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RESEARCH ARTICLE

TOPONOMY OF CORAMANDEL COAST: MAPPING THOROUGH INSCRIPTIONS

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Abstract

Indian subcontinent having vast coastline covered three coastlines given more possibilities to survive the inhabitants over the years. The name of the coastline is having the history, indeed the genesis of the name from historical scenes. On the path, the Coromandel (earlier called as Cholamandala Kadarkarai) called by the eastern coastline. Now its name changed, as Bay of Bengal, but it could not cover the entire region. During the Chola period, entire coastline was renowned as Chola Lake, because the kings controlled entire region. ²⁰Yet, not the term 'Chola' meaning was unidentified by the historians. In Tamil work Chola kingdom was surrounded by water. In Tamil water means 'Neer', surround means 'Suzha'. Over the years Suzha slightly changed as Chozha. The meaning of the Coromandel still has not clear descriptions but the unanimously agreed that the Coromandel which got the name from the authority of Chola country The inscriptional records show that the Coromandel name existed during the Chola period to British period. Europeans also attributed the name, which Cholas used in their region. Some of the organization wanted to change the Coast name as Cholamandel instead of Bay of Bengal. The clarification of the geographical boundaries from the travelogues does not unanimous, and they differ from one another. However, the Coromandel is situated in the southeastern coast of India. This article deals with the toponomy of Coromandel Coast with the inscriptional resources, especially Cholas.

Keywords: Coromandel Coast, Toponomy, Inscriptional records, Bay of Bengal, Chola period.

Introduction

Indian subcontinent having vast coastline covered three coastlines given more possibilities to survive the inhabitants over the years. The name of the coastline is having the history, indeed the genesis of the

name from historical scenes. On the path, the Coromandel (earlier called as *Cholamandala Kadarkarai*) called by the eastern coastline. Now its name changed, as Bay of Bengal, but it could not cover the entire region. During the Chola period, entire coastline was renowned as Chola Lake, because the

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kings controlled entire region. Yet, not the term 'Chola' meaning was unidentified by the historians. In Tamil work Chola kingdom was surrounded by water. In Tamil water means 'Neer', surround means 'Suzha'. Over the years *Suzha* slightly changed as *Chozha*.¹ The meaning of the Coromandel still has not clear descriptions but the unanimously agreed that the Coromandel which got the name from the authority of Chola country. The inscriptional records show that the Coromandel name existed during the Chola period to British period. Europeans also attributed the name, which Cholas used in their region. Some of the organization wanted to change the Coast name as *Cholamandel* instead of Bay of Bengal. The clarification of the geographical boundaries from the travelogues does not unanimous, and they differ from one another. However, the Coromandel is situated in the southeastern coast of India. This article deals with the toponymy of Coromandel Coast with the inscriptional resources, especially Cholas.

Indian coastline

India ranked the seventh largest country in the modern world by area, which has an area of 3, 28,782 km in the South Asia, with a land boundary of 15, 200 km and a coast line. India is blessed with longest coastline, covered 7516 km² of which the mainland accounts for 5422km. Indian peninsula covered with two seas and one ocean, namely Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. Indian coastal zone included the three major groups of islands namely Andaman and Nicobar in Bay of Bengal, Lakshadweep in Arabian Sea. There are considerable difference between east and west coast of Indian and its geomorphology. The Western coast has the rocky shores, heavy surf and headlands. Moreover, it possessed with lagoons, beaches, marshes and deltas.

The Indian coastline is divided into two major parts, first one Eastern coastline and the second one western coastline. The western coast line is classified into two sections, the lower part (South) has been called as Malabar Coast and upper part (North) Konkan coast. On the same manner, the eastern coastline is divided into two parts upper part (North) has renowned as Northern circa (also named Orissa coast or gingerly coast).³ some sea names have been changed gradually, and old names were forgotten, and new names existed

till today. On the mark western coast line could be called earlier as Malabar Coast now got the name Arabian Sea. Moreover, the eastern coast has been renowned as Coromandel Coast in colonial era. Now this coast got the name called as Bay of Bengal. While comparing with the western coast, the Eastern coast consisting wide plains. The eastern cost has wide curves, and it frequently changes its direction north to north eastern side. The eastern coastal plains covered with three major states in India, namely Tamil Nadu (Tamil Country), Andhra Pradesh and Orissa.

Chola administration unit

The Chola ruled the Southern India long-drawn-out the time from about 9th century to 13th century. For their administration convenience, they divided the region into several units. During the period of King Rajaraja (895 B.C -1014 B.C) a country had been renowned as Mandalam. The Chola empire consisted of the *Cholamandalam (Colamandalam), Rajaraja Pandimandalam (Rajaraja Pandiyamandalam, Jayankonda Cholamandalam(Jayankonda Colamandalam), Mummudi Cholamandalam (Mumudicholamandalam), Nigarili Cholamandalam(Nigraili Cholamandalam), Adirajaraja Cholamandalam (Adirajaraja Coalmandalam), Malaimandalam (Malaimandalam) and Vengimandalam (Vengaimandalam).*⁴ The territory subject to the Chola Raja's was known as Choramandalam, it means the land of victory.⁵ After capturing the region of Sri Lanka by King Rajaraja then renamed this place into "Mummudi Chozhamandalem". So, Coromandel spread over southern region of Sri Lanka.⁶

The Chola inscriptions have been started with word *Chozha Nadu* means 'Chola country'.⁷ For instance the inscription begins with "*Chozhamadalathu arunmozhideva vala nattu mangala nattu pudukkudi*"⁸ and mentions the territory name. The name "mandalam" has first appeared in the Chola inscription which was issued during king Rajaraja on 1009 A.D. ⁹Chronologically, Chola rule was divided into four periods, and topographically by differentiating the two Madalams, namely Chola-Mandalam and Jayagondachola-Mandalam.¹⁰

Recently its name corrupted into Coromandal, and a sub-division of it was called *Tondaimandalam*

and corresponded nearly with the province of Arcot. Though, it would call after the son of Chola king which subdued it. Towards the close of the 13th century, while Choramandalam was ruled over by its Hindu Rajas, occurred the first Mussalman invasion of the country now known to us as the Dakkan. The Cholas were great administrators and they had well organized and high standard systems, V.A. Smith revealed the systems of administration, "In Ancient times, the one of the greatest, highly systematized administration followed by the Chola kingdom."²⁹ The entire empire was classified into 'Mandalams' or Provinces. The province was administrated by the governors or royal family members. The mandalam was sub-divided into 'Valanadus' (divisions), then *Nadus* (districts), and also *Kurrams* (villages). Village might be the basic unit of Chola administrations.

Ancient lineage

Coromandel Coast was not only flourished as the trading emporium, but also it was glorified from ancient period. Those days Temples were identified the important trade centre in this regions. The temples were acted as the administrative headquarters in ancient period. Similarly, Forts were acted as the administrative headquarters in Modern period; especially colonial period. Before the Europeans, the temples had been played important role in the eastern coast of India, which had been renowned as pagodas. European soldiers renowned these places and identification of regional centers, once served the trading centers.

Mahabalipuram, prominently termed as "Seven pagodas"¹¹ by the local fishermen. Perhaps, the Konark belongs to Orissa also renowned as "Black pagoda". Perhaps, the temple was referred as white pagoda in sailor's accounts namely Jagannatha in Puri, Chinese pagoda in Nagapattinam. All the temples were monumental structures dating from the 9th to 14th centuries CE. Their construction at strategically chosen locations made them easily visible to sailor's merchants and travelers, when approaching the coast.

The trading ways were changed between 16th and 17th century while the Europeans roaming on the Indian Ocean. They applied the new techniques in the ship constructing techniques. The liner companies established the regular ship services on the Indian

Ocean. The engagement of the British East India Company with the countries of the Indian Ocean with the countries of the Indian Ocean was a different order from that of its predecessors. The establishment of colonies in south and Southeast Asia resulted in the introduction of new disciplines which had wide-ranging implications for the cultural identity of the sea and the communities who navigated across it. The 19th century thus raised a different set of issues with the colonialization of large parts of South and Southeast Asia. Coastal defense architecture and heritage is command for its beauty, but more chiefly there might be a need for protection, conservation and preservation of maritime heritage.¹²

Various descriptions on Coromandel Coast

Over the years, place names were transformed into several ways, sometimes lost their original version. The procedure of renaming places in inextricably linked to social, political, cultural, linguistic, geographical phenomenon. On the consequences, the Coromandel Coast also possessed several names.

Europeans came to India for the purpose of profession viz., merchants, soldiers, and travelers. While entering the Europeans in India, they were visiting all over the country and wrote down their experience in the form of notes or diaries. Unfortunately, they wrote down the names of the places merely as they flock their ear, and for that reason, place names changed the original pronunciation. After their settlement, the officials documents, maps, military journals also followed the improper names. There are numerous descriptions about its nomenclature and geographical boundaries of Coromandel Coast. Also Coromandel Coastal referred as in the map, documents, original correspondence of the Europeans, has notified a heterogeneous form the same. The Writings of the early travelers have given different terms of Coromandel as *Charmandel*, *Cormandel*, *Choromandel*, *Chormandel*, *Ciolamandala*, *Cholamandel*, and *Cote D E Coromandel*.¹³

The maps of Colonial cartographers placed Coromandel name both in their document and portrayed. The Coromandel name mentioned differently like *Coste de Coromandel* (See plate No.1),

Cote D E Coromandel (see plate No.2 and No.3) *Choromandel* and *Koromandel*.

European tradesmen companies adopted the name Coromandel in their official documents. Their consultation books, diaries, documents inscribed the name of Coromandel. The term 'Coromandel' was coined by a young Italian escapist from Bologna, named "Ludovico di Varthema" (A.D., 1503-1508), referred by Charles Allan in his book (A personal History of South India, 2017) denotes the term "Coromandel". The word 'Coromandel' first mentioned in maps of Portuguese at the beginning of the 16th century. A miniature map of the Malabar and Coromandel coasts was drawn by the Flemish cartographer Petrus Bestius of Amsterdam, from *Tabularum geographicarum constructarum* (1606). This was based on an earlier map made in 1580 when the coastal trade was controlled of the Portuguese. Portuguese had pronounced C as Ch in Portuguese.¹⁴

On the consequences, Fra Paolino da san Barolemo (1776-1789), who visited India between 1776 and 1789, around 13 years to register history on own view. He wrote the name of Coromandel Coast as *ciomandala*. Moreover, he explained the meaning of Coromandel on different way. The eastern part is called '*ciomandal*' that is 'the land of millet', the Western Malayala, or land of mountains. The *ciomandal* or *cholamandalam*, comes from the compound of two words cholam and mandalam. Cholam means "the millet (millet was called in Tamil cholam), and mandalam means 'a territory'. Thus he made a conclusion that Cholamandalam means 'the country of the choras'.¹⁵

Maucci, who resided in Madras during the seventeenth century and written a book named "Storio do Mogor" that the sea named Cholamandel and mentioned about the two places like Mavelivaru and Sadrasta Patao. On the contrary, Robert Caldwell (1856) has registered in his view about Coromandel. The definition of Coromandel came from *choramandalam*, the Chola country. Coromandel word derives from the place name called '*karu manal*', a small village on the eastern coast, in near Pulicat (the first settlement of the Dutch) which was invariably pronounced and written Coromandel by the European who were resided in Madras, who migrated from there.

¹⁶Although, he rejected the view of Fra Faulino; which the first word "Choram" towards often pronounced as "Cholam" (maize not millet), always written in Tamil "Choram" and the compound "chora-mandalam". Another version, one of the places held from the eastern coast, which has been called as Kharamandalam, from Khara. However, this name has been never been used so widely along the coast as to render it likely that it was the origin of the name Coromandel.

Conclusion

Cholas are prominent rules who have ruled Indian sub-continent for long years. They also having the enormous inscriptions revealed that they are ruled vast areas in South India. For the administrative system, they have segregated the regions and named in the region. On the path, the Coromandel coast also named by the Cholas as Cholamandala Kadarkarai. Indeed the names are the prominent identity of the region, which having historical value. Thus the toponymy of the places could be changed as the earlier name.

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