

Kollatturai: Forgotten History

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Abstract: Literary and archaeological sources support the beginnings of Indian mercantile activities go back to very early times. Maritime trade reached higher levels with the discovery of monsoon and advancement of technology from medieval times. The geographical position of India enabled her to become a bridge between new world and old world from the centuries. Now India become a large source of supply to the Steel Industry in Japan, China, Western Europe as well as to the developing steel industry in the east European countries. This paper addresses how forgotten history of a port and it's maritime trade offers vital insights to the present with the case study of Kollatturai port. This paper also discusses the existence and importance of the port in history and its relevance at present. This paper is part of my Ph.D thesis which is yet to submit to the University.

Keywords: Kollatturai Port, Krishnapatnam Port and Calitore.

I. INTRODUCTION

PORT

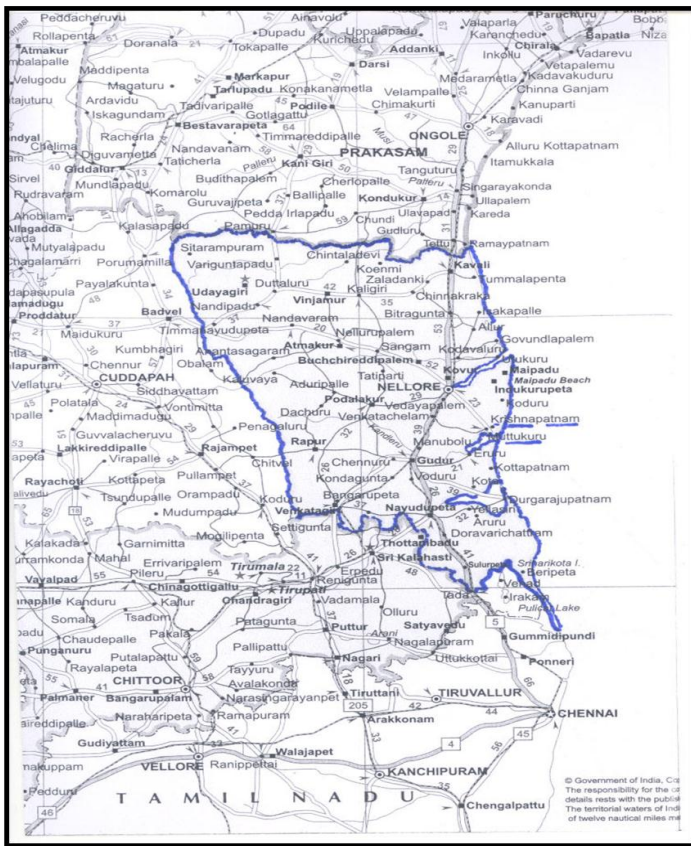
Popular definition: "A port is a physical location on a coast containing one or more harbors where ships can dock and transfer people or cargo to or from land. Port locations are selected to optimize access to land and navigable water, for commercial demand, and for shelter from wind and waves. Ports with deeper water are rarer, but can handle larger ships. As rightly pointed out by G.G. Weigned a port is the place of contact where goods and people as well as cultures are transferred between land and maritime space. It is a knot where ocean and inland transport lines meet and intervene.

KOLLATTURAI PORT

Krishnapatnam port in the past was called as Kollitturai/ Kollatturai/ Gandagopalapattana/ Gandagopalapuram/ Kistnapatam/ Calitore (Red sandal wood in Dutch) and Melange in Greek on Stone inscriptions and British records. In the inscriptions, Krishnapatnam was mentioned as one of the biggest towns had a huge trade with other foreign countries. Grants made by the then kings, the traders and merchants of

Kollitturai/ Gandagopalapattana, agents of rulers and by Kapu's (powerful peasant class at this place) to temples at this place was prevalent from 13th to 16th century A.D. There was also proof of charity Edict issued by Samantha king to a Barber at this place. These inscriptions are found in Tamil and Telugu languages. All these reveals the longevity of a port from ancient times, power-play of dominant people and flourishing trade and guilds at this place. All these tally with the reign of chieftains of Chola-Chalukyas and Kakatiyas (i.e. Telugu Chodas/Cholas of Nellore), Kakatiyas and Vijayanagara rulers of medieval period from secondary sources.

PRESENT LOCATION OF KRISHNAPATNAM PORT



Source: the Department of Tourism, Government of Andhra Pradesh, India. 2010

Figure 1

There is a reference to Kristnapatnam as Melange in a book called “The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India” by E.H. Warmington M.A. 1928. New Delhi. Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Limited. India. This book refers to commercial relations between India and Roman Empire during the Ancient period from the triumph of Augustus to the death of Marcus. “Ptolemy reveals the extensive, though irregular, travels made by the Roman Greeks and the decline of the Chola Kingdom, the name of which (Soras, Choras, Cholas) is hidden in his Soreitae, Soringo and Sorea, with capital apparently at Arcot, and in his king Sornas(the name is obviously the racial title) whose place was at Orthura. This place seems to have been in reality the inland capital Uraiur, the name of which (Argaru) was identified by Ptolemy to a coast town and included in the Pandya territory. Schoff has pointed out the power of the Pandyas and the decline of Cholas(perhaps already harassed by the Pallavas) during the Roman Imperial period and the author thought was reflected in Ptolemy - for the Cholas were partly nomad according to him and it was clear that the Pandyas, by seizing the coast-land originally controlled by Uraiur, and by seizing the Argaric gulf (palk strait), completed their control over the pearl trade, monopolizing the fisheries of the Palk strait as well as those of Mannar, other Chola marts recorded by Ptolemy are Nicam (Negapatam), places seized by the Pandyas, such as Salur (the Tamil mart Saliyur); Chaberis (Camara in the Periplus), Subura or Suburus (Cuddalore),

Poduce (Pondicherry not Pulicat), Melange (Kistnapatam), and Manaliapha(near the mouth of a river still called Manara), and in the Andhra districts men visited the district of Maesolia (of Masulipatam, called Masalia by the merchants of the first century), Contacosyla (Kondapale?) and Alosyani (Koringa) near which place ships bound for Malay Peninsula left the coast, perhaps at the mouth of the modern Baroua. (((Not for inland))) near the mouth of the Tyna(Pennar river) lay Malanga (Allur?) the royal seat of Barsaronax, and many other cities were known, particularly Pitura or Pityndra, the metropolis of the Maesoloi- probably near Bezawada”.

Two inscriptions from Krishnapattanam, refer to the place name Kollatturai, Gandagopalapattana and the temple of Manumasiddesvara. It is possible that this village must have been renamed after Vijayagandagopala alias Manumasiddhi-II, a Telugu Choda chief of Nellore. Historical writings and evidences reveals that there has been change in the name of Krishnapatnam port. It was referred to as Melange during ancient times and then as Kollatturai, Gandagopalapattanam, Calitore and Kistnapatnam and later during modern times as Krishnapatnam. Thomas Bowrey also mentioned this port as Caletaer. He mentioned that “from Caletaer to Pondy, the coast trenches N.E easterly, distance 5 ½ leagues... close in shore, before the river of Pondy are 10 or 12 rocks and with in land some high rugged mountain which thwart the river” see Ind. Ant. Vol xxxp.356”

According to the Sinnappah Arasaratnam over and above there were more than 48 ports on the Coromandel Coast between 1650 to 1740 A.D. He reiterated that each port had its own significance. For instance Bhimilipatnam port was well known as one of the chief rice exporting ports on the Coromandel Coast, the vital supplier by sea to South Coromandel, Ceylon and Malabar coast. Narsapore port was popular centre for ship-building. Similarly, “Krishnapatnam port was one of the chief port of the Inland District Administration and market town of Nellore, which was situated on the left bank of the Vupatheru river. This Vupatheru river, though shallow, was navigable to the extent of twenty-five miles in small boats and, as such the Nellore district was a weaving area, it enabled the transport of piece-goods to Krishnapatnam for shipment from the port in 17th Century”. This reveals us of the important textile trade activities and trade route from Nellore and to the port and the existence of the port between 1650-1740 A.D.

According to British sources Krishnapatnam mentioned as “a sea port of 13th century A.D., whose geographical latitude stand at 14^o 16' North and longitude at 80^o 10' East. It has a village abutting coast on the Coromandel coast about 3 km east of Muthukur village and 25 km from Nellore. The village is connected to Muthukur by road. This village was once under the rule of the Vijayanagara Monarch Krishnadevaraya. Krishnapatnam was named after the Royale Sri Krishnadevarayael. This was a seaport in the 13th century A.D. There are travellers’s bunglawa at Muthukur and Gopalapuram which are only 4 and 2 ½ kms respectively from the Kandaleru river”. There were many details of Krishnapatnam port, its type, width and length of the port and advantages of the port were mentioned in British Administrative Manual and District Gazetteers and also found similar information on Stone Inscriptions and John A.C.

Bosewell.(ed &comp). 1873. Manual of the Nellore District in the Madras Presidency. Printed by H. Morgan at the Government Press, Madras. This manual is considered to be the first manual. In these sources precisely “Krishnapatnam was referred to as the principal port and anchorage at this port outside the bar is deemed to be unsafe, not being a good holding ground, but within the bar there is a fine backwater, with great depth of water, which form an excellent harbor and place of refuge for ships of modern tonnage. The entrance to the backwater is always open and the channel by which ships come in is stated to be 40 yards wide, and on the bar ordinarily 9 feet deep at mean tide; at high tide depth is 11 feet. The whole width of the mouth is 5 or 6 hundred yards, but the depth is less on either side of the channel, which shifts its position in accordance with the season of the year, but is always available. It is now a place for shelter for ‘Dhonies’ and native craft during the monsoons and in the stormy months of April and May. Dhonies are sometimes taken into dock and repaired at this port, it is capable of being considerably improved and rendered available for ships in distress. There used to be large trade in salt from this port when large English vessels resorted to it, but this has ceased with the abolition of the salt export depot and the chief trade was in grain, for the export of which from its position is particularly convenient. It is connected to Nellore, 17 miles away, by a good metal road. Boat drawing nine feet of water can go up to the stream which is navigable for 18 miles to a distance of 10 miles and those drawing six feet of water can go 8 miles further inland, and it was proposed to extend this navigation eight or ten miles more or up to near Guduru on Trunk road number-6. The East Coast canal from Madras is now being extended from Dugarajapatnam to this port”.

Literary sources and circumstantial evidences revealed that the Dugarajapatnam, Krishnapatnam and Iskapalle and smaller ports like Pakala, Ramapatnam, Maipadu and Thummalapenta were important ports of the Nellore district, exporting chiefly Salt and Grain. With the manufacture of Salt in other places in the country and the excavation of Buckingham Canal (which rendered the transport of goods to Madras port easier) these ports fell into decay.

II. METHODOLOGY

Mixed methodology of using quantitative data to find out qualitative output was used. Collection of archival data, large amount of readings of primary and secondary literature were employed for exploring the port studies. Documentation of oral history and narratives from fishermen communities from the port, field trips, interactions and face to face interviews with the locals, journalists, light house officials and common people were included and analyzed in the research.

III. FINDINGS

- ✓ Kollatturai identified as modern Krishnapatnam port located in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh with the help of rich and reliable sources.
- ✓ History records, vernacular epigraphs and rich resources of Telugu, Tamil and secondary literature gives the rich and valuable insights like Krishnapatnam port’s potentiality to hold huge maritime international trade, its historical linkages to Golconda Nizams, other ports on western coast of India, with China and also trade links with South East Asian countries.
- ✓ In other words it can generate more income and employment to the Government of India and Andhra Pradesh. It can also generate intra-state income with Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana states which is crucial in this neo liberal era of World trade.

IV. CONCLUSION

It’s a history from below. Writing history with available and reliable sources and tallying them with various sources helps to establish the historical facts.

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