



PORT CENTRES IN EARLY ANDHRA REGION AND THE MARITIME CONTACTS

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Abstract: Trade activities have been great facilitators of change in various spheres of life since ages. The ports on India's coasts, especially those on the east coast, served not only commercial purpose but also promoted political, social, economic and cultural interactions between different regions within the subcontinent and distant regions across the seas. Andhra coast during the ancient period was studded with a number of ports which played a key role in connecting India with other countries. The references in literary works and the discoveries of archaeological remains enable us to observe the pattern of coastal trade in ancient India reflecting the shift of maritime activities from the east to the west coast due to several factors with the passage of time. This paper attempts to identify the role of ports in Andhra region with regard to establishing contacts with neighboring Tamil Nadu and Odisha respectively as well as distant lands including the Roman Empire, Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia and China.

Keywords: Andhra, Maritime, Port, Roman, Southeast Asia, Trade

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Introduction

Andhra region is bounded by an extensive coastline along the Bay of Bengal located to the east of the mainland. The seaboard extends towards the Bengal coast in the north and connects the Tamil Coast in the south. The mouths of rivers like Krishna and Godavari, which have drained

the plateau through ages, provided ideal locations for the development of ports during the early period of history. These coastal centres facilitated commercial, cultural and political exchange between Andhra region and distant lands connected through the overland routes as well

as the maritime networks. This paper attempts to revisit the early port centres on the Andhra Coast in the light of the available archaeological and literary evidence in order to understand their significance in the process of interaction between people and places.

Studies have shown that the ports on the west coast of India provided maritime links to the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean region in the initial phase of trade contacts up to *circa* first century CE. The focus of trade activities, however, shifted to the centres on the east coast from the second century CE onwards. The discovery of monsoon in the first century CE was a landmark in this context as the knowledge of this seasonal wind made circumnavigation of the Cape convenient by lessening the perils of sea travel in comparison to the past. The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* of the first century CE also records the absence of direct sailing from Egypt to India in earlier times (Casson: 1989: p. 65). The references to intensified trade between Egypt and India following the Roman annexation of Egypt suggest that the monsoon was known to the mariners by the first century CE when the *Periplus* and Strabo's *Geographica* were written (Young, 1998). This further led to the emergence of coastal centres on the Coromandel Coast and the development of maritime networks. Besides the ports on the Tamil Coast, the coastal centres of Andhra region continued to play significant role from the Satavahana period up to the rule of the Kakatiyas.

Locating the Region and its Past

The Deccan plateau stretches southward from the Satpura mountain range and is bounded on the east and the west by the Ghats. The easternmost part of this flat landmass forming the southeastern part of India can be topographically divided into two main divisions — the Eastern Ghats marking the eastern boundary of the plateau, and the coastal plains along the Bay of Bengal.

This coastal zone of Andhra Pradesh is connected with the Telangana and the Rayalaseema regions to the west and south-west respectively. The Andhra Coast during the ancient period had many seaports at the mouth of rivers flowing through the region. The earliest reference to the Andhras as one of the tribes of south India, who were among the descendants of sage Vishvamitra, is found in the *Aitareya Brahmana* (Haug:1922: 321). The *Puranas* mention the term *Andhra-Jatiya* or *Andhrabhrtyas* (the Andhra servants) for the Satavahanas who as the successor of the Mauryas in the Deccan ruled over their territory called the *Andhra-Desai* (Ramachandran, 1952; Venkatachalam, 1952; Sinopoli, 2001). Foreign accounts such as the *Periplus* (first century CE) and the *Geographia* of Ptolemy (second century CE) record about the inland and port towns of the Andhra region and their contacts with distant lands (Casson, 1989 ; McCrindle, 1885; Stevenson, 1991). Besides literary sources, archaeological remains in the form of inscriptions, coins, ceramics, structural forms such as *stupas*, *chaityas*, *viharas*, etc. and other antiquities also provide significant information on the early history of the region and its interaction with other countries. The Satavahanas started their rule in the second century BCE from the political headquarter located in the western Deccan and integrated the eastern Deccan into the empire by the first century CE. The maritime trade made immense contribution to the growth and expansion of Buddhism in *Andhra-Desa* for nearly six centuries from about the third century BCE to third century CE. Buddhists, who were largely converts from the commercial class, donated their wealth for the construction of *stupas* at Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda and other centres (Ramachandran, 1952). The ancient Andhras notably participated in the exchange process facilitated by the trade networks that connected different parts of the subcontinent and regions such as Southeast Asia, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and

China across the seas as revealed by the sources (Akkidas, 1999). Later during the twelfth–thirteenth centuries CE under the Kakatiyas, foreign merchants visited Andhra region and the port of Motupalli served as a great emporium (*Desyuyukkondapattana*) as mentioned in the epigraphic records and literary accounts of the period (Hultzs, 1913; Devi, 1958; Naidu, 1991).

Port Centres

Krishnapatnam located in the present-day Nellore district was the southernmost port town of early Andhra region. The inscriptions mention it as Gandagopalapattinam (*Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy*: 1963–64: p. 58) that had trade contacts with many countries. The epigraphic records further show that the port was also under the control of the Cholas and then was known as Kollitturai (Kollatturai), a name which reflects influence of the Cholas in Andhra region. An inscription dated 1257 CE, belonging to the later Chola ruler Rajendra III, mentions gifts to the deity Munamasiddhesvara made by the natives of the town and the foreign merchants (Rangacharya, 1985; Balasubrahmanyam et al., 1979; Butterworth and Chetty, 1905). Another Telugu Chola inscription in Tamil dated 1280 CE in the same temple mentions about the export and import activities at this port city (Rangacharya:1985:1073). Thus, the port city of Krishnapatnam served as a trade emporium for traders from within the subcontinent and from other countries to the Andhra region during the Chola period.

The remains of an ancient port were discovered at Kottapatanam by K. P. Rao in 1994. The potteries found here suggest that the site was an important trading station for commercial activities with the countries across the Bay of Bengal in the east and the Mediterranean region in the west. Different types of ceramics from the place include plain ware, glazed ware, Kaolin ware, stamped ware, rouletted ware, etc. The

examination of rouletted ware indicates that this coastal town was very much part of the Indo-Roman trade network extending between the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean and as far as South China Sea from *circa* 100 BCE onwards (Rao:1994:829–31; Rao:2004:11–15). Furthermore, the analysis of the profusely occurring stamped potteries datable to the first century BCE, which constitute nearly thirty percent of the total collection, suggests that these were not produced locally but reached Kottapatanam through maritime exchange (Rao: 2004:11–15). In this context, it is worth noting that the contacts between south India and the countries to the east, especially Southeast Asia, can be traced to the Megalithic period (*circa* 1000–200 BCE) on the basis of the similarities observed in the sepulchral structures and the grave goods in both the regions (Ramana, 1983). Trade with Southeast Asia and China lasted till the medieval period (thirteenth–fourteenth centuries CE) as revealed by the discovery of a large number of Chinese celadon ware and other potteries such as glazed ware from Thailand and Myanmar (Burma) (Sasaki:2002:134–38). The antiquity of Chinese stamped pottery from the site indicates the contact between south India and China in the pre-Common era even prior to the Roman contact.

Motupalli was a famous costal centre during the rule of the Cholas and the Kakatiyas. Although the site served as a port before the establishment of the Kakatiya power, only thereafter it acquired prominence for maritime trade with other countries. The Venetian traveller Marco Polo visited this port towards the end of the thirteenth century CE and called it Mutfili (Sastri: 1939:174–75). I.K. Sarma identifies this port with Dabadan mentioned in *Daoyi Zhilue*, an important Chinese work of fourteenth century CE (Sarma:1991:41). The seaport was also called by the name *Desuyakkondapattana* during the Kakatiya rule as reflected in the inscriptions of the period (Hultzs:1913:189,197). This

name for the coastal mercantile town reflects Tamil influence in the region. The epigraphic records contain information attesting this as a celebrated port during the rule of the Kakatiyas and Reddy Kingdoms during the twelfth–fifteenth centuries CE. The Motupalli pillar inscription of Ganapatideva (1244 CE) sheds important light on the safety provided to traders from other regions including foreign lands (*swadesi* and *paradesi*) who often faced hazardous conditions such as storms and shipwrecks during their sea travels. This also documents the levies on goods of import and export in great detail as well as the flourishing international trade from this seaport that had warehousing facilities. In addition to the mention of several towns, islands and foreign countries, the reference to ‘Chini’ (China) is noticeable as it suggests the expansion of trade networks through Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia (Hultzs:191:197). Although functioning of the port was affected for a brief period due to Muslim conquest, it was later renovated during the rule of Reddy Kings (fourteenth–fifteenth centuries CE) as recorded in the charter issued in 1358 CE by king Anavota of the Reddy dynasty. This inscription mentions about the merchants of Motupalli trading with distant lands (*paradesi vyavaharulu*) and custom duties called the *aputrikam* and *kaddayamu* levied on various commodities (*South Indian Inscriptions*, X:1948, no. 556:304). The Anavota charter of rights issued to the traders from Motupalli is a confirmation and continuation of a previous charter issued by Ganapatideva of Kakatiya dynasty further indicating the significant position of this port on Andhra Coast even during the medieval period.

Ghantasala was a famous seaport and important Buddhist centre of ancient Andhra. The richness of Buddhist antiquities discovered at the site suggests the popularity of Buddhism in the region during early times (Srinivasan, 1979; Mitra, 1971; Rea, 1894). The place is identified with Kontakossyala located at the mouth of the river

Maisolos as mentioned by Ptolemy (Stevenson, 1991; McCrindle, 1885; Vogel, 1929–30; Vogel, 1931–32). The inscriptions refer to the place as Kantakasola and the scholars equate Maisolos with the river Krishna (Gopalachari:1941: 8). Besides literary records, the discovery of numismatic evidence in south India and other remains datable to later periods show that it was a famous port town from the time of the Satavahanas up to thirteenth century CE. A number of Roman gold coins and hundreds of copper and lead coins of the Satavahanas with ship motifs found here indicate trade contacts with distant lands extending to as far as the Mediterranean region (Sewell, 1904, pp. 591–637; Gupta, 1972, p. 57; Mirashi, 1941, pp. 43–44, Gupta, 1965). An inscription datable to the second century CE from Ghantasala mentions about a *mahanavikal* (the great mariner/sailor or the head of the mariners) which reflects the seafaring skills of the early Andhras. The word ‘*mahanavika*’ in the inscriptions refers to a master mariner who was also the commander of a large vessel (*mahanava*) and perhaps participated in long-distance maritime trade. Numismatic discoveries such as the Satavahana coins with ship motifs also indicate trading activities on the Andhra Coast during the second century CE. (Vogel, 1947; Ghosh, 2006). Another inscription dated to the ninth century CE from Jaladhisvara Temple refers to the place as Ghantasala, and from then onward, this name gained popularity (*South Indian Inscriptions*, X nos. 114–15: 1948: 52–53). Other epigraphs datable to the *circa* eleventh–twelfth centuries CE at Ghantasala record the gifts to the Jaladhisvara Temple made by Marisetti and Kota Komisetti of the *vaisyas* community (*South Indian Inscriptions*, X, no. 115:1948: pp. 52–53; no. 264: 137). The gift from an inhabitant of Katakasola also finds its mention in the Amaravati stone inscription (Luders, 1912). The references to this centre as Gajarajapatana and Ghantasalapuram further indicate the large size of this urban settlement. The Kantakasala of the

early period, thus, rose to fame as Ghantasala in later periods and functioned as an important port town from the Satavahana period up to twelfth–thirteenth centuries CE.

Masulipatnam, located on the mouth of river Krishna, is identified with the Masalia of the *Periplus* (Casson, 1989; Majumdar, 1960). Tavernier, who visited India in the seventeenth century CE, mentioned this coastal town as the only port on the Bay of Bengal Coast and the ships from here sailed towards the east for Bengal, Arakan, Pegu, Siam, Sumatra, Cochin-China (southern Vietnam) and Manilla (Philippines), and in the west to Hormuz, Makha and Madagascar (Mookerji, 1912; Pattanayak and Patra, 1996). This place, therefore, served as a significant seaport and trade centre on the Coromandel Coast from ancient to the modern period (Mookerji, 1912). In this context, our information is primarily based on the literary sources as the site awaits adequate archaeological investigation.

Visakhapatnam (Vizagapatam/Vizag) was an ancient port town on the Coromandel Coast that existed within the Kalinga kingdom during early times and later became a part of the territory under the control of the Pallavas, Eastern Gangas and Cholas respectively during different phases of the past. Inscriptions of the medieval period refer to the place as Vizadurg or Vijayanti which functioned as the best harbour on the east coast (Kupparam and Kumudamani:1996: 243). The epigraphic records of eleventh–twelfth centuries CE mention the port as Kulottungacholapatana after the name of the Chalukya Chola king Kulottunga I (*South Indian Inscriptions*, X, 1948, nos. 211, 651, pp. 110, 351). The name shows the Tamil influence in Andhra region and the commercial interaction between the two. The inscriptions at Visakhapatnam have also brought to light the facts regarding the settlement of Tamil merchants at the site and the gifts made by the merchant guilds belonging to different regions. For instance, an inscription datable to 1090 CE

records the gifts to *Perumbali* (a shrine) by five hundred (*Ainnuttuva perumbali*) merchants of the *Anjuvannam* community (*Anjuvannattu vyapari*) hailing from Malabar. The description leads us to infer that the *Perumbali* was built by the merchant from a trading community called *Ainnurruvar* (*South Indian Inscriptions*, X, no. 651: 1948: 351; Sastri:1955:595; Sundram:1968:95). In the same context, we find a stone inscription in Tamil dated 1250 CE which mentions the reign of Eastern Ganga ruler Narasimhadeva I and gift of a *mandapa* by a merchant to the temple of Karumanika Alvar at Visakhapatnam (*Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy*, 1910, 98 of 1909). These evidence, therefore, suggest that Visakhapatnam, which developed as a trading centre during the early period, also acquired religious character by eleventh–twelfth centuries CE.

Ancient city of Vengipura is identified with the modern village of Peddavegi in the West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. This port town served as the capital city of the Shalankayana dynasty which ruled the Andhra region during *circa* fourth–fifth centuries CE. The evidences reveal that the Shalankayanas of Vengipura played a great role in the spread of Buddhism to Kanchipuram in Tamil region and also to Southeast Asia. Recent excavations at the village (Peddavegi) have yielded the structural remains of *viharas*, *stupas*, stone pillared *mandapas* and other antiquities which suggest maritime trade through this site in early times. The discovery of a carnelian intaglio from Peddavegi and a similar variety of carnelian found from the excavation at Jetavana monastery (third century CE) at Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka establish the overseas contacts of this port city in ancient period (Sarma, 2002). No significant information, however, is available about the functioning of this coastal centre in subsequent times.

Koringa (Koddura) is identified with modern Gudur or Peddagudur village about seven

kilometres north of Masulipatnam. The site, which was originally located on the mouth of the river Godavari, today is a small village known as old Koringa situated miles away from sea as a result of the siltation in the channel. Pliny describes it as a cape and Ptolemy has referred to it as *Allosygni emporium* (McCrindle, 1885; Stevenson, 1991; Tyagaraju, 1931). The literary sources suggest that Koringa was an important port since the early centuries and made outstanding contribution to the trade with Southeast Asia (Kupparam and Kumudamani: 1996: 245; Sree Padma: 1996: 6). The site still awaits a systematic archaeological investigation.

Ramatirtham is located in the district town of Vizianagaram in north coastal Andhra Pradesh. A chain of high hills can be observed to the north of the village. Of these, two hills connected with each other and locally known as Gurubhaktakonda and Durgakonda respectively have yielded significant archaeological antiquities. Buddhist edifices at this site were discovered by Alexander Rea in the first decade of the twentieth century (Rea, 1914, Ramachandran, 1952–54). Besides the ruins of structural forms such as monastery, *chaityas*, *stupas* etc., and sculptural remains in the form of Buddha images, the site also yielded a Satavahana lead coin and six clay seals. One of the seals bear the legend '*siris(i) vama(ka?)-Vijaya Raja-S(e)lasaghasa*' in Brahmi characters, datable to the second century CE, which refer to a *sangha* and the king Sri Sivamaka Vijaya. Although some scholars have identified the king with a Satavahana ruler, in the light of recent researches it seems that he was a local chieftain who probably ruled over this area for a brief span of time after the decline of the Satavahanas (Hettiarachchy, 1973; Srinivasan, 1978; Deshpande, 2013). These sources, nevertheless, suggest that Ramatirtham was an important Buddhist centre during the Satavahana rule. Some images of Jain *tirthankaras* have also been discovered on these hills, which are datable to about eighth–ninth centuries CE

when there was probably the discontinuation of Buddhist occupation at the site (Hettiarachchy, 1973; Srinivasan, 1978). The archaeological remains discovered at this port town indicate the significant role of this site in the spread of Buddhism and interregional contacts.

Salihundam is on the bank of river Vamsadhara which joins the sea near Kalingapatnam in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. This site with significant Buddhist antiquities and rich archaeological potential was discovered in 1919. The excavation at the site was conducted by south-eastern circle of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1954 under the supervision of R. Subrahmanyam (1964). Two inscribed conches discovered in the excavation of the monastic area carry the name 'Salipedaka' or 'Salipataka' which is believed to be the old name of the locality. The words '*Sali*' meaning rice and '*pataka*' or '*vataka*' used for a town suggest that it was a place where rice was stored and marketed in ancient period. Its proximity to the port of Kalingapatnam further strengthens this belief. The place is also associated with the Satavahana rule during early centuries of the Common Era as evident in the names of the Satavahana towns similar to 'Salipataka' such as their capital Dhanyakataka or Dhanakada (modern Amaravati) communicating a similar meaning, that is, 'a granary'. The present name Salihundam, however, is believed to have been derived from the mention of the place as Salivendam in an inscription datable to 1260 CE engraved on the walls of the Srikakulam Temple (Subrahmanyam, 1964).

The site is characterized by three cultural phases — the Early Phase datable between third–second centuries BCE and the first century CE, the Middle Phase datable from the first century CE to third–fourth centuries CE and Late Phase from fourth–fifth centuries CE to seventh–eighth centuries CE. The resemblance of the black-and-red pottery in association with other antiquities found at Salihundam with megalithic black-

and-red ware discovered at Brahmagiri help in the fixation of the date for the early phase (Subrahmanyam, 1964). Other pottery types from this phase include black ware, grey ware and red ware. Besides several Buddhist structural remains, a solitary silver punch-marked coin from the same cultural level bears a solar symbol, and some other marks on the obverse and two marks on the reverse. The megalithic black-and-red ware in association with the silver punch-marked coins noticed at the site suggest third–second centuries BCE as an initial date for the Early Phase (Subrahmanyam, 1964).

The Middle Phase of Salihundam culture revealed well-planned structures. It yielded a considerable number of rouletted ware sherds which resemble those found at Sangam age port of Arikamedu (Puducherry) (Subrahmanyam, 1964; Wheeler, et al., 1946). The rouletted ware discovered at the site is datable to the period between the second century BCE and third–fourth centuries CE on the basis of an epigraphical analysis of the inscribed potsherds (Subrahmanyam, 1964; Ramachandran, 1958; Ramachandran, 1952–54; Ray, 1993). Majority of these sherds are inscribed in Brahmi characters datable from early second–first centuries BCE to second–third centuries CE. Besides the frequent occurring rouletted ware, a large number of decorated sherds, black-slipped ware and grey ware sherds with inscription, lids, sprinklers, etc. too were found at Salihundam. The site also yielded terracotta figures of mother goddess, seated Buddha and animal figures including those of the horses. Other significant findings in this cultural phase are a circular terracotta seal with inscription in Brahmi characters datable to the fourth century CE and a single oval steatite seal inscribed with Brahmi characters of the fifth century CE. The contents of the two inscribed conches discovered from the site were of immense help in dating the structures of this phase. The first inscription refers to a gift to the Buddhist *chaitya* at Salipetaka (later

Salihundam) and the other mentions about a gift by the wife of a householder from the same place (Subrahmanyam, 1964; Srinivasan, 1978). Two coins of copper and lead obtained from this phase have been identified as the Puri-Kushana coins by R.D. Banerjee. He has assigned such coins to the middle of the fourth century CE at Sisupalgarh in Odisha. The Puri-Kushana coins from this cultural level indicate the early date of this phase to be *circa* third–fourth centuries CE. The main pottery types of the Late Phase include black-and-red ware, black-slipped ware, grey ware, brown ware and red ware. The datable ceramics from this phase such as the two inscribed sherds of red ware, one of grey ware and a few other potteries range in date from the third–fourth centuries CE to eighth–ninth centuries CE (Subrahmanyam, 1964; Srinivasan, 1978).

The remains of Buddhist structures including that of *stupas*, *viharas*, chambers, votive platforms, etc., datable between the second century BCE and eighth century CE, suggest the popularity of Buddhism in the region during the contemporary period (Subrahmanyam:1964:23–24). The above-mentioned evidence further highlights the commercial prosperity of this centre and the significant role it played in the internal trade within the subcontinent as well as in the foreign trade with the Roman Empire.

Kalingapatnam is located on the mouth of river Vamsadhara in the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. As the name suggests, it was the city of ancient Kalingans who were known for their active participation in maritime trade on the east coast. Ancient Odisha (Orissa), referred to as Kalinga in literary works, had its territory extending from the Ganga to the Godavari during different stages of historical past. The region in ancient times comprised most of the modern state of Odisha as well as the bordering areas of the present-day Andhra Pradesh. The early kings of the Eastern Ganga dynasty established their capital at Kalinganagara. The modern

Dantavaktrunikonda in Srikakulam area was probably the site where the capital of ancient Kalinga was situated (Chakrabarti, 2011). With the passage of time, the territorial extent of the Kalinga Empire was confined only to the southern parts of Odisha. The geographical location of ancient Kalinganagara and its identification with Kalingapatnam has been an important subject of scholarly investigations leading to divergent views. The examination of evidence, however, suggests that the ancient port site of Kalingapatnam was located in the Kalinga territory extending from the river Ganga to Godavari during different phases of history (Ramamurti, 1896–97 ; Patra, 1998 ; Subrahmanyam, 1964).

A small-scale excavation of an ancient mound near the seashore at Kalingapatnam in 1977–78 revealed the remains of a *stupa* datable to the second–first centuries BCE. The site yielded

ceramics in the form of black-and-red ware, brown or chocolate slipped ware and rouletted ware (*Indian Archaeology — A Review:1977–78:14*). Subsequently, the excavation of the Buddhist *stupa*-mound was resumed by the south-eastern circle of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1978–79. Besides the ruins of a large brick-built *stupa* similar to that found at Nagarjunakonda, the remains of a massive brick-wall were also noticed at the site (*Indian Archaeology — A Review:1978–79: 66*). Later investigations brought to light the evidence of a fortified city at the place in the third century BCE. The location of a brick wharf discovered here indicates that the *stupa* must have been erected exactly opposite to the then port. It is, however, difficult to find out the accurate location of the earliest port due to the frequent change in the course of the river in every fifteen to twenty years. The large size of the

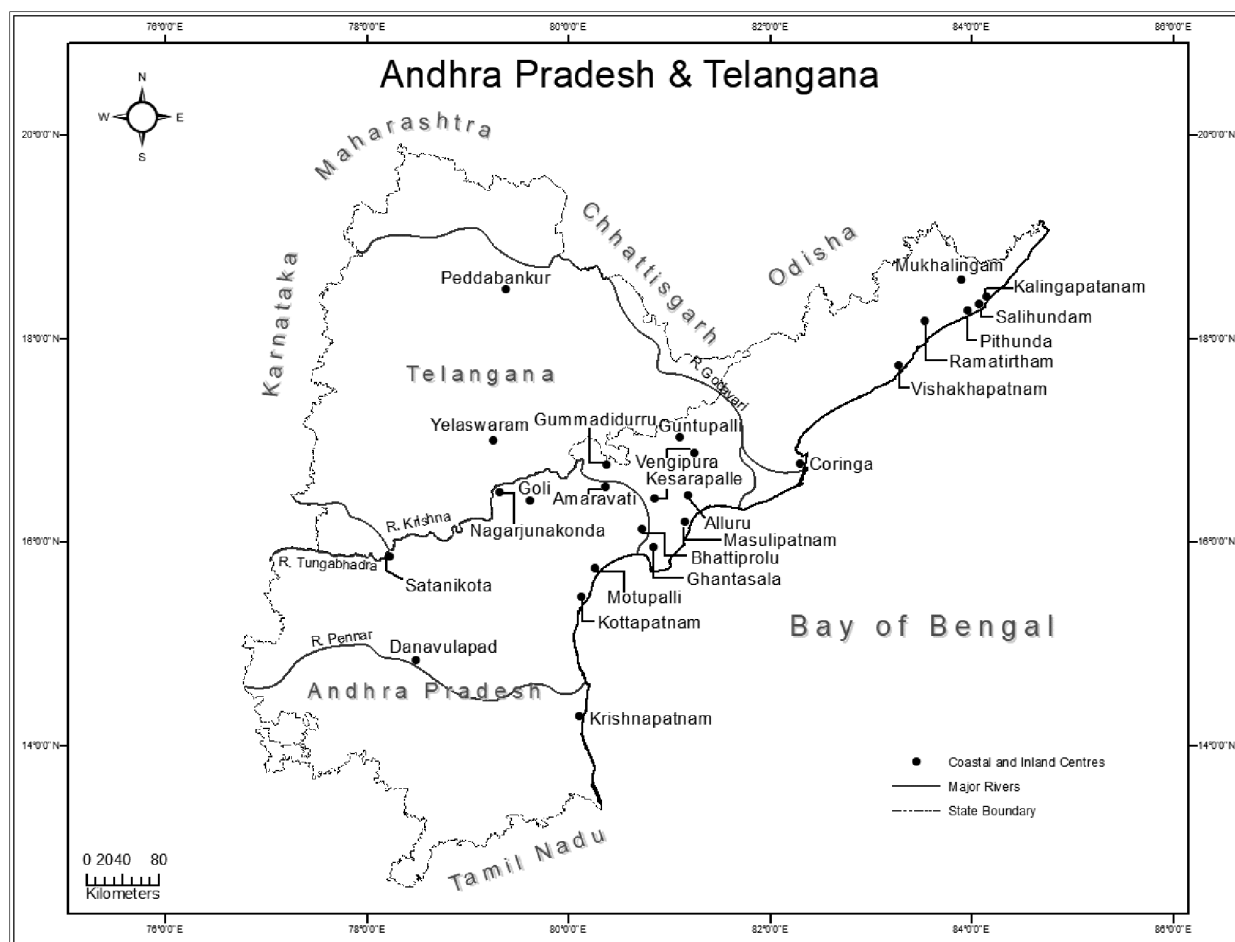


Fig. 1: A map showing the important coastal and inland centres of early Andhra region

stupa and the gold grains which were offered to the shrine suggest that it attracted large number of wealthy devotees especially the merchants from different regions (Sree Padma: 1996: 5). Thus, Kalingapatnam served as a major commercial centre in ancient period from *circa* third century BCE onwards. In later periods, the port witnessed decline in the maritime activities due to several factors such as the political instability, withdrawal of patronage to overseas trade and frequent change in the course of the river.

Pithunda (Pithumdam/Pithundra) is recorded in the inscriptions and literary works as another significant coastal centre in ancient period. The Hathigumpha inscription (*circa* first century BCE–first century CE) of the Kalinga king Kharavela mentions this place as a metropolis which was conquered by the king in his eleventh regnal year (Jayaswal and Banerji: 1929–30: 78, 82–83: 88). Ptolemy also has referred to Pityndra (Pithundra/Pithunda) as a metropolis located between the mouth of Maisolin (Godavari) and Mandas (Mahanadi) equidistantly from each (Stevenson, 1991; McCrindle, 1885). The Jain text *Uttaradhyayana Sutra* mentions Pithunda as a port city (Jacobi, 1895; Sahu, 1964; Jain, 1947). Sylvain Levi has identified Pithumdam/Pithunda of Hathigumpha inscription, Pityndra of Ptolemy and Pithunda of the *Uttaradhyayana Sutra* to be one and the same (Levi:1926:145–47). Considering this deduction with regard to its location, the port of Pithunda could be traced somewhere near the Chicacole (Srikakulam) region of Andhra Pradesh. Although this area was under the rule of the Kalinga kings during the early times, recent studies suggest strong possibilities for the site to be located in the present-day Andhra Pradesh (Pattanayak and Patra:1996:19). Our assumptions for the reconstruction of this port centre are primarily based on the information gathered from literary references until archaeological investigations ascertain its identification.

Conclusion

The study leads us to the inferences that reflect substantial contribution of the port centres in early Andhra region towards the growth of maritime activities leading to the developments in different spheres. First, the discovery of monsoon in the first century CE facilitated well-planned and smooth sailing conditions around the Cape further effecting the shift in the focus of trade from the west coast of India to the east coast. These developments encouraged the rise of several coastal towns on the Coromandel Coast. The port centres in ancient Andhra region served as the exchange centres for commodities transferred through the overland and sea routes. Besides their contribution to the Mediterranean trade, different maritime routes emerging from these ports also helped in strengthening the trade contacts with Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka and China. Second, the influence of Tamil region is very evident in the port names such as Kollitturai and Kulottungacholapatana and the religious gifts made by the Chola king in Andhra region. Furthermore, some of the ports were within the territory of the Kalinga kingdom in the north which also promoted interaction between Odisha and Andhra. Third, the existence of Buddhist centres such as Ghantasala, Ramatirtham and Salihundam indicates the popularity of the religion in the region and its significant role in trade and commerce. In this context, the gifts made to the Hindu as well as Buddhist religious institutions by merchants and their guilds reflect the vibrant relationship between religion and economic activities. Fourth, the evidence belonging to different periods also attest the dynamic nature of trade practices that originated in the ancient past and continued through different phases of history in Andhra region. The rise and fall or the continuation of a port needs to be viewed in the light of weakening Mediterranean contact and intensification of maritime links with the countries across the Bay of Bengal. The emergence of new

coastal cities on the east coast, nevertheless, indicate the continuity of the maritime trade in the Indian Ocean even after the decline of the Indo-Roman trade. The ports centres of ancient Andhra region, thus, were essential to the development of commercial, ideological and political relationship with diverse regions of the subcontinent and also that with distant lands across the seas.

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