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**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF  
 ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)**

Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/3417  
 DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/3417>



### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### THE MARATHA NAVY UNDER KANHOJI ANGRIA (1669-1729).

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#### Manuscript Info

##### Manuscript History

Received: 15 December 2016  
 Final Accepted: 15 January 2017  
 Published: February 2017

#### Abstract

Kanhoji Angria was a diplomat of uncommon ability. He was regarded as the second Founder of the Maratha navy. He undoubtedly re-established Maratha prestige at sea. He defied the joint efforts of the English, the Portuguese's and the Sidis, and in his wars by land and sea. He had given evidence not only of good seamanship but also wise diplomacy. He offered significant competition and damage to the European powers who fought with Angria at sea, would later claim that he was pirate, but they deliberately ignored that he had been appointed an admiral in the Maratha navy by its legitimate leaders.

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#### Introduction:-

After Shivaji's death the Marathas passed through a great crisis. During the stormy days of Sambhaji and Rajaram most of their older leaders passed away. At one time it appeared that the nascent Maratha power might be crushed out by the Mughal empire. But the unusual crisis brought a number of young men of exceptional energy and ability to the fore front, and the new leaders not only saved the newly founded kingdom from imminent extinction but added to its power and prestige both land and Sea. While Balaji Vishwanath, the founder of the Peshwa family, was gaining Shahu's confidence, the Chief Command of the Maratha fleet had already passed to Kanhoji Angria, the founder of a family which made it self feared and respected by all the sea powers of the coast, Indian and European.

Kanhoji's origin was obscure; of his early career little of nothing is known. A Portuguese Viceroy states that he started life as a humble servant of other Hindus in the island of Versova<sup>1</sup>. According to the official history of his family, Kanhoji was a Maratha Kshatriya by birth and the original surname of his ancestors was Sankpal. The new name of Angria was supplied by the Village of Argarvadi, where the family had long resided. Tukdoji Father of Kanhoji, had served under Shivaji<sup>2</sup>. His Son Kanhoji had naturally followed in the footsteps of the father. When Rajaram sought refuge in Jinji he was accompanied by the Commander-in-chief of the navy Sidoji Gujar, and Kanhoji was appointed as in-charge of Suvarna. Durg. Here he distinguished himself against the Sidis of Janjira who had reconquered their lost possessions on the mainland and was appointed Subhedar of the Armada by Rajaram with the title of Sarkhel. Earlier Kanhoji made himself known in many a Skirmish with the Siddis. By 1703 he had attained so much importance that Ceatano de Mello e Castro, Viceroy of Goa, addressed a friendly letter to him, sent him some presents and permitted the merchants chaul to purchase a vessel which Kanhoji had probably captured as a prize and was anxious to dispose of with Shahu's home coming the loyalty of the Maratha nobility was divided between the parties of Tarabai and Shahu. Kanhoji threw his lot with Tarabai. Kanhoji as Tarabai's man, took the forts of Rajmachi, Tunga-Tikona and Dhanagad and Threatened to march on Poona and Satara. But Balaji Vishvanath Bhat handled the Circumstances and brought Kanhoji into Shahu's camp without having to shed drop blood. In the treaty concluded between Shahu and Kanhoji, the latter obtained ten Seas-forts and Sixteen land-forts.

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By this treaty, Kanhoji, received territory worth Rs. 34 Lakhs revenue<sup>3</sup>. He was now free to deal with the sea-powers who often questioned the sovereignty of the Matatha over the sea.

The Maratha navy had been an active unit for nearly forty years when Kanhoji succeeded to the chief command. As the admiral of the Chhatrapati had every right to levy tariff to force ships of all nations to purchase his passport, and to negotiate with any power he liked. His aims and objects were well known and clearly defined. The Maratha merchantmen were to be protected from the pirates who infested the Malabar coast, Maratha subjects were to be Protected against the depredations of the Sid and the Sovereignty of the sea was to be secured for the Maratha state. It was however, no easy task and Kanhoji had to contend against no less than five rivals, the Sidi of Janjira, The Savants of Wari, the English of Bombay, the Dutch at Vinguar and the Portuguese of Goa. It was Kanhoji's duty to drive them back. But the Maratha fleet consisted of no more than right or ten small vessels, as we learn from Conde de Fricira, when Kanhoji was called upon to assume its command<sup>4</sup>. Hence there was need of money for additional ships and for the enlistment of more men for the army and money could be obtained only by exercising the sovereignty of the sea and compelling alien traders to purchase, Kanhoji's Cartaz. All these rights had to be executed by the simple rule of might. If the Siddis, the Phiragis and the Topikars acquired territory, carried on trade, and ruled the waves on the authority of their distant Sovereigns, how could Kanhoji's right in these matters be questioned when he had the sanction of the Chhatrapati. The English and the Portuguese in addressing Kanhoji as a pirate have simply betrayed their hatred for one who challenged their authority.

#### **Kanhoji and the Siddis:-**

After Sambhaji's death, the calamity which befell the Marathas was the proper opportunity for the Siddis to extend their Sway over Konkan. They recovered a number of places which they had lost to Shivaji. Raigad, the capital of the Marathas, Mandargad, and Ratnagiri were also occupied by the Mughal officers. Their occupation of the ports off Rewash and Thal impeded the movements of the Maratha Ships at Kolaba and in the pen river. In that dire hour it was Kanhoji Angre who by his daring exploits kept the Maratha flag flying over Kolaba and Khanderi. He forced the Siddis and the Mughal Subhedar to share with him half a revenue of certain place which they had taken possession<sup>5</sup>. In 1697 when Kanhoji shifted his, headquarters to Kolaba, the Siddis as well as the English were very much disturbed because he proved to be challenge for these powers. In 1698 the Siddis attacked Kolaba similarly their attempt to take Kolaba and Khanderi in 1701 ended in the failure.<sup>6</sup> A Concerted attack on the Angrian territory by the Portuguese, the Siddis and others was foiled by Balaji Vishwanath<sup>7</sup> in 1714. The treaty between Shahu and Kanhoji greatly disturbed the Siddis as it transferred a number of places belonging to the former to Kanhoji's Jurisdiction. In 1725, fresh dissensions had taken place between Kanhoji and Siddis, who appeared before Kolaba with a large fleet of twelve pals, two frigates and one hundred Gallivats.<sup>8</sup> It is quite impossible that Kanhoji should have been ignorant of the intended invasion, for reason unknown to us. The Maratha Admiral considered it unsafe to face the Siddis on the Sea, and as was usual in that age. Silver served to avert the danger when steel offered little or no remedy. By experience Kanhoji had learnt that an attack on Janjira without the aid of the land power was hazardous.

#### **Kanhoji and the Portuguese:-**

Wavering behavior of the Siddis had greatly disturbed the Portuguese Kanhoji was also very much perturbed by the continuous struggle with the Siddis. Driven to despair he asked the help of the Portuguese which was readily given. An alliance<sup>9</sup> was formed between Kanhoji and the Portuguese against the Siddis in 1701. Till 1708, peace existed between Kanhoji and the Portuguese. But no sooner was the Mughal menace over than Kanhoji threa this friendship to the winds and started seizing Portuguese ships.

When exactly Kanhoji first challenged the Portuguese supremacy of the seas we do not know. In 1708, Kanhoji captured some Portuguese ships. In retaliation, the latter marched on cheul but were defeated by the overwhelming number of the Marathas, 2000 against 400 of their own. Kanhoji fought two manchuas-of-war belonging to the Portuguese fleet of the north. He burnt one and captured another with 27 Protuguese. They were all put to the sword, according to a Portuguese official account, except one captain who purchased his life and liberty by paying a ransom of 12,000 Xerafins.<sup>10</sup> Many merchantmen sailing under Portuguese colours shared the same fate and contributed to Kanhoji's coffers. In 1712, during the Viceroyalty of Rodrigo da Costa, Kanhoji attacked the merchant fleet sailing for the ports of the north.

He fell upon the frigates with his pals, dismantled the Portuguese flagship, and captured no less than forty Parangues. This was great blow of Goa, for a large number of its citizen lost all the capital they had invested in this

mercantile enterprise. The next year the merchant fleet was better convoyed, but Kanhoji did not hesitate to attack two ships but at last the Angria's fleet had to retire with much loss<sup>11</sup> However the possession of the Portuguese on the Bombay coast had been isolated and the Angria was in position to cut off their communications by land and sea. In 1713, he attacked a frigate of 34 guns that had just landed a Portuguese force at Chaul. In this combat also the Angria's fleet, though numerically superior, was discomfited, the Viceroy resolved to take the offensive and sent Antonio Cardim with a fairly numerous flotilla to reduce Kolaba. Having sailed with six ships and some Gallivats, he blockaded the port. The Angria, who was not inclined to hazard a naval action, responded by hauling his fleet a shore out of range of the Portuguese guns and leaving Cardim to continue his ineffectual blockade. Three Months later the Portuguese Captain was forced to depart by the receipt of news of the arrival of the Arab fleet at Surat.<sup>12</sup> The next in 1718 near Karwar, the Angria fleet was defeated with heavy losses.<sup>13</sup> Kanhoji recognized that his strength lay mainly in the Sea. The possession of the coast, was essential not only for the maintenance of uninterrupted communication between different ports, but also its revenue on which the navy, as in Shivaji's days, ordinarily depended. He therefore, received from Shahu Rajmachi and other places and the important island of Renery.<sup>14</sup> He acknowledged Shahu's Supremacy and concluded treaty with him in the latter part of 1713 or in the earlier months of 1714. After that the Angria's fleet rode the sea boldly, Seizing merchantmen of all nationalities which had omitted to purchase his passports, and the Portuguese found themselves powerless to circumscribe his activities of all their possessions on the coast, Chaul suffered most; for the main source of its income was the volume of dutiable commerce which suffered heavily from Angria's interference. As a result of it in 1721, the English formed an offensive and defensive alliance with the Portuguese against him. In 1721 an Anglo Portuguese Combined army reached the gates of Kolaba on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September. Attempts to pound the walls by erecting batteries were foiled as the labourers were panic stricken by the Angrian army. At this stage a force of 6,000 horses under Bajirao I, sent by Sahu stopped the war. It would have been a sheer folly to fight with so vast an army and the Portuguese Viceroy<sup>15</sup> concluded a treaty of peace with Bajirao on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1722.

#### **Kanhoji and the English:-**

Ever since Kanhoji made Kolaba the main station of admiralty the English were ill at ease. They became all the more restless when the island of Khanderi passed under his Command. Kolaba and Khanderi were within a couple of hours' sail from Bombay. Khanderi could easily keep a watch on the English vessels entering Bombay waters. It was dangerous for the trade and peace of Bombay.

It was the studied policy of the English to regard the enemies of Kanhoji as their friends. They were therefore, determined to give all possible aid to the siddis as foil to the Angria. With regard to the practice of the English to allow their friends to fly their flags and thereby avoid the purchase of passports was never accepted by Kanhoji. He also contended that outside the ports, beyond some specified limit he was free to deal with any vessel as he pleased.

In 1702, Kanhoji captured near Calicut a merchantship with its English crew as it was without his passport. In 1706, the Marathas and the Angria captured three English ships of which the Diamond had 12 guns. In 1712, Kanhoji seized a yacht of the Bombay Governor along with the Anne of Karwar. But then he decided to come to terms with the English and sent a messenger to Bombay in February 1713 with proposals for peace, offering to deliver the captured vessels if an Englishman of credit was sent to Kolaba. The Governor and Council proposed the following terms.

1. Kanhoji was to return to the English the ships which he had seized from them and their people.
2. He was neither to molest the English ships nor those of their merchants.
3. He was not to molest ships of any nationality entering into the English harbor or insight of it (between Mahim stakes and Khanderi)
4. Kanhoji was to allow the English merchants to come to his ports on payment of due customs.
5. The English promised that they would not allow any ship to sail under their colour except that of their subject
6. The English granted Kanhoji the liberty to trade in their Bombay port on payment of regular customs<sup>16</sup>.

According to this treaty, Kanhoji returned the two English ships he had taken. But the peace did not last long. In 1717, the ship 'Success' belonging to the English broker Govardhandas was captured by Kanhoji. When talks regarding its recovery were in progress another ship Robert fell a victim to Kanhoji's aggressing. He refused to return the ships. Within a couple of months from the Robert incident Kanhoji made prize of yet another ship the Otter. These excesses of his goaded the English to the point of desperation and they detained at Mahim a ship belonging to Kanhoji. At last on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1718 war was declared against Kanhoji. The nationality of the three captured ships was a highly controversial question. The owners of the ships were not English, but the cargo belonged

to English subjects, and Kanhoji contended that they were not entitled to exemption from the ordinary rules of passports. He wrote to captain Cornwall that the ships belonging to Bombay, Bengal or Madras. Shall not be molested by him that if the English will freight on country shipping they must expect that he will make price of them<sup>17</sup>. The real ground of contention was that the English had to load foreign boats with their goods and demanded for these boats the same immunity to which ships of undoubted English nationality were entitled. Kanhoji was unwilling to grant this demand which would have meant financial loss to him. The English led expeditions against Khanderi, Kolaba and Gheria without success<sup>18</sup>. In 1720, the English lost their ship charlotte to Kanhoji, and the next year they entered into an alliance with the Portuguese against their common enemy. This joint attack failed miserably, The ill-success of the Anglo-Portuguese expedition undoubtedly contributed to Kanhoji's prestige, and he was soon free to seek his enemies at sea. He continued to make prize of the English ships whenever he could. On 14 March 1722, his fleet, consisting of four pals and twenty Gallivats, had attacked two English pals between chaul and Rajapore. One of the two English vessels was burnet and the other was put to light. About the same time Angria captured a big English ship richly laden with coins and valuable goods. But his success was by no means uniform for one of his ships, surrendered to the English near Hennery sometime between March and October.<sup>19</sup> In October 1722, Kanhoji sailed from Kollba, leaving his eldest son incharge of the government. The last three or four years of Kanhoji's life were probably quiet and uneventful. In 1725 he went to satara to pay his respects to his sovereign and liege lord and died at Kolaba on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1729.

### Conclusion:-

Kanhoji Angre, following Shivaji's policy, boldly rode the sea capturing ships which sailed without his passes. The Portuguese and the Siddis had to respect his right on the sea. Kanhoji allowed English ships to enter his ports on payment of the usual customs. This term Speaks for his equality at sea what often led to heated controversy and war was the granting of a flag by the English to ship which did not belong to them or to their subjects. Kanhoji was unwilling to make more concessions to the English. He was prudent enough not to offer any additional offence to the Portuguese. Conde de Ericeira tells us that Kanhoji did not give Portuguese subjects any trouble during the terms of his Viceroyalty. One enemy at a time was enough for him. The Maratha navy had not yet emerged from the primitive galley stage. The seamen had, indeed, learnt to, make skilful use of their sails, but their fighting fleets were inferior as compared to contemporary Europe. They didn't take efforts to moderate nary. As a result of it the Maratha nary progressed satisfactorily up to a certain stage and then further improvements stopped.

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