

Research Article

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22192/ijamr.2021.08.06.009>

Colonization of Waterways in South Asia: A Study of Ports in Colonial Orissa.(1803-1936).

Dr. Ganeswar Nayak

Asst Professor of History,

F.M Autonomous College, Balasore, Orissa.

Keywords

The Balasore Port,
Pipli Port,
Chandballi Port,
Sartha,
Churamani, False
Point Port,
Superintend of
Marine Survey,

Abstract

Before the coming of railway to Orissa, rivers, canals and ports were principal mode of water transport. In the Orissa Cost, there were several ports which were used by the colonizers. These were, Balasore Port, Pipii Port, Subarnarekha Port, Dhamra Port, Chandballi Port, and False Point Port. These ports were used by the British Government for commercial exploitation of the area. These were situated in the eastern coast of Orissa and connected to Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean. But, these ports were never developed. But with the coming of the Railway, the commercial importance of the ports came to an end.

Introduction

Before the coming of railway, rivers, canals and ports were the dominant mode of transport in South Asia. The river Ganga, the Sindhu, the Brahmaputra, The Krishna, and the Kaveri were important channels of communication. Similarly the Ports like Calcutta, Bombay, Rangoon, Madras, Karachi, Moulmein, Rangoon, Bassein, Akyab and Chitagong were important mode of water transport in the 19th century. Similarly in the first half of the 19th century Godavari and Krishna Canal in the Madras Presidency. The Kurnool – Kuddapah was also an important navigation Canal in South India. In north India, Lower Ganga Canal, the Agra Canal, the

western Jamuna Canal, and Shirhind Canal were important mode of water transport in colonial India.

In colonial Orissa before the coming of railway, the Mahanadi was important channel of water transport with western India. The river Subarnarekha, the River Burabalanga, the river Rushikulya, the river Baitarani, and Brahmani were important channels of Communication before the coming of railway. The colonial government in Orissa had developed several canals for promoting communications. These were, the coast canal, The Kendrapara Canal, the High Level Canal and the Gobri canal were important.

J Hornell (1946) in his original work on Primitive type of Water Transport in Asia has analyzed different types water Transport in Asia. His another work was Water Transport Origin and evolution (1946). Here he has described growth and development of water transport in different parts of Asia. The third monumental work was by Jean Deloche . In his book Water Transport, Vol II, has described different dimension of water Transport in Medieval Orissa.

In the present work I have discussed different ports and their commercial importance before the coming of railways. Secondly, the British Government effort to develop ports was also discussed. Finally, the economic implication of ports on the colonial economy of Orissa was also discussed.

Geographical Location and Commercial Importance of the Ports.

The Balasore Port.-

The Chief historical importance of Balasore is that the first English factory was established here by Ralph Cartwright in the year 1633. ¹ It is described as "a town called Bollasorye, a sea-town where shipping was built." ² It has been mentioned in Bruton's Account thus, where to much shipping belonged and many ships and other vessels built". ³ The English made their settlement immediately near the river Burabalong and a village named as Barabati was established, a mile below the site of the modern town Balasore, when the British factory was established by the 1642, ⁴ Balasore remained as an insignificant village inhabited by fishermen and milk men. ⁵ This factory itself was protected on one side by the river (Burabalong) and the other three by a deep moat and a native village, sprang up. Inhabited by the artisans and weavers who worked for the company. ⁶ In those days Satran a type of coarse long cloth, and muslin were the articles of trade. The muslin cloth manufactured at Balasore was very famous in Orissa. The condition of the factory at Balasore port was unsatisfactory and it was abolished in the year 1641. ⁷ In the year 1642 Francies Day visited the

ports of Balasore and Hariharpur and recommended for the improvement of the above factories. Under this situation Balasore port was retained. (flourished) till 1651. Hopkins was appointed as the British agent at Balasore. Trade in clicos, silk and saltpetre gradually increased. The situation changed when Aurangzeb ascended the throne in 1658. He demanded year. an annual customs duty to the extent of Rs 3,000 and also cancelled the trade permission granted by Sahajahan. The Mughal Governor also demanded the anchorage charges on the English and Balasore remained as a mere port upto 1663. ¹⁰ In the year 1688, the hostilities between the Mughal Emperor and the British became more when the Company's servants came in a body from the Hooghly to Balasore. Two English factories were seized by the Governor of the town, where upon Captain Heath burned and plundered the Balasore town. Nature was also responsible for the close of the port, because river Burabalong, was getting up at Its mouth. It created difficulties for the trade transaction through the port towards 1700. From 1751 the ruin of the port became inevitable, and ultimately is the port was abandoned before 1786. It was found in ruins when the British conquered the city in 1803. A large sum was required to revitalize the Balasore port. Soto avoid the expenses, the government declared the Dhamra and False point as ports for better convenience. The development by False point and Chandbali and the advent of railways were further responsible for the decline of Balasore port. All these factors were by and large responsible for the ruin of Balasore port.

Pipili Port –

The ancient port of Pipili was situated at a distance of 30 miles north of Balasore on Subarnarekha river in latitude 21 42' N and 'longitude 87 25' E." ¹³ It was once considered most important port on the Orissa coast or this it also attracted both the Portuguese Dutch settlements. Bruton described it in 683 as "a port-town of the portugals where he portugals are resident". It was also a great slave market where the Arakanese pirates brought their prisoners. ¹⁴

In the beginning of 17th Century, the Portuguese settlement was deserted. In 1635 the first British factory was established here by getting firman from the Mughal Emperor Shahajan.¹⁵

In Hamilton's description on Hindustan, it is mentioned that in the middle of the 17th century this was a great centre of European trade. Here the Dutch shipped 2,000 tons of slat annually from this port.¹⁶ Due to the silting of Balasore rivers at their mouths, Pipili around 1670.¹⁷ and many other ports later were abandoned and so there was a great loss to the Balasore district during the 17th century.¹⁸ It is also mentioned in Hamilton's Hindustan that the floods of the Subamarekha having washed away a great part of the town and formed a dangerous bar in the river and then the English merchants were removed to Balasore.¹⁹

Dhamra Port-

Dhamara, which forms a part of the boundary line between Balasore and Cuttack, is a fine estuary formed by the junction of the rivers Brahmani and Baitarani.²⁰ The English settlers were attracted to this place to use it as a port of greater facilities, During the British conquest of Orissa in 1803, Dhamara was a useful port from which rice and salt were exported to Bengal.²¹ The Dhamara port was declared to be an important port of Orissa by Government notification No.877, dated the 8th May 1858.²² It is the oldest of all the ports in Orissa which are fit to be worked out. W.W.Hunter also describes Dhamara thus "as a port for native shippers it ranks next to Balasore in importance."

The river Dhamara was wide and deep estuary forming the South boundary of Balasore District. It discharged the waters of the rivers like Matai, Baitarani, Brahmani and Kharsua. In the eastern boundary of the Dhamara port there was Dhamara custom station and the port included the navigable channels for all the above rivers, as far as they were affected by tidal waters.²³

Hunter also gives information thus, the collector of Balasore estimates that during the famine of 1866-67 out of a total of 3505 tons of rice imported into the district for relief operations probably four-fifths were landed at Dhamara."

The activities of the port of Dhamara were subsequently shifted to Chandbali for the convenience of the passengers. Hunter describes it as follows "This place, Chandbali has risen to importance within the last three or four years and is now the centre of a rapidly growing trade. The channel of the Dhamara and Baitarani has been completely marked out with buoys and beacons as far as Chandbali and with mooring buoys in mid-channel at Chandbali."²⁴

In connection with Dhamara port Hunter writes thus:

"Chandbali on the Baitarani has during the past three years assumed a prominent position as a station for coasting steamer traffic and is rapidly rising in importance. It is however, little frequented by the native sloops, which wander about the navigable channels trading to the great Dhamara estuary, taking in cargoes of rice wherever they find it most convenient. The Matai river is more particularly affected by the native craft, as affording unrivalled advantages in its long course through a rice producing tract."

The Survey Report of May 1870, places Dhamara first among the navigable rivers of Orissa. The entrance to the port is marked by the Kanika buoy in twenty one feet reduced, and by short's Tripod beacon on the extreme north-east dry portion of point Palmyras Reef. The entrance has greatly improved since 1866.²⁵ Till 1903 cargo was being loaded and unloaded and passengers were being made to board the vessels both at Dhamara and Chandbali.²⁶ So Dhamara continued as an important port of Orissa upto 1903.

Chandballi Port-

Chandballi, 20 miles from the mouth was declared as a port on 28th March 1881²⁷ and soon became one of the major ports of Orissa.²⁸ It was connected with the interior by the Matai. the Bhadrakh road and various tidal creeks and with the sea by the Dhamara and Baitarani, the channel of which was marked out with buoys and beacons. The station was situated on a high but narrow sandridge stretching from east to west for about a mile and a half, it contained a customs house, telegraph and post office, police station; staging bungalow and dispensary.²⁹

Chandball also become a trading centre of coastal Orissa. Not only paddy was being imported to Chandballi from this area but also clothes, salt, Kerosene, spices and cotton goods were exported to these areas from Chandballi. Paddy was the main agricultural product of this area. So rice; paddy, and Chura (flattened rice) were exported from Chandballi port to Bombay, catch and calicut in India, Galle and Colombo in Ceylon and distant islands such as Mauritius and Zanjibar on the eastern coast of Africa in the Indian ocean.³⁰

The sea-borne trade was in a dilapidated condition before the opening of the port Chandballi. John Beams, the then collector of Balasore observed thus, "A stranger coming by sea to Balasore on seeing our harbours would think he had arrived at the dominions of some independent native chiefs who did not know what were the requirements of the civilised countries in respect of port accommodation. He would be extremely surprised to find himself in the territories subject to the greatest maritime power, the world has ever seen."³¹

One merchant of that time has also depicted Chandballi as a natural port of Cuttack and Balasore of northern Orissa.³² Light steamers ran through Chandballi port almost daily to and from Calcutta. And the then commissioner of Orissa Division has observed thus, "the place was likely to become of vital importance to the province as a centre of coasting trade and activity." It was continued to be the chief port of call for larger steamers and sea-going vessels.³³ Chandball port

gradually declined with the emergence of railways in Orissa. However it served as a port upto the early part of the 20th century.

Subarnarekha Port.

The Subarnarekha was a noble estuary which was admirably suited for a harbour. It was one of the first places which attracted European merchantile enterprise.³⁴ It was not far from port of Pipili. With the decline of Pipili Port, the Europeans shifted their centre of activities to the Subarnarekha Port. No permanent measures were undertaken due to the heavy expenses. It was declared as a port of Orissa in the year 1858 in accordance with the Act 11 of 1858. During the time of famine the Subarnarekha could not afford facility for food supply to the Orissa people. In 1882-83. a gross amount of Rs.20.00 was spent towards repairing of this port.³⁵ It is clearly known from this statement that Subarnarekha existed as a port of Orissa till 1882-83. The silting-up of the mouth of the Subarnarekha,³⁶ the construction of coast canal and abandonment of salt manufacture in Orissa led to the decline of this port.³⁷

Sartha Por-.

Sartha was situated at the junction of two rivers, Pan-chapara and Sartha, which debouched into the Bay of Bengal, a few miles below the Subarnarekha. This port became unsuitable due to the silting of rivers. But unfortunately the British Government paid no attention to improve this port, panchapara took the place of Sartha port.³⁸

Churamani Port.

Churaman was an open roadstead in the mouth of river Gummere, a branch of Kansbas. This was once the Chief centre of salt and nice export.³⁹ In 1809, Balasore Collector of Customs wrote, "Churaman is considered the most safe and convenient port on the coast of Orissa and carried on a sea going trade exceeding that of Balasore."⁴⁰ If there was any possibility of a dangerous storm, the sailors ran the ship straight into the Bay

of Churaman, where the thick, half-liquid mass of mud in solution : counteracted the violence of the winds and the waves.⁴¹ A local merchant, Mathormohan Padhi by name, tried his best to improve the condition of the port by removing the silt before 1874.⁴² But later on the port became useless due the deposits of mud and silt. 42 However, the silting up of the mouths caused the decline of trade there. In the second half of 19th century they lost their prosperity.

Lychanpore Port

Lychanpore was situated on a small creek of the river Lychanpore. This port included in the Act II of 1858. Especially in Balasore district it played in important role in the development of sea and the port of Lychanpore was closed in 1888. It declined due to the non-availability of government aid.⁴³

Chhanao Port.

Chhanao was situated on the mouth of the Chhanao river. It occupied an important place among the ports of Orissa before the British conquest. This port was already abandoned by the time of the port Act II of 1858 which was introduced in Orissa for the better administration of port.⁴⁴

False Point Port.-

False point, another important port of Cuttack district, was situated at the mouth of river Mahanadi, nearly 70 miles from the town of Cuttack. The important port of Orissa declined in course of time. It was declared to be a port under the Act XXII of 1855 in the Calcutta Gazette of 23rd May 1860. The port was opened in the year 1860 for open seaborne trade not only with Orissa proper but also with the outside. According to the Famine Commission Report, it was by far the best harbour on the India coast between Hooghly and Bombay.⁴⁵ During the time of the horrible famine of 1866, it was not working properly and the Government did not pay attention to improve this port. There were no means of communication

except in the rainy season. The horrors of famine forced the Government to improve the port which was in a ruined condition.

The ports of Orissa were not given the attention which they deserved. Adequate attention was also not paid to the False point port. The Maharaja of Burdwan donated a vast area of land in the neighborhood of False point for the use of the port. In Eighteen hundred seventies great hopes were entertained that Fake point might be developed into an important harbour. In 1875 Walker the superintending engineer furnished the Commissioner with a scheme for the improvement of the port at an estimated cost of Rs.2,33,189.00. He also suggested for the appointment of a port commissioner and money required should be raised from the security of the port dues. The matter was preceded so far that the Government of Bengal addressed the Government of India, asking that the provisions of the Indian ports Act might be extended to False point.⁴⁶ In the year 1876, A.D.Taylor, the Superintendent of Marine surveys to the Government of India declined to grant any large expenditure on False point. It had also mentioned thus, "Chhandbali has become the port for the Calcutta trade and False point is merely a port of call for coasting vessels and serves Orissa for the trade in rice to the Mauritius, Colombo and the west coast ports."⁴⁷ It was alleged by the people of Balasore that the Government had neglected their ports and spent lakhs of rupees for the improvement of False point. The collector of Balasore who had never seen False point corroborated them in 1873 by saying, "All Orissa is being sacrificed for False point Chimera."⁴⁸ But nothing of the kind had really happened. The port was devastated by the storm wave of 22 September, 1885.⁴⁹ Still then False point became an important port of Orissa in the latter part of 19th century. The quantity off sea-borne trade increased year after year. However, there was a remarkable development in the sea borne trade the ports of Orissa,. The Lt Governenr of Bengal visite Orissa in 1874. He4 sanctioned following sum of money for the development of ports.

Ports:	Sums granted in rupees
False point	289,000
Balasore	30,000
Dharnara and Chandbali.	100,000
Puri	20,000

Puri Ports

The ports of Puri district, opened in 1860, drew the attention of the Government after the Famine of 1866. The port of Puri were Puri, Devee, Sahandu, Metta Cooah, Futtypore and Nundla”.⁵⁰ Puri district remained underdeveloped regarding ports in relation to Balasore and Cuttack districts. Puri port the only port of Puri was an open roadstead and owing to the shortage of labourers loading and unloading difficulties and lack of storage facilities it could not compete with other ports of Orissa. It was also not safe for vessels during the time of South-West monsoon .⁵¹ However, it functioned as a port till the end of 19th century. Ports of Puri were exporting rice to Mauritius Srilanka and Maldives.⁵²

Conclusion

The geographical location of the ports was very favorable for the economic development of the Province. But this was not done by the British Government. These ports were utilized for commercial benefit of the British East India Company. These ports were used as platform for commercial penetration of the country. It helped to drain raw materials to outside the province and gateway for import of finished product to the province of Orissa.

References

1. L.S.S.O' Malley, Bengal District Gazetteer (here after BDG) Balasore (Calcutta 1907) p. 144.
2. Ibid., p.8
3. Ibid., p.37
4. Ibid., p.188
5. S.L. Maddox, Final Report on the survey and settlement of the province of Orissa, 1890-1900, Vol.1 (Calcutta 1910). p.38

6. L.S.S.O'Malley, Op. cit. p. 188
7. C.R.Wilson, The EARly Annals of the English in Bengal, Vol.1 (London 1895), pp. 19-20.
8. Ibid., pp. 21-22
9. Ibid., p.32
10. Ibid, pp.47-49
11. S.L.Madox, Op. cit., p.38
12. Ibid.,
13. L.S.S.O'Malley, Op.cit p. 190 ?\$3
14. S.L.Madox, op. cit. p.38. Walter Hamilton, East India Gazetteer, London 1815, p.671
15. L.S.S.O'Malley Op.cit. p. 204.
16. S.L.Madox, Op.Cit. p.38 16A. Compiled by Brajasundar Das, Orissa in Hamilton's Hindustan (Published in 1820).p. 10
17. Om Prakash, The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, 1630-1720,(United Kingdom, 1985), p.26.
18. S.L.Madox, Op. Cit. P.43.
19. Complied by Brajasundar Das, Op.cit. p. 11
20. L.S.S.O'Malley, opt.cit. p. 10
21. G.Toynbee; A sketch of the History of Orissa; p.88
22. W.W.Hunter, A statistical Account of Bengal, District of Cuttack and Balasore, Vol.XVII (Trubner and Co.London 1877); p.35 their maritime activities due to the collousness of the Government and the abandonment of salt industry. The advent of the railways was another factor which diminished the importance of the ports. The silting up of the river mouths of Orissa was also one of the important factors responsible for the decline of Orissan ports.
23. Ibid, p.259
24. . Ibid, p.261
25. . Ibid, p.260
26. Complied by G.C. Roy; Facts About Dhamra (Chandbali) Port (Published by Reception Committed of Dhamra (Chandbali) port Development Conference), p.7
27. W.W.Hunter Op.Cit; P.35
28. L.S.S.O'Malley: Op.Cit; p. 10
29. Ibid, p. 197
30. Complied by G.C. Roy, Op.Cit;p.9

31. GAROD, 1872-73 T.E.Ravenshaw, Commissioner of the Orissa Division to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, General Department, No. 271, Dt.Cuttack 23 July 1873, pp. 13-14.
32. Ibid, p. 14
33. GAROD, 1873 -74, p. 10
34. L.s.s.O'Malley, Op.Cit; p.9
35. Proceeding of Board of Customs, Salt and Opium, March 1882, Customs Officer, Subarnarekha to Collector of Customs, Balasore No.131, March 7, 1882, Quoted in P.C.Das, The Economic History of Orissa in the 19th Century, p.252.
36. L.S.S.O'Malley, Op.Cit; p.4
37. - S.L. Madox, Op. Cit; p.43
38. Ibid
39. Ibid
40. W.W.Hunter, Orissa, Vo.II; p.259
41. L.S.S.O'Malley, Op.Cit; p. 8
42. Bengal Revenue Proceedings, November 1875.
43. L.S.S.O'Malley, Op.Cit; p.6; P.C.Das; op.cit; p.253
44. P.C.Das; Op.Cit; p.253
45. Report of the Orissa Famine Commission (1866) Vol.I, Part I, Para-30.
46. W.AEnglish The Canals and Flood Banks of Bengal, (Calcutta 1909), P.232.
47. Ibid.
48. K.Patra, The ports in Orissa Panchashila, Bhubaneswar 1988); p. 183.
49. C.E.Buckland. Bengal under the LT. Governor, Vol.II, p.322; W.AEnglish Op.Cit; p. 439.
50. Bengal Revenue proceedings, Nov. 1868, H.L.Dampier.. Secy. Govt of Bengal to Govt. of India, No. 3345, Oct.22. 1868.
51. General Administrative report of Orisan Division, 1876-77, p.12
52. W.W.Hunter, Astastical Account of Bengal, District Puri, Vol.XVIII, p. 39

Access this Article in Online	
	Website: www.ijarm.com
Quick Response Code	Subject: History
DOI: 10.22192/ijamr.2021.08.06.009	

How to cite this article:

Ganeswar Nayak. (2021). Colonization of Waterways in South Asia: A Study of Ports in Colonial Orissa.(1803-1936). Int. J. Adv. Multidiscip. Res. 8(6): 102-108.
 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22192/ijamr.2021.08.06.009>