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KINGDOM AT THE CROSSROADS: GEOPOLITICS OF KHURDA KINGDOM IN EARLY MODERN ORISSA

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine how political crises of mid 16th century became the centrifugal force for establishment of new state of Khurda within the unexplored strategic mountain range of coastal Orissa; and how the state took the territorial advantage from the pan-Indian Empires that were going through a major political crisis. However, when the state of Khurda tried to expand her hegemony from the mountain ranges to the productive alluvial tract and religious-ritual center of the old empire, it faced utmost external invasion. The state has succeeded in taking advantage of natural protections provided by the forests and hills of the geo-political region of Khurda, where its rulers had concentrated military strength in the forts and attempted to hold the fertile alluvial land of the area around the temple town of Puri, which provided politico-ritual legitimacy to the kingdom of Khurda. Nevertheless, the contention over the fertile alluvial land of Puri resulted in the loss of this precious territory to the Marathas.

Keywords: Gajapatis, Geopolitics, Khurda, Marathas, Orissa.

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of Ninth century to the end of 15th century, empires were established over the coastal plains of Orissa by dynasties such as the Ganga and the Gajapatis. But establishment and consolidation of those empires were never free from external invasions from their Northern as well as Southern adversaries. Nevertheless, the political challenges that Gajapati Empire faced in the middle of the 16th century paved the way for the establishment of new states like Khurda within the unexplored geo-politically and potential strategic region of coastal Orissa. The kingdom of Khurda was established by Ramachandra Deva in the middle of 16th century in the geo-politically and strategically significant coastal region of Orissa. Apparently the founder of new kingdom like Khurda had directly or indirectly associated with the official establishment of the previous regime. The founder and his father were served in the army of the old Gajapati Empire. On the one hand, while founder was aware that he did not have sufficient military support that would protect him from external invasion, on the other

hand, he was neither in a position to capture imperial capital nor could he seize any royal treasury of the old empire owing to the prevailing political crisis. The founder of Khurda chose an area, which was not explored by the old monarch. He established himself in such a confined strategic geopolitical region that provided him not only protection from the external adversaries but also support from internal local communities. Geographically, the kingdom of Khurda was situated on the high hill, just above the coastal plain land of Orissa and politically, it was segregated from the power centers of the old Gajapati Empire. The region was surrounded by numerous mountain ranges and covered with deep forest with various forts looming the kingdom. The state explicitly explored the geo-political advantage to ascertain her sovereignty over the region from external powers. Moreover his political successors explored ecological resources in this geo-political region for further expansion of their kingdom. However, their expansion from the confined semi-arid region to open alluvial plain of coastal Orissa faced strong resistance from their external competitors like Mughal.

GEOPOLITICAL LOCATION OF KHURDA

The kingdom of Khurda, which was an admixture of plain

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land and mountain ranges, was situated in the coastal zone of Orissa. Ecologically, the kingdom could be divided into two parts. The first part represents the alluvial tract of southeast region corresponding to what is presently known as Puri division. The exact location of this part lies in between 19.28' and 20.26' north latitude and 85.00'

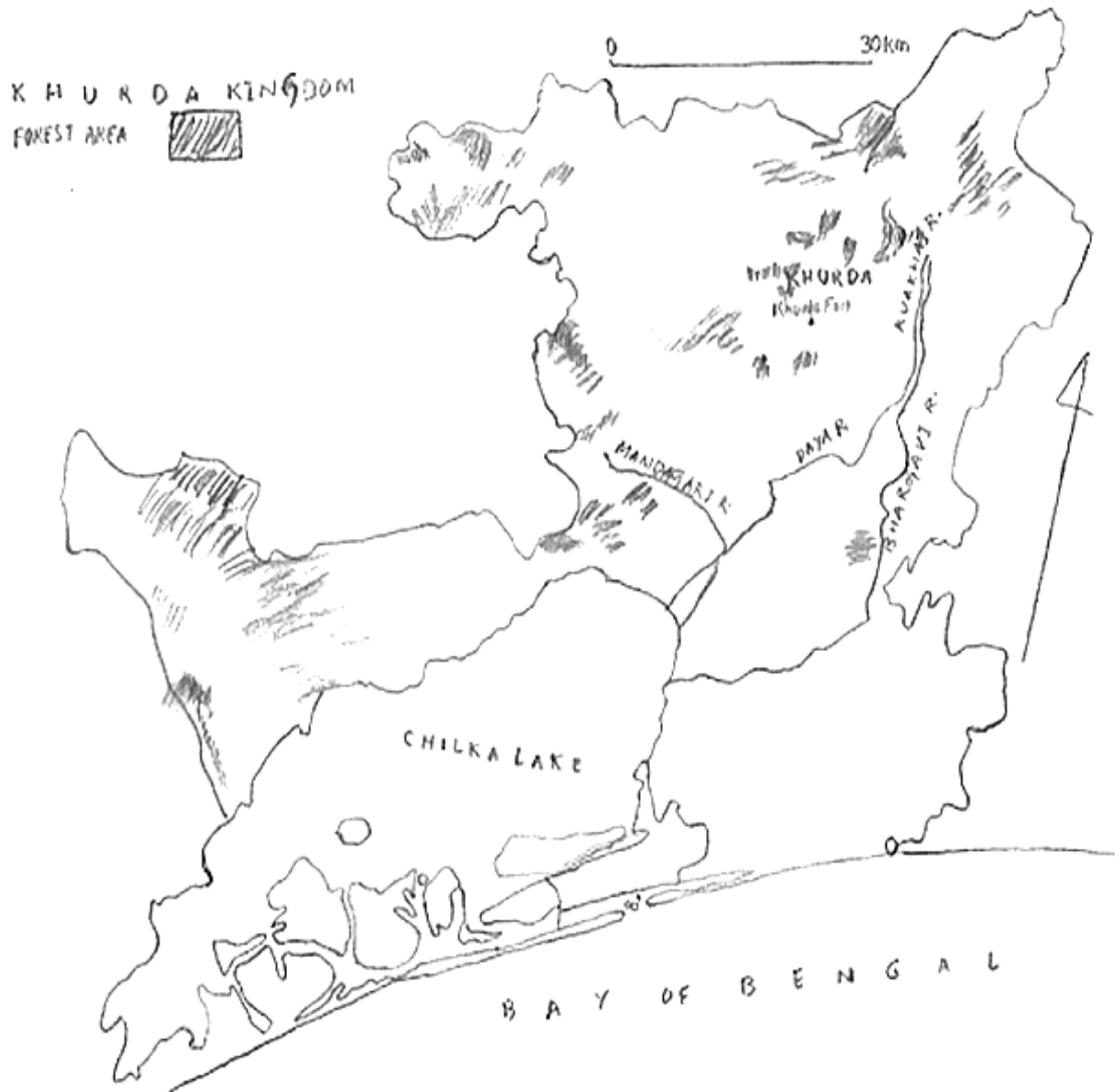
and 80.30' east longitude. The second part represents the hill tract region of northwest region or Khurda division, which lies between 19.41' and 20.26' north latitude and 84.59' and 85.56' east longitude. . River Daya separated these two regions (See Map 1 below).



Map 1. River Daya Source: N. Senapati and D. C Kuanr, 1977, Orissa District Gazetteers: Puri.

Southeast Part of River Daya: The southeast part represented three-fifths of the total area consisting of a deltaic alluvial plain extending from the center of the Khurda hills to the Bay of Bengal. A negligible portion of forest located in these regions and almost all the region was under cultivations. The alluvial tract lies in between

the Chilika Lake and southwestern part of Mahanadi delta. The northwest part or Khurda division, which measured 633,729,646 acres (Taylor, 1886) represented a considerable portion of hill ranges with a varying height of 500 to 3115 feet above the sea level (Malley, 1984). See Map 2.



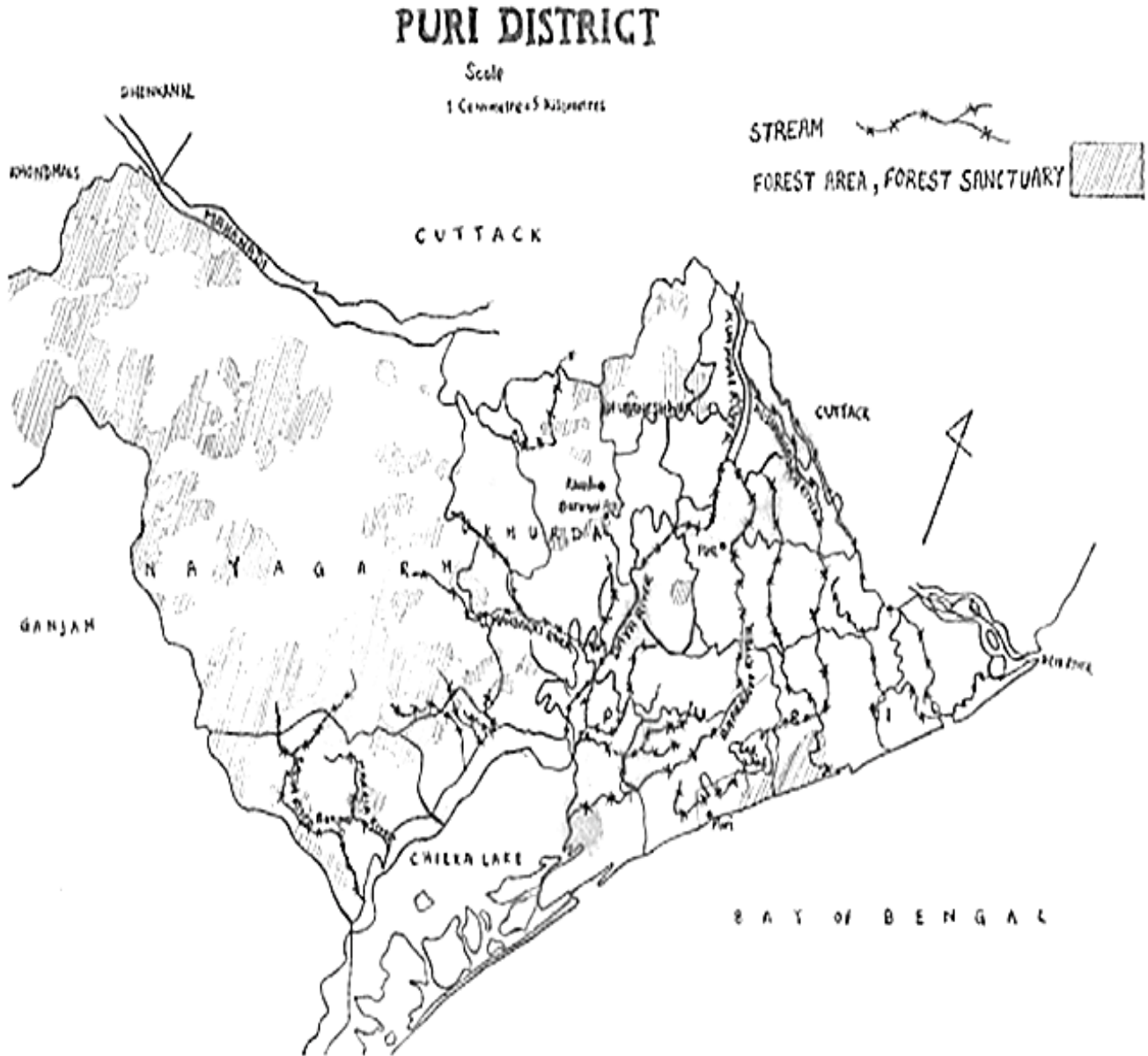
Map 2. Khurda Kingdom.

Source: N. Senapati and D. C Kuanr, 1977, Orissa District Gazetteers: Puri.

According to W. Forrester report of 1819, the region was measured upwardly 60 miles from north-east to north-west and 30 miles in breadth. The cultivated land was merely founded in the midst of forest and varying very much in the quality of soil and supply of water (Forrester, 1889). These regions were bounded on the south-east by the Chilika lake, *pregunnahs* Serai, Limbai, Kotdes and Kotrahang in Puri; the Daya and Koakhai rivers; northern boundary on the Puri district on *killahs* Patia and Sarangarh, *mouzahs* Chandi and Ratagarh, *killahs* Motri, Dompapa and Banki; the western boundary on *zillahs* Manikagora and Panchgarh and the

south-eastern boundary was the boundary between Bengal and *zillah* of Ganjam, the northern district of the Madras Presidency (See Map 3) (Taylor, 1886).

Other Part of the Kindom: Substantial part of the kingdom was hilly with a narrow strip, varying in width from one to three miles, of the delta of Koakhai and Daya channels of the Mahanadi River, which used to provide water as well as travel route to the kingdom. The hill ranges were moving in an irregular course from northeast to southwest dividing the region into small-cultivated valley overlapped by small streams (See Map 3 below).



Map 3. Map of Khurda Kingdom

Source: N. Senapati and D. C Kuanr, 1977, Orissa District Gazetteers: Puri.

According to 1889 settlement report of Khurda, out of the total 633,729,646 acres of land, 311,273,501 acres were unsettled and unoccupied; of which 193,087,456 acres were cultivable and the rest 118,186,045 acres were barren and uncultivable (Taylor, 1886). The upper land was occupied by small patches of forest with an extensive range of trees starting from mango, jack, banyan and tamarind to many other tropical trees. The eastern faces of the hill are habitually rocky and impulsive, whereas the western face was covered with forest. The most prominent peaks are Solari in the west

and Bhelari, Baitha and Baruani in the south west of Khurda. The Solari is a cluster of peaks that were increase one after another from the plane land near the lake of Chilka. Bamboo trees and dense jungles covered those peaks. The rest of the mountain peaks like Bhelari, Baitha and Baruani were saddle black hills rising into simple and unapproachable (Taylor, 1886). The soil of the region was mostly lateritic and its inhabitants were utilizing the uplands for the hoe cultivation owing to the high level of ensured water supply. This region was extensively covered with dense forests.

POLITICAL CRISIS OF ORISSA IN 16TH CENTURY

India's history witnessed a series of major political crises during the first half of 16th century. Delhi Sultanate in the north, Vijayanagaram Empire in the south and Gajapati Empire in the east collapsed. Those political crises brought some major changes in the historiography of India. The Mughals established a strong Empire in the north; Afghans emerged as powerful monarch in the east: Muslims of Deccan emerged as a powerful force in the south; and regional as well as sub-regional states emerged in Orissa from the edifice of Gajapati Empire. The coastal tract of Orissa virtually became the fiefdom of Mughal-Afghan rulers on the one hand and internal infighting of petty and subordinate powers of late Gajapati Empire for throne on the other hand. Everyone wanted to capture the late Gajapati Empire from his or her point of interest. For the Afghans, capturing of Orissa would provide them a ray of hope for further strengthening of their position in the eastern India. For the Mughal, it was strategically important as Orissa was situated in between the two powers of Bengal and Muslim Governor of eastern and southern India respectively. For the local powers, capturing Orissa meant inheriting Gajapati legacy.

The death of third Gajapati ruler of Orissa Prataprudra Deva in 1540 had brought cascading effect on the history and polity of Orissa. This incident was followed by a war of succession among his ministers as his minor son Kalua Deva was murdered by his ambitious minister Govinda Vidyadhara. According to *Katakarajavamsavali*, "he [Kalua Deva] had a minister named Govinda Vidyadhara. This wicked minister assassinated him (King) with treachery by getting him involved in a certain game. His period of reign was one year... hereafter the minister Govinda Vidyadhara himself assumed the kingship. He killed 32 sons of Prataprudra Deva" (Tripathy & Kulke, 1987). While Govinda Vidyadhara was in south to resist the advance of Quli Qutb Shah of Golconda, his nephew Raghu Bhanja Chattaroy, a scion of the Bhanja dynasty of Mayurbhanj, assisted by an ally named Abdul Shah raised a rebellion and besieged Cuttack. Govinda Vidyadhara made a treaty with the Sultan of Golconda and returned to his capital in order to safeguard his throne (Sahu, 1965). A battle took place in between Govinda Vidyadhara and Raghu Bhanja in which the latter was defeated and fled. Govinda Vidyadhara chased him till the bank of Ganga but died there in 1549 (*Yuddhe Raghubhañjachotarāyā*

Bhidhena Parājayam Prāpya Apagatam...Rājā Tadantabeṣaneṇa Paścātabhāge Gaṅgā Paryanta Gatam) (Tripathy & Kulke, 1987). He was succeeded by his son Chakra Pratap who ruled for eight years and hanged himself in the Garuda pillar of the Jagannatha temple (*Maraṇadine Garuḍastambhe Rajajyutiyojanaṃ Kṛtvā Ātmānaṃ Babandha*) (Tripathy and Kulke, 1987). Chakra Pratap was succeeded by Narasingha Jena who faced an internal uprising headed by Mukunda Haricandan, the previous governor of Cuttack under Govinda Vidyadhara. Mukunda Haricandan killed Narasingha Jena and placed Raghuram Jena, the younger son of Chakra Pratap, on the throne (Beveridge, 1907). In 1559, Mukunda Haricandan killed Raghuram Jena as well and proclaimed himself as the king of Orissa (Pattnaik, 1979).

Soon after becoming the king of Orissa, Mukunda Deva faced invasion from Suleiman Karrani of Bengal. At the same time, the Mughals were also fighting hard with the Afghan to wrest control over eastern part of India that was politically and economically important for them. As Akbar had an eye on Golconda and wanted to mobilize his force southwards through Orissa, he never wanted a direct clash with the king of Orissa. Secondly, the Mughals never wanted to invite the ire of the Orissan King because that could possibly drop the latter into the hands of the Sultan of Golconda. Emperor Akbar, who was planning to conquer Bengal, sent a goodwill mission to the court of Mukunda Deva. Mukunda Deva accepted the friendship request and presented him with elephants, valuable gifts and precious items (Beveridge, 1907). In the winter of 1567-68, taking advantage of Akbar's siege of Chittor, the Afghan governor of Bengal Suleiman sent a huge army under his son Bayazid to Orissa. After several skirmishes with the Afghan forces, Mukunda Deva took asylum in the fort of Kotsimha (Sarkar, 1943). The Muslim forces under Bayazid and Kalapahara advanced upto Cuttack and besieged the fort. In the meantime, Rama Chandra Bhanja, the commander of the fort of Sarangagada, which was situated in the vicinity of Cuttack revolted against Mukunda Deva (*Rāmachandra Bhañja Ye Sāraṅgaḍa Dharile Se Puñi Golāre Rājā Hoile*) (Mohanty, 2001). Finally, Mukunda Deva had to acknowledge the Muslim authority and marched towards his capital backed by Bayazid. On his way in Gohiratikri, four miles to the north east of Jajpur, he met Rama Chandra Bhanja and in the skirmish that followed Mukunda Deva was killed (*Rāmachandra Deva*

Ye Sāraṅgaḍa Thile Mukundadeba Tahim̃ Yujha Kale...Mukunda Devaṅku Rāma Chandradeba Māile) (Mohanty, 2001).

ESTABLISHMENT OF KHURDA KINGDOM

The raging political crises of 16th century and the death of Mukunda Deva provided opportunity to the old officials of his kingdom, who were eyeing the Gajapati throne for long. One of them was Ramachandra Deva, son of Danai Vidyadhara, the ex-minister of the late Gajapati king, Govinda Vidyadharaⁱⁱ (Pattnaik, 1979). He was in the south and was interned in the fort of Rajmundhary by Mukunda Haricandan in 1568. Later, he was released from confinement. He declared himself as the king of Orissa in the fort of Veer Gotamu in modern Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh and ruled at Kotam for some time with the help of some Khandayat chiefs (Sewell, 1882). Taking advantage of the absence of a central authority over the coastal part of Orissa, many chieftains declared independenceⁱⁱⁱ (Suvrahmanyam, 1956). Under the prevailing political turmoil, Ramachandra Deva created an adversary by killing the Khandayat chief at Gotama Gard. In the far south, the Sultan of Golconda, who was very rapidly expanding his supremacy, had established control over southern Orissa between the Godavari and Rishikulya rivers. In the north, the Mughals established their garrison at Cuttack.

Ramachandra Deva established the kingdom of Khurda in the middle of 16th century when the Mughals were struggling hard with the Afghans to capture Orissa. Akbar deputed Man Singh to Orissa to deal with the Afghan menace. Under such circumstances, the choice for establishment of new Khurda kingdom was both geographically tenable action and a politically correct decision. Geographically, it was surrounded by dense forest and mountains that isolated it from the mainland and politically it was unimportant for all the competitors, who had an eye on the alluvial tract and religious center of late Gajapati Empire popularly known as Puri division (See Map 1 above). The sizeable presence of mountains and forest range played vital role in the external as well as internal security of the state (See Map 3 above). The imperial establishment was in the foothill of the Baraunai mountain range that acted as a natural boundary. The mountain range had protected the capital from any external invasion and provided safe passage to the monarch in the face of an emergency. Often, during the time of political crises, the king

exercised his power from the mountain range. Sometime, even the state temporarily shifted its capital to the mountain range. Secondly, the location would never disrupt the interest of the kith and kin of the late Gajapatis, who were constantly looking for the late Gajapati's throne^{iv} (Mohanty, 1940). Had he been vying for the imperial establishment, his competitors would have thrown him away. His political supremacy was challenged from the south by the house of Paralakhemundi who claimed himself as the direct descendent of the Gajapatis. Thirdly, politically, Khurda would never appeal the mighty Afghans and Mughals, who were constantly fighting for the capture of imperial establishment of Gajapatis of Orissa. He proceeded towards Orissa and the ruler Vala Vikram Sing gifted him the village Khurda, where he established a kingdom. He was helped by Bagha Patra of Kokkola (situated somewhere on the east of Chilikalake around the confluence of river Bhargabhi), Jhadu Parida of Ghodadia (near the present Dalalga railway station of Khurda sub division) and Sarani Patra of Mallipada of Khurda).

Ramachandra Deva utilised the Afghan–Mughal conflict to gain control over the various forts that were lying over the semi-arid region of Khurda. It is said that, there were 108 forts, out of which, 72 were stated as leading forts in the Khurda regions (See Map 4 below).

He gradually gained control over the old forts of Sahajpal, Khargarh, Kalupara, Kahnana, Longarh and Bhurmal in the vicinity of Khurda laying on the north and north-eastern boundary line of Chilika Lake. These forts provided the state a sense of security to deal with the external forces. The state actively interfered in the political affairs of Deep South for further expansion, which ultimately led it defeat in the hands of Golconda army. Ferishta in his account states that Mukoond Raj, king of Cossimcota being assailed by the Golconda army in 1589 took shelter with Ramachandra Deva I: The Mahommedans gave him no rest, and compelled him to seek an asylum with Ramchundur [*sic.*] Raj, a prince of great fame and power in those parts. Ramachundru, in order to repel the invaders, wrote letters to Madoo sing, a raja whose country bordered on Bengal and who with a large army of Rajpoots, was in the service of Akbar Badshah of Delhi. Madoo Sing, at the request of Ramchundur, marched into his assistance, while Ameen-ol-moolk pursued the fugitive into that rajas dominion, levying contribution on town, devastating the villages, and pillaging the open country. Madhoo Sing, finding

that no advantage was to be gained in the war, withdrew to Bengal, leaving Ramachundur the alternative of becoming a tributary to the king of Golconda (Briggs, 1990).

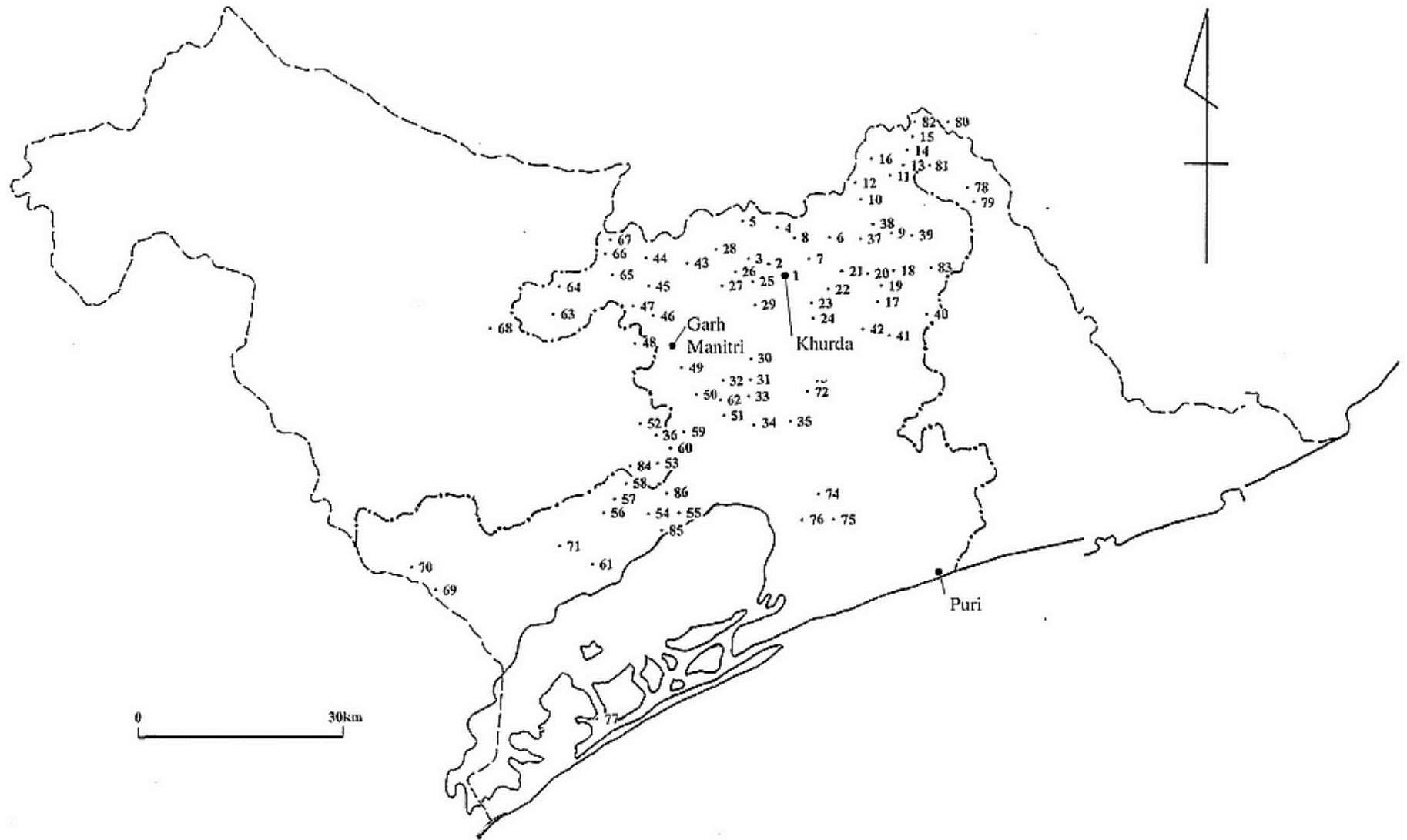
The military setback received from the hands of Golakundan army compelled the state of Khurda to focus into the region that extended from the river Mahanadi in the north to the border of the Khimedy in Ganjam in the south. This region was impenetrable for the external forces. The Afghans correctly estimated the importance of geo-political potentiality of Khurda region. When their capital of Orissa fell into the hands of the Mughals, some of them took shelter in the fort of Ramachandra Deva. According to AbulFazl: 'In the town of Bhadrak, news was received that the sons of Qutlu and KhwajaSulaiman, Dilwar Khan, Malik Sikandar and Purukhotam had collected in the fort of Cuttack with 300 elephants. That fort is at the end of the country and on the sea shore. It belonged to Rajah Ramchand who was a great land-holder in that country. It was called Sarangarh. Rajah Mansingh left Sujan Singh and some other in the city and went off to attack the fort and the Afghans took refuge in the forest near the sea. The fort was taken without a contest. Rajah Ramchand admitted those who had taken protection to Sarangarh. When Rajah Mansingh came to Cuttack he left Yusuf Khan and others to guard it and went off to pay his devotions at Jagannath. His idea was that he would be nearer to Rajah Ramchand, and that when an opportunity occurred he could lay hold of him. When his thought had been realized he returned and took up his quarters near Sali. Every day active men went forth and inflicted chastisement. In consequence of counsels he (Rajah Ramchand) became obedient and sent his son Birbal with presents. The Rajah returned to Cuttack and established the foot of conquest near the fort of Sarangarh (Beveridge, 1907).

The main strength of Ramachandra Deva lay upon the various forts that he controlled over a wide geographical region (See Map 4). Most of them were situated on top of the mountain ranges. The state explored geo-political advantage to overcome the external invasions from both the directions - north and south of Orissa. Apparently, the Mughal general Man Singh sent an expedition under the command of Jagat Singh against Ramachandra Deva without analysing the strength of Khurda. From Pipli onwards Jagat Singh had faced number of resistance from the forts that were situated on both sides of the river Daya near Khurda.

Finally, when Jagat Singh reached Khurda, Ramachandra Deva himself took shelter in his best fort at Barunai hill that was impenetrable for the Mughals to approach. The Mughal realised the geo-political strength of Khurda and started trying to win the good will of Ramachandra Deva to deal with the southern power. In the meantime, Akbar changed his policy towards Orissa for certain reasons. Firstly, as Akbar had an eye on Golconda and wanted to mobilize his forces southwards through Orissa, he did not want a direct clash with the Orissan King. Secondly, the Mughals never wanted to annoy the king of Orissa as that could possibly drop it (the kingdom) in the hands of the Golconda Sultan. Therefore, Man Singh stopped military action against Khurda. The Mughalshah assigned Ramachandra Deva the principality of Khurda along with 71 forts and lordship of 31 subordinate chiefs, who commanded over 129 forts. He was conferred the title of Maharaja with a commandership of 3,500 soldiers. He would pay revenue directly to the imperial treasury and not to the Afghans. He was also allowed to exercise sovereignty over the region that represents present Khurda district and considerable parts of Puri as well as portion of Ganjam district. He was allowed to collect tribute from the 129 forts of Orissa including all tributary *Mahals* of Cuttack starting from south of Mahanadi, precisely the estate of Ghumsar and Mohurito as far as the border of Khimedy in Ganjam (Stirling, 1904). See Map 4.

CONFLICT WITH THE MUGHAL FOR ALLUVIAL TRACT

The state had to struggle hard with the Mughal Subahdar to gain control over the alluvial region or the inherited territories known as Puri division (See Map 2 and 3 above). The soil of the tract was fertile and almost all the regions were under plough^v (Maddox, 1890). According to the Maddox settlement report (1890-1900), winter rice was grown on 78.4% of the total cropped area and pulses used to occupy 10.1% of the total area (Maddox, 1890). The main productive zone was lying in the delta between the channels of the Daya on the west and Kushbhadra on the east. However, distinguished for its religious centres, there was not so much stable military presence in the region. While the Mughal Subahdars were more conscious about controlling the religious centres of the region for economic benefit, the states were more assertive in defending the religious centres as well as the productive zone of the region^{vi} (Salim, 1902).



Map 4. Forts in Khurda Kingdom

Source: Akio Tanabe, *Cultural Politics of Ethics in Everyday Practice: Caste, Local Society and Vernacular Democracy in Orissa, India*, unpublished Ph. D thesis, the Department of Cultural Anthropology, the University of Tokyo, 2005.

In order to tighten the hold over the alluvial region in a comprehensive way, the state started establishing small settlements called *Sasana*. Though, it was not a new phenomenon in the region, yet rulers of coastal Orissa had suspended the practice for a while owing to the political turmoil^{vii} (Tripathy and Kulke, 1987). The main motive behind the establishment of *Sasanawasto* draw religious and ritual support from the old orthodox section of the society for the newly established state. Unlike the forts of the semi arid region, the *Sasanadid* did not provide military support. However, the region provided ritualistic support to the state at the time of internal as well as external crises. The state adequately explored ritualistic supports in the initial phases of expansion to proclaim that it was the undisputed master of the Gajapati legacy. Ramachandra Deva immediately reinstated the image of Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra in the temple of Puri when he became the king of Khurda. According to the *Chakada* manuscript: *Rātrire Rājāṅku Swapanare Āñjā Helā Ye, Ābhe Kujaṅgathāre Bije Kari Rahiachum, Se Śālakhāku Tu Nuākari Dārubrahma Murtti Karibu, Bhitara Poṭalare Āmbhāṅku Bije Karāibu ... Deula Bhitare Ratnasinghāsane Bije Karāibu* (Pattnaik, 1959).

English translation is as follows : One night God appeared in the dream of the king to guide him that God will appear in the form of a log, which could be found in the forest of Kujanga. God ordered the king to find Him the next morning and to prepare a new idol out of the log and reinstall the same in the golden throne of the temple.

Next day, the king discussed the content of his dream with his ministers and after consultation, he ordered Padmanabha Bhatta to collect the log. He reinstated the image in the temple and on the occasion of installation; he established three new villages in his kingdom. The *Madalapanji* or temple chronicle states that, the king (Ramachandra Deva) brought a Brahman from Kujanga in his Ninth anka (regional) year and carved the images of Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra and sanctified them in Khurda after performance of necessary sacrifices. The images were installed on the *Ratnasinghasana* of the Jagannatha temple on the 18th day of *Karkataka*, which was *Sravana Sukla Navami* in his 11th *Ankayear* (9 *Āṅke Rājā Kujaṅga Gaḍaru Brahma Āñāile, Khurudhā Kaṭake Banayoga Kari Sumuruti Karāile. 11 Āṅka Kakaḍā 18 Dine Śrābaṅa Śukla Nabamī Dine Śrī Puruṣottama Baḍadeule Ratnasinghāsane Bije Karāile* (Mohanty, 2001). Orthodox section of Hindus of

these regions bestowed him with the high title of *Dwitiya Indradyumna* and provided him legitimacy as a lawful successor of imperial Gajapati. Persons like Ramachandra Bhatta, Gobardhana Prahara and Mishra, who were the leading religious personalities of the time along with their disciples, had gladly taken *Mahaprasad* from his hand near the Jaya Vijaya gate of the Jagannatha temple (Mohanty, 1940).

From time immemorial, numerous rulers had established a great number of *Sasanas* in the wider area of the alluvial tract. All these settlements could be found in between the river Daya and Khusabhadra, which represent as the best tract of the productive zone (See Map 2 above). The founder himself had made such arrangement in and around Puri. He established *Bira Ramachandrapur, Sri Ramachandrapur, Bijaya Ramachandrapur, Ubhayamukhi Ramachandrapur* and *Pratapa Ramachandrapur Sasanas* and assigned those *Sasanawasto* the Brahman communities. His son and successor Purushottama Deva (1600-1621) followed his policy with equal zeal and established *Bira Purushottamapur, Sri Purushottamapur* and *Pratapa Purushottamapur Sasanas* in the northern part of the kingdom, which spread in and around the present areas of Jatani-Puri railway tract. Narasingha Deva (1621-1647) established *Bira Narashingapur* on the bank of the river Bhargabi. Similarly, Balabhadra Deva (1647-1657) established *Bira Balabhadrapura*, Mukunda Deva (1659-1688) founded *Mukundapur*, Hari Krishna Deva (1714-1719) instituted *Bira Hari Krishnapur*, Gopinatha Deva (1719-1727) launched *Rautarapura* and Birakishore Deva (1739-1793) created *Birakesaripur Sasanas*.

The penetration of state towards the alluvial tract had jeopardised the interest of Mughal Governors in Orissa, who wanted to control the religious center of the region to get more power and prestige in the imperial Mughal court^{viii} (Ray, 1981). Nevertheless, the region provided a source of horizontal legitimacy to the state vis-à-vis other kings and empire. Thus, the invasions that the state had faced from Mughal authority were relating to control over the temple of Lord Jagannatha. In short, the alluvial tract became a bone of contention in between the state of Khurda and Mughal authority. Sometime the state exploited political crises, which surrounded the imperial Mughal court in Delhi, to take a lead over the region. However, owing to the weaknesses of the state over the alluvial plain, it was always forced to sign

humiliating treaties with the Mughals in order to retain the region. Starting from Purushottama Deva (1600-1621) to Birakishore Deva (1737-1793), the state had fought with the Mughals as well as with the Marathas in order to gain control over the region. It became an annual ritual for the Mughal Governors to attack Puri and the state had to fight incessantly with the aggressors to safeguard her sovereignty. Purushottama Deva had faced three invasions from the Mughal Governor, which forced the former to sign a few humiliating treaties. Rajput General Kesho Das Maru, the deputy of Hasim Khan led the first invasion. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* of Mirza Nathan gives a vivid description of the invasion, which says:

From his personal fief, Cuttack, he started for the temple of Jagannatha with the pretext of performing worship at the temple, and after the performance of worship, he converted that temple to a strongly fortified place for himself. Then he occupied the temple which contained properties worth more than two to three corers of rupees, and scourged the Brahmins to produce the rest. This news reached Raja Purushottama Deva. He thought that before the end of the rainy season and the arrival of the imperial officers, he would chastise Raja Kesho Das Maru and produce such an effect that no one else would ever dare commit such an act of sacrilege. He planned to march from Khurda with a force of ten thousand cavalry three to four hundred thousand infantry and a large number of raths (chariots) to besiege the temple and thus put the Raja into a very sad plight. Accordingly, he made five hundred to one thousand men ride on each rath which was pulled by two to three thousand men, and thus, carrying the raths in tens and twenties, he pushed then on to the outer wall of the temple and put the inmates into a very serious plight. Raja Kesho Das Maru took out long poles from under the roofs of the houses, and wrapping them with canopies, canvas, and cloths of the Farraseh Khana (store-room) soaked them with mustard oil and ghee, set fire to them and threw them into midst of the raths which were close to the temple. All of a sudden people who were at the top of the raths were burned in hundreds, and many others in groups of two hundred to three hundred, were killed by being trodden under each other's feet. The Uriyas, unable to fight any longer, took to flight and left the raths in that burning condition (Borah, 1992).

Kalyan Mal, who became the Governor of Orissa in 1611, led the second invasion. Narrating about the second invasion, the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* stated that:

he then put in the forefront of his mind the idea of the conquest of Khurda and marched against Raja Purushottama Dev. When a large portion of his territory was attacked and looted, Purushottama Dev, having put on the collar of obedience in his neck, sent his envoys to tender apologies and expressed his desire to surrender. He offered his daughter as a present for the service of the Emperor and three hundred thousand rupees as peshkash to the imperial exchequer and the best of his elephants named Sisnag for the use of the Emperor. Thus he submitted to the imperialists by handing over the bride to the Raja with a hundred thousand rupees and saved himself from the attack of the Raja and the imperial officers (Borah, 1992).

Makarram Khan, who became the Governor of Orissa in 1617, led the third invasion and created reign of terror by his iconoclastic activities. The *Tuzuki-i-Jahangiri* states that:

at this time it was represented to me that Makarram Khan, son of Muazzam Khan, who was the governor of Orissa, had conquered the country of Khurda, and the Raja of that place had fled and gone to Rajmahendra. . . Between the province of Orissa and Golconda there were two Zamindars, one the Raja of Khurda and the second the Raja of Rajmahendra. The province of Khurda has come into the possession of the servants of the court. After this it is the turn of the country of Rajmahendra (Beveridge, 1909).

He signed a peace treaty with Kesho Das Maru according to which "he therefore, sent an envoy offering his daughter in marriage to the Emperor with a peshkash of three hundred thousand rupees; and his own sister in marriage to Raja Kesho Das Maru with one hundred thousand rupees as NalBandi (light tribute or present) to the Raja and his men" (Borah, 1992).

The involvement of Narasingh Deva (1621-1647) with the Mughal prince on the issue of control of the region led to his death at the hand of Mutaqad Khan (Mohanty, 1940). While Ahmed Beg, the Mughal Governor of Cuttack, was planning for a second attack on Khurda, Shahjahan had entered Orissa from the south. Narasingha Deva acknowledged the authority of Shahjahan. He accompanied Shahjahan to Jajpur through Cuttack. At Cuttack, Shahjahan appointed Muhammad Taqui as the Governor of Orissa and marched towards Bengal. At Jajpur, Shahjahan granted the insignia of royalty to Narasingha Deva (*E Mahārājānka 12 Anke Sāhājādā Pātīśā Pāṭanāru Bhāgi Ailāku Parameśwarnaku*

Khurudhā Kaṭake Nei Meradāre Bije Karāile). Shahjahan was defeated at the hands of Mahabat Khan, which compelled him to come back to Orissa in order to escape to Deccan. Mutaqad Khan became the Governor of Orissa for the second time in 1645. The *Madalapanji* states that, on the *Anka* year 32 of the king Narasingha Deva, Mutaqad Khan and Amir Fateh Khan attacked the fort of Khurda from the southern side and beheaded Narasingha Deva and looted all the wealth of the city (32 *Anka* 7 *Mithuna Dina Rātra Pāhibāku Nabāba Matamat iKhām Amarā Phete Khām Āsi Śrī Puruṣottama Dakṣiṇa Pāruṣa Naare...Rājā Ṭhākurnaka Muṇḍa Kātidelā*) (Mohanty, 1940).

Nevertheless, the state utilised the opportunity of Shahjahan's illness to extend her control over the region. Taking advantage of the unrest at the Mughal court, the state under the leadership of royal priest Dharma Deva organized all Zamindars of Orissa against the Mughals. The Zamindars were not paying any revenue and rose in open rebellion under the leadership of Gajapati Mukunda Deva (1657-1689) (Sarkar, 1925). The Bhoi kings of Khurda became so powerful that the feudatories of Khurda regarded Mukunda Deva (1657-1689) as:

'the leading Zamindar of the country whose orders are obeyed by the other Zamindars, whom all the other Zamindars of this country worship like a God and disobedience of whose order they regard as a great sin, wait on him with due humility accompanied by other Zamindars and Khandaits of Central Orissa' (Sarkar, 1916). Aurangzeb sent Khan-i-Dauran as the Governor of Orissa to handle the situation. After four days of fierce fight, the fort of Khurda was captured and the Mughals became victorious in the battle (Sarkar, 1925). Mukunda Deva fled with his family and many of his followers were taken captive. In his letter Khan-i-Dauran stated that: 'The Rajah had fled from (Khurda), and we seized a vast amount of booty and many prisoners at his capital. During the last 50 years, no other Subahdar had reached these places. They were all conquered by my army and the rustics became the food of the pitiless sword. I gave Mukunda Deva's throne to his younger brother Bhunarbal' (Sarkar, 1916).

In order to get the throne of Khurda, Mukunda Deva negotiated with the Mughal through his royal priest Dharma Deva. In a letter Khan-i-Dauran wrote, "Raja Mukunda Deva, who has been ill advised enough to defy my authority and withhold tribute, finding no way of

escape from our heroes, saw me penitently on 18th March" (Sarkar, 1916). At last, Mukunda Deva got his throne back only in October 1662 (Sarkar, 1925). He faced another Mughal invasion under the leadership of Abu Nasir, son of Shaista Khan that ended in a treaty. According to *Madalapanji*, in the 38 reign year, king Abu Nasir with a plan to conquer Purusottama Kshetra came to Pipli, where he met Mukunda Deva and made a peaceful treaty and returned to Cuttack the next day (38 *Anka Śrī Puruṣottama K eṣatra Ku Ābala Karibā Bicāri Nabāba Abdula Nasara Khām Pipili Yāe Ailā. . Āradina Rājākna Saṅge Prite Hoi Kataka Bāhudā Kalā*) (Mohanty, 2001).

In the middle of 17th century, the Mughal became more aggressive to overthrow the Khurda supremacy over the region. When Aurangzeb emerged as a powerful monarch in the war of succession; he followed an aggressive policy toward Orissa. Divyasingha Deva (1689-1716) faced the Mughal invasion under the leadership of Ekram Khan, the son-in-law of Aurangzeb. The Mughal army attacked the Jagannatha temple and sent the idol to Aurangzeb. According to *Tabsirat-un-Nazirin*:

He (Mir Sayyid Mahumud of Bilgram) was a man held in great respect and served under Nawab Ekram in Orissa. When Aurangzeb sent orders to the Nawab to destroy the temple of Jagannatha, Raja Durup Singh Deo who had the temple under him asked the Mir to introduce him to the Nawab. The Raja promised to break the temple and to send the big idol to the Emperor. He actually did break the statue of Rakas which stood over the entrance of the temple; and also to battlements over the door. The idol which was made of sandal wood and which had two valuable jewels set in the eyes was carried off and sent to Aurangzeb at Bijapur, where it was thrown by order on the steps of the mosque^{ix} (Mohapatra, 1969).

Although Divyasingha Deva defeated Shuja-ud-din, the Subahdar of Orissa, in 1707, yet he lost a considerable part of his territory, leaving for himself, "eleven mahals the rent of which had been valued at Rupees 6, 15,616 (Pattnaik, 1979). Shortly after his accession Ramachandra Deva II (1727-1737) faced the invasion of the Sultan from the South. He sought the help of Taqi Khan, the Mughal Governor of Orissa, who refused any help to Ramachandra Deva II. He faced a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Sultan and lost some of his territories forever to the south of Ghumsur (Mahapatra, 1969 & 1976). Meanwhile, Taqi Khan attacked Khurda in 1731 and captured Ramachandra Deva II. The *Madalapanji* states that:

8 Añka Dhanu 22 Dina Kaṭaka Subā Sujā Khām Pua Mahammad Takikhām Nasaka Gheni Śisūpālagāḍa Khelāi Delā. Dhauligaḍa Gheni Rathipura Ghenilā Khojā Bakasi Beṇu Bhramarabara Rāeñku Ehāñka Pua Diāna Nīlāmbara Haricandana. . . Kehi Laḍei Na Kale. . . Dhanu 20 Dine Bakasimuṇḍa O Diāna Muṇḍa Kaṭāi Āja Nabābaku Dei Paṭahiāile. . . Rājāñku Āpaṇa Nasakara Dei Rathipuraṭhāre Dhari Nabāba Kaṭaka Gale (Mohanty, 1940).

The English translation as follow: in the 8thregnal year of the king, Taqī Khan son of Suja Khan the Subehdar of Cuttack, invaded Sisupalgarh, Dhauligarh, and marched towards Rathipurgarh. Those in charge of Rathipurgarh, DiwanNilambaraHarichandan and BakshiBenuBhramaravara Rai fled from the field. Meanwhile, Ramachandra Deva II appointed a new Diwan and a Bakshi and met Taqī Khan at Rathipuragarh. Taqī Khan captured both the rebel Diwan and Bakshi and beheaded them on 20th December 1731. Ramachandra Deva II was captured treacherously by Taqī Khan and taken to Cuttack.

When he reached Khurda after his release from Cuttack, he faced the invasion of Mir Habib, the general of MurshidQul Khan. Ramachandra Deva II fled to Athagarh along with his wife and took shelter in the court of Narasingapur where he died in 1737.Mir Habib placed Padmanabha Deva, the king of Patia, as the king of Khurda. Birakishore Deva (1737-1793), the son of Ramachandra Deva II, fled to Ghumsur and took shelter in the court of Ghana Bhanja. In order to recapture Khurda, he marched with a huge army from Ghumsur. While at Baideswar, he received the insignia of royalty from Murshid Quli Khan II, the Naib Nazim of Orissa (*Musasta Kuli Khām. . .Baidyawaraśṭhāre Ṭikā Śīropā Dei Khurudhā Śrī Nagara Bije Karāile*) (Mohanty,1940). In return, Birakishore Deva granted him 18 lakhs as tax for four years (Mahapatra,1969).

In the first half of the 18thcentury, the Marathas slowly penetrated into Orissa. It was Mir Habib, the Diwan of Murshid Quli Khan, who invited the Marathas to conquer Orissa. Raghuji Bhonsla of Nagpur sent a huge army to Orissa against Aliwardi Khan. In the meantime, Narayana Deva, the powerful Zamindar of Khimedi attacked Khurda and defeated Birakishore Deva. Birakishore Deva sought help from the Marathas to overthrow Narayana Deva but the Marathas demanded one lakh rupees for their support. Finally, with the help of the Marathas, BirakishoreDeva defeated Narayana Deva but

he did not pay the amount demanded by the Marathas. So he was forced by the Marathas to hand over the best portion of his dominions, Limbai, Rahang and Purushottama, together with the tribute of 14*Khandaitas* of the hills (*Lembāi, Rāhānga Puruṣottama O 14 Gaḍajāta Marahaṭṭāmānāñku Swadāna Kale*)(Mohanty, 2001). It was during the governorship of RajaramPandit that Birakishore Deva was allegedly struck by madness and therefore, the Marathas kept him in the fort of Cuttack. When his grandson Divyasingha Deva II promised to pay 100,000 rupees annually as tribute, the Marathas released Birakishore Deva (*Bīrakeśarī Deba Pāgala Hoi Marahaṭṭāmānāñka Dwārā Bandī Hele, Ehāñka Pua Dibyasingha DebaSahasra Tankā Debāpāim Swikāra Karibāru Tāñku Khoradhā Chāḍi Dele*) (Mohanty, 2001). The waning of the central authority of Khurda, the rising of the local feudatory chief over thehill tract regionand the superiority military skill of the Maratha enforced Bhoi of Khurda to accept Maratha suzerainty. Thus, the struggle for the holding of the alluvial tract that started during the time of Mughal ended with the Marathascompletely establishing their control over the region.

CONCLUSION

Thepolitical crises of mid-16thcentury became the centrifugal force for the establishment of new states amidst the unexplored strategic mountain range of the coastal Orissa. Ramachandra Deva had adequately exploited the internal fighting for the throne of Gajapatiempire as well as the external invasions of the Afghans and the Mughals.Initially the state of Khurda explored the potentiality of geo-political advantages of the region to safeguard her independence fromthe external forces. When the state expanded from the mountain range to plain land for the purpose of controlling the reglio-economic centers, it faced utmost challenges from the Mughals. The plain land became the bone of contention between the Mughals and the Khurda state for which the latter had to sign numerous humiliating treaties.Those treaties with Mughals had partially provided a mode for the state to access and establish her supremacy over the alluvial tract of the inherited territories. Sometime the state took advantage of the flip-flop of the Mughal court to control over thealluvial tract. However, during the later part, the state failed to establish control over the alluvialregion. In short,throughout the crises period,theKhurda kingdom succeeded in taking advantage of natural protections

provided by the forests and hills of Khurda region where they concentrated military strength in the forts, and attempted to hold the fertile alluvial land in Puri division, which also provided the politico-ritual legitimacy to the kingdom. However, the contention over the later, at the end, resulted in secession of this precious territory to the Marathas.

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ⁱ *Anantaremetastaputraḥ Kāluā Nāmako Rājābhabat, Aśya Gobinda Bidhyādharatī Sacibaḥ. Anantaram Gobinda Bidhyādharā Nāmo Sacibaḥ Sa Eba Rājābhabat, Anena Pratāparudradebaśya Dvābimśatiputrā Māritāḥ* (Tripathi, G.C and Kulke Hermann, 1987, *Katakarajavamsavali* (English Translation), Verses 69-70, Allahabad, p. 91.)

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- ii Danai Vidyadhara was appointed as prime minister by the Gajapati King Chakra Pratap (1549-1557). Narasingha Jenacame to the throne after Chakra Pratap appointed Mukunda Haricandan as the prime minister. Therefore, Danai Vidyadhara rebelled at Mangalajori near Puri but was defeated by Mukunda Haricandan and taken into the Cuttack prison, where he finally died. (Pattanaik, P. K., 1979, *The Forgotten Chapter of Orissan History*, p.6)
- iii Bahuvalendras of Krishankota and Viswanatha Deo of Nandapur had declared themselves as independent. (Suvrahmanyam, R. *Suryavansi Gajapatis of Orissa*, 1882 p. 106.)
- iv Telinga Ramachandra Deva and Chakkadi Bhramarabar, the two sons of the late Gajapati King Mukunda Deva came forward to press their claims to the throne of Orissa before Mansingh. They complained to the Mughal emperor that Ramachandra Deva had no valid title to the throne (*Rājā Mānasinghe Āile Ehāṅka Saṅge Mukunda Debaṅka Pua Thile*. (Mohanty, A. B. (ed.), 1940, *Madala Panji* (in Oriya), p.63.)
- v According to the Survey report of 1890-1900, out of the 6,29,666 acres land of Khurda, 4,47,337 acres represented as cultivated land. (Maddox, S. L., 1890, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement of the Province of Orissa (Temporarily Settled Areas)*, Vol. I, Printed under the Authority of Board of Revenue, Orissa, p. 67.)
- vi When Taqi Khan (1727-1734) became the Governor of Orissa, "the Rajah of Parsutam[Puri] had removed Jagannatha, the Hindu God, from the limits of the subah of Odisah (Orissa) and had guarded it on the summit of a hill across the Chilika lake. In consequence of removal of the idol, there was a falling-off to the tune of nine lakh of rupees in the Imperial revenue, accruing from pilgrims." [Ghulam Husain Salim, English Translation by Maulavi Abdus Salam, 1902, *Riyaz -us- Salatin*, p. 302.] Similarly when Birakishore Deva (1737-1793) was appointed as the King of Khurda by Murshid Quli Khan, the former had to deposit 18 lakhs rupees as pilgrim tax of four years to the Mughal court (*E Bīrakesāi Deba Mahārājāṅka Diāna Nabāba Musustakulikhāṅku Pātīśāhi 18 Lakṣa Taṅkā Bandabosta Patara Lekhāi Śrīṭhākuraṅkaṭhāru Diāi 4 Baraṣa Cutara Yātrī Hāsile Madya E Taṅkāku Dele*.) [Mohanty, A. B. (ed.), 2001, *Madala Panji*, Second Edition, p. 56.] During the time of the annual car festival, "one of the moguls sitting...in the chariot, upon a convenient place, with a canopy to keep the sun from injuring him. . . vast crowd of Paganism of both sexes come in pilgrimage at that time from the surrounding as well as from far distant places." [Acharya, P., 1966-67, "Account of Travels of Fary Sebastine Manrique in Orissa", *Orissa Historical Research Journal*, Vol. XV, No.3&4, Bhubaneswar, p.76.] The king of the state "exact tax of half a crown per head on every pilgrim that comes to the pagoda (jagannath) to worship which generally amounts to 75000 L. per annum." [Bowery, Thomas, *A Geographical Account of Countries Round the Bay of Bengal, 1669- 1679*, R.C. Temple (ed.), 1905, Cambridge, p.8.]
- vii Establishment of Sasana was started by the Ganga King Ananga Bhimadeva (1211-1238), who founded a total of 20 Brahman villages during his reign (*Brāhmaṇānaṃ Bīmśātiparimitāḥ Agrahāraḥ Kṛutāḥ*). [Tripathi G. C. and Hermann Kulke, 1987, *Katakarajavamsavali* (English Translation) Verse 49, p.20]. In order to gain the blessings of the Brahmans for a male progeny, Gajapati King Purushottama Deva (1468-1497) too established the *Sohala Sasana* in the vicinity of Cuttack [Mahapatra, K. N., 1969, *Khurdaltihasa*, (in Oriya), p. 13]. Mukunda Deva (1568) was the last in the line of Gajapati rulers of Orissa who established a Sasana called Mukundapura.
- viii Jahangir promoted Kesho Das to the rank of 4000 horses and honoured with a bejeweled sword, a sword belt, a horse, a bejeweled saddle and a rein. Mukaram Khan too was promoted by Jahangir to have the Mansab of 3000 personnel and 2000 horses, honoured with drums, horse and a dress of honour. [Ray, B. C., 1981, *Orissa Under Mughals*, pp. 36-39.
- ix With the departure of Ekram Khan, Divyasingha Deva brought back the idol of Jagannatha which was kept in Banapur to Puri in 1699 [Mitra Rajendralal, 1961, *The Antiquities of Orissa*, Vol. II, p. 112. Also see Mahapatra, K. N., 1969, *Khurdaltihasa*.