

PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION OF SOUTH KANARA COAST OF KARNATAKA

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South Kanara is situated (Lat. 12° 27' to 13° 58' N Long. 74° 35' to 75° 40' E) on the west coast (140.8 Km of Arabian Sea), with the adjoining districts of North Kanara on the north, Shimoga on the north-east, Chikmagalur and Hassan on the east, Coorg on the south-east and Kerala in the south.

The South Kanara ports of Karnataka have played a vital role in overseas trade since the 2nd century BC if not from an earlier date. In the 1st century AD, the author of the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, and the Greek writers Herodotus (484-431 BC), Megasthenes (302- 288 BC), Strabo (54 BC - 24 AD) and Pliny Kosmos make mention of the activities of South Kanara ports such as Malpe (*Malippalaj*), Gangolli (*Kambolim*), Mangalore (*Nitra Mangarouth*), Baidoor, (*Baidanur*), Basur (*Barcelore Barace*) and Udyavara (*Udayapura*).

Megasthenes mentions in his work *Indica* the 5th category of the people as ship-builders and navigators. Strabo refers to Myos Hormos as the emporium of the Egyptian trade with India (Mc Crindle, p.6). The Alexandrian merchant vessels sailed through the Nile and the Arabian Gulf to India, and Strabo found that about 120 ships sailed from Myos Hormos to India. The author of *Periplus* states that the Egyptians exported woollen and linen cloth, wine and bullion to India and received in return spice, gems, silk, pepper, ivory, cotton, betel, and tortoise shell, some of which were probably exported from

South Kanara Ports. (South Kanara District Gazetteer, 35).

The author explored Gangolli, Basrur, Barkur, Malpe, Udyavara and Kaup in the month of September 1990 with a view to collect archaeological evidence and record the traditional account of sea trade of the ports.

Gangolli

The port of Gangolli, 18 Km north of Coondapur is situated (74° 4' 30" E, 13° 38' 45" N) at the confluence and on the northern bank of the rivers Haladi and Chakranadi at Gangolli village. It is well protected against cyclonic effect by a chain of rocks. The present light house is situated on Tipu Sultan gudda, where one can see the remains of the Fort of Tipu Sultan. Enquiries made with Govinda, the son of Gaunu, a fisherman, revealed that 50 years ago the light house was 1 Km away from the sea, but presently the sea touches the foot of the light house. The transgression of the sea during the last century is apparent and a few houses have been submerged. Some years ago the boats were anchoring near the rocky area 2 Km west of the light house and the ancient port was called as *Aluvina Bagilu*. It is reported that a boat had sunk in this zone, and all the wood was removed leaving only the engine and iron fixture.

Madhava Karve, Koggana Karve and Ganapathy, all fishermen, have deposed that four of their houses were submerged by the sea

and their land of 60 coconut trees and a temple called *Kuladevata* were lost in the hurricane in 1974.

Prakash, son of Krishna Karve, a resident of Thrasi in Coondapur Taluk says that invariably atleast one boat sinks in the monsoon every year.

One more lighthouse is situated in Kodi to the south of the port. According to the sketch of Peria Souza in 1642 the ancient port of Gangolly was 1.5 miles north of the present port. The Portuguese called this station as Kambolim.

There is a temple called Venkateshwara Mutt, which belongs to 17th Century AD. According to Vamanmukunda Pai a businessman, this temple was built by his forefather, Ram Pai who was a minister in the court of Keladi kingdom. They migrated from Goa to Kanara and reached Kanara by boat. It touches the place called Rampaikal and presently this temple is called as Malleramutt. Inside the temple there is a well, covered by a stone slab containing inscriptions and a Jaina figure.

There is one more temple called as Venkateshwara mutt in front of which there are two inscriptions carved on a stone slab, on which there is a figurine of Parashurama, holding *kamandalu* and *parasu*. Presently local people have renovated these two temples.

Basrur

The port of Basrur (13° 37' 45" N, 74° 43' 50" E) 6 Km east of Coondapur is situated on the bank of the river HALADI. Ptolemy mentions this place as Barcelore which traded with Arabia and Egypt.

Between 973 and 1190 AD Basrur was ruled by the Chalukyas of Kalyana. The tem-

ple of Seneswara said to have been built by the Kalyani Chalukyas suggests the importance of the town.

According to Vadiraja Bhat, lecturer in Kannada, Sharada College, Basrur, there is a tradition of river navigation from the 8th century AD onward. The ancient port of Basrur was known as Mandibagilu and the business street as Mandikeri. The structural remains of the ancient port which had flourishing trade under the Chalukyas, Alupas, the Vijayanagara and Portuguese rulers are extant in some quarters. Presently a Portuguese royal emblem in stone adorns the window of a house in the village. A few large storage earthen jars, wooden boxes, weights and measurements of the Portuguese period are available in private custody.

Barkur

Barkur originally known as Barkanur the capital of Alupa rulers is situated (13° 27' 50" N, 74° 45' 20" E) 16 Km to the north of Udipi. The two fortifications said to have been built by the Alupas and Vijayanagara governors are partly visible. For some time Barkur was the subsidiary capital of Hoysala kings.

Anciently a coastal town on the common estuary of Sitanadi and Swarnanadi, Barkur is now 1 Km inland. Among a large number of temples containing inscriptions of historical importance the following are important.

1. Panchalingeshwara temple of Kotekeri, 8th century AD.
2. Bettevinayaka temple of Kotekeri, 9-10th century AD.
3. Somanatha temple of Mudukeri, 10th century AD.

4. Venugopalakrishna shrine in Kotekeri, 11th century AD.
5. Siddheswara temple of Manigarakeri
6. Mahishasura temple, 11th-12th century AD.
7. Veerabhadra temple of Pathashalakeri, 12th-13th century AD.
8. Twin temples of Chaulikeri, 14th century AD one of which is dedicated to Siva and the other to Ganapati.

There are two memorial (Sati) stones outside the Panchalingeshwara temple.

According to Hariyapoojari a fisherman living in Bennekudru the river Sitanadi was broad and deep permitting navigation anciently. Now siltation prevents river navigation and the sea going vessels do not find an entry. The ancient boat-building industry is now dead.

The Pottery collected by the author from a site near the Basadis consists of jars and basins in Red and Buff wares. Their age will be determined on a comparative study of similar pottery from other sites.

Malpe

The port of Malpe situated 5 Km north of Udipi (74° 42' 15" E, 13° 21' 10"N) at the mouth of the river Udyavara finds mention in the *Periplus*. It is a natural port, with four rocky islands on the west. It is known for the temples of Ananteswara and Odabandeswara.

The northernmost island is known as Dariya Bahadurghad, where a cannon said to be of Tipu Sultan's period can be seen. Remnants of the port installations built by Basavappa Nayaka of Bidanur are extant here. The middle island is known as Daria-Gadara-

Kallu and the next one is called St. Mary's island. According to Jayaraj, former Director of Fisheries at Malpe, Vasco da Gama is said to have landed at St. Mary's island before proceeding to Calicut. Perhaps he put up the cross and named the island as St. Mary's. Large vessels of 250 tons or more called Machwas were built here for transportation of goods. Tipu Sultan also built his boats here, as well as at Basrur and Kundapur.

According to John Detan, Manager, Coronet Tile Company, Malpe, boat-building was an ancient industry and Machwas of 120 to 250 tons were built here with sirihonne wood and covered with copper sheets. Malpe exported to Bombay, Ratnagiri, Ceylon, and Alexandria codliver oil, tiles and other articles, but salt and other goods were imported 100 years ago.

Mr. Narain J. Karkera, a businessman selling fish, says that there was a promontory at Malpe projecting towards the river Udyavara and the ships were anchored there. Presently the promontory has disappeared and a fishing harbour has come into existence. The ancient port installations are no more to be seen. Earlier the river Udyavara was deep and broad enough for navigation, but it is silted up. Some years ago, Maple port exported manganese ore and imported dates, food grains, wines etc., but now the trade has greatly declined.

Udyavara

The town of Udayavara (74° 44' 20" E, 13° 18' 30" N) is situated 4 Km south-west of Udipi. It was the capital of Alupas from about 8th century AD and anciently known as Udayapura and Udevara. There is an ancient site extending from Ganapathy temple to the Panchayat office of the village and even beyond. There is a well-defined citadel known

as Balergudda with atleast three entrance gateways and a lower town facing the sea. The discovery of the remains of a Shiva temple and a citadel of the early historical period indicates that the scene of action mentioned in the Greek farce *OXYRHYNCHUS POPYRI* wherein Kannada words occur was the ancient port of Udyavara (IAR 1968-69 p.24).

Unfortunately the ancient site has been given over for construction of houses.

Some early relics such as stone pillars bearing old Kannada inscriptions, a few dating back to the 7th century AD are found in Udyavara. The Shambukallu Veerabhadra temple situated on a large boulder and the Veeravittala temple situated on the bank of the river Udyavara, now called as Papanashini are noteworthy monuments. The temples of Ganapathi, Savitri, Gayatri, Sarasvati, Chamundeshwari and Bommeshwara are also of historical importance.

The pottery collected from the ancient mound comprises plain red ware and black and red ware, the main types being a jar with a splayed out or flared rim. Some vessels are well fired and others have a smoky core due to ill-firing. The red ware vessels are assignable to 9th-10th century AD.

Kaup

This village (74° 45' E, 13° 13' 40" N) is situated 12 Km south of Udipi. It was an important place during the Vijayanagara and Tipu Sultan's rule. There is an old lighthouse perching on a rock nearby and an old fort on another rock. According to local tradition the Mallar fort built by Tipu Sultan was connected by a tunnel with the ruined fort near the lighthouse, the distance between the two being 5 Km. In ancient times Kaup had a boat building industry. The ruins of the Mallar fort 2 Km south of Kaup can be seen even now.

Shipwrecks on Karnataka Coast

The data collected by Mr. P. Gudigar from the Marine Records of the State Archives at Madras are useful for survey of wrecks on the Karnataka coast.

1. *SHABUL HAMID*, a sailing wooden ship was wrecked at Kaup near Udipi on 24th November, 1911.
2. *DHAN PRASAD BALLEKA*, an Indian sailing wooden ship was wrecked in the backwaters of Malpe in 1912.
3. *RASUL NADATH*, a native craft, was wrecked at Mulki near Udipi on 12th December 1912.
4. *WAROO MACHWA*, an Indian sailing ship was wrecked near Coondapur on 10th March 1914.

These ships built of wood may not have survived owing to wood-borer activity unless however they were buried in sediment soon after they sank. Since the bearings are not given and the local fishermen are unable to point out the sites, it may be necessary to resort to geophysical survey, but further enquiry with local merchants and captains may provide clues to wreck sites.

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Abbreviations

A.S.I. = Archaeological Survey of India.

