

Development of Ports in Colonial Odisha, a Study of False Point Port.

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ABSTRACT; *The coast of Orissa is very significant in the maritime history of India. Several ports were developed in this coast during the colonial era. Among them False Point was very important .It was located in the north of Mahanadi estuary .It was established in 1860.During the famine of 1866, it was acting as the commercial nerve centre of Orissaa . Because all the export and import trade were transacted through this port. The port had maritime link with Maldives, Ceylone, Mauritius and other French Port. But, the British Govt did not prepare any plan for it's development. The opening of Chandballi Port in 1872, the opening of Coast Canal in 1885 condensed the importance of the port. Finally, the introduction of Bengal Nagpur Railway in 1899 led to the disappearance of the False Point Port.)*

Keywords: *European Factory Recodes, Orissa Coast, Point Palmiras, Hinterland, Coast Canal.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The economic importance of the northwestern coast of Bay of Bengal and significance of its ports as commercial link between east and west is attested from its roman times. There is wealth of historical evidence for the extensive use of this coastal hinterland from sixteenth to the nineteenth century A.D.

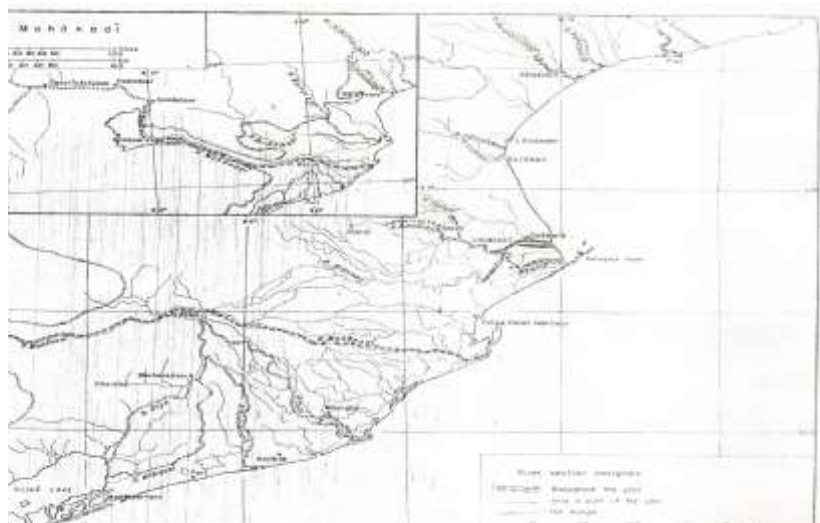
From second century A.D this region, like many other coastal regions of South Asia, supplied spices, diamonds and precious stones to the Roman Empire. Ptolemy named several Orissan river ports of this period, including Jagannath-puri, Katak, Konark, Balasore, and the mouth of the river Mahanadi, Brahmani, Baitarani (?) and Subarnarekha (?).

During the medieval times twelfth to mid –sixteenth century, earlier trade links with southeast Asia, Ceylon and beyond to China were expanded with the export of commercial crops, industrial products such as perfumes, diamonds and ivory. The expansion of trade during this period encouraged the increased use of inland water to transport grain and other products from hinterland and to move salt inland from coastal margins.

With the coming of the British some new ports were came into prominence. Gopalpur, Ganjam, Kalingapatnam, Machhgoan, Puri, False Point Port, Dhamra, Chandballi, Laichhanpur and Churamoan, Balasore, Saratha, Chhonoa, and Subarnarekha.⁵ In Orissa coast navigation was difficult due to lack of depth and because of shifting sandbanks which obstructed channels. It is clear that, the possibility of developing ports on the sea fronts or in the estuaries depended upon the range of tides. It rises from the south to north on the east coast 0.70 meter at Tuticorn, 1 meter at Madras, 1.30 at Kakinada, and 2 to 2.28 on the Orissa Coast.⁶

The False Point Port-

The False Point port was situated on the north of the Mahanadi estuary.⁷ It consisted of an anchorage landlocked by Island and sandbanks. It derives its name from the circumstances of ships proceeding northwards frequently mistaken it for Point Palmiras a degree farther south.⁸



Source-Deloche, J. *Transport and Communication in India, Prior to Steam Locomotion*, Vol 11, Water Transport, New Delhi, 1994, p119

The British Government declared it as a port in 1860.⁹ The Bengal Orissa Famine Commission Report of 1867 reported it to be the best harbour on the coast of India from Bombay to Hugli.¹⁰ It lies in the north latitude $20^{\circ} 22'$ and east longitude $86^{\circ} 49'$.¹¹ The lighthouse stands about 5 m. northeast of the Point. The light building was coloured red or reddish brown with large white star in the centre. It exhibited a fixed light 120 ft. above HW. The light was seen 148 m from the vessels dock. If elevated 14ft from the sea. Vessels were recommended not to come under 8 fathoms for the purpose of making the navigation.¹²

The survey report (10TH May 1870) recommended that a vessel coming to the port should give point Riddie a berth of half a mile, steering up midway between the buoy. But if the buoy was passed, then the vessels were keeping False Point Lighthouse midway between the two small beacons on the Plowdens's Island.¹³ Formerly no vessels approached the coast during the summer season, but after 1860, the port was open throughout the year, and the ships of large tonnage were lying with safety in all weather. Inside the Dowdswell Island lies Powden Island. There was some land for building purposes. The island was also provided with wells from which good drinking water was obtained.

Water routes from False Point Port-

There were two routes from the anchorage. The Jambu River on the north and the Bakud creek on the south, a short deep branch of the Mahanadi River.¹⁴ But for water transport by ships, sand bar obstruct between the anchorage and these channels, and except at higher water block the entrance to the both. At full tides, cargo boats and steamer enter with ease.

Besides, the two Island route, several tidal creek connect along the coast, and connect False Point anchorage with Dhamra and the Vaitarani River on the north and with the Devi on the south. These channels were generally very winding and narrow. These were available for country boats all over the year.

Commercial Importance of the Port-

False Point port was opened in 1860.¹⁵ About the same year the newly started East India Irrigation and Canal (E.I.I.C) company perceived its capability for the importation of stores and an enterprising French Firm in Calcutta shortly after words established an agency for the export of rice. In 1862 two thousand tons of material for the canal were landed directly from London from a ship of about 12 hundred tons and a barque of about eight hundred tons burden. These vessels were safely lodged within the anchorage and discharged without loss of any sort. But it was during the famine of 1866, when govt was exploring every means of providing supplies to the province the capability of False Point Port was publicly appreciated. So Bengal Orissa Famine Commission of 1867 recommended it to be best harbour along the coast of India from Bombay to Hugli.¹⁶

Communication with Port City Cuttack and the False Point Port

The False Point port was connected with the capital city of the province by four water routes-

1. The Kendrapara Canal-It was connected from Birupa weir at Jagatpur to Marshaghai, twenty-three miles from False Point.¹⁷ It was opened for traffic on 29th May 1869. The route was along the high ground as north or left bank of the Mahanadi till about eight miles, at which point the Chitrotapala branch diverged to the northward from the great river.

2.The Kendrapara Extension Canal-It is an extension of Kendrapara Canal and connected between Marshaghai and Jambu River, a distance of fifteen miles .¹⁸ It was principally constructed with the object of improving communication between Cuttack and False Point Port.

3. The Gobri Canal-The Gobri Canal was originally intended to be distributaries of Kendarapara Canal. But was afterwards navigable by steamer and boats in order to facilitate communication between Cuttack and the port of Chandballi on the Vaitarani.¹⁹

4. The Taldanda Canal-

The Taldanda Canal between the Mahanadi and Kathjuri River connects Cuttack with False Point .It was main source from which rice was exported to the Mauritius. ²⁰The High Level Canal supplies a direct route between the marts of Cuttack and Bhadrak.

Location of the Port City-

Cuttack was the port city of False Point Port. It had the office of the Commissioner of the division and Superintending Engineer in charge of the canals and embankments. According to Census of 1891, it had a population of 47,186. ²¹ It stood at the apex of the delta formed by the Mahanadi and Kathjuri.The town was well connected with a good number of roads. The Grand Trunk Road connected from Midnapur to Cuttack. A provincial road was also connected from Puri to Cuttack .Besides, a number of District roads were also connected to Cuttack. Those were-Cuttack- Taldanda road, Cuttack Machhgaon road, Cuttack – Chandballi road .In 1899 Bengal Nagpur Railway connected with Madras and Cuttack. The Mahanadi was the principal outlet for carrying the product of Sambalpur in boats to Cuttack and cloth, salt and other commodities were brought in exchange. The town of Cuttack imports large quantities of Kerosene oil, salt, cotton twist, piece goods, spices, gunny bags, sugar and other miscellaneous goods. The items of export were rice and hides, making up, with bass ware, timber, stone works and grain of various sorts.²²

The False Point ports developed into inter port for export and import trade of Orissa. A number of Govt and private steamer were plying between the port and the entrance of the canal at Marshaghai, from which place passenger traffic was comfortable and rapid, compared with old and uncertain route round the river. The extension of the canal from Marshaghai to the False Point port further facilitated the communication. ²³ A Harbour Master and Superintendent of Custom were appointed at False Point .The British Indian General Steam Navigation Company had made this place a regular place of call. The Passenger fare between Calcutta and False Point, which was determined by the British Indian Steam Navigation Company. The following fare were collected from passenger who were travelling from False Point to Cuttack .²⁴

Table-1
Passenger fare between False Point and Calcutta.

Passenger	From	To	Fare
First Class Passenger	False Point Port	Calcutta	Rs. 25.00
2nd class Passenger	False Point Port	Calcutta	Rs. 12.50
Side sitting Passenger	False Point Port	Calcutta	Rs. 2.50

The British – India Steam Navigation Company’s steamer was leaving from lighthouse for Calcutta in the following days.²⁵

Table-2
Arrival and Departure Steamer in the False Point Port

Date of Departure for Calcutta	Date of arrival at False Point	Date of Departure for Calcutta
18 th May1879	19th May,1879	19 th May,1879
18 th June1879	18 June,1879	26th June,1879
13 th July1879	14 July,1879	24July,1879
10 th August1879	14th August,1879	24 th August,1879

The French ships visited the port from Mauritius. It was taking rice and oil seeds for Havre, Bordeaux and ports of France’

Development of False Point Port-

The British Government gave much importance to False Point Port for its advantageous like location. In 1874 Lt Governor, who visited Orissa sanctioned following sum of money for the development of ports in Orissa including False Point Port. ²⁶

Table-3

Funds allotted for the development of **False Point Port.**

False Point Port*	Rs. 2,89,000
Balasore Port	Rs. 30,000
Dhara and Chandballi Port	Rs. 1,00,000
Puri Port	Rs. 20,000
Total	Rs. 4,39,000

*False Point Port received highest fund from the British Government for its development in comparison to other ports of Orissa.

In 1878, the Government further sanctioned money for tidal gauge and for the construction of a lighthouse.²⁷ The light house was completed in 1880 and was able to cover a distance of 20 miles in the sea ensuring the safety of the ship.²⁸ The British Raj gave much importance to the False Point Port and constructed buildings for office and go down to make it a modern port where goods were easily transported to Cuttack through Kendrapara Canal.

Hinterland of False Point Port-

The success of a port largely depended on the growth of hinterland. In fact a fertile hinterland was responsible for a success port. The hinterland of False Point was situated all along the Canals and Rivers. The Places of supply were similarly situated in the neighbourhood of flourishing villages. The important marts for rice, the chief article of traffic were False Point Port, Jambu, Bhutmandi, Cuttack, Marshaghai, Alba, Kendupatna, and the most places of supply was Cuttack .From Cuttack (the headquarter of rice merchant) rice was exported chiefly to Calcutta, via Alba and Chandballi.²⁹ The traffic was mostly in the hands of the India general Steam Navigation Company and of Messers, Mac Neiland Co, who maintained a regular service of Steamer from Calcutta. The steamer and boats used False Point Port along with Orissa Coast Canal. Among other important trade centres were Kendrapara, Jajpur, Aul, Pattamundai and Baideswar. The sea –borne trade was carried on with ports all along the coast in Bombay, Madras, and Bengal as well as with foreign countries, with Ceylon, the Maldives Island, Mauritius, London and New York.³⁰

Management of the Ports-

The famine of 1866 brought radical changes in the administration of Custom Department.³¹ But section 33of the Act of 1855 did not include False Point Port in the list of ports of Orissa. Government introduced a special rule in 1861 for the False Point Port. As result of which False point port was accepted as port of importance.³²

A Custom House was established prior to it in the year1860. According to the new rule, the rate custom duty at False Point port was raised from Rs. 2 to Rs 4 per ton of cargo. Initially a writer was appointed in this port. Besides, Superintendence of lighthouse and his assistance were also appointed. A Preventive officer was appointed in the port of False point in 1862 to take charge of portal communication and collection of custom duty.³³

In 1875, the Government of Bengal moved to Govt of India to extend the Act to the False Point Port. But no action was taken. As the port was not regulated by the law earlier, the exception of making, it an important port and collection of custom duty could not be materialised through the customhouse.³⁴ So False Point was partially brought under the custom department. A Sub-Deputy Collector was appointed at the customhouse, so the collection of custom dues gradually increased.

In 1875,a Custom Officer was appointed in the customhouse at False Point to work independently.³⁵ The Government worked out this new scheme after the year1875 to get more revenue from the Port. But no extra facility like anchorage and storage were provided in this port. Even though land was acquired at Jumbo for better custom establishment, with no expenditure from Govt treasure, the scheme submitted before the Government was not approved. As a result, the False Point port which served the people and the Government during the critically year of the famine of 1866, could not be developed.

By the Government Notification on 1st february1916, the port of Dhamra (Chandballi) Balasore, Cuttack (False Point) and Puri were declared as the Custom Port for shipment and loading of cargo. However, the maritime trade of Orissa had considerably declined and economic distress was so acute that the annual emigration took place from Orissa in large numbers.³⁶

In 1921, the improvement of the Port of False point so as to accommodate large ocean going vessels was suggested. The Government investigated the possibility of developing the port but was found to be quite unsuitable due to silting. The existing small ports at that place were finally closed by the end of June 1924.

Trade and Commerce

The False Point Port received attention of the Government after the famine of 1866. The horror of the famine forced the government to take notice of this port, which was in a ruined condition. During the year of famine the, when Government was exploring every means of supplying in to the famine, the capability of False Point came to light. It formed main source of entrance by which food was brought to the province.³⁸ It was expected by the government confidently that False Point would grow in to an important harbour in Orissa that would afford facility for export and import. False Point was visited by French ship from Mauritius, which took rice and oil seeds from that place for Harve and Bordeaux and other port of France .The steamer of British India Navigation Company also visited the port. Rice was exported to different port of Ceylon, Maldives, Mauritius and other French ports. By Mid seventies, it was fairly proved that there was a place in India called Orissa, which could be relied upon with regard to export of qualitative rice in large quantities. The news was carried beyond, British possession by French and American ships, which were regularly visiting the port.

The articles, which principally traded through the False Point Port, were thus classified as follows.⁴⁰

1. Articles of Food-Paddy, Rice. Salt, Gur, Gram, garlics, tarmanind, salt, fish, turmeric, mustard, dried fish, coriander seed , oil , betel leaf, wheat,, coconut, tobacco, saru.
2. Stimulant – Ganja
3. Staples of Manufacturers- Hides, copper, cotton, Jute, Cotton thread, leather and Iron.
4. Building Material- Timber, Bamboo, Stone, Lime
5. Fuel- Firewood, Coal
6. Cooking Utensils and other domestic implement-Earthen pots, Bamboo, mats, Furniture.

The following figure highlights the maritime transaction of False Point Port from 1861-1875. This table also shows the number of vessels came and total value of export and import carried out in this port.

Table-4.
Commercial Transaction in the False Point port

Year	No Of Vessels entered	Tonnage\$	Value of Imports \$	Value of Exports \$	Total Value of Trade. \$
1860-61	4	2,830	No return	6,759	-----
1861-62	10	7,756	Do	24,657	-----
1862-63	6	4,016	Do	17,802	-----
1863-64	16	8,681	33,093	18,828	51,921,
1864-65	16	12,834	4,406	25,063	30,080
1865-66	12	8,055	1,550	8,225	9,775
1866-67	51	33,862	184,859	Nil	184,859
1867-68	29	13,574	157,044	54	157,095
1868-69	15	33,023	1,710	1,920	3,630
1869-70	71	41,741	31,076	18,673	49,749
1870-71	105	59,744	103,235	66,975	17,0210
1871-72	86	72,525	90,013	47,570	13,7583
1872-73	75	19,929	84,954	82,142	16,7096
1873-74	100	86,597	114,289	106,043	220,332
1874-75	100	118,375	91,163	170,047	264,212

Decline-

Several factors contributed to the decline of the Port. 1872 Chandballi port was opened. After that trade of the False Point was diverted to the Chandballi Port via Gobri canal. Secondly, after the opening of the Coast Canal in 1886, the coastal trade was diverted to the Coast Canal. The False Point Port was closed since 22 Oct 1924 as the sea borne trade completely disappeared. The closure of the port was said to be due to introduction of Railway. Thirdly, Larger and deep draft steamer had taken the place of smaller coasting steamer and sailing ships. The long and deep draft steamer could not enter small ports as Balasore, Chandballi and False point and hence the trade that at once found its way by sea diverted to railway.

II. CONCLUSION-

The False Point Port was one of the important port of Orissa during the colonial era .During the Famine of 1866, it was only port , which provided only way for providing relief material for the famine stricken people .But the British Government did not prepare any plan for its develop and expansion . The opening of the Chandballi Port in 1872, and the Coast Canal in 1886 reduced the importance of the port. The silting of the port further condensed the importance of the port. The introduction of Bengal Nagpur Railway practically decimated of the port .So one of the significant port vanished from the pages of history.

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