

Excavation at an Ancient Port in Gopakapattana : Goa

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In ancient times, Goa was known by various names such as Gomanchala, Gomanta, Gopakapura and Gove. Ptolemy, the Greek Geographer of the Second century A. D. mentions 'Kouba' (McCrindle, J. W. 1885) which is identified with Goa. The ancient city of Chandrapur or Chandor on the bank of the river Paroda was Bhoja's early capital during the period of his expansion in Konkan. The excavation at Chandrapur confirmed that the town must have been in occupation from the Satavahana times (2nd - 3rd century B. C.) to 11th-12th century A. D. It seems that the capital was shifted to Gopaka (modern Vodlem Goem) on the bank of river Zuari by Viravarmadeva about 1049 A. D. (Gune V.T., 1977). According to Jayakeshi's Gopaka copperplate inscription (1053 A. D.) he organised a strong fleet at Velakula, the port of Gopaka on the bank of the river Zuari in A. D. 1052 (Dhume : 1986).

According to tradition the ancient port of Gopakapattana was on the river Zuari situated at Long. 73° 51' 36" E., and Lat. 15° 25' 40" N. in Tiswadi taluka of the Goa State. It was a flourishing port during Kadamba (1020-1247 A. D.) time and the commercial prosperity of the town is attested to by the fact that it had trade relations with at least fourteen countries such as Kadh, Srytem (Sumatra) Bomgalla, Pusta (Pulikat) Chanda (Chola) Pandya, Kerala, Lata, Gurjar and Lungavar etc. (Gune V. T. , 1969).

The Director of Goa State Archaeology requested NIO to collaborate in offshore exploration of the site. However Dr. S. R. Rao suggested that excavation on the shore and in the intertidal zone should be

undertaken first and if the results obtained suggest occupation of the site, offshore excavation could be undertaken. In November 1991 excavation of the intertidal zone was conducted for four days.

This paper presents the results of excavation conducted in November 1991 at Gopakapattana. A significant finding is the existence of the port in pre-Portuguese period.

Three trenches were laid in the intertidal zone to the south of village Donda (Fig. 1). Each trench was 5 square metre and was sub-divided into four quadrants. The results of the excavation are briefly discussed below.

Results

Trench 1 :

This trench laid at the junction of the ancient street known as Rajvidhi of Kadamba period with the sea was dug to a depth of 1.20 m from the surface. Layer 1 was a deposit of 90 cm thick sea sand. The next layer is reddish sandy deposit containing shingle of laterite. The thickness of this layer was about 15 cm and below it a layer of compact soil was noticed. No archaeological finds of importance were recovered.

Trench 2 :

At this site a wall exposed during low tide, measures about 150 m long and 1.35 m wide and one course is visible (Fig. 2). The trench laid to get a section across the wall was excavated to a depth of 1.15 m and 6 courses of laterite blocks were exposed. Each block measures .75m x .35m x .15m.

Trench 3 :

In this trench laid about 500 m southeast of Trench 2 the remains of a wall upto a height of 1.50 m (Fig. 3) were noticed. The excavation revealed seven more courses of laterite block. The total number of courses in situ are 14, out of which the top 4 courses were laid in lime mortar and the rest is dry masonry.

Discussion

1. Below the 90 cm thick deposit of sand in Trench 1 rammed laterite soling material was found. Similar material having been used in the area known as Rajvidhi, the soling found in the trench may indicate the continuation of the ancient Kadamba road. Shirodkar (1990) is of the view that the ancient royal road (Vidhi or Rajvidhi) of Gopakattana passed through this area. Presently it begins from the port and goes right up to the palace site and the ancient Siva temple of Goveshwar and then extends up to Old Goa near St. Cajetan's church via hillock known as Bonbo or Brahmmbhu. This layer of soling material traced in all the four sections of the trench. Suggests the road was at least 5 m. wide.

2. In Trench 2 the foundation of the wall in 7 courses was revealed. While the foundation itself is made up of laterite boulders the superstructure is of dressed lateritic blocks. The lime mortar was used as building material in the top two courses while the remaining courses below

constitute dry masonry. The construction of the wall must have been in two different periods as laying of headers and stretchers also differs. The upper part of the wall in which lime mortar was used, belongs to the Portuguese period and the lower part may be of the pre-Portuguese period. If literary and inscriptional evidences are taken into account then it can be said that the site under investigation was the harbour area and belongs to Shilahara-Kadamba period (9th cent. to 12th cent.).

Conclusion :

The significance of Gopakattana excavation is the existence of the port installation during the pre-Portuguese period, but it is difficult to determine the timeframe of pre-Portuguese period. Provisionally the pre-Portuguese protective wall may be said to be of the Kadamba-Silahara phase.

Acknowledgements

The author is thankful to Dr. B. N. Deasi, Director, National Institute of Oceanography, for permission to publish this paper. I am extremely grateful to Dr. S. R. Rao, Advisor, Marine Archaeology Centre for his valuable suggestions and encouragement given during the present study. Thanks are also due to Director of Archaeology of Goa State for providing financial assistance and to Sri K. H. Vora, Scientist-in-Charge, Marine Archaeology Centre for giving necessary help.

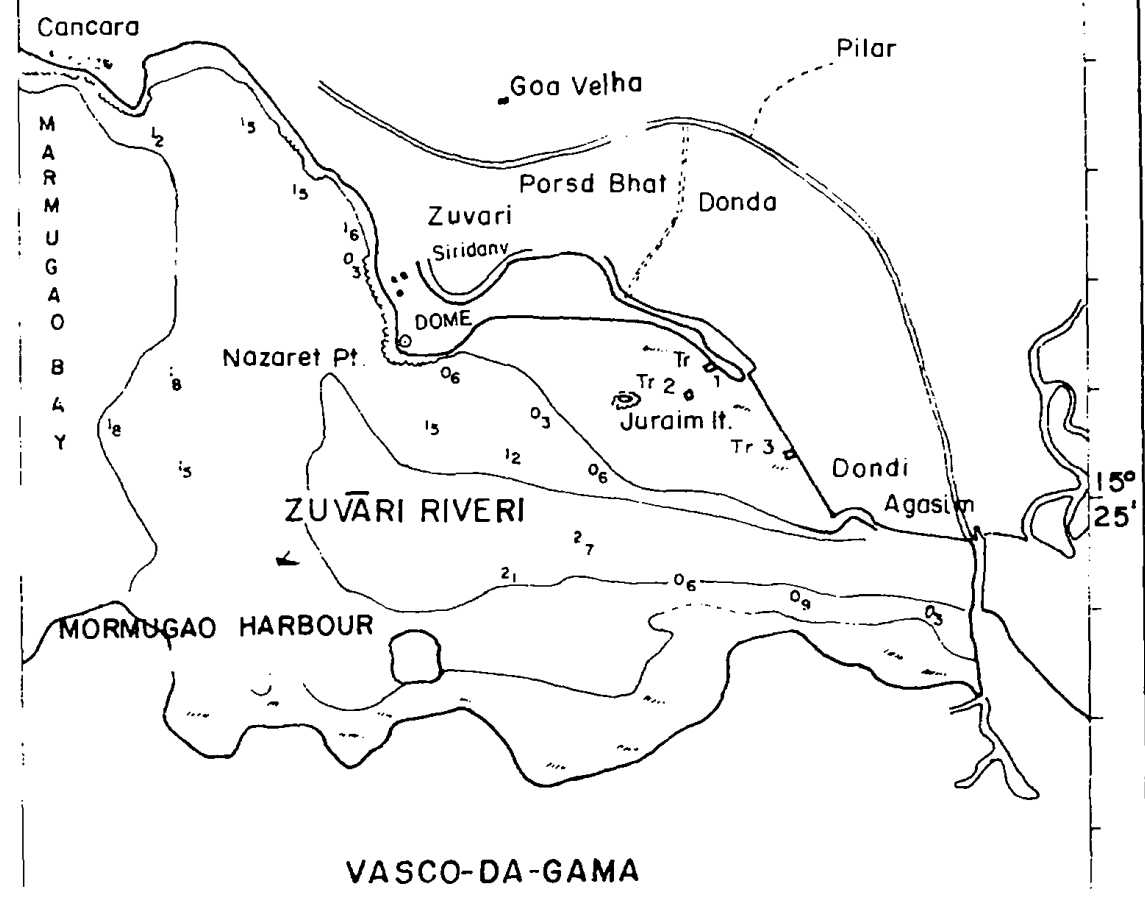
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EXCAVATION AT GOPAKAPATTANA



Scale: 1 : 60,000



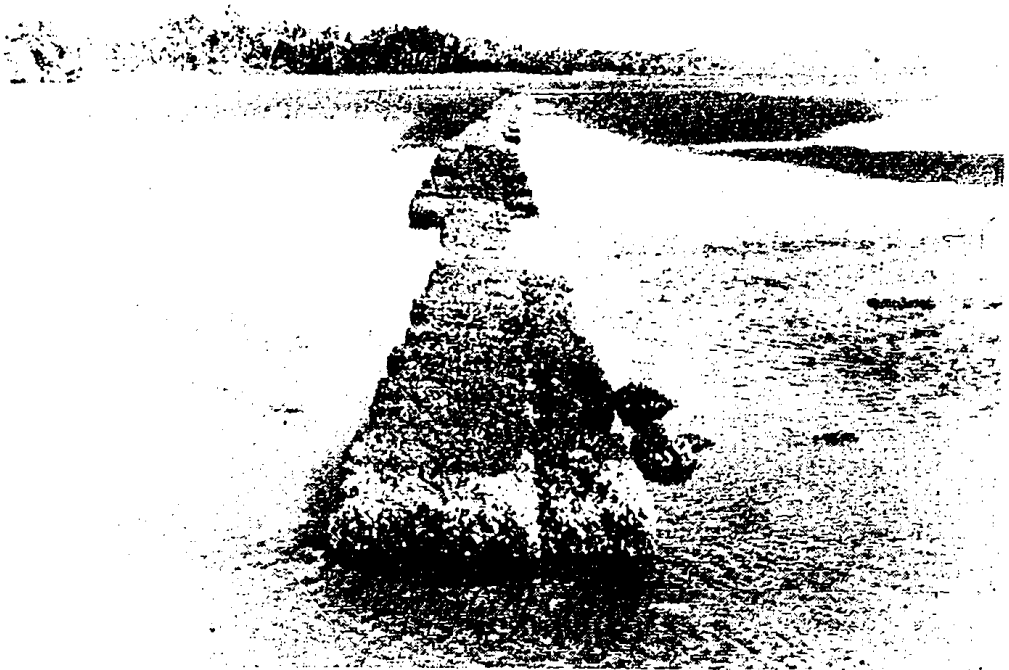


Fig. 2. Partly submerged stone wall of the port of Gopakapattana



Fig. 3. Remains of a stone wall of Gopakapattana post