

---

# The Early Historical Culture in Peddapalli and Jagitial Districts of Telangana - A Study

---

Raju Balgoori\*

\*Assistant Professor (PT) Department of History, Kakatiya University, Warangal (T.S.), India.

Corresponding Email: \*[raju.balgoori@gmail.com](mailto:raju.balgoori@gmail.com)

Received: 25 May 2021

Accepted: 01 August 2021

Published: 06 September 2021

**Abstract:** *It is now an increasingly recognized fact that in early India, the pace of historical change varied from region to region, and even the process of change was not quite identical everywhere. To a large extent this divergence is explained by the obvious influence exerted by the ecology of each region on its socio-economic pattern in the ancient period. Peddapalli and Jagitial districts located in the northern region of the Indian state of Telangana. These districts lie to the south of mighty river Godavari. By virtue of its proximity to the river Godavari, These districts has been the cradle of culture and civilization through centuries dating back to the early phases of the dawn of history. . The recent archaeological operations at Dhulikatta and Peddabankur in Peddapalli district, and Kotilingala in Jagitial district have thrown ample light on the history of the Satavahanas in these districts. The present paper deals with the early historical culture, early historical religious architecture and objects of early historical sites in Peddapalli and Jagitial districts of Telangana.*

**Keywords:** *Archaeological Excavations, Dhulikatta, Early Historical Culture, Early Religious Architecture, Kotilingala.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is now an increasingly recognized fact that in early India, the pace of historical change varied from region to region, and even the process of change was not quite identical everywhere. Transition from a tribal to an agricultural economy with potentialities of urbanization and formation of state, took place earlier in the Gangetic plains than in the peninsula. To a large extent this divergence is explained by the obvious influence exerted by the ecology of each region on its socio-economic pattern in the ancient period. Within the two broad geographical divisions of the subcontinent - north and the south-there are sub-regions offering variations in geology, topography etc. which left their indelible impression on the course of their early history. This is probably even truer of the Deccan and the far south than of the north. Study of a region's early history is therefore, important in order to understand the nature of the cultural pattern generated by these factors.



Peddapalli and Jagitial districts located in the northern region of the Indian state of Telangana. Peddapalli town is an educational hub and Ramagundam for Industrial hub. Peddapalli is also famous for agricultural occupation. Peddapalli town is well known for its multi-cultural and linguistic diversity. Ramgundam Godavari is only the largest city in this district and 5<sup>th</sup> largest city in Telangana State.<sup>1</sup> Jagitial is the district headquarters of the district. A railway line connecting Jagitial and Peddapalli via Karimnagar is available. NH 63 passes through the district.<sup>2</sup> These districts lie to the south of mighty river Godavari. By virtue of its proximity to the river Godavari, These districts have been the cradle of culture and civilization through centuries dating back to the early phases of the dawn of history. These are very potential districts containing about a hundred historical sites and studded with numerous magnificent temples big and small, rich in variety and splendour. The recent archaeological operations at Dhulikatta and Peddabankur in Peddapalli district, and Kotilingala in Jagitial district have thrown ample light on the history of the Satavahanas in these districts.<sup>3</sup>

The different rulers are the Satavahanas (B.C. 230-A.D. 220), the Chalukyas of Vemulawada (A.D. 750-973), the Western Chalukyas Kalyani (A.D. 973-1159), Polavasa Chiefs (A.D. 1080-1138) and the Kakatiyas of Warangal (A.D. 1159-1323) have ruled this land successively. After the fall of the Kakatiyas, the Rachakonda and Devarakonda Velamas (A.D. 1361-1482) had their way over this region for some time and then the Qutub Shahis (A.D. 1518-1687), the Mughals (A.D. 1687-1724) and the Asaf Jahis (A.D. 1724-1948) ruled over these districts during the late Medieval and Modern periods.

## **2. The Early Historical Culture of Peddapalli and Jagitial Districts:**

The Andharas are an ancient race of people mentioned by Aitareya Brahmana in association with Sabaras, Pulindas and Mutibas. These people are known to the Aryans of the north from B.C. 600. They are also known to the Greeks and Romans of Europe. They were contemporaries of the Nanda, Maurya and Sishunaga dynasties, which ruled over Magadha Kingdom (B.C. 600-300). The Buddhist Jataka stories contain several references of the Andhras. Asmaka was among the sixteen Mahajanapadas of sixth century B.C. and the Buddhist literature calls it an Andhra Janapada. Asmaka or Asmaka (Present north Telangana districts) was situated on the banks of Godavari with its capital at Potali, the modern Bodhan in Nizamabad district. According to Megasthenes, the Andhras built numerous villages, 30 fortified towns and raised an army of one lakh infantry, two thousand cavalry and one thousand elephants.<sup>4</sup> It is evident that the Andhras were powerful in the south by the time the Mauryas came to power in Magadha Kingdom. In Vayupurana Asmaka and Mulaka are mentioned as the scions of Ikshvaku family. Mahabharata speaks of the royal sage Asmaka as having founded the city of Podana. Panini makes a mention of Asmaka which was in the interior of the Deccan and watered by the Godavari. The Buddhist Suttanipatha refers to Asmaka lying on the banks of Godavari.<sup>5</sup> The Rock Edict XIII of Ashoka reveals that the Andhras honoured the doctrines of Buddhism. It appears that the Andhras might have been divided into a number of small kingdoms in Godavari valley. A good number of early historical mounds and Satavahana sites are noticed in the north-west Telangana. The Department of Archaeology and Museums of the state of Andhra Pradesh conducted large-scale excavations at Peddabankur and Dhulikatta in Peddapalli district during 1968-1974. The excavation work at Kotilingala in Jagitial district, another early historical site continued upto 1984.



The excavation at Kotilingala in Jagitial district witnessed six layers, which have thrown new light on the pre-Satavahana rulers as well as king Chimuka Satavahana the founder of the dynasty and his successor Satakarni I. A good number of coins of King Rano Samagopa were found in all six layers, a layer below the coins of the king Satavahana. Coins of other pre-Satavahana rulers obtained from the same site are of Gobhada, Narana and Kamvayasiri apart from pre-Satavahana Talavaras. Pot shreds, terracotta objects and beads found in the sixth layer indicate a post Mauryan Palaeography i.e., first half of the second century B.C.<sup>6</sup> Coins of king Satavahana and Satakarni I are found in layers from V to I and those of Chimuka (Simuka) Satavahana only from layers III to I. Thus the stratigraphy at Kotilingala right from post-Mauryan to Satavahana period is quite undisturbed and distinct. P.V. Parabrahma Sastry had traced the sequence and evolution of the symbols and motifs depicted on these coins that corroborate the stratigraphic and chronological sequence and point out the successive rulers of this region with its capital at Kotilingala. Satavahana and his successors continued some of the main as well as auxiliary symbols used by the pre-Satavahanas. The Ujjain symbol used first by Samagopa is found on most of the Satavahana coins. Swastika is found on all the coins.<sup>7</sup> Samagopa appears to have been the most popular among the Pre-Satavahana rulers as his coins are found profusely in all layers. The coins of the first ruler Satavahana compare well with those of Samagopa. Thakur Rajaram Singh taking into consideration the coins of Pre-Satavahana rulers Rano Gobhada, Narana, Kamvaya and Rano Samagopa gave them the new name belonging to a dynasty called Andhra-Gopa dynasty that ruled this region earlier than the Satavahanas.<sup>8</sup> It is generally believed that Simuka was the founder of the Satavahana dynasty. But the stratigraphy of Kotilingala excavation establishes the fact that there was definitely a king Satavahana prior to Satakarni I and Simuka and hence he should be the founder of the Satavahana dynasty. This Satavahana as the evidence indicates was possibly a general under Samagopa the local ruler at Kotilingala from whom he appears to have acquired the throne either forcefully or peacefully at an opportune time.<sup>9</sup> The Satavahanas also known as Andhra-Bhrityas in view of the fact that Satavahana the founder of the family was in the service of Samagopa.

V.V. Krishna Sastry opines that the Peddapalli region is marked by a number of early historical sites almost in every alternate village. It is likely that the political nucleus of the whole or the part of Deccan might have been situated in this region, with Kotilingala as its centre; secondly the population during the Satavahana period must have increased manifold; thirdly it might be a commercially important region traversed by ancient trade routes; and lastly agriculture being the main occupation, they found the black soil plain congenial.<sup>10</sup> The mounds with early historical pottery such as red polished, black and red, coarse red and large number of brick bats are noticed at Chinnabankur, Vemnur, Kachapur, Bodagutta near Kannala, Bompalli, Rachapalli, Paidichintalapalli, Khadeem Kanagarthy and several other places in Peddapalli district. Most of the towns and villages were raised in the middle of arable lands. Peddabankur was a Satavahana village, while Dhulikatta (Peddapalli district) and Kotilingala (Jagitial) were walled towns of Andhras.

#### **A. Peddabankur at Peddapalli District:**

Peddabankur, a kilometre away from a rivulet called Hussaini vagu is a small village in Peddapalli Mandal situated adjacent to Karimnagar-Peddapalli P.W.D. Road. Jasper, chalcedony, crystal and quartz stones available here were useful for making stone tools and

ornaments. The excavations conducted here revealed many brick structures, cisterns, wells and elliptical rubble structures besides pottery, iron, copper and terracotta objects including a big collection of Silver Punch-Marked, Roman and Satavahana coins. This village had no walls around. Two brick structures measuring 30x40 meters. And the third one 16.80x15.80 meters were exposed during the excavation. Wealthy individual families evidently occupied these. Inside these enclosures traces of houses, wells, cisterns etc came to light. The entrances were 3 meters. Broad for vehicular traffic. Some enclosures have even two or three wells, most of which were near to the walls. The used waters of the well were let out to soak pits lined with terracotta rings.<sup>11</sup>

### **B. Dhulikatta at Peddapalli District:**

Dhulikatta in Julapalli Mandal is situated on the right bank of Hussaini vagu about a kilometre from Vadkapur and 10 Kms. to the west of Peddabankur. Dhulikatta may be a corrupt name of Dhulikota or Dhulikatakam, which literally means a mud fort. The villagers point out Rajulakunta and Yenugula cheruvu and so on in the nearby areas. The ancient habitation at Dhulikatta was a pre-Satavahana town and was a nucleus of political activity during Satavahana period. Excavation in the middle of the mud fort revealed a palace complex and the residential quarters, which have seen several phases of construction and they are enclosed by a massive brick wall of about 3 mts.height.<sup>12</sup> The structural plans are not clear as most of the bricks from the buildings were removed and carried away by the villagers for their houses. While removing the filling from a well, a beautiful ivory button-seal inscribed as “Ajanisiriya Game Kumariya” in Brahmi characters of 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C is recorded. Spacious halls paved with brick, granaries, wells, a soakage pit, and brick structures provided with sewage noticed here signify a period of prosperity. The habitation at this site is believed to have continued from 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. to 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.

### **C. Kotilingala at Jagtial District:**

Kotilingala situated at the confluence of Peddavagu and the Godavari in Eligaid Mandal is about 49 kms. from district headquarter Jagtial town and 5 kms. from Munulagutta. The early historical mound with a height of about 6 meters. above the plains is roughly 50 hectares in extent. It is the biggest mound so far discovered. As at Dhulikatta (Peddapalli district) the mound at Kotilingala is also encompassed by a mud fort with several gates opening towards the cardinal points. Adjacent to the bank of Godavari the fort wall runs to a distance of more than 300 meters. The bricks used for the structures measured 50 to 55 cms. long most of which were ransacked by the villagers. In fact the entire village is now found built with early historical bricks. Towards the north of the fort and adjacent to the water course of the river, the brick structures squares and rectangular in plan noticed here indicate the presence of a wharf, which is reminiscent of a once commercially and politically important town.<sup>13</sup>

On the way to Munulagutta from Kotilingala a few label inscriptions in Brahmi characters of 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. were noticed by P.V.Parabrahma Sastry. The sand stone pillar lying in the fields contains a label inscription, which reads “Nagagopinikaya” in bold double-lined ornamental characters of first century A.D. The mud fort at Kotilingala was strong and safe because it was enclosed by the river Godavari on the north and Kapparraopet vagu flowing on the east and south. The fortifications are found ruined due to flooding and erosion. The bastions now appearing like high mounds are noticed at all the corners of the fortification. In view of the

historical finds, it can be inferred that the site was once a stronghold of early Satavahanas.<sup>14</sup> In fact the early historical site of Kotilingala needed large scale excavations, but that could not be done to paucity of funds and scarcity of staff. If the excavation work taken up here more than two decades ago had continued further, many more priceless historical finds and facts would have come to light changing the entire early history of Telugu country. But unfortunately today the chances for further excavations are in doldrums as the site is likely to get submerged in the waters of the newly proposed Sripadasagar project coming up on river Godavari near Yellampalli village.<sup>15</sup>

### **3. Early Religious Architecture and Objects of These Districts:**

None of the sites excavated or explored in these districts gave evidence of the temples of Brahmanical origin. A single brick cell, excavated at Peddabankur in Peddapalli district appeared like a temple without giving us any knowledge as to what deity it was dedicated to. The brick temple measured 5.30 x 4.90 meters. The evidence is, however, not clear in the absence of a deity. The religious beliefs may still have centred round the local primitive forms of worship and rituals. They early inhabitants be lived in village gods and goddesses, tree and serpent cults and probably practiced the worship of spirits. The worship of serpent (Naga cult) is attested by a figure of a snake made of iron from Peddabankur.<sup>16</sup> A Terracotta sealing of Gajalakshmi datable to around 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. is noticed in the excavations at Peddabankur. The goddess is shown standing naked in a lotus pool and being bathed by two elephants with pails in the trunks.<sup>17</sup>

The excavations have yielded several archaic terracotta female figurines of Mother Goddess. A nude goddess sitting with legs apart represents the cult of Mother Goddess of great antiquity. Such figurines are reported from Yeleshvaram, Nagarjunakonda and Kondapur. It had great popularity among the urban as well rural populace.<sup>18</sup>

The archaic Mother Goddesses of Peddabankur are handmade with protruded and pointed breasts and the hands depicted like pointed masses. One figurine is shown with out-stretched arms and arms lifted. The second type hold a bunch of fruits in her right hand and a parrot perching on her left arm is shown nudging the breast of Goddess with its beak. In the third type the Goddess holds her prominent breasts with her hands from below.<sup>19</sup>

A bronze sculpture of Mother Goddess, found early levels of Dulikatta, assignable to 2- 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. is holding a baby in the left hand while her right hand is resting on her knees.<sup>20</sup> She is left seated on a pedestal. The figure of a mother and the child is of the ankadhatri type and represents the fertility cult. It is evident from the above objects that people had faith in the fertility cult in the early historical times.

#### **A. The Buddhist Stupa at Dulikatta in Peddapalli District:**

The excavations at Dulikatta revealed a Buddhist stupa. The stupa consisted of a brick drum of 2 meters height over a single layer of rubble basement. The anda or the dome rises over the garbha to height of 5 meters crowned with a harmika and chatra. A square enclosure

around the drum filled up with bricks is raised to strengthen and also it served as a pradakshinapatha. During the second phase of constructional activity the drum was enlarged which is 36 meters in diameter. It is built with bricks entirely. The remnants of harmika and chatravali were found in the excavations.<sup>21</sup>

The garbha of the stupa was decorated with 47 carved Ayaka slabs which were seen mostly in tact on the spot. Most of them are known to have been shifted to Karimnagar, where they are placed in the local museum. Sculptural representations on the slabs include five hooded Muchilinda Naga, Bodhi tree, Mahabhinishkramana etc.

Muchilinda Naga is believed to have sheltered Buddha for a week from a terrible storm. But nowhere else he has been so glorified as on the stupas of Andhradesa particularly at Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda.<sup>22</sup> Similar glorification of Muchilinda Naga is noticed on the ayaka slabs of Dulikatta, the figures of which are quite similar to those of Amravati and Nagarjunakonda.<sup>23</sup>

On the slabs at Dulikatta, the Muchilinda Naga, a five hooded cobra, protecting Lord Buddha, symbolically represented by his feet, is exquisitely delineated. It contains a label in brahmi inscription datable to 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. which reads as “Gahapathino Pathalasa Mathuya Danam”.<sup>24</sup>

Another slab contains the figures of ladies standing with floral offerings. The ladies are profusely decorated with cubical ear ornaments stamped with beautiful lotus medallions, their profuse hair made into side knots. They have broad necklaces, waist belts and beaded wristlets.

As there is no anthropomorphic representation of Buddha, the stupa may belong to the Hinayana sect. Buddha is represented here symbolically by the chatra, padukas, dharmachakra, stupa etc. the Brahmi characters of label inscriptions suggest that this stupa had its origin in early 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.

### **B. The Stupa at Pashigon in Jagitial District:**

There was a small stupa on a hillock at Pashigon, hamlet of Stambhampalli village in Dharmapuri Mandal of Jagitial district. The site situated about 3kms. Away from Godavari lies on the right side of the P.W.D. Road leading from Jagitial to Lakshettipet. The glittering casing slabs on the hillock ever attracted the attention of the passengers travelling by bus from a long distance. It contained only six Ayaka standing erect one beside the other, while one of the slabs was found broken into pieces. But unfortunately this stupa is no more extant now, as it was ruined in December 1999. However the remnants of the stupa are shifted to Karimnagar, where they are given the shape of a mini stupa, which is erected in the back-yard of the local Archaeological Museum. The slabs of this stupa contain the designs of pilasters, vases and full blown lotuses.<sup>25</sup>

Pashigoan, where once the stupa stood before is a Satavahana site as evidenced by the visible layers of a big hall built with Satavahana bricks to the south of the stupa. This hall rectangular in shape might be a monastery intended for the monks. Generally the dwelling houses of the monks from an important adjunct of Buddhist establishment.<sup>26</sup>

### **C. The Stupa at Mirzampet in Peddapalli District:**

An early historical mound is noticed at Pochampalli, hamlet of Mirzampet in Srirampur Mandal in Peddapalli district. The site, lying beside the river Maner, is about 36 kms. to the east of Paddapalli. When the villager Anumandla Venkataiah started digging the construction of a well near his house, a small Buddhist stupa built in stone was unearthed in 1994.<sup>27</sup> It is astonishing



that the relics of Buddha, which were not found in the stupas at Dulikatta and Pashigoan, are stated to have been noticed here in a casket as revealed by the native of this place Late M. Lakshminarayana, who was then working as a Technical Assistant and Guide Lecturer at Karimnagar Museum. It is interesting that this hamlet Pochampalli lies just beside Gumpula village, where a megalithic site containing about 50 burials is found.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Peddapalli and Jagitial districts located in the northern region of the Indian state of Telangana and lie to the south of mighty river Godavari. By virtue of its proximity to the river Godavari, These districts has been the cradle of culture and civilization through centuries dating back to the early phases of the dawn of history. The recent archaeological operations at Dhulikatta and Peddabankur in Peddapalli district and Kotilingala in Jagitial district have thrown ample light on the history of the Satavahanas in these districts. In fact the early historical sites of Kotilingala and Peddabankur needed large scale excavations, but that could not be done to paucity of funds and scarcity of staff. If the excavation work taken up here more than two decades ago had continued further, many more priceless historical finds and facts would have come to light changing the entire early history of Telugu country.

#### **5. REFERENCES**

1. Census Hand Book, Peddapalli District, Pedpalli, 2020, p.3.
2. Ibid.
3. Archaeological Excavations at Kotilingala in 1984 and Dhulikatta in 1964-78.
4. V.V. Krishna Sastry, The Proto and Early Historical Cultures of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, 1983, p.124.
5. Ibid., pp.119,120.
6. S.J. Mangalam, "Presidential Address" Ancient History, Section-I, Proceedings of APHC, Vol. XXIII, 1999, pp.14, 15.
7. Ibid., p.19.
8. Thakur Rajaram Singh, "New light on Early Andhra Satavahana History" Proceedings of APHC, Vol.VII, 1983, pp. 21, 22.
9. S.J.Mangalam, Op.cit., pp.14, 15.
10. V.V. Krishna Sastry, Op.cit., p.123. [11] Ibid., pp.124&134.
11. Ibid., pp.136-138.
12. Ibid., pp.126-132.
13. J. Ramanaiah, History and Culture of Karimnagar District, Jagitial, 2008, p.26. [15] Ibid., pp. 26,27.
14. V.V. Krishna Sastry, Op.cit., plate No.76.
15. Ibid., plate No.104.
16. B. Rajendhra Prasad, Art of South India, Andhra Pradesh, Sundeep Prakshan, Delhi, 1980, p.55.
17. V.V. Krishna Sastry, Op.cit., plates Nos.93,94,95.
18. Ibid., plate No.82.
19. J. Ramanaiah, Op.cit., p.28.



20. C. Sivaramamurti, Early Andhra Art and Iconography, Hyderabad, 1979, p.5.
21. Ibid., plates Nos.14 & 22.
22. J. Ramanaiah, Op.cit., p.29. [25] Ibid., pp.29,30.
23. B. Rajendhra Prasad, Op.cit., p.26.
24. J. Ramanaiah, Op.cit., p.31.