

Ancient Ports of Kalinga

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The ancient Kingdom of Kalinga mentioned in the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela (1st century B.C.) extended from the mouths of the Ganges to the estuary of Godavari river on the East Coast. Ptolemy (100 A.D.) mentions that Paluru (District Ganjam), Konark, Puri (both in district Puri) and Kosambi (district Balasore) were flourishing Ports. Besides the inscriptions and other archaeological finds the *Brahmanda Purana* (10th century A.D.) also refers to the ships in the Chilika Lake and those which plied between Kalinga and south east Asian countries. Nanda raja, is said to have attacked Kalinga with the intention of getting access to the sea for the landlocked Kingdom of Magadha (Bihar). The ancient text *Artha Sastra* (3rd - 4th century B.C.) refers to Magadhan trade. The exports from Kalinga included elephants, cotton, salt and silk. The inscriptions of the Sailendra dynasty found in the Malayan Archipelago refers to overseas trade between Kalinga and south Asian countries. An attempt is made in this paper to highlight the rise and decline of Kalingan Ports and their contribution to the development of overseas trade and spread of Indian culture.

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The literature shows that there have been flourishing ports along the 600 km long line of Orissa in the past which have played an important role in the maritime history of ancient India. Kalinga, as the present Orissa was known extended from the mouth of Ganges to the estuary of Godavari river in the south (Banerjee, 1931:3). The present paper information is gathered from the literary sources, archaeological evidences, and travellers accounts to throw light on the ports of Kalinga and their contribution towards the spread of Indian culture.

In Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* (3rd-4th century BC) the maritime activities of India especially the rules regarding sea trade, and construction of ports have been described (Mookerji, 1962:73-75). The Hathigumpha inscription of King Kharavela (1st century BC) indicates that the Magadhan Emperor invaded Kalinga to acquire sea ports of Kalinga, as Magadha did not have any sea ports of its own (Mahatab, 1959:174). Kalidas's reference in *Raghuvamśa* to the King of Kalinga as lord of the sea "Mahodadhi Pati" speaks of the maritime power of Kalinga (Das, 1977:115).

Sylvain Levi discovered Pithunda port (district East Godavari in Andhra Pradesh) on east coast of India and the Hathigumpha inscription reveals that Pithunda port which was deserted then was renovated by Kharavela (OR, 1964:19). *Jaina Uttarādhyāna Sūtra* also says that Pithunda had trade relations with Champa (present Kampuchea) even in the days of Mahavira (Sarma, 1981). Adzeitta (Ajita) another port on the Kalingan coast had active trade relation with Burma and was contemporary with Pithunda port.

Ptolemy's (100 AD) *Geography of Ancient India* describes Kalinga's major and prosperous ports like Nanaigam (present Puri) and Konagar (Konark) both in district Puri, Kosambi (district Balasore), Pālur (district Ganjam) in

Orissa, Kalinganagar (district Srikakulam) in Andhra Pradesh and Tamralipti (district Midnapur) in West Bengal. The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* (10th century AD) also refers that Chilika lake (district Puri) was a big harbour, providing shelter to the sea-going vessels. From this harbour vessels which sailed to Java, Malaya, Sumatra, Bali, Burma, China, Thailand, Ceylon and other places could carry thousands of passengers (Das, 1975:7).

Among them Pālur, identified by S. Levi was one of the important and flourishing ports from the time of Ptolemy to Hsien-Tsang.

Ptolemy the Greek geographer has mentioned Pālur as an international maritime emporium further to the south-west, most likely at the Rishikulya estuary or nearby on the southern elongation of Chilika lake. Even today in this area a village bears the name Pālur. The presence of Apheterion, the point of departure for ships bound to Charyse or Golden land (*Suvarna Dvipa*) and the prominent hillock south of present village Pālur which during Portuguese period (16th century) was known as Serra de Palura and served as a landmark for early sea farers in the Bay of Bengal proves that Pālur was a port.

The *Mahaparinirvana sutta* and *Datha-Datu-Vamsam*, a Pali work by Dhammakitti of Ceylon tell that Brahmaduatta (543 BC) the King of Kalinga raised a stupa where he kept the sacred tooth of Buddha given to him by the Buddhist Arhat, Khemather by name for worship and the place where the stupa was built came to be known as Dantapura/Pālur.

The excavation branch of the Archaeological Survey of India, Bhubaneswar which had undertaken exploration near Pālur recovered sherds of bowls, dishes and jars of red ware alongwith a terracotta dabber and a wheel. Over an area of half a km these red ware sherds are extensively scattered in the midst of sand dunes and the habitation mound bisected by the road leading to Prayasi. On ceramic evidence the site may be assigned to the 12th century AD and it deserves a systematic excavation (IAR, 1984-85:56-60).

The Sailodhbavas migrated to South-east Asia through the port Pālur after the 7th century AD and established there a Sailendra dynasty. The Sailodhbavas were ruling over the land which extended from Mahanadi to the Rishikhilya river. This kingdom is known as Kangoda or Kanyadha (modern Ganjam) with its capital on the bank of the river Salima. Some scholars have identified Salima river with Sali which joins the Chilika lake. The lack of good relation with the Bhaumakaras of Utkal and Gangas of Kalinga, the Sailodhbavas might have taken the advantage of port Pālur to migrate to Malaysia. For this migration a favourable route was already created by the traders of Kangoda from Pālur. The Sailendra of Suvarna Dvipa are supposed to be the Sailodhbavas, emigrants from Kangoda. The discovery of certain stone inscriptions and copper plate grants both in Indian Peninsula and Malayan Archipelago, has revealed that they built some Buddhist temples in South-east Asia, and by the end of the 8th century AD all the rulers of Bali, Java, Sumatra, Malaya and Borneo owed their allegiance to the Sailendra dynasty (Mahatab, 1959:108-9).

Manikapatna (Adigrama) in district Puri located near Chilika lake is believed to have been a port as evidenced from a palm leaf manuscript. It probably flourished during the medieval period. Recently the Orissan Institute of Maritime and South-east Asian studies, Bhubaneswar excavated Manikapatna which revealed some Chinese celadon and procelain wares along with indigenous grey and red ware pottery. The Roman rouletted ware and the Ceylonese coins found here suggest trade contact with foreign countries. Besides pottery, the terracotta and semi-precious stone beads, carriages, glass and decorated glass bangles were also recovered. Abul Fazl (in 1595-1596) mentions Manikapatna was a 'large port' where salt tax was collected and Mughals invited the Dutch to found a factory at Manikapatna. Other ancient ports of Kalinga could not be identified on account of changes in names. However, the exploration undertaken by scholars has revealed some of the ancient ports like Boitakuda, Banijpur on the coast of district Puri in Orissa (Prachi, 1931:15).

The Kalingas had a sound knowledge of materials such as varieties of wood required for boat-making in ancient times. According to the principles of *Yukti Kalpataru* of King Bhoja of Dhara (11th century AD) Kalingan people also divided sea-going vessels into two categories on the basis of dimension. (a) *Sāmānya* (ordinary class) and (b) *Viśeṣa* (special class) (Singh, 1962: 548-50). This fact clearly indicates that the Kalingas had a large fleet of boats for inland and overseas trade, namely the Bhelaka, Bariratha, Nauha, Tarikah, Plavah, Tarandhuh, Vahanah and others. Some boats had many sails and masts with the capability of carrying two hundred people as described by Fahien (Majumdar, 1973:12). A small vessel was attached to the main boat which can be called as a life boat to save human lives in case of damage to the main one. Although the boat motives are

not profusely depicted in Kalingan art, they can be visualised from the boats depicted in the Bhoga-mandapa of Sri-Jagan-nath temple Puri and a small medallion of Lingaraja temple Bhubaneswar.

The accounts of Megasthenes and Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* as well as Hiuen-Tsang's *Si-Yu-Ki* speak of the transaction of Kalinga during ancient times. The chief export commodities were rice, bajra, cotton, silk, salt, elephant, gems, pearls, ornaments, fine cloth, ivory and diamond (Das, 1978:48). The diamond obtained in Sambalpur was famous especially in countries like Persia, Egypt and Greece. Similarly, the elephants and tusks of Kalinga were appreciated in the neighbouring provinces. R.D. Banerjee opines that Kalinga had trade contact with the coastal regions of Africa and with Mexico and Peru by sea (Banerjee, 1931). For the safety of this extensive trade the people of Kalinga maintained a naval force escorting and protecting the merchants in the Indian Ocean.

The recovery of foreign coins of 3rd and 4th century AD besides the rouletted ware, clay bullae and iron caltrops during excavation at Sisupalgarh has confirmed trade relation of Kalinga with Rome (AI-5:62-105).

The *Deepavamsa* and *Chulavamsa* (Buddhist religious books) state that during the reign of Ceylonese King Agrabudhi-II (592-602), the Kalinga king and his queen visited Ceylon. It also mentions that King Vijayabahu of Ceylon (1054-1109) married a Kalinga Princess named Triloksundari.

The history of Burma tells that Kalinga had good relation with Burma and Buddhist preachers from Kalinga came to Burma through the sea route and preached Buddhism in Burma. The 'Dharakshetra' in Burma was a prominent settlement of Kalinga. In course of time the Kalingas occupied the throne of the Prome Kingdom and ruled there for many years (Prachi, 1931:31).

The Maritime relation of Kalinga with China and Arabian countries is brought to light by the excavations at Khalkata Patna near coastal areas of Puri on the left bank of the river Kushabhadra, where the Chinese celadon ware along with the egg white glazed and glazed chocolate ware of Arabian origin were found with the indigenous dark grey pottery. The discovery of Chinese copper coins with the characteristic square perforation in the middle bearing legend in Chinese character on both sides proves that Khalkata Patna was a Port town during 12th century having maritime trade both with the east as well as the west (JAR, 1984-85:56-60). The depiction of a giraffe on the Konark temple suggests Kalinga's contact with Arab and African countries.

Raghavaraja Chola captured the islands of Kalinga in the high sea in the conflict between the Cholas and the Sailendras which continued throughout the 11th century AD, and caused a setback to the maritime trade of Kalinga. Later on due to the Arab interference in the Indian Ocean the maritime trade was again disturbed. The Gangas, however,

could not protect the trade interests of Orissa as they had a weak naval force (Das, 1978-48). The Muslim and Mughal rulers raised the commercial taxes from the rulers of Orissa.

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