

**K**alinga or ancient Odisha, because of its conducive geographical location had played a pioneering role in the maritime relations of India. Being a great maritime power endowed with a number of all seasoned ports and port towns on its coast it had brisk contact with different transoceanic countries such as Sri Lanka, Indonesian islands of Java, Bali, Sumatra and Borneo, Burma, Funan (Cambodia), Siam (Thailand), Champa (Vietnam), Laos, Philippines, China etc. In course of its maritime interaction with those countries, Kalinga not only disseminated its own culture and civilization but also contributed significantly in the dissemination

(Cochin-China) with the exception of three northern districts of Than Hoa, Nghe An and Ha Tinh. It was situated between 18<sup>o</sup> and 10<sup>o</sup> north latitude. It was a long narrow strip of territory sandwiched between the mountains on the west and the sea in the east, and intersected by innumerable spurs of hills running in various directions.<sup>1</sup> The people of Champa were known as *Chams* (the term 'Cham' is derived from the name Champa). The Chams were actively participating in the maritime trade, and articles like camphor, sandalwood, porcelain ware, lead and tin etc., constitute their main items of export. However, the most significant aspect of Chams

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## Kalinga and Champa : A Study in Ancient Maritime Relations

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of Indian culture there. It influenced the history, culture, polity, society and religious life of people of those countries to a considerable extent. Still the remains of that imprint are available in those faraway lands. Kalinga had close maritime contact with the ancient land of Champa. In the present paper, a sincere endeavour has been made to trace out the multifaceted contact of ancient Odisha or Kalinga with Champa in historical perspective.

The ancient Hindu kingdom of Champa comprised the present states of north and south Vietnam or old Annam (excluding Tonkin and

history is that in ancient times they were greatly influenced by the Indian culture though the adoption of some Cham features by the Indians cannot be ruled out.

The discovery of items like shouldered adzes, knobbed ware, glass beads etc., from different sites in India and modern Vietnam (ancient Champa) point to relations between the two regions in pre-historic times.<sup>2</sup> There was also commercial relationship between India and Vietnam in ancient times. According to R.C. Majumdar,<sup>3</sup> the Indians must have been acquainted with Champa by way of trade and

commerce, long before they established their political supremacy in that region. One of the major trade routes between India and China passed through the coast of ancient Champa. The early Indian voyagers and traders arriving on the Malay coast were crossing the Gulf of Siam to reach Oc Eo.<sup>4</sup> The Brahmanical Hinduism of India remarkably influenced the society, culture, religious institutions, literature, art and architecture of Champa. There are references to Vedic sacrifices and ritual practices in the inscriptions of Champa. The Hindu trinity (worship of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesvara or Shiva) was well known in Champa. Icons of various gods and goddesses like Brahma, Vishnu, Indra, Surya, Kubera, Ganesh, Kartikeya, Lakshmi, Sarasvati etc., have also been found from different places of Champa. God Shiva, in Champa was worshipped in both the forms—the human and the *linga*, the later having been more popular in comparison with the image-worship as in India. A number of kings of Champa were well versed in the Vedas and other ancient Indian literatures like the *Dharmashastras*, *Dharmasutras*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Mahabharata* etc. The Chams were very familiar with the contents of the *Ramayana*. King Prakashdharma of Champa (c. 653- c. 670 CE) constructed a temple for Valmiki, the author of the *Ramayana* at Tar Ken, which is a very rare practice in India. *Wen-hsien T'ung-k'ao*, a Chinese work by Ma Tuan-lin gives a clear picture of the Cham society in the second half of the fourth century CE, when it had already received a large measure of Indian culture. From Ma Tuan-lin's accounts it appears that the royal dress, ornaments, the funeral customs and rites of mourning of Champa were similar to those obtaining in India.<sup>5</sup> Buddha images of Amaravati style pertaining to early centuries CE have also

been found from Dong-duong near Danang in central Vietnam.

Kalinga being situated on the coast of Bay of Bengal had close maritime relations with the kingdom of Champa (modern Vietnam). The people of ancient Kalinga like other people of the east coast went to Champa and played there a significant role in the process of Indianisation. They influenced the political, social, economic and religious life of the Chams in a remarkable manner. Though there is no clear cut evidence to the political contact between the two regions it can be said that Simhapura, the capital of Champa was definitely named after the capital of Kalinga.<sup>6</sup> In the southern part of Vietnam, the Vo-Chanh Rock Inscription (on palaeographic grounds assigned to the second or third century CE) which is in Sanskrit refers to the first kingdom in Champa by the royal family of Sri Mara, who was supposed to be a Kalingan.<sup>7</sup> According to the Chinese chronicles, king Sri Mara was a Shaiva by faith.<sup>8</sup> He calls himself in the aforesaid rock edict to have been a Kalingan in origin and a descendant of the Varmas. The rock edict further describes how he showed great mercy and favour to his subjects at the time of his coronation. Thus, a Hindu dynasty was founded in Champa by Sri Mara [a Kalinga descendant] in the second century CE.<sup>9</sup> When there was no heir to the throne, the practice of letting loose an elephant to choose the successor, which was practised in the early medieval period towards the closing years of the Ganga rule in Odisha was also followed in Champa.

The Jain *Uttaradhyayana Sutra*<sup>10</sup> mentions the maritime contact between Kalinga and Champa. Pilgrims as well as traders of Champa, since the time of Mahavira, used to

come to Pithunda (a port of Kalinga) as it was a port town as well as a centre of Jain religion. This Pithunda of *Uttaradhyayana Sutra* has been identified with the Pithunda metropolis of Kalinga mentioned in the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela and the Pityndra metropolis of Ptolemy. The aforementioned Jain text further states that a merchant of Champa, named Palita came to Pithunda for trade and stayed there having married the daughter of a Kalingan merchant.<sup>11</sup> While returning to Champa his wife gave birth to a son in the ship during the voyage.<sup>12</sup> Hence, his son was named as Samudrapala.

The Brahmanical religion prevailed in Champa with the worship and great popularity of Hindu trinity (*trinath* or *tridev*). However, the prevalence of the worship of Vishnu Purushottama together with Lakshmi indicates that Kalinga and Champa were bound together with cultural and commercial ties in olden days. Vishnu was worshipped in Champa as Madhava, Vikram and Hari.<sup>13</sup> Various names of Vishnu like Purushottama, Madhava, Narayana, Hari, Govinda and Vikram are also very popular in Odisha from which it can be inferred that there was close religious and cultural contacts between ancient Odisha and Champa. A famous king of Champa named, Sriprakasdharmas of seventh century CE built a temple for Vishnu Purushottama at Duong-Mong. The worship of Purushottama Vishnu in the kingdom of Champa during the seventh century CE suggests a relationship with the worship of Purushottama Jagannath at Puri, which must have been in practice (though the present temple of Jagannath was not there) by that time in Kalinga.

In the Kautara region of southern Champa the prevalence of *shakti* worship was there during seventh and eighth centuries CE.

Bhagavati Kautaresvari or Devi Bhagavati, for whose worship a beautiful temple was constructed by Vicitrasingh in the eighth century CE was the presiding deity of Champa. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that almost during the same period, goddess Bhagavati worship had started at Rankada or Bankada (present Banapur) on the coast of Kalinga.<sup>14</sup> Hence, from this it appears that there was a close cultural link between ancient Kalinga and Champa during that period.

The Chams being influenced by the Hindu culture did not eat beef, widows did not remarry and the queen performed *sati* after the death of the king.<sup>15</sup> However, from the analysis of Kalingan link with Champa, the important thing which catches our eyes is the use of other name for the Chams, i.e. *Kiu-lien*. It is evident from the Chinese records that in the year c. 137 CE, about 10,000 *Kiu-liens*, a barbarous tribe from beyond the frontier of their territories, attacked their southernmost districts, destroyed the Chinese forts and ravaged the whole country.<sup>16</sup> These people who seem to have possessed great military skill and organisation, ultimately formed the kingdom of Champa with the conquered territory of the Chinese empire.<sup>17</sup> These *Kiu-liens*, whom the Chinese recorded as 'a barbarous tribe', were not actually barbarous but a civilized people, otherwise how could they establish a kingdom capturing territories from the Chinese empire. They have left epigraphic records in Sanskrit. A.P. Patnaik<sup>18</sup> says that, these *Kiu-liens* were quite likely a branch of the *kula* people of Burma whom Gerini has described as people from Kalinga. According to Gerini,<sup>19</sup> the term *kula* now employed in Burma to designate western foreigners in general and the people from south India in particular. H.B. Sarkar,<sup>20</sup> a dedicated scholar on the history of South-East Asia, has

clearly identified the *Kula* people of Burma with the Kalinga people. It is quite possible that these *kula* people or *Kiu-liens* migrated from Kalinga in large number either by land route or through sea to Burma and to further lower regions of Indo-China, sometime during the first century CE or still earlier period. Now we find place-names like Kuliana, Kolipala (Kolapala), Kulisuta (Kulasuta), Pariakoli (Parikula), Kolidiha (Kuladiha) and Kanjakula etc., in the Mayurbhanja district of Odisha to indicate the ancient abode of *kula* people of Kalinga before their migration.<sup>21</sup>

The contact between Kalinga and Champa can also be established archaeologically. The discovery of bar celts from the excavated site of Sankarjang in the Angul district of Odisha revealed that this earliest musical instruments of Odisha was parallel to those unearthed in Vietnam.<sup>22</sup> It is also significant to mention that the *srivatsa* motif of the Hathigumpha Inscription of emperor Kharavela became later on enormously common in the coins of Oc Eo in Vietnam to Arakan.<sup>23</sup>

Like Bhubaneswar in Odisha, Mi-son in Champa was known as the temple city because of the construction of a number of Hindu temples. The Cham temple scheme, like the early Odishan temples consists of a main shrine in the centre and a secondary one. All the shrines of Champa were arranged on a square terrace and above these rose three towers. The window-openings were of exquisite design having 'baluster-shaped mullions' like the Rajarani temple at Bhubaneswar in Odisha.<sup>24</sup> The decorative motifs of Mi-son group of temples, particularly *makara torana* (crocodile shaped archways) reminds us one of beautifully carved *makara* heads in the archways in front of the Muktesvara temple of Bhubaneswar. The form of dancing Shiva

balancing on the back of the bull itself, a type very frequent in Odisha and Bengal is also represented on some monuments of Champa.<sup>25</sup> There is similarity between the script of Kalinga and those used in the fourth century CE Cho-Dinh and Hon-Cut inscriptions of king Bhadravarman.<sup>26</sup>

From the above discussion in the light of both literary and archaeological evidences, we can conclude that Kalinga or ancient Odisha had brisk commercial as well as cultural contact with the kingdom of ancient Champa.

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2. P.P.Mishra, *Cultural Rapprochement between India and South East Asia*, New Delhi, 2005, p.101.
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4. Oc Eo was an important port of ancient Champa and from second century CE to sixth century CE, it served as an 'entrepot' for the voyagers. It has yielded beads, seals with Sanskrit inscriptions, gold medallions and rare piece of statuary which indicate its contact with the Indians during the ancient period.
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