

HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE OF CUTTACK TOWN

*Debendra Nath Bhoi
Priyadarshini Bakshi*

Cuttack, one of the oldest cities of India and the Metropolis of Orissa, is situated at the bifurcation of the river Mahanadi and its main branch the Kathajori. It is located in lat N.20°29' and Long. E85°50' and has area of sixteen square miles.¹ The word 'Cuttack' is derived from the Sanskrit word '*Katak*' which signify a '*Military camp*' or a fort or seat of Govt. protected by army. Madalapanji gives reference to '*Pancha Kataka*' or '*Five Katakas*' i.e., Jajpur, Choudwar, Amaravati, Chhatia and Bidanasi Kataka. The name Bidanasi Kataka is identified with the present town of Cuttack which has been referred to by Ferishte's History of Bengal and the Ain-I-Akbari. It is also quoted by Mr. A. Stirling as early as 1822.²

The early history of Cuttack town is connected with the history of Kesari dynasty. Based on Madalapanji Stirling mention that Nripa Kesari founded the Baranasi Cuttack in 989 A.D. He was a marital and ambitious prince, who was always fighting with his neighbours. The reign of Markat kesari was distinguished for the construction of stone revetment or embank to protect the new capital from flood in 1002 A.D.³

According to Nagari Copperplate of Anangabhimadeva III (1211-1238 A.D). He was transferred his capital from Choudwar to Abhinava Baranasi, Kataka. Madlapanji also reveals same evidence therefore it can be said that Cuttack town as capital of a Kingdom was founded by Anangabhimadeva in 1211 A.D.⁴ After the end of the Ganga rule, Orissa passed to the hands of the Gajapati Kings (1435-1541 A.D) belonging to the solar dynasty under whom Baranasi Kataka continued to be the capital of Orissa. After the death of Mukunda Deva the last Hindu king of Orissa, the suzerainty of Cuttack passed on to the hands at first the Muslim rules and later to the Mughals.⁴

By 1750 Cuttack came under Maratha rule and it grew first as a business center being a convenient point of contact between the Marathas of Nagpur and the English Merchants of Bengal. It was occupied by British in 1803 and became the capital of Orissa division in 1816. From 1948 onwards, when the capital was shifted Bhubaneswar the city remained the administrative head quarters of Orissa.⁶

Archaeological remains of Cuttack city :

Cuttack preserves hoard of archaeological remains, one of the important monument of Cuttack town is Barabati fort, which speaks a history of seven hundred years and more is the mute witness of march of events through the centuries. Scholars give different opinions regarding the date of construction of Barabati fort. Madalapanji, the Jagannatha temple chronicle narrate an interesting story which is as follows.

This king Bhima Parichha or Anangabhima II was residing in his capital called Chaudwar. One day the king crossed the Mahanadi and came towards southern side. Here he noticed in the Barabati village belonging to the Ko-danda sub-division that near the god Visweswar Deva, a heron had jumped upon a hawk. Seeing this the king was very much surprised and on an auspicious day laid the foundation of construction of the fort and this village was named Barabati Cuttack. And since then he left Choudwar and lived at Cuttack making it his capital.⁷

In the opinion of Jagabandhu Singh, Anangabhima Deva II ruled for 27 years (1183-1210 A.D.) and in the 12th year of his reign Barabati was constructed.⁸

Pandit Kripasindhu Mishra inclined to believe that this fort was constructed by Anangabhima Deva (1189-1223 A.D.) in the 13th year of his reign i.e., in 1202 A.D.⁹ The newly discovered Nagari cooper plate issued by Anangabhima Deva donated land from Varanasi Kataka. On the basis of this evidence K.C. Panigrahi concludes that Barabati fort was constructed sometimes after 1223 A.D. Thus the fort was built after 1229 A.D.¹⁰ and before 1238 A.D. Barabatifort, witnessed the fortunes and the fall of the long line of Ganga and Suryavamsi rules. During the rule of the Muslims and the Marathas it continued to be the capital of Orissa. The British army took possession of Barabati fort on October 1803. Barabati fort which for centuries was the residence of ruling dynasties became the occupation of the British the prison for confinement of several illustrious rules of the land. In 1800 the Raja of Kujanga, in 1818 the Raja of Surgaja with his family members kept under strict confinement to this fort. In addition vandalism to destroy the fort was intensified in the early phase of British rule.¹¹

Excavation by Archaeological survey of India on December 1st 1989 revealed evidence of a palace, a square structure built up of Khondolite stone. It was built over an area which was carefully prepared by filling of 5 meter with sand and Malba. Trenches taken on the eastern side of the structure revealed 32 pillars built of laterite blocks roughly square but varying in size. In the north eastern corner of the mound remains of temple has been founded. Excavation on the eastern and southern side of the mound reveled the existence of a citadel wall built of laterite blocks.

From outside the citadel wall a number of antiquities recovered like arrow heads, Canonballs, sculptures like Ganesa, Surya. A silver coin was recovered belonging to Moghul emperor Shahajahan (16.27.1658) minted Surat. Some Chinese Porcelain

datable to Medieval period, areca-nut shaped beads and pieces of glass goblets also recovered.¹²

2. STONE REVETMENT CUTTACK :

Among the civil works of great engineering skill of Cuttack are revetments of the river Mahanadi and Kathajori which protect the town from the floods of the two rivers. It is in horse shoe pattern. The traditional account on the basis of Madalapanji associates these to works with the name of Markat keshari of the Keshari dynasty of kings ruling in the A.D. 10th century. But no Corroborative archaeological evidence could be traced up till now.¹³

3. BASULI THAKURANI SHRINE :

The premises of Basuli Thakurani shrine of Baniyasi of Cuttack town preserves a large hoard of temple fragments, which include naga nagi figures, yakshas, Narayan images. Figure of Saraswati and Buddhist figures also.¹⁴

4. HERO STONE :

A hero stone is noticed firmly planted on a masonry pedestal which is found in the premises of Revenshaw College. The stone slab depicts a royal figure in full military vigour brandishing a hard and curved rectangular shield in left hand.¹⁵

5. HINDU TEMPLE :

Cuttack had originally a number of Hindu Temples. But none had survived in its ancient form. The nagari copper plate inscription of Anangabhimadeva III records the construction of temple for Lord Purushottama at this place. Sarala Dasa refers to the *Visvesvara* temple on the bank of the Mahanadi at Varanasi Kataka but on its site we now find renovated temple with the name of *Gadagadeswar*. The later Hindu temples are i.e., *Amaresvara Temple Buxi Bazar*, *Gangamandir* of Kaji Bazar, *Raghunatha and Jagannatha* Temples of Telenga Bazar, *Lakshmi-Narayan* temple of Mansinghpatna, *Landa deula* near the district Judge Court, *Paresvarasiva* temples of Paresar Sahi. Some of these temples like the *Gangamandir* and *Amaresvara Siva* of this town appear to have been originally built in earlier periods others convey the idea of much later construction.¹⁶

6. MATHAS :

Cuttack town contains a series of Mathas of much later date, they include the *Mastaram matha*, *Rasabehari Matha*, *Tulasipur Matha*, *Gopalji Matha*, *Bangali Sahi Matha*, *Anantagopala Matha*, *Jaganantha Matha*, *Chaitanya Matha*, *Nala Matha*, *Sangati Matha*, *Chaudhary Matha* and *Radhakrishna Matha*. *Mastaram Matha* seems to have been constructed during the maratha, period.¹⁷

7. JAINA SHRINES :

Cuttack town preserves three Jainashrines of modern origin. They are located in Chaudhury Bazar, Jauanlipati and Alamchand Bazar. Architecturally Jain temple of Chaudhuray 'Bazar is best preserved. It displays all the major features of an Orissan temple situated within a spacious compound. It has the main temple built in *rekha* order and Jagamohana in *Pidha* style a feature common in the later temples of Orissa.¹⁸

Cuttack town also enjoyed for a pretty long time the honour of being the seat of political authority of the muslims in Orissa.

8. THE LALBAG PALACE :

The Lalbag palace of the Mughal period stood on the bank of the Kathajori and there is nothing now which gives any appearance of the ancient palace. The date of erection of the palace may be ascribed to the year 1633.A.D.¹⁹

9. THE DIWAN BAZAR MOSQUE :

The Diwan Bazaar mosque built in A.D. 1666 was another monument of beauty and grandeur of Cuttack. Various components parts of the mosque appear to have been added in different period. The *Saiban* and the *Peshgah* were of latter date. Symmetrical vaults and arches adorn the unpartitioned hall. The semi spherical domes and few small towers add to its overall beauty. A large tank situated near the mosque attaches a natural charan to its religious sanctions.²⁰

10. THE QADAM-I-RASOOL :

The Qadam-I-Rasool is the main burial ground of the Muslims of Cuttack. It contained among others the grave of Mahammad Taqi Khan the Deputy Nazim of Orissa, who died in A.D. 1735. It was a monument of beauty built by Shaujauddin Khan, It contains the foot print of the prophet engraved in a circular stone. The octagonal building has doorways on all cordinal directions. The dome outside is adorned with a golden pinnacle. The inner part of the big dome is covered with a golden pinnacle.²¹ Other Muslim monuments of Cuttack town are *Panjee Shah* of Oriya Bazar, *Bukhari Shah* of Barabati fort, *Malanga Shah* in the compound of General Post Office, Buxi Bazar, *Mastan Shah* on the Cantnoment road, *Sadarkhan Mosque* Shaikh Bazar and the *Fateh Mahammad Mosque* of Oriya Bazar etc.

Thus, Cuttack has great historical importance which speaks about pride and glory of the Orissan people.

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*Research Scholar
P.G. Deptt. of Ancient Indian History
Culture & Archaeology
Utkal University, Vanivihar
Bhubaneswar-4*