

Abstract

MARITIME CONTACTS ON THE COROMANDAL COAST

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Peninsular India in general, the coromandal coast of India in particular has played a vital role in the maritime activities with the South East Asian countries and Mediterranean countries since very early times. The sources for the study of maritime contacts both politically and economically from the eastern coast to the South East Asian countries are numerous indeed. The archaeological and inscriptional evidences provide valuable information regarding the contacts of these countries and the ancient ports in the eastern coast, various types of ships anchored, types of goods both export and import, mercantile groups and their functions etc. Apart from these indigenous sources the Chinese and other regional literary sources, the number of foreign inscriptions and the architectural wealth in the form of Stupa, monasteries, temples and sculpture discovered in these countries have been immensely helpful to recognize the influence of Indian culture. Besides, the sangam literatures as well as the inscriptional evidences help us to fix some active ports on the coromandal coast.

Sangam literature amply refers to the imports and exports and the important ports located on the eastern coast. The Periplus of Erythrean Sea, the magnanimous work of the first century A.D. quotes several ports on the coromandal coast. Ptolemy mentions several port towns on the south east coast. They extended right from Tamralipti (Taluk of Midnapur, West-bengal), Dosarne (Dhauili, Orissa), Kainapara (Konark), Palura (Gopalpura district, Orissa) Kalingapatna (near Salihundam, district Srikakulam), Vengipura (Peddavegi), maisolia (Machilipatnam, district Krishna) Utukuru – Krishnapatnam, Dugrajupatnam and Beripeta Sriharikota, Mylarphan (Mylapore, Chennai). Keberis (Kaveripumpattinam), Puduke (Arikamedu), Soptana (Marakkanam), Nikam (Nagapattinam), Periyapattinam, Kayalpattinam, Alagankulam, Colchi (Korkai) and Comari (Kanyakumari) etc. This paper deals with the active ports and various types of Ships and Boats commodities, which were imported and exported on the coromandel Coast on the basis of inscriptional evidences in detail.