

An Overview Upon Some Existing Palaces of Odisha

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Man lived on earth as one of the animals like other animals on the earth but his creative genius make him different from other species. Through the gradual process of evolution both biological and technological, human being gradually acquire some short of knowledge to construct their own shelter by observing certain natural phenomenon occurring around him. Then for certain period he took shelter inside the cave. After that he learned how to adjust himself in these changing circumstances. The concept of structural house started in the Mesolithic period and a settled life started at the time of Neolithic and the village life started at the time of Chalcolithic. In Iron Age the settled life and political life became more galvanized. The concept of urbanization goes back to third millennium B.C in form of Indus valley civilization. Second urbanization in India started in 6th century BCE in middle and upper Ganga valley. This process of urbanization again appears in next stage of development at the time of medieval period and it reached its zenith under the British. In between several regional political dynasties contributed a lot for the growth of urban centres. Mostly these urban centres grow on the basis of combination of trade, commerce and political centre. Head of the trading community, caravan, and caravan leaders by virtue of their

wealth they constructed palatial buildings. In other word rulers or political head of a region or state built palaces not only for residence but also aiming at fulfilling some administrative requirement that is why palace assumes unusual form, some time gigantic and grandiose one and these are centre of all political activities. It controls economic and politics of a state and it also serves as a centre of art, architecture and literature. This is a common outline about the palatial structure and building, which reflects will and test of the ruler.

Similar set of growth was occurred in Odisha. It occupies an area of 115,707sq kms and is bounded by the Bay of Bengal in the east, Chhattisgarh in the west, Jharkhand and West Bengal in the north and Andhra Pradesh in the south. The very name ancient Odisha conjures up a picture of the regions full of mountainous ranges, dense forest, gurgling fast-flowing rivers and the forest dwelling tribal people living in caves and other protective place. The state has preserved a number of palaces, which stands witness to its history.. So far as political history of Odisha is concerned, Nandas are the 1st ruling dynasty in Odisha as reflected in Hatigumpha Inscription but they are invaders probably they didn't have any palatial residence in ancient Odisha.



Figure-1 Sisupalagarh

After Nandas the next ruler was Kharavela. He had a capital named as Kalinganagari but it has yet to be properly identified. B.B Lal the excavator of Sisupalagarh tried to identify Sisupalagarh with capital of Kharavela i.e., Kalinganagari, by analysing the first year experience of Kharavela, as ruler he repaired his cyclone ravaged capital. B.B Lal found some short of disturbing element while excavating Sisupalagarh, comparing both epigraphic record and excavation findings he identified Sisupalagarh as capital of king Kharavela. All the early presidential palaces are highly fortified and the buildings were not as in situ that's why this category of sites is studied under category of fort and fortification, not as palace. In his Hatigumpha inscription he mentioned a line which mention the king Kharavela constructed a palace named as 'Mahavijaya Prasada' or 'great victory palace' which he built in his 9th regnal year in cost of 38 hundred thousand¹. After Kharavela, Sailodbhabas, Bhoulmakaras and other dynasties ruled over Odisha in different time and palace but there palace is yet to be properly identified. Then the Somavamsi started their rule from 9th century CE to 12th Century CE. Basically the palaces of Somavamsi period were in ruined state or not discovered yet. A Charter grant of Janmejaya I was found from Sonepur region and it was mentioned in the inscription that this inscription

was issued from the royal residence of Sonepur,² so this inscription we got that there must be a palace of Somavamsi existed in Sonepur from where this inscription was issued. In Jajpur a palace of Somavamsi period was found. It is stated that the Jajpur name was derived from Jajnapur or Jajatipur which was based on the name of Jajati Kesari and also for another cause that he performed here Dasaswamedha Yajna and also he built here a royal palace and a court.³ Mahasivagupta V or Karnadeva's Ratnagiri copper plate described Solonapur (which is identified with Solapur in Puri district) as the residence of queen Karpura-sri,⁴ the wife of Karnadeva. Another example i.e. in the Cuttack copper plate which was discovered from the record room of Cuttack Collector, the 1st line of that is stated as follows :

Om Svasti Murasîma-samāvāsita[h] srîmato vijayakatakât.

Dr. Fleet explained this line as though the Somavamsi had their residence at Murasima (identified with Bolangir or Patnagarh) but this charter from *katak* i.e. present Cuttack but later scholars opined that though the Somavamsi had their residence at Murasima but the identification of *kataka* with present Cuttack was not correct.⁵



Figure2 Barabati fort

Then the Gangas shifted their capital from Mukhalingam of Andhra Pradesh to Cuttack i.e. Abhinava Baranasi Cuttack, that Cuttack identified with present Barabati. Barabati was excavated by Archaeological Survey of India. Size of its pillar and finding of elephant skeleton, its stone rampart, moat, and gateway prove continuity and legacy of ancient Indian tradition. From Harappan period the tradition of protective wall around a residential area continues till the medieval period. By the early historic time these protective walls were made with mud like Sisupalagarh and by the time of Ganga these earthen rampart transform into stone wall. So it is stated that may be a royal residence existed here. In Barabati, except pillars all other remnants found in form of heap.



Figure-3 Gajapati palace

After Gangas, the Gajapati Dynasty came to the power they somehow regarded as descendant of Gangas. These Gajapati rulers have made a revolutionary achievement in context of palace architecture⁶. The most remarkable one is palace of Paralakhemundi or Brundaban palace, which was constructed by Krushna Chandra Singh Deo around 1835 CE, in purpose of beautification of their ruling area.⁷

Except the Somavamsis, Gangas and Gajapatis; there were some minor rulers who

contributed much more thing to Odishan culture and architecture basically in field of palaces. The remains of their palace were still found in some places. Among them are Bhanja Dynasty, Bhoi Dynasty, Virata Bhujanga Dynasty, Naga Dynasty etc.



Figure-4 Bhanja palace of Baripada

If we look into the history of Bhanja rulers scholars stated that Bhanjas were divided into two groups they are Bhanjas of Khinjali and second one was Bhanjas of Khijingakota. According to R. C Majumdar and T. N Ramachandra the origin of Bhanjas started from Gupta period and they ruled upto 1947 CE or 1949 CE. The remains of palace of these Bhanja rulers are found in many places. In Haripur Maharaja Harihara Bhanja founded a township in 1400 CE and made it capital of Bhanja dynasty, after him this place was named as Hariharpur or Haripur. A palace is found in this area, this palace is a plain rectangular block of building made with brick and covered with lime plaster. In the north-western side of this palace a Radhamohana temple was found. After Haripur, Baripada regarded as next capital of Bhanja rulers in beginning of 19th century CE. The palace of Maharaja palace is the biggest building in this town. The Kichakeswari temple was found inside the palace. It is believed that Kichakeswari was

presiding deity of the Bhanja rulers. The palace has consisted with 3 courtyard i.e the durbar hall is the 1st courtyard. The second courtyard



Figure-5 Belgadia palace

contains the Kichakeswari temple, Maharaja's office, the audience hall and a big pendal and the third courtyard contains the Laxmi Narayan temple and a big hall. This palace now functions as the Maharaja Purnachandra College. Other palaces of Bhanja rulers are found in Gopinathpur. It is stated that this palace of Gopinathpur was residential area of the Bhanja kings of Ghumusar. The scholars have identified this place with Kulada Kataka of Bhanjas. Except it at Khiching the remains of two forts are found, one is Kichakagada and another one is Viratagada; from excavation report it came to know that these forts were perhaps the residential area of Bhanja rulers.⁸

The Bhoi dynasty was founded by Govinda Vidyadhara in 1542 CE and ruled till 1560 CE. They made Khurdha as their capital during the Muslim invasion. So may be during Govinda Vidyadhara they shifted their capital. In Khurdha at the foothill of Barunei hill there is a fort, which is now in ruined state but some traces of wall and rampant are still found. Except this thing there were some mounds which scholars opined that this mound may be the palace of Bhoi kings.⁹

In context of Naga Dynasty who succeeded Gangas in Kalahandi area has come from Chotnagpur area, they regarded themselves

as descendant of God Pundarika. The Ganga ruler Jagannathdev who ruled over Kalahandi area has a daughter named as Surekha, who married to Raghunath Sai a prince of Naga dynasty of Chotnagpur. After that Jagannath Dev went on pilgrimage but when he returned to his territory his son-in-law not allowed him to enter into Kalahandi area. After that in 1005 he conquered the throne of Kalahandi. From 1005 CE ruled up to 1947 CE. The remains of Naga Dynasty palaces are still found. Inside this palace Gopinath and Manikeswari temple were found. It is assumed that Manikeswari was the presiding deity of Naga dynasty. But till 1850 CE Junagarh was the capital of Naga Dynasty. Junagarh literally meaning is old fort or old capital, once there was a huge palace but it was now not in traceable condition.¹⁰ In 15 century CE Phanimukuta was the feudatory ruler of Gajapati king Kapileswaradeva. He founded the Kaptipada area and he made his capital at Koinsari, where he built a fort. Phanimukuta was succeeded by his son Vasanta Virata. Then gradually from Vasanta Virata the Virata Bhujanga dynasty was started. During the war of Purusottamadeva with Kanchi and Vijayanagara rulers Vasanta Virata fought very bravely. After that he assumed various titles like Jaya Bhujanga, Virata Bhujanga, Abhinaba Bhujanga and Parikshita Bhujanga. He



Figure-6 Viratgarh palace

was succeeded by his son Jayakumara Virata Bhujanga, whose great grandson was Saratachandra jaya Bhujanga, who has transferred his capital from Koinsari to Kaptipada. For that reason the remains of capital still yet found. It is also known as Koinsarigada. Here the remains of palaces are found. People stated that the some descendant of Virata Bhujanga Dynasty is still living there. After this Kaptipada shows up the next remain of virata bhujanga dynasty in form of palaces.



Figure 7 Nilagiri palace

The list of palaces of Odisha is too wide because this includes the palaces of major and minor rulers, ex-zamindars etc. Still now the remains of these palaces scattered in various area. There are also some examples existed where the remains of palatial structure are found but the dynasty and the date of construction is still in darkness. The earliest example of a ruined palace which is in form of a mound is Asuragada. It was dated from 3rd century BCE to 5th century CE. The excavation work was undertaken by Sambalpur University and Culture Department of the Government of Odisha. Near river lies the ruins of a fort called Asuragada. It is rectangular in shape and has four gateways in four directions. The central part of this fort contains a high mound. The scholars and excavator stated that it may be the ruins of a palace. Other examples are like

Itagada, it was found inside the thick jungle of Badakaman of Kaptipada subdivision. Here the ruins of a large big fort were found known as Itagada. Inside this fort the remains of walls of a palace are still found. Next to Itagada another ruined palace is found at Baidyanath Kshetra of Mayurbhanj. Where the Kakharua raja who ruled from 1454 CE to 1456 CE was killed by his minister Govinda Vidyadhara. At Managovinda which is situated very nearer to Mantri area, the remains of palace is found. According to local people it was the palace of Govinda Vidyadhara. Who after conquering the throne entitled himself as Managovinda and after him the place was named as Managovinda. In Hindol of Dhenkanal district the ex-chief's palace found near a hill range. The Athagarhpatna or Athagarh in Cuttack district also contains a palace of ex- rulers inside the Langalabeni fort and it was surrounded by hills.¹²

After all these palaces there are also some palaces which are in good condition and still speaking up the history of those rulers.



Figure-8 Dasapalla palace

Rani Bakhri or the Queen's palace of Sambalpur - According to recent news the conservation work has started in this palace and the State Government has sanctioned one crore rupees for the conservation work. This palace was built by King Baliyar Singh for his daughter in 1650 CE.

Bhanja Palace of Baripada, Mayurbhanj-This Bhanja palace was situated near famous

Rasikaraya temple and one Jagannath temple of Baripada. The palace and both the temples were under the supervision of A.S.I Department and State Government. The local people admire a lot the work of Government and A.S.I Department.

Ranpur palace of Nayagarh -The ruler Ramachandra Narendra has built a palace at Ranpur in Nayagarh district. It was still in good condition and proper observation. Except it the T.B Hospital of Ranpur was previously the palace of Ranpur Raj family.

Kanika palace of Kendrapada - Kanika palace of Kendrapada known as Kanika Rajbati was constructed by King Agenda Narayan Bhanj Deo of Bhanja Dynasty. The construction of this palace was started around 1909 CE. A floor of this palace is converted into museum. When the members of UNESCO visited the Bhitarkanika they also visited this palace.

Jatan Nagar palace of Dhenkanal - This palace is situated upon a hill range. It was built during the durbar rule in Dhenkanal. The king who built this palace was very rude in nature, he tortured the labours who were engaged in the construction work and some of them were put as prisoner in this palace. On the basis of this legend the palace was named as Jatan or Jatana Nagar, the city where the people were tortured. It consists of around hundred rooms and a tank was also there near this palace. But now a days it is marked as a abandoned palace but still it is in good condition. Except the above palaces there are also some palaces which were in good condition like Aul Palace or Ali Palace of Kendrapada which was built during the Dev Dynasty in 1590 CE, Nilagiri in Balasore, Dasapalla Palace of Nayagarh, Khallikote, etc. Most of these palatial buildings were influenced by Persian architecture during the period of Sultan and Mughal but most of the existing palaces of Odisha belong to British period with European Influence model.



Figure-9 Kanika palace

Like the temples the palaces also bear the architectural works and periodical developments but with the passing of time these were ruined and there are also no specific sources or documents which will speak about the palaces of various king.

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