ART & ARCHITECTURE OF TRIPURA

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TRIBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
GOVERNMENT OF TRIPURA
AGARTALA,

First Published :
Agartala Book Fair 1997

Published by :
TRIBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
GOVT. OF TRIPURA
AGARTALA

Cover :
Swapan Nandy

Printed at :
Print Best
Agartala, Tripura.

Rs. 140/-

TO MY PARENTS
AND
TO HIM

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INTRODUCTION

Lying approximately between 22.56° and 24.31° north latitudes and between 90.09° and 92.20° east longitudes, Tripura is a small State in North-Eastern India. It is bounded in the north, west, south, and south-east by the internatinoal boundary of Bangladesh (erstwile East pakistan) districts of Sylhet, Comilla, Noakhali, Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts respectively. In the east it has a common boundary with the Cachar district of Assam and Mizo district of Mizoram. The geographical continuity with the Indian mainland is maintained only in the north-east by an outlet through Cachar district of Assam (see Map). The land embraces an area of about 10,006 square kilometres. (Tripura District Gazetteers, 1975, p,2.) Rich in natural resources, ethnologically interesting as a habitat of several tribal communities such as Tripuris, Riânǵs, Hâlams, Mags, Jámatiâs, Chakmâs etc. and attractive for its scenic splendour, the present State of Tripura was known as 'Hill Tipperah' in the British period [1]. It was uniterruptedly ruled by a lunar dynasty of members with *Mânikya*-ending names since the beginning of the 15th century A.D (infra, ch.II). The British Government gave Tripura the status of 'Native State' under the general supervision of a Political Agent. It merged with India on October 15, 1949 and became a fullfledged State on January 21, 1972.

It is not known how and when this land was named as Tripura. A common belief is that the name has originated from 'Tripurâsundarî', the presiding goddess of the land, who was installed by the king Dhanyamânikya (Saka 1412-37). According to some, the name *Tripura* is much older than Tripurâsundari and one of them sought to derive the name Tripura from the word ' *Tuipsrâ*' which means 'places adjoining water'. However, the word (Tripurâ) is met with for the first time on the coins of Dhanyamânikya carrying *Tripurendra* as the royal epithet. And the name is not known to have been ever in use prior to the days of Dhanyamânikya. It is reasonable to hold that the name of this state is the Sanakritized form of Tripurâ, a name borne by a well-known Tribe of the land.

This State has a rich cultural background and its heritage in art and architecture deservers more than a passing metion. But for the cursory notice of the same, no full-scale and systematic study of the old buildings and plastic examples has yet been made. Indeed, with the gradual discovery of *objects d' art* in numbers (many of them by the present author), the distinctiveness of the art of Tripura and its contributions to the mainstream of Indian art has become clearer than before. The present dissertation is the attempt in that direction. In the following pages a depth-study of the various aspects of the subject has been made. Though the work deals with art and architecture of the present land of Tripura, it has necessarily included the stylistically allied mounments of the neighbouring areas of Bangladesh, such as the districts of Comilla, Noakhali and Chittagong, for the sake of comprehensivenes. The period covered by us extended from the earliest times upto A.D. 1775 and emphasis

has been given not only on the relevant styles, but also on the religious and socio-ethnic backgrounds of the mounments under discussion.

In cōures of my on-the-spot study, I have been able to recover from the ruins and oblivion, a large number of architectural and plastic examples. They include (interalia) seven buildings (five in Udayapura and two in Amarapura) and many stone and terracotta sculptures at Ūṇakoṭī, Pilāk, Jolāibāḍi, Udaypura, Amarapura, Devatāmuḍā, Kamalasagar etc. All the newly discovered monumental remains along with the known ones and the devices on coins as well have been studied in details and thus it has been possible for us to bring out the distinctivenes of the creative genius of the local artists of bygone days on the one hand and to assess the importance of the contribution of the plastic tradition of Tripura to the growth and development of Indian art, on the other.

The present dissertation has occasionally drawn upon literature, notwithstanding the dearth of relevant materials bearing on our subject. The famous Tripura chronicle, named Rājamāla, contains references to Sakta images, rock-cut sculptures, coins, religious and secular buildings, but it hardly mentions anything about the environ and the factors responsible for their creation. Thus notice has been taken of vivid description of dwellings of royal families of Tripura as contained in the 18th-century Ahom record called *Tripura desara Kathar lekha*, written by Ratna Kandali and Arjunadāsa, two envoys from the Assam court to Tripura during the reign of Ratna II (A.D. 1685-1712)[4]. Likewise, Muslim records such as *Mukt-ul Husain, Baharistan-i-ghaibi, Ain-i-Akbari, Naubahar-i-Murashidoul-i Khani, Tarikh-i-Bangla* and *Riaz-us-Salatin*, refer to Tripura but are silent on the artistic activities of the land. Historical or quasi-historical texts, such as *Champaka Vijaya, Gazināmā, Krishnamālā, Sreṇimālā, Rajratnakara* and *Varadamangala-Kavya* (all of them belong to the 17th-18th century) though valuable as sources of political history of Tripura, do not say anything about the art tradition of the land. Likewise, European travellers and traders, such as Ralph Fitch, Tavernier and Peter Heleys, who visited India during the Mughal period, purvey some information about Tripura, but hardly anything about its art heritage. Mention may also be made of manuscript written in old Tripuri language of the 18th century and materials connected with contemporary religious life have been collected from it on contextual occassions. Apart from sources, monumental and literary, necessary help has been taken from published work as listed in the Bibliography.

The main hindrance in the study of art and architecture of Tripura, as in most cases in regard to other parts of India, is the problem of determining the date of a piece of undated seulpture. As regards Tripura sculptures, not a single specimen with any dedicatory inscription on it, has so far been found. I have depended mainly on two criteria: first, the style of the relevant sculpture and second, where available, its affiliation with allied finds (sometimes dated) hailing from Bangladesh, India and Burma. We are in better position, however, as regards architectural monuments,

where dedicatory inscription having dates of the foundation of the shrines as well as the names of the founders are encountered on the walls of the majority of the temples of the land.

II

The present dissertation consists of five chapters and will cover a period from the earlest times till A.D. 1775. It opens with a chapter dealing with the religious, socio-ethnic and geographical background of art and architecture of Tripura.

The second chapter traces the historical background of art and architecture of Tripura including the contributions of the royal houses of the pre Mānikya and the Mānikya periods till 1775 A. D. Significantly, from this terminal date, Tripura passed through constant political turmoil caused by internal and external factors and the plastic art which suffered a serious setback in consequence, was never revitalised. The Mānikya rulers of the 19th and 20th centuries were more interested in music and literature than in sculpture and architecture.

The sculptural art of Tripura comes under the purview of chapter III. Rock-cut & detached stone sculptures, metal statuettes and terracottas, as well as devices on coins, have been discussed in it.Attempt has been made not only to bring out the distinctiveness of the local idiom, deriving inspiration from the religious and ethnic elements of the land, but also its proper place in the fabric of Indian art.

Chapter IV deals with the architecture of Tripura. Though the religious architecture of the State is apparently simple and unimpressive, it has a character of its own, notwithstanding the influence exercised on it by the monuments of Assam, Bangladesh, Burma and West Bengal. Detailed descriptions of the structures, including their stylistic affinities with, and differences from, the monuments of these regions will be found in this chapter.

A resume of essential features of art and architecture of Tripura with an account on the creative individuality of the people, largely resulting from the admixture of Bengalees and the tribal people, has been given in the fifth and final chapter.

In utilizing the data, largely and understandably monumental, I have kept my mind free from all sorts of prejudice and preconception. None of my conclusion has been phrased without a proper scrutiny of the data. And where positive evidence is lacking, inferences and suggestions have been sought to be reasonbly drawn. While I do not claim that I have made the last pronouncement on the subject,I shall feel my labour amply rewarded if the present dissertation, the first of its kind, generates interest in the art and architecture of Tripura among the future investigators and is found useful by them.

In the preparation of this vast work I received much assistance in various ways from a number of well wishers and friends to whom I intend to express my

gratefulness.

I acknowledge with sincere respect the sympathetic help and able guidance always received by me from late Dr. Kalyan Kumar Dasgupta former Vice-chanceller, Kalyani University, West Bengal & now Bagishwari Progessor of Art, Calcutta University. I will very much miss the pleaseure he would have on seeing this work in print.

I will fail in my duty if I do not record here my veneration to Late Anil Kumar Sen, my beloved father and Late Supreeti Dasgupta, my loving aunt but for whose fostering care it would not been possible for me to complete this work. I regret that they are not with me to see and enjoy the moment of the book coming into light.

I like to take this opportunity to pay my love and affection to my mother, my husband, and my children for their loving care and cooperation in completing this work.

My sincere thanks are due to the Director of Higher Education, Government of Tripura, who has kindly allowed me to use the photographs of the objects preserved in the Government Museum, Agartala and the Director General of Archaeological Survey of India, but for whose courtesy the illustrations of Unokoti rock-cuts and some of the temples could not have been reproduced here and am also thankful to Dr. Gayatri Sen Majumder, Sri Dilip Deb Roy, Photographer, Sri K.M. Chako, Ex-Surveyer, Education Department, Government of Tripura, Sri Jahar Acharjee and Sri Tushar Kanti Chakraborty for rendering various help.

I would like to thank my friends and colleagues who have always been source of encouragement to me.

I convery my sincere thanks to Sri D.K. Tyagi, Commissioner-Cum-Sedretary, Education & Tribal Welfare Departments, Government of Tripura and the Tripura State Tribal Cultural Research Institute & Museum, Government of Tripura who are actually responsible for translating this work into reality.

Last, but not the least, I pay my homage to those unknown sculptors and architects of Tripura, whose creations have inspired me to undertake this work.

Agartala **Ratna Das**
04.11.96

N.B.:- All the interpretations drawn and conclusions made in this dissertation have been based on the findings available upto 1979. The manuscript has also been prepared in 1979. Consequently, later interpretations on the said materials are not included here.

-Author.

Notes &References

1. Erstwhile Tripura district (modern Comilla) of East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, was known as 'Plain Tipperah'. As the name suggests, the land is not undulating like the present State of Tripura, and is bathed by large watery veins like Meghna and Titās. It was directly ruled by the British, a part being the Zamindary of the Kings of Tripura.

2. Sinha, K.C., *Rājamālā*, pp. 2-3.

3. A number of objects found in the Pilāk Jolāibāḍi area were placed under the disposal of Dr. Debala Mitra for her study. She published the results of her study in *JAS, Vol. xviii*, 1976, p.56f.

4. Bhuinya, S.K.(ed), Tripura Burunji, p. xi.

Abbreviations

ASB, AR	Annual Report, Archaeological Survey of Burma.
ASI, AR	Annual Report, Archaeological Survey of India.
BSPP	Bangiya Sahitya Psrishad Patrika.
EI	Epigraphia Indica.
EISMS	Banerji, R.D.,Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture.
IBBS DM	Bhattasali, N.K.,Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures, in Dacca Museum.
JAIH	Journal of Ancient Indian History, University of Calcutta.
JAS	Journal of Asiatic Society.
JGIS	Journal of Greater India Society.
JISOA	Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art.
JNSI	Journal of Numismatic Society of India.
MASB	Memoirs of Asiatic Society of Bengal.
MASI	Memoirs of Archaeological Survey of India.

CHAPTER -I

GEOGRAPHICAL, SOCIO-ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

Rising from the level land of erstwhile Tripura and the present-day Comilla district of Bangladesh, of which it forms the western boundary, stretches out this hilly and undulating land of Tripura, inhabited by various ethnic groups. Tripura is one of those strategically located areas wherein diverse civilizations and cultures met in the past. Lying at the cross-roads of Bengal and Assam, it was probaly connected with Burma via land-routes through Gomati, Surna and Cachar Valleys, Lushai hills and Manipur on the one hand, and via Chittagong, Arakan on the other. Prehaps it was through the later route in the 11th-12th centuties that the kingdom of Pattikera and Burma maintained relations among themselves[1]. The Burmese chronicles contain many references to this kingdom. According to these the kingdom of Anoratha (11th century A.D.) was bounded on the west by Pattikera and probably both the kingdoms had matrimonial relations[2]. Although the city of Pattikera cannot be identified, it must have been situated within the district of Tripura (modern Comilla district,Bangladesh) for an important place near Mainamati hills is still known as Paitkera, a Pargana, which had been under the administation of Tripura even before the partition of India. Tripura's link which appears to have been effected *via* Chittagong and Arakan in the later period and Govindamānikya (1661-67 A.D.) who is said to have taken shlter in the Arakan court due to political turmoil in his motherland[3] most probably used the said route, suggested by an observation of Capain T.H. Lewin in the later part of 19th century[4]. On the banks of river Mainee in Hill Tract of Chittagong are found ruins of old masonry buildings. Some tradition attributes these ruins to a former ruler of Hill Tripura who is said to have been driven away from his land and again was forced to leave the new area by some hillmen.

From the north through the Assam Valley came the Chinese[5] pilgrims as well as different tribal imigrants of Indo-Monogoloid race who belonged to the Tibeto-Burman family of the Indo-Chinese group[6], of whom the Bodo-speaking group deserves a special mention. They spread over the whole Brahmaputra Valley and extended to Tripura in the shape of Tiprā tribe[7]. People of ethnically similar groups gathered in the Nowgong-Cachar districts of Assam for habitation and they maintained contact with Bengal, particularly with the Srihaṭṭa sector, which considerably influenced the cultural history of Tripura. Bengal had a happy cultural relation with Burma and the Bengal-Burmese style of art seems to have an outcome of religious factor. However, geography did play an important role too in determining style and transmission. And it is through the passes of Tripura this stylistic trend migrated.

Moreover, when colonization and trade linked together people of South-East Asia or the Buddhist Missionaries came from the said region via sea routes to visit Bodhgaya and other sacred places have had to pass from or to Bengal through land routes *via* Tripura to reach the destination. Being situated in such a cross-road of different cultural waves, Tripura experienced the prelimianry blending of Bengal and

South-East Asian (particularly Burmese) art on its soil which gained its final shape in Bengal and South-East Asia and *viceversa*. As a result, this both-way assimilation of extraneous elements wih the local idioms gave rise to a regional style of art, typical of Tripura since the 8th-9th century of Christian era (*infra*, Chapter III, specimens from Pilāk-Jolāibādī) which is an important phase towards the development of Eastern Indian school of mediaeval art.

In later period, through its unguarded western (including north-western and suoth-western) gates Muslims entered Tripura and attacked it on many occasions. But physical features and natural factors like mountain fastness and dense forests, unsuitable climate, excessive rains and floods, and consequent difficulties in movement helped the Tripura rulers in offering resistance to the alien agressors, and impeded the latter in staying here for a substantial period. As a result these Muslims could not affect the Tripuri cultural life much,as they did in cultures of many other parts of India. While indigenous cerative impulses of the people appear to have received setback in their expression elsewhere, the local lunar dynasty survived and ruled till recently in Tripura, where sculptural art and architecture flourished owing to the royal patronage. Notwithstanding the occasional influence of Muhammedan, the art and architecture of Tripura remained essentilly indigenous, with distinctive styles of their own.

The population of Tripura is largely a collection of Indo-Mongoloid group of tribes and the people who came from the West, particularly from Bengal. Matrimonial relation of the royal family of Tripura with different States of India made this land culturally a part of Indian mainland, and paved the way for the transmission of different elemants in its art and culture. Various racial and cultural elements of other parts of India are discernible in the cultures in both hills and plains of Tripura[8]. For instance, the people of Tripura like the most Indians have a spirit of religious toleration and members of the royal family of the land who adopted Bengali language, gave it the prestige of State language and even today it is serving as a great cementing force, without suppressing the linguistic variety of the tribes. Immigrnats like the Manipuris, Nagas, Garos etc., while adopted many local customs and beliefs, also offered some of their cultural trait to the people of Tripura. In short, the population being a composite one, the culture of the land has been heterogenous in content, but with the passage of time and growth of the spirit of toleration, an ideal of homogenity has laced the complex life and culture of Tripura.

II

Local variations in the cultural life of Tripura itself are also worth noticing. The cause of this phenomenon perhaps lies in the topographical differences. Since the time of Ratnamānikya I (1464-67), the first historical king of Tripura, the socio-political life of South and Western plains of Tripura had been dynamic, whereas that of the northern hilly areas static and primitive. Well-administered Government was

comparatively at work in the plains of Tripura since the 15th century (*infra*, Chapter II), while the northern hilly region was perhaps controlled by the chiefs of Kirāta people, who were semi-nomadic due to their mode of agriculture (shifting cultivation) and lack of mutual understanding between themselves. Such varying socio-political conditions, in different sectors of Tripura led to cultural differences; plains of southern and west Tripura were more easily and intensively Aryanised and they witnessed a commendable development of art and architecture, mainly due to the patronage of the royal family, but no noteworthy plastic remains (except Ūnakoṭi culture complex which is again sporadic in nature, *infra*, Chapter III) have so far been discovered in the north. It is probale that the lack of mutual understanding and bickerings among the tribes of the north and their constant moving from one place to another in search of food, did not give them scope for expressing their creative impulses. The non-idolatric type of religion as practised by these tribes, may have been another reason for the absence of cult icons.

From early time, people of the plains and the royal family appear to have remained within the fold of Buddhism and Brahamanism. The art of this area reflecting the religious experience of the people and the court, is hieretic in nature. Only members of the well-to-do class of the area who could afford to pay the artist, and bear the cost of material and installation of images, had the privilege of enjoying religious merit. Large number of stone sculptures including culticons recovered from southern and western Tripura testify to the presence of an economically prosperous community in those areas. This religious art, was thus, the art of higher classes and there is hardly any evidence during the period under discussion of the art of the common people. Or they used perishable materials which have washed out.

Alongside Buddhism and Brahamanism, tribal faiths and beliefs appear to have flourished in Tripura from early times. And that such faiths and beliefs came under the influence of Brahmanism is seemingly testified to by the well-established practice of worshipping fourteen gods, the antiquity of which has been pushed back to the time of Ratna-mānikya I by one of his coins of Śaka 1386 or A.D. 1464[9]. The original association of the fourteen gods with the tribal people survives in the practice of performing the relevant rites of non-Aryan nature connceted with their worship by the tribal priests like Chantais and Debhais[10]. The fourteen gods, identified with members of Brahmanical pantheon are as follows: Śiva, Umā, Hari, Kamalā, Sarasvati, Kumāra, Ganeśa, Brahmā, Prithivī, Gangā, the Sea, the Fire, Kāma and Himālayā[11].

It is not known as to when exactly Aryans influcnced the religion of Tripura. " The religion now prevailing is a form of Hindu idolatry, but it is said that before the accession of Trilochana[12], they worshipped no idols but objects of nature, e.g., trees, stones, animala etc. A trace of this is noticed in their present practice of sticking a bamboo in the ground during religious festivals and worshipping it "[13]. Bamboo is literally the staff of the life of the tribes and deified probably from the earliset period.

Majority of the clans of this tract offer worship to bamboo. It is to them merely an impersonation of the deity of forest (*vanakumāri*), but it is interesting to note that no artistic representation of bamboo tree has come to our notice as yet, even in the art of later period.

Paucity of archaeological evidence from Tripura proper makes it difficult to say anything about the condition of Buddhism or Brahmanism in Tripura during the early centuries of Chrisitian era. Icono-plastic art recovered from this land provides data about the prevalance of these faiths since earlier part of 7th century A.D. It is important to note here that while Buddhism was in a flourishing stage in Bengal at the beginning of Gupta era, Tripura has not produced any evidence of the presence of this faith on her soil on such an early period. On the testimony of Hiuen-Tsang, it is learnt that Buddhists and Jainas were outnumbered by the followers of Brahmanism in Bengal in 7th century A.D. This tide of Brahmanical faith also came to Tripura during this period which is corroborated by lange number of Brahmanical images of the 7th-8th century A.D. Tripura was also a seat of Buddhism which is again evidenced by the Buddhist icons and remains found at Pilāk.

Though not scientifically excavated, sufficient examples of antiquities, similar to those hailing from Maināmatī, have been recovered from this area. It is assumed that, Buddhism, when it was at its threshold in Samataṭa and Harikela-maṇḍala, was able to influence the extreme southern part of the land and it is tempting to suggest that a monastary was established at Pilāk which was contemporary of Maināmatī Vihāra and perhaps it was dedicated to Avalokiteśvara. It seems likely in view of the colossal stone images of Avalokitesvara which have been unearthed from this site. Dearth of definite inscriptional evidence, however, is a bar to identify this place with any known Vihāra of ancient times. The Gunāighar copper-plate mentions one Āśrama Vihāra dedicated to Aryā-Avalokitéśvara. A mound in Pilāk containing a colossal image of Avalokitesvara is still known as Asram tilla, and whether this place can be identified with Āśrama-Vihāra will be in a state of assumption until we get some more definite record. However, there is no doubt that in the extreme southern part of Tripura, Buddhism was in flourishing stage and still it is a living religion among the people of that area. Bhattasali is of opinion that Buddhism spread from Bengal to Arakan and Burma *en route* Tripura[14], and the fact is evidenced by a bulk of art pieces recovered from the southern part of Tripura[15]. Of the great sects in the Brahmanical religion, Vaishnavism and Śaiva cult and worship of Devī Mahishamardinī were popular as evidenced by the iconoplastic art of Tripura of early period. A good number of massive Sūrya images, some of which measure about eleven feet high, have been recovered from the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi area of South Tripura and they belonged to a considerably early period. Such colossal figures of Sūrya from eastern India has not come to our notice yet. Ganeśa was also a popular deity among the people of Southern Tripura. Śaiva faith was also popular but ordinary phallic representation of the god (not the Mukhalingas) was more frequently worshipped. Only one image of Śiva in anthromoporphic form has been recovered from Pilāk-Jolaibadi region. Perhaps

North Tripura was the seat of Śaivism and orthodox brahmanical preachers selected the Ūnokoti hills of the region which was largely populated by the tribal people. Different types of Śiva images of cruder and finer variety are found scattered over the Ūnakoti hills. Perhaps it was a Śaiva place of pilgrimage of Eastern India during 10th-11th centuries of Christian era. In the per-Mānikya period,different religious sects co-existed side by side without any sectarian jealousy and perphaps these sects of Buddhism and Brahmanism got the royal patronage, instead of which sculpting of such colossal images and the shrines to install them could be built. In Bengal the Khadgas, the Chandras, and the Pālas and rulers like Kāntideve and Ranavaṅkamalla were followers of Buddhism, while Vainya Gupta, Śasānka and early Sena rulers were Śaivas. The Varmans, the later Sena kings and Deva family were Vaishnavas. Viśvarupa-sena and Keśavasena were parama Sauras[16]. They have the equal zeal and veneration for other creeds. It may tentatively be assumed that in Tripura, the contiguous territory of Bengal, the same religious climate was prevalent and spread of sculptures in this area was a sure index of it. The same spirit of religious toleration was present in the Māṇikya period also. Moreover, in this perod, the old religious faiths and cults of the autochthonous people seems to have been given a new form and content through contact with the Indo-Aryan world of Brahmanism through Sanskrit and Bengali. Brahmanical spirit was also at work. But the old rites which have been harmonised with Brahmanical ones began to carry on with pomp and grandeur (e.g., worship of Chaturdaśa devatā). Buddhism perhaps lost the royal patronage of Tripura since 15th century A.D., because no royal record on this matter has yet been found. Rulers were devout worshippers of Śiva, Śakti and Viṣnu and Chaturdaśa devatā which is evidenced by their coins and inscriptions. Temples were dedicated to Ambikā, Girijā, Viṣnu, Śiva and Chaturdaśa devatā. Dikpālas and Mātrikās were also not neglected in the religion of Tripura in the later period. In addition to these better known religious practices, there were groups who continued animistic and non-idolatric rituals. A hybrid type of religion, perhaps resulting from the admixture of Aryan and non-Aryan cults, flourished in late medieval period. A number of images belong to this period with peculiar iconography uncommon in Indian art history. Literary, epigraphic or any other data to unveil the nature of these still obscure icons are lacking.

This mixed type of socio-ethnic and religious pattern of life influenced in a greater degree towards the development of art and architechture of Tripura. In the earlier period the art-stream of Tripura is mainly influenced by mainstream of Indian art, partly as a result of domination of inferior civilization by the superior in respect of higher standard of attainment in the field of culture and their rich earlier tradition, and partly by the geographical influence. In the later period the art evolution of this land seems to have attained a stage where typical local idiom and beliefs, influenced by the ethnic character of this area were in vogue in the treatment of physiognomy, dresses and ornaments, hair-do and other decorations. Tripura also tolerably and harmoniously adopted Muslim idiom of art and architecture .

Notes & References :

1. Ray N.R., *Bangalir Itihass*, p. 119.
2. Annual Report, *Archaeological Survey of Burma*, 1921-22, pp. 61-62; 1922-23, pp. 31-32 ; Phayre, *History of Burma*. pp. 49-50.
3. Sen, K.P. (ed.) *Śri-Rājamālā*, IV, pp. 7-9
4. Lewin,T.H., *Hill Tracts of Chittagong and Their Dwellers*, p. 6. We think that this might be the temporary dwelling of Govindamāṇikya who sought refuge in the hill tracts of Chittagong , but the Riāṇg inhabitants of that region drove him away to further south -east and he took his shelter in the court of Arakan as evidenced from the Rājmālā source.
5. Travernier, a French Traveller, who came to India during the reign of Shajahan and visited Bengal when Chatramāṇikya (A.D. 1663-64) was on the throne of Tripura, refers to Tripura's trade relation with China. Travernier's *Travels in India*, John Phillip, pp. 451-52.
6. Dani, A.H., *Pre-history and Proto-history of Eastern India*, pp. 13-14.
7. Chatterjee, S.K., Kirata-jana-kriti, p. 130.
8. This process of Intermingling of different culture is afoot even today.
9. Chowdhury, Vasanta and Ray Parimal, 'Representation of the Chaturdaśadevatās on a coin of Ratnamānikya deva of Tripura', *JNSI*, vol, XXXVII, 1975, parts I-II, pp. 111-113.
10. Ahom priests are also called Deodhais.
11. Sen. K.P.(ed), Śri Rājamālā, I, pp. 31.32. Fourteen octo-alloy heads are worshipped in lieu of full images.
12. Trilochana, the 47th king of Tripura who settled his kingdom in present land of Tripura, introduced the the worship of fourteen gods, *Śri Rājamālā*, I, pp. 281-82.
13. Dalton , E.T., *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 110.
14. Bhattasali, N.K., *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in Dacca Museum*, p. xxix.
15. It is peculiar to note that when Jainas and Ājīvikas were able to establish their tenets in Bengal prior Buddhism, no evidence or information about their foothold in Tripura has yet been recovered. Even today Jainism is not at all a living religion as Buddhist and Brahmanical faiths are.
16. Majumder, R.C. (ed.) *History of Bengal*, I pp. 426-27.
17. Das, Ratna, 'Tripurar Puratatvik Silpa', *Samachar;* Agartala, 1977, pp. 168-177.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The early history of the present State of Tripura is still shrouded into obscurity. No records in the shape of documents or monuments of the autochthonous people of the land belonging to the pre-historic or proto-historic periods have survived. One of the major sources of the history of Tripura is a dynastic account of the local kings with the Mānikya-ending names[1]. While the earlier part of this account tracing the beginning of the dynasty to the epic here Yudhishthira, is historically unreliable, it is tolerably dependable as a source from the middle of the 15th century A.D. onwards.

Presumably the present State of Tripura did not exit as such (from the earliest times to the 13th century A.D.) and its southern plains integrally belonged to the domains of more substantial rulers of South-Eastern Bengal (see below), while the northern hilly sector was governed by the semi-nomadic primitive tribes who have left no records of their activities, political as well as cultural, for the posterity. Their land was gradually but slowly Aryanised and this process of acculturation could not make much headway in the northern region due to its impregnable geographical position.

The name of the country is supposed to have owed its origin to the Tipras of the Indo-Mongoloid (Bodo) group of people to whom Professor S.K. Chatterji applies the generic appellation Kirāta[3]. The view of K.C. Sinha[3] seeking to connect Tripura with Kartripura, one of the five *pratyanta* States submitting to Samudragupta, as known from his Allahabad prasasti, is untenable.

The Gunāighar(in the Comilla district of Bagladesh) copper plate of the Gupta king Vainya-gupta of the 188 G.E. (A.D. 507-8); according to its editor D.C. Bhattacharyya A.D. 506[4]) may be regarded as the earliest record having some bearing on the history of Tripura, if we regard the hill Tripura and the plain Tipperah of the British period as forming one compact culture-zone. Of the places meationed in this epigraphic record, the name of 'Jolāri Kshetram' appears to us to be interseting. We may venture to identify it with modern Jolāibāri in South Tripura, situated on the border of the Comilla and Noakhali districts of Bangladesh and not far from its findspot. In fact, the Jolāibāḍi-Pilāk region of Tripura, has yielded a relatively rich harvest of art examples datable from the 7th-8th centuries of the Christian era.

Vainya-Gupta was succeeded by a group of kings comprising Gopachandra, Dharmāditya and Samācharadeva who ruled Samatata approximately between 525 and 575 A.D. These three kings ruled from the place, wherefrom Vainya-Gupta also had done a few years before them. This locality was somewhere either in eastern Dacca or Tipperah district.[5] Hiuen-Tsang, who visited India in the first half of the 7th century A.D., referred to the Kingdom of Samatata which included the major portion of Vanga proper. It had included as Hiuen-Tsang described, within its political boundaries a part of Central Bengal in addition to the region of the district of

Tippera.[6] A family of Buddist rulers, designated as the Khaḍhas, deserves a particular mention.

The combined testimony of the Āsrafpur copper plates and Deulbādi Sarvāni image inscription (Āsrafpur and Deulbādi are in the Dacca and Comilla districts respectively) has revealed that a family of four rulers, Khaḍgodyama, Jāta-khaḍga, Devakhaḍga and Rājarājabhata used to rule in the Dacca Noakhali Tipperah region and on the basis of paleography of these inscriptions these Khaḍga kings have been placed in the last three quarters of the 7th century A.D. [7]The above mentioned Sarvāni image and an image of Sūrya from the same spot may be treated as the fore runners of the stelac-carved Pāla sculptures and in this respect have a large contribution towards the growth of the Eastern School of medieval Indian art.

Mention may be made in this context to the Tipperah copper plate of a feaudatory chief called Lokanātha (the plate was discovered somewhere in the erstwhile district of Tripura, now a part of Bangladesh) from wich record it is known that a family of four or five chiefs (Lokanātha being the fourth) ruled in the Tipperah (perhaps including a part of modern Tripura) region in about the late 7th century (the period is indicated by the palaeography) but unfortunately the liege lord of Lokanātha is not mentioned in the plate, and it records a grant of land in the forest region (atavibhukhaṇḍa) of Suvvunga Vishaya for construction of a temple of Ananta-Narayana[8]. This forest region of Suvvunga Vishaya might be under the control of Lokanātha of Tripura and may be identified with a portion of hill Tripura. It is said that even before fifty years ago, a brick-temple, locally called as the temple of Nārayāna was visible in the Thākuranibāri area of Pilāk[9]. Now a days debris of large sized bricks, some of them are decorated (stylistically similar to those from Maināmati) are being stacked there and a massive Nrisimha image was recovered from the region. It is tempting to suggest that this portion of modern Tripura might be included in the Suvvunga Vishaya of Lokanātha. The copper-plate grant of Maruṇḍānatha recovered from Kālāpur (Sylhet district of Bangladesh) records the grant of land for construction of 'bali charu satra' of the temple of Ananta-Nārāyana in the atavibhukhaṇḍa [10]. Both the Nātha feaudatories had the same ancestor, Śrīnātha, of them Maruḍanātha appears to have been later than Lokanātha since he does not figure in Lokanātha's plate; and further he was granting land not for the temple, but for the 'bali-charu-satra' of the temple.

Another important record, the Kailān copper-plate of Śrīdharan Rāta (Kailan being in the Comilla district, now in Bangladesh), has disclosed the existence of another family with the members having their ending in Rāta; these Rāta rulers who had their capital at Devaparvata (somewhere in the Mainamati hills). On palaeographic grounds this inscription may be placed in the second half of the 7th century[11]. Jīvadharana Rāta, father of Śrīdharana, and Jīvadharana as mentioned in Tripperah copper-plate of Lokanātha, might be identical person.

After the Rātas came rhe Devas, whose capital also was at Davaparvata. Viradeva, Anandadeva, Bhavadeva and Kāntideva belonged to the Deva dynasty. A copper-plate inscription, discovered in Chittagong, palaeographically datable to the 9th century A.D. mentions, 'Harikela mandala'. The geographical connotation of the name Harikela may be taken to denote originally an area now included in the Chittagong district of Bangladesh[12] and the Sabrum subdivision of Tripura which are collateral territories and topographicaly, ethnologically and culturally similar with each other, though politically separate now-days (see below), might have been included into Harikela-mandala.

Apart from the epigraphic records of this period as cited above, mention is to be made of the coins found in south Tripura as well as the Comilla and Chittagong districts of Bangladesh . Broadly divisible into two groups, the first of them consists of debased gold coins closely imitating the issue of the Imperial Gupta kings in respect of device and metrology (archer: Devi;) and was dated by Allan to the middle of 7th century[13]. A large number of same type of coins have been recorded from the vicinity of the Jolāibāḍi-Pilāk region of South Tripura (fig.86). Though the lack of stratigraphic information on the coins forbids us to deduce any definite conclusion, we may infer or suggest reasonably that atleast the Southern part of Tripura was under the same political power as was in South-Eastern Bengal after the decline of the Guptas.

The second group consists of thin silver coins, stylistically and metrologically connected with the coins of the Chandra dynasty of Arakan(bearing recumbent bull and tripartite symbol on them) found in plenty in and around Sabrum and Belonia areas of South Tripura (adjacent to Chittagong of Bangladesh). They bear on them the similar legend which has been sought to be read as Harikela[14]. It has been assigned to the 7th century A. D. on the basis of the paleographic evidence of Sandoway inscription of Arakan of the same period[15] and the legend *Harikela* suggests the existence of a kindom Harikela in the Chittagong district and its adjacent areas which is contiguous to Arakan and might be influenced by the more dominating mint-masters of Arakan of that period. Most probably the Sabrum area, the southernmost part of Tripura, where numerous such coins are being found, was include in, or otherwise connected with, the kingdom of Harikela during the 7th-8th century A.D.

During the 10th-11th century A.D. Samataṭa was ruled by the rulers with name-ending Chanas and the Maināmati copper-plates suggest that these Chandras originated from Rohitagiri (identified as Lālmāi hills of erstwhite Tripura district and modern Comilla district of Bangladesh) and this Rohitagiri enjoyed the position of royal seat of Chandras in earlier Period[16]. All these Maināmati copper-plates mention land-grants at Samataṭa-maṇḍala by the rulers of Chandra dynasty. Samatata was probably included in the Chandra kingdom, Karmāntaka being the great seat of culture which is identified as Baḍkamta in the Comilla district and is situated in the

eastern boundary of the present state of Tripura.

That a portion of Samataṭa was annexed by Mahipāla I is evidenced by the Baghāura Visnu image inscription[17], though it was again recovered by Laḍahachandra of the same dynasty as evidenced by Bharellā image inscription[18].

Dāmodaradeva, grandson of Madhumāthena-deva (founder of an independent kingdom in the eastern region of the river Meghna) was a powerful ruler whose kingdom comprised of the district of Tripura, Noakhali and Chittagong[19]. These rulers might have got some contact with the southern part of Tripura. In this connection mention may be made of an Umā-Maheśvara image inscription (the icon is now in worship at Agartala) of Tarangachandra deva, identification of whom has not yet been known. The image was recovered from the Khandal pargana[20] (Noakhali district of Bangladesh). Tarangachandra-deva might be a member of this family and have a close relation with southern portion of Tripura. Stylistically the image is assignnable to the late 11 th century, and the dating is supported by the palaeography of the accompanying inscription.[21]

The existence of a small kingdom of Pattikera[22] may be traced back as early as 11th century A.D. The Burmese Chronicles contain several references to this kingdom. A copper-plate dated 1220 A.D. records Karmāntaka, Pattikera were governed by the family of Ranavankamālla Śri Harikāla Deva[23]. It records the grant of a Buddhist monastary by Dhadi-eba, the Chief Minister of the said ruler of Pattikera. The extraordinary nature of the three name of the grantor Dhadi-ebā, his father Heḍi-ebā and the writer Medini-ebā, all apparently belonging to the same family, deserves more than a passing mention. Though the names have no doubt been more or less Sanskritized in the hands of the writer, they clearly preserve their foreign origin in the unique appellative ebā which is unknown in any Indian dialect. It appears that a respectable family of Burmese origin settled and survived in the 13th century A.D.. in the district of Tripura and atleast one of the members of this family enjoye the position of Chief Minister of Southern-Bengal kingdom, for ba or eba seems to be the characteristic of Burmese name even now[24]. The Māṇikya rulers of Tripura to the 15th century A.D. had been bearing thr word Pha[25]. as their name endings . It is tempting to suggest a connection between the respectable Burmese family of Pattikera on the one hand and the families of Tripura and Ahom rulers on the other and it is expected that discovery of some new data in near future may substantiate our suggestion[26]. Whatever be the relation, the Mānikya rulers of Tripura were influenced by the Burmese cultural tradition, which is evidenced, *inter alia*, by examples of religiious arcitecture of the land (Fig. 74).

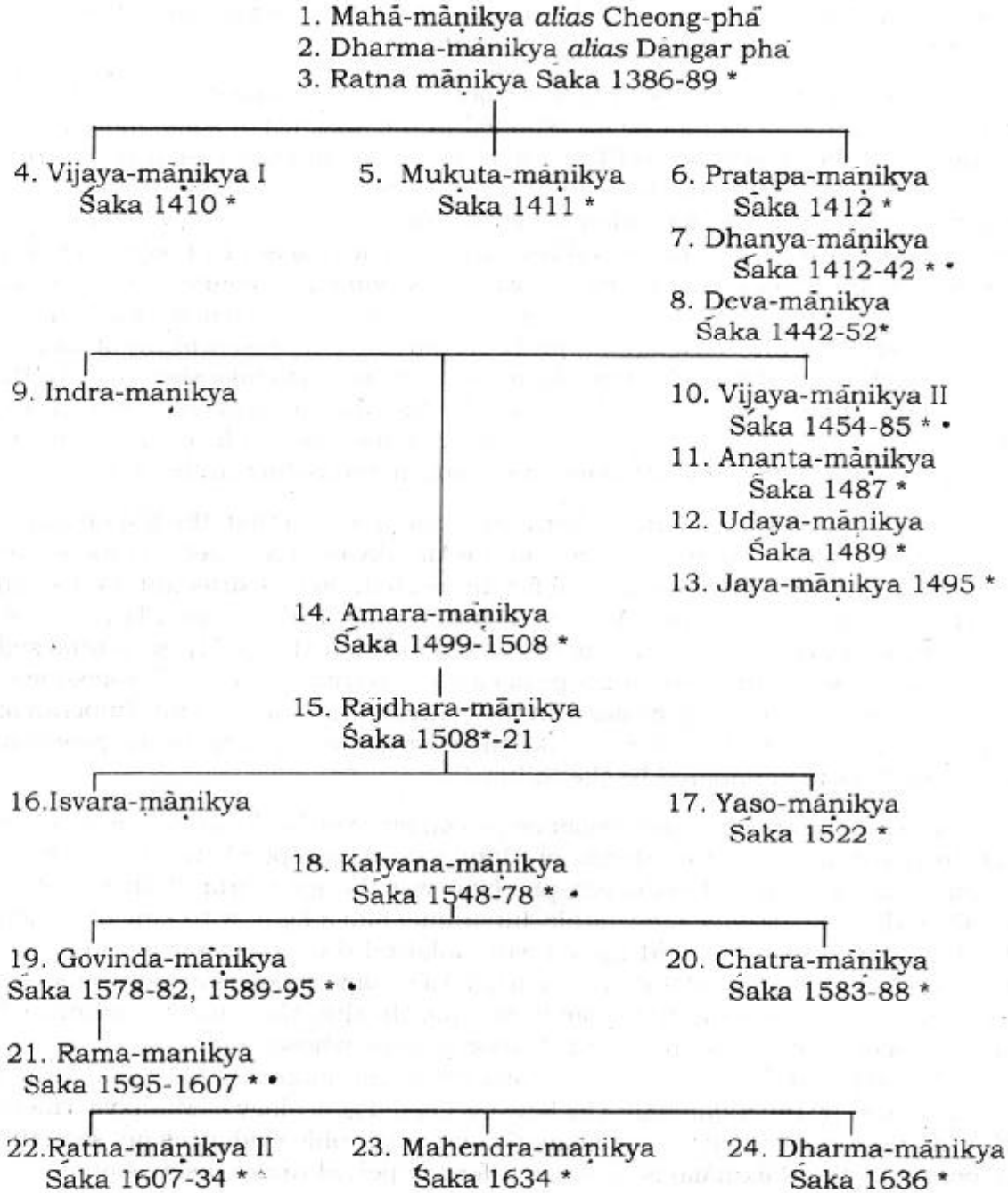
The discovery of same types of coins and sculptural art in South-Eastern Bengal and in southernpart of the present State of Tripura also seems to indicate that atleast the latter area was governed by or somehow rather politically connected, with Harikela, Samataṭa and Pattikera in pre-Muhammadan days[27] and same stream of

artistic activity was current in both the regions probably under the same type of royal patronage.

The nature of relation of the Mānikya rulers, with the ruling dynastics of Bengal as mentioned above, cannot be ascertained in the absence of some more positive documents in the present land of Tripura. It seems probable, that after the fall of the Devas (family of Dāmodara-deva), the predecessors of the Māṇikyas became powerful and formed an independent kingdom. Alternatively it may be suggested that due to political turmoil in Hindu and Buddhist kingdom of South-Easternn Bengal, a certain noble family of that region who was somehow connected with those kingdoms, sought the help of the Muslim invaders and formed a new kingdom in the present land of Tripura[28]. It is equally probable that the successors of any of the above mentioned Hindu and Buddhist royal families were forced to take shelter in the Hilly regions of Tripura due to turmoils caused by the Muslim invasions and with the alliance of the autochthonous people of this land, they were able to form a kingdom in the land lying between Chittagong in the south and Sylhet in the north.

It has already been mentioned (supra, Introduction, p-2) that the Rājamālā gives an account of a lunar dynasty (Of whom the Māṇikyas were later members) since very ancient period, but evidences so far discovered, do not substantiate its claim earlier than the 15th century. At the beginning of the 15th century, Tripura came into contact with the Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Shah (1415-31), who annexed a portion of Tipperah and issued a type of coinage having a figure of grotesque lion on the reverse, which was prevailing in the contemporary State of hill Tipperah and perhaps this was done in order to make the currency acceptable to the people of a portion of Tripura conquered by the Sultan[29].

No numismatic or epigraphic evidence is available yet for the period prior to 1464 A.D. to substantiate the existence of Māṇikyas as independent rulers. But the Rājamālā narrates that king Cheong-pha (who was the great grandfather of Ratna-māṇikya, the first datable king of this lunar line) had a fight with king of Gauḍa[30]. This king of Gauda may be identified with Jalal-ud-din and Cheong-pha- may be placed on the earlier part of the 15th century A.D. Some scholars are of opinion that Ratnamāṇikya was not the first ruler to assume the title *Māṇikya*. According to this school Cheong-pha was the first Māṇikya king whose Sanskritized name is Mahāmāṇikya[31] and he was the grandfather of Ratna-māṇikya (not great grandfather as stated by the Rājamālā). The latest accepted genealogy of Manikya rulers of Tripura as corroborated by numismatic and epigraphic evidences (as sometimes supported by the Rājamālā) is as follows (for the period under discussion).



* coins ; Inscriptions •

25. Mukunda-māṇikya
Śaka 1651-61

26. Indra-māṇikya
Śaka 1666-68 * •

27. Jaya-māṇikya

28. Vijaya-māṇikya III

29. Krishna-māṇikya
Śaka 1682-1705 * •

Except an account in the Rājamālā no archaeological or any other evidence for the period reigned by Mahā-māṇikya and Dharma-māṇikya has yet been recovered. The Rājamālā mentioned Dharma as great patron of art and literature, though nothig is survived to prove the real factors.

It seems presumable that Ratna-māṇikya I ruled over Tripura after the death of his father Dharma-manikya I. His accession on throne occurred sometimes in śaka 1384-1385 (1462-63 A.D.[32]). Ratna made a friendship with Sultan of Bengal (probably Rukn-ud-din Barbak Shah, 1454-74 A.D.) and with his help, defeated all the tribal chiefs[33] and became the sole ruler of Tripura. It might be so happened that the Sultan of Bengal recognised him as the independent ruler of this region which was described in the Rājamālā as conferment of Māṇikya[34]. Now Ratna issued coins as a ruler of independent State. It was during the time of Ratna, Tripura maintained a friendly relation with Bengal and probably after a long period since the earlier part of the 13 th century, it came into cultural contact with Bengal. It was probably largely through the patronage of Ratna, Brahmanism made a significant dent into the tribal society of Tripura which was wiped out from this land after the downfall of Samataṭa and other South-Eastern Bengal Hindu and Buddist kingdoms[35]. He was the pioneer in the field of cultural synthesis between the Aryan and pre-Aryan cultures in the land. His coins describe him as a devout worshipper of Pārvati. Parameśvara and Nārāyana. As he was the worshipper of Chaturdaśa Devatā (fourteen Gods), is evidenced by one of his coins[36]. Chaturdaśa Devatā are cult deities sprang out of peculiar synthesis and harmonious blending of Brahmanism and primitive society (*Supra*, Ch.I). He introduced lion device on the reverse of his coins which became a tradition till the end of the dynasty.

It is not known, for how many days Ratna ruled Tripura after the issue of his coin dated Śaka 1389. Next ruler of this line was Vijaya-māṇikya I. His relation with Ratna-māṇikya is not known and at the time of his accession he was a minor. It appears from a copper-plate grant datd Śaka 1410 (1488 A.D.) that Punyavatī,

* coins ; Inscriptions •

maternal aunt (wife of Daityanārāyana, the army chief and defacto ruler) of Vijaya-māṇikya granted villages, situated both at hill and plain Tripura. Nothing about his reign is known from any other source[37] . Perhaps he was dethroned by the army and his brother came into power in Śaka 1411 (1489 A.D.) which is evidenced by his coin of the same date. He introduced Garuḍa device on his coin, which is never found in any type of Tripura coinage. This type of Garuḍa figure on teracotta plaques are found in plenty in Udayapur , the old capital of Tripura. After a short reigning period he died or was dethroned sometime in Śaka 1412 (1490 A.D.) because numismatic evidences for the reign of Dhanya-māṇikya are being available since Śaka 1412, but his relationship with Mukuta is still in darkness.

Dhanya-māṇikya (1490-1514-15 A.D.) was perhaps the greatest of Tripura rulers[38]. He was a contemporary of Ala-u-din Hussain Shah of Bengal, and the latter achieved very little success, though he made strenuous efforts to conquer this hill kingdom. Dhanya-māṇikya started his career of conquest by subjugating a number of principalities around his kingdom. He annexed to his kingdom Khaṇḍal (Noakhali) Meherkul, Pattikera, Gangāmandal, some portion of Śrihatta, Chittagong and he also proceeded upto Arakan and Lungley (in modern Mizoram State)37. He used the epithet *Vijayindra* on his coin dated Śaka 1428 (1506 A.D.) to commemorate his victories. The Rajamala has all the praise for him. But the Muslim records gave a contradictory picture of these events. Sonārgāon inscription of 1513 A.D. refers to Khawas-Khan as Sar-i-Laskar of the country of Tripura which indicates that atleast a portion of Tripura was conquerred by Hussain Shah[40]. Works of Parameśvara Das and Śrīkara Nandī (poets patronised by the commanders of Hussain Shah) described that Hussain Shah conquered a portion of Tripura[41]. The epithets used in his coins, viz., Tripurendra, Vijayīndra, Chātigram Vijayi certainly are the evidences of his conquest. However, during his rule, Tripura came into contact with Muslims more than once and the cultural influence of the political affairs was submerged in the art and architecture of Tripura (*infra*. Ch.III and IV). It is said in the Rājamālā. that the rock-cut sculptures in Devatāmuḍā were carved during the reign of Dhanya by the soldiers of Hussain Shah[42]. Stylistically, these sculptures may be assignable to this period.

The Rājamālā praised Dhanya as great patron of art and architecture[43]. According to epigraphic evidence atleast two temples at Udayapur were built by Dhanya for Ambikā and Śankara respectively. A number of images stylistically datable to the same period have been found in Udayapur. Perhaps these were fashioned in the same period in any well accomplished workshop of Tripura, patronized by the rulers of Tripura. It is generally believed that Dhanya died sometimes after Śaka 1436 (1514-15 A.D.)as no coin was issued in the name of Dhanya after that period. But according to an inscription, quoted in the Rājamālā[44], that a temple for Ambika was built by Dhanya in Śaka 1442 (1520 A.D.). If Deva-māṇikya, son of Dhanya, is considered as the next ruler in the line, there may not be much objection to accept the view that Dhanya died in Śaka 1442 and at the same year Deva became the king[45]. Kaliprasanna

Sen, in his commentary on the Rājamālā gave an account of the rule of Dhvaja-māṇikya intervening betweenn Dhanya and Deva[46]. Neither the Rajamala enlists this king in its genealogy, nor any other source material is available to substantiate the above view.

That Deva-māṇikya ascended throne in Śaka 1442 (1520 A.D.) is evidenced by his coin of the same date. He was contemporary of Nusrat Shah (1519-32 A.D.) of Bengal. The Rājamālā accounts for a victory of Deva-māṇikya over Chittagong[47]. On the other hand Mukt-ul Hussain describes that the ruler of Tripura was defeated by Hamza Khan, the Governor of Chittagong at the reign of Musrat Shah[48]. Suvarnāgrama (Sonārgāon) was conquered by Deva-māṇikya. Perhaps it was recovered by the Sultan but again Deva-māṇikya was able to capture it. This is evidenced by his coins dated Saka 1450 (1528 A.D.) and Saka 1452 (1530 A.D.) describing him as *Suvarnagrama-vijavi*. He was a devout Sakta and was put to death by a tantrik Brahmin[49]. Nothing about his patronization of art and architecture of the land is known as yet. But he gave the lion insignia on the reverse of his coins, a new form which differs to some extent from that depicted on the species of his predecessors. He introduced a half moon and sun (?) symbol on the head of the lion and the slim but solid figure of the animal depicted on his coins served as models to his successors[50].

Next important ruler of Tripura was Vijaya-māṇikya who ascended the throne in 1532 A.D.[51], after a short reign of his brother Indra-māṇikya. There is no doubt that Vijaya was one of the most powerful rulers in Eastern India in the middle of sixteenth century as evidenced by his coins. He was contemporary of great Mughal Akbar, Naranārāyan of Cooch Behar and Mukunda-deva of Orissa. Realising the importance of an efficient army for the security as well as expansion of his kingdom he set up an army following the age-old tradition of *Chaturanga-valam*[52]. With the help of the well trained army he conquered Śrihattā, Jayantia, Chittagong and Sonārgāon upto the Padmā. That his kingdom was bounded by the sea is corroborated by the legend *Pratisindhusima* on his coin dated Śaka 1479. That Chittagong remained under control alternately of Vijaya-māṇikya and the ruler of Arakan is evident from the account of Ralph Fitch, who travelled through the territory during Vijaya's reign [53]. Abul Fazl in the *Ain-i-Akbari* mentioned 'Vijayamāṇik' as a ruler of an extensive area[54].

Vijaya was not only a brave conquerer but also a great patron of art and religion. In his time Śaiva and Śakta cult were perhaps united which is evidenced by a unique Ardhanariśvara figure, a syncratistic icon of Śiva and Durgā, on his coin, commemorative of his bath at Lākshya[55] (modern Sital akshya in Dacca). He was also a patron of Vaishnavism and a figure of Viṣnu depicted on one of his coins is a beautiful example of his Viṣnu-worship.An arch shaped stone gateway having an inscription of atleast seventy-six lines have been found in Māharāni village (in between Udayapur and Amarpur)[56]. Inscription depicts the construction of a temple

of Viṣṇu with his consorts Śrī and Vāṇī, in Śaka 1470. To match with such massive gateway, a big temple and metal images of Viṣṇu, Lakshmi and Saraswati as per description of the inscription, were there. Unfortunately, nothing has come to our notice yet, except the mentioned inscription. His coins with icons on the reverse, are miniature models of plastic art practised in those days. There is no doubt, in the days of Vijaya-māṇikya, the people of Tripura came into a cultural contact with the territories other than the hilly land of Tripura, which helped a lot for the growth of art and architecture of the area. A masterful man, Vijaya-māṇikya died in Śaka 1485 or 1486 as evidenced by his coin dated Śaka 1485 (which is the last coin issued by him) and a coin dated Śaka 1487 of Ananta-māṇikya , Vijaya's son.

After the death of Vijaya-māṇikya the history of Tripura is covered with humiliating murders and usurption, and gradual decay of the kingdom started during this period. Amara-māṇikya (1577-87 A.D.) a brother of Vijaya restored the old dynasty of the Tripura royal family from Jaya-māṇikya , whose father (an army chief) usurped the throne from Ananta-māṇikya . Amara-manikya conqucred Srihatta, is evidenced by the legned 'Śrihatta Vijayi" on his coin minted in Śaka 1503. According to some historian[58] Amara-māṇikya suffered a severe defeat in the hands of Sikandar Shah (1571-93 A.D.) who overran Tripura and even plundered his capital. Perhaps Amara had to desert the capital and to take shelter in the hills of interior which is at present known as Amarapura. Perhaps this was named after the king who was forced to make it a second capital. A group of ruined architectural pieces, debris, mutilated temples have been found here. Ruinous buildings, found in Amarpura, are non-Indian in nature. Whether Amara-māṇikya was the founder of these temples, was not knoen. Ultimately Amara-māṇikya committed suicide due to such unbearable political situation[59].

Rājadhara and Yaso-māṇikya, son and grandson of Amara-māṇikya, were devout Vaishnavas and at their instance Vaishnavism spread over Tripura successfully. Rājadhara reoccupied the capital Udayapur from the Arakanese. But both of them totally were indifferent in administration and warfare which resulted in the process of decline of ruling power and also of the morale of the people and the army. After the death of Rājadhara, a chaos in the kingdom and perhaps disputes arose among the members of the royal house for power. A careful scrutiny of the Rājamālā suggests that Yaso-māṇikya was not declared 'king' soon after the death of his father[60] which was a local tradition since the earliest time. Probably, with the help of such chaotic condition in the royal family, an unwanted person came to power and struck coins in the name of Iśvara-māṇikya along with his queen Iśwaridevi[61]. The Rājamālā is quite silent about this man and only one coin of the said king has so far been found. Nothing conclusive can be said with such a single evidence. But it is tempting to suggest that with the opportunity of chaotic condition after Rājadhara's death, Iśwari ascended the throne and he was an unwanted person whom the patrons of the Rājamālā did not allow the authors to include him in the official genealogy of the Māṇikyas. Perhaps he ruled for a very short period and in the same year, i.e. Śaka

1522 (1600 A.D.) Yaso-maṇikya ascended the throne, is evidenced by the coins of the same date.

Though politically indifferent, Yaso-māṇikya's contribution in Indian art and iconography is undeniable. His 'venugopāla' type of coins are, no doubt, unique examples of art of Tripura at that period (*infra*, Ch. III). He was a contemporary of Jehangir. He had a fight with the Mughals and was defeated and sent to Delhi. Probably he was conflined in Mughal territory and died there[62].

During their stay at Udayapur, Mughals started the construction of a mosque. It remained incomplete due to their sudden departure. Situated on the north bank of the Gomati it is locally known as Masjid.

According to the Rājamāla, the plains of Tripura remained under Mughal occupation for more than two years and occupied places were named as Sarkar Udayapur[63]. The Mughals, however, had to quit the area and eventually Kalyān-māṇikya, a descendant of Mahā-maṇikya, the earliest Māṇikya ruler, was selected king by the people[64]. He remodelled his army and recovered atleast some portion of the lost territory. According to the narrative of the Rājamālā, Kalyāna ascended the throne in Śaka 1545 but his earliest coins were struck in Śaka 1548. He built Gopinatha temple at Udayapur in Śaka 1573 as evidenced from the votive tablet. He also renovated the Kali temple (built by Dhanya-māṇikya). Kalyāṇa introduced half and quarter coins with a *Sivalinga* inscribed on the obverse, reverse device being the same as those of his predecessors.

Kalyāna-māṇikya died in Saka 1582 and his son Govinda ascended the throne soon after his father's death[65]. but a copper-plate dated Saka 1578 is the evidence of his rule over Tripura earlier than Saka 1582. He was dethroned by his step-brother Nakshaṭra who struck coins in Saka 1583 as Ṭhatra-maṇikya when Govinda had to take shelter in Arākān. Perhaps he deid in Saka 1589 and Govinda reoccupied the throne which is evidenced from a copper-plate grant of Govinda-māṇikya of the same date.

Govinda was a pious and benevolent ruler. He built temples at Udayapur and Chandranatha (Chittagong). His queen Gunāvati also built a group of temples at Udayapur. Tavernier visited India at this time and he mentioned Tripura's trade relation with China[66].

His son Ramadeva-māṇikya was also a patron of art and Brahmanical religion. It is evidenced from the dedicatory inscriptions that he built atleast three temples at Udayapur.

After the death of Rāmadeva, the history of Tripura in the 17th century was one of gradual decay, although Tripura never became a part of Subāh Bāngla, though major portion of the kingdom, acquired by great rulers like Dhanya and Vijaya-māṇilya was lost to it. The rulers took less interest in the affairs of Bengal, and were

spending time in religious activities.[67]

Rāmadeva was succeeded by his son Ratna-māṇikya II and his copper-plate and coins dated Saka 1607 (1685 A.D) have been found. It was at the time of Ratna, a diplomatic relation was set up with Ahom kingdom. Rudra Sinha of Ahom line sent Ratna Kandali and Arjundās Vairāgi to the court of Ratna who left a vivid account of Tripura in '*Tripura deshara Kathar lekha*[68]. They saw many temples in the capital, dedicated to Viṣṇu, Siva and other Gods and Goddesses, and the Rājāh of Tripura lived in a brick-built palace[69].

Ratna II ruled Tripura for sixteen years and was murdered by his brother Mahendra-maṇikya who came to power in Saka 1634 as evidenced by his coin of same date[70]. A manuscript in Tripuri language having the same date contained his name[71].

It was during the middle of the 18th century [72] the plains of Tripua which had so long been under the control of the rulers of Tripura, had already integrated within the Mughal empire in terms of settlement and revenue, and Tripura rulers were granted Zamindary rights over Chāklā Rosanābād consisting of 22 parganas. Thus the areas of Tripura which went under the Mughals consisted of one-fourth of Mymensingh, half of Sylhet, one-third of Noakhali and some portion of Dacca district as well [73].

Taking advantage of the quarrel among the members of the royal family during this period, Samser Gāzi, a Muslim clerk of a Zamindar, organized an army and occupied Udayapur[74] and prince Krishnamani took shelter into old Agartala (six kilometres east of Agartala town) and after the fall of Samsher ascended the throne in 1766 A.D. under the name of Krishna-māṇikya, old Agartala being tha capitaal. Very soon Krishna-māṇikya was involved not only with the Nawab of Bengal but also the English. The English were very eager to occupy Tripura and they took the advantage of hostility between the Nawab and Tripura. Accordingly, a British troop was sent to Tripura and it found no resistance from the Rājā of Tripura who is said to have surrendered to Company's army. Mr. Ralph Leak was appointed first Resident of Tripura and thus Tripura was reduced to the State of obedience to the British.

Copper-plates and half rupee coins of Krishna-maṇikya have been discovered. Though the kingdom was much disturbed politically, pious activity and patronage of art and architecture was in spontaneity during Krishna-māṇikya's reign (1760-83 A.D.) He had to shift his capital from Udayapur to old Agartala. A temple for Chaturdasadevatā and a palace were built in the locality of which the latter is in a ruinous condition while the Chaturdasadevatā are worshipped still by the people, irrespective of all classes under the State patronage. He completed the construction of Sateroratna (seventeen-jewelled) temple near Comilla, the foundation of which was laid by Ratna-māṇikya II. In Saka 1697 (1775 A.D.) he constructed a Pancharatna

temple for Radhāmādhavā in Kalikaganj, near Agartala. The stone plaques of this temple are of significance in the field of Tripura art.

Inspite of constant warfare with the Muslims, Arakanese and other neighbouring territories , and unlimited internal disputes , the Maṇikyas of Tripura did not neglect the cultural side of life.There is no doubt that the Manikya rulers had keen artistic sense and did not lose sight of the urgency of reviving and promoting architecture and sculpture in the land and spared no pains whenever they were free from wars and internal dissensions, towards patronising art and culture.

It is not difficult to understand from which strata of the society inspiration of art used to come and who patronised the art of Tripura, for a period since the early days upto the end of 18th century of Christia nera. It is evidenced from the examples of plastic art and architecture that the royal court, aristocratic class of the society, followers of the particular religious belief and priestly class were the main patrons of art of Tripura. It may be reasonably inferred that the art of the period under review was patronised by the aristocrats of the society and the plebian masses had hardly any place in the fabric of the art of Tripura during the period. No example, except a very few terracottas, of folk or tribal art has come to our notice so far to give us an idea of art of the common people of this land.

With the end of Krishna-manikya's reign, the land sank in chaos and disorder and never was Tripura once more excelled in artistic activity. All cultural work became strictly cofined to literature and music, preferably due to political turmoil and economic crisis in the land. After an active and strenuous life of hundreds of years, her cultural activity had come down to a very low ebb, and ultimately sank into stagnation.

Notes & References :

1. (a) Sen, K.P. (ed.) *Śri-Rājamālā.*

   (b) Education Department, Government of Tripura Rājamālā.

2. Chatterji, S.K., *Kirātajanakriti*, pp. 130-39.

3. Sinha K.C., *Rājamālā*, p.8.

4. *IHQ* VI pp. 45-60.

5. Basak, R.G., *History of North-Eastern India*, p. 34.

6. Majumdar, R.C., *History of Ancient Bengal*, p.8.

7. Basak, R.G., *op. cit*, p. 228.

8. *EI*, XV, p. 311.

9. Dev Barman, S.C., *Tripurar Smriti*, p. 149.

10. Gupta, Kamalakanta, *Copper-plates of Sylhet*, p. 72.

11. Basak, R.G., *op. cit*, p. 244.

12. Mukherjee, B.N., The coin legend Harikela, *Monthly Bulletin of the Asiatic Society*, January, 1976, p. 10.

13. Allan, J., *Catalogue of coins of Gupta Dynasty*. p. CVII.

14. Mukherjee, B.N., *op. cit*, p.9

15 *Ibid.*

16 Khan, F.A., *Mainămăti*, p. 21.

17. Bāghāurā is situated in erstwhile Tipperah district in Pargana Noornagar ; and homestead of the donor, mentioned in the image as 'Vilakinda" may be identified with adjacent village Vilakendu of the same pargana, not Bilekanda as suggested by N.R. Ray, *Bāngālir Itihāsa*, p. 483.

18. EI. XVII. p. 349.

19. Chattal Inscription of Dāmodaradeva, vide Majumder, N.G., *Inscription of Bengal,* III, p. 158.

20. Khaṇḍal was conquered by Dhanya-māṇikya (Sáka 1412-36) and was under Zamindary of Tripura upto the independance of India.

21. Devavarma, S.C., *Tripura Smriti*, pp. 43-44.

22. Pattikera is identified with modern Paitkara near Comilla.

23. Whether this king belonged to the Deva families as mentioned above is not known. After him we do not hear the name of the kingom of Pattikera.

24. IHQ, IX, p. 285.

25. Ahom kings were also using the word *phā* at their names end. In Triprā language phā literally means 'father' and it also means a 'leader' and a 'respectable person'. However, the title phā used by the Ahom and Tripura rulers might have had the same origin .

26. According to the Sri Kailas Chandra Sinha, one branch of the Shan dynasty of Burma set up as independent kingdom on the eastern side of Kamrup. The members of this family were ousted by another tribe of that area and migrated to Tripura and formed the kingdom (Rājamālā, p.8)

27. No archaeological evidence in support of the account of the said period as

described in the Rājamālā has yet been recovered.

28. It is said in the Rājamālā that Ratna-māṇikya (15th century) strengthened his kingdom with the help of the Sultans of Bengal.

29. Majumder, R.C.(ed.) *History and Culture of Indian People* (Delhi Sultanate), VI, p. 209. The earliest coin of the Māṅikyas of Tripura is that of Ratna-māṇikya dated A.D. 1464 (Śaka 1386). So it is useless to presume that coins with lion-device on their reverse were prevalent in the earlier part of 15th century until and unless we get some more data on this point.

30. *Rājamālā*, Education Directorate, Government of Tripura, p. 17.

31. Majumder R.C.(ed.) *Bānglādesher Itihāsa*, II, p. 485. No coin or copper-plate of Mahā-māṇikya has so far been found. Mādhava Kandali, an Assamese poet, who translated the Ramayana in Assamese, mentions one Varaharājā Mahā-mānikya as his patron. Kalirama Medhi identifies this Mahā-māṇikya with the Tripura king of the same name. Medhi, Kalirama, *Assamese Grammar and Origin of Assamese Language*, preface. Nothing definite can be said, however, at the present state of our knowledge.

32. Coins of Śaka 1386 (1464 A.D) are the earliest dated coins of Ratna. But some undated coins have been recovered having legends on both obverse and reverse as on Muslim coinage. These coins may be placed on an earlier period. Besides, the lion device on the undated coins of Ratna are in experimental stage.

33. It is stated in the *Rājamālā* that Ratna defeated his seventeen brothers and recovered the whole territory of Tripura of which those people were chiefs. *Rājamālā*, p. 19.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Ahom ruler Suhungmung (1497-1539 A. D.) assumed the Hindu name, Svarga-nārāyana which is an index of the gradually incrasing hold of Brahmanical Hinduism upon this Shān royal family and the people. Royal family of Tripura might be a branch of same Shān people(Supra p. 27 fn. 2). Hinduisation of Tripura started earlier than Ahom, might be due to rich past tradition and as an effect of geographical situation.

36. Chowdhury, V., and Ray, P., *op. Cit.*, pp. 111-113. Worship of Chaturdasa Devatā is still prevalent in Tripura as one of the presiding festivals. The mentioned coin is the only numismatic evidence to prove atleast one king as a patron of said worship.

37. According to the *Rājamālā*,Ratna had two sons namely, Pratāpa and Mukuta, among whom Pratāpa was elder and he became ruler for a very short period.

Recently coin of Pratāpa-manikya dated Śaka 1412 has been shown to me by its possessor. The figure of lion surmounted by the crescent moon and a circle-with-dot within (sun?) appearing on this piece is encountered for the first time on the coins of Deva-māṇikya (1520-30). This device is absent on the coins of Dhanya māṇikya(1490-1520), the immediate successor of Pratāpa-māṇikya. This phenomenon is inexplicable and thus the genuineness of this coin is doubtful.

38. Chatterji. S.K., *Kirāta-jana-Kriti*, p. 133.

39. *Rājamālā*, pp. 25-30.

40. *JASB*, Old Series , XLI, 1872,pp. 333-34.

41. Mukhopadhaya, Sukhamay, *Bāngālir Itīhāser Dusha Bachar*, pp. 327-28.

42. *Rājamālā*, p. 30.

43. *Ibid.*

44. Ibid.

45. A coin of Deva-māṇikya dated Śaka 1442 has been found, and preserved in Government Museum, Agartala.

46. Sen, K.P. (ed.) *Śri Rājamālā*, II. p. 178

47. *Rājamālā*. p. 33.

48. Mukhopadhaya Sukhamay, op. *cit.pp*. 321-24.

49. *Rājamālā*. p. 33.

50. Das Ratna, '*Itihās Prasanga Tripurā Mudra*', Gomati (Special issue), Agartala, December 1974, p. 35.

51. The earliest coin so far discovered was struck in Śaka 1554 (1532 A.D.)

52. Sarma, R.M., 'Military Organisation under Vijay-māṇikya of Tripura. The quarterly Review of Historical Studies, XV, 4, 1976 p. 215.

53. Ralph Fitch quoted in Sinha, K.C. *Rājamālā*, p. 62.

54. Jarret & Sarkar, *Ain-i-Akbari*, IV, 1949, p. 130

55. He introduced for the first time a trident symbol on the back of the lion insignia of Tripura which means again union of Śaiva and Śakta cult, if we consider trident as the symbol of Śiva and lion for Durgā.

56. The inscription was edited by Dr. D.C. Sircar in *IHQ* XXXIII, 2, 1957, pp. 99-196.

57. The images were made of *Avastadhātu* as mentioned in the inscription.

58. Sarkar, J.N. (ed.) *History of Bengal*, II, pp. 243.

59. *Rājamālā*, p. 63.

60. *Ibid*

61. Das Ratna, *op. cit.*p. 38.

62. *Rājamālā*, p. 67. The *Rājamālā* corroborates the statement of Mirza Nathan in the Baharistan-i-ghayebi where a detailed account of the battle between Mughals and the Tripura was narrated. Cf. *Baharistan-i-ghayebi of Mirza Nathan* (tr. Borah, N) II, p. 537

63. *Rājamālā*, p. 69

64. *Ibid.*

65. *Rājamālā*, p. 76.

66. Tavernier, *Travel in India*, tr. John Phillip, Bangabāsi office ed. 1905, pp. 451-52.

67. Chatterji, S.K., *Kirāta-Jana-Kriti*, 2nd ed. p. 135.

68. Bhuiya, S.K. (ed.) *Tripura Burunji*, p. XI.

69. *Ibid.*

70. Majumder, R.C. (ed.). *Bānglādesher-Itīhāsa*. II. p. 497 and fn.

71. An unpublished MSS, now preserved in Government Museum, Agartala.

72. It happened during the time of Jagat-māṇikya, though the *Rājamālā* did not mention him in its genealogy.

73. Stewart, *History of Bengal*, pp. 266-67.

74. The *Gāzinama* by Seikh Manchar gives a detailed account of his activities.

CHAPTER III

SCULPTURAL ART

The political history of the present land during the Māṇikya period is gradually becoming clear. So also the cultural history of Tripura. Different examples of plastic art are coming to light as a result of occasional explorations[1]. These commendable art treasures testify to the rich heritage of Tripura in the realm of plastic art. All these specimens of bygone days seem to suggest that delectable handicrafts of Tripura of the present-day, which are avidly desired by art connoisseur all over the world, are but the products of a people with an old art heritage. Regrettably, however the output that has been recovered so far is not quantitatively as considerable as one may expect. This is due to the natural factors, such as, humid climate and perishable materials of which they were made. Besides, lack of systematic exploration and excavations has also been a cause of inadequacy of findings in Tripura.

Of the materials, stone was more profusely used for plastic art than clay and metal. During the period under review the use of wood is not met with. Since good quality of stones from Rājmahal of Chhotanagpur hills for carving were easily available to the sculptors of this region, sculptures made of such materials are very few in number.

The present repertoire has given evidence of the use of (1) yellowish coarse-grained sandstone, (ii) less compact grey shale, (iii) Hrishyamukh sandstone, (iv) Gajāliā shales, (v) soft grey sandstone, and (vi) black chlorite or basalt.

The first type of stone is found in Baḍamuḍā[2] hill range. Rock formation is relatively hard in the Devatāmuḍā sector of this range and colossal sculptures were carved on the high rock cliffs of Devatāmuḍā. Several stone sculptures recovered from the area between Amarapura and Mahārāni are made of this type of stone.

The second group consists of less compact grey shale found in Ūnakoṭi hillock which is formed in comparatively later period and are composed of soft and thin layers and are susceptible to damage more quickly. The rock-cut sanctuary of Ūṇakoṭī in North Tripura is carved out of such type of shales on rock cliffs of the Ūṇakoṭī range.

The third type is popularly known as Hrishyamukh sandstone because of its prolific availavility in the Gajāliā range at Hrishyamukh area in South Tripura. Of the chief varieties, the iron-grey one is large-grained quartz and silicious matrix and is provided with an outer layer of metallic incrustation, while the yellowish type is comprised of sand particles, and this may explain the absence of detailed ornamentation in the concerned sculptures. As an illustration, mention may be made of some sculptures unearthed at Maināmaṭī which have got the crust intact on the images[3]. Some of the sculptures recovered from the surface of the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi region have got the same type of crust on them but in much weathered

condition due to constant human and natural contact. Maināmatī is a place not very far-off from this area. Stone used in the Maināmatī culture-complex and in the areas of South Tripura appears to have been quarried from the same hill range.

Gajāliā shales, found plenty in Feni valley of Chittagong, are sandy shales containing large percentage of sand. It also occurs between Udayapur and Mahārānī, in the escorpment of hills and a number of images of Amarapura and the Pilak-Jolāibāḍi area are made of such stone.

The fifth variety is soft grey sandstone, which is used on architecture and also on some sculptures recovered from Kamalāsāgar, Bisālgarh area. This rock is seen along the major portion of the length of Gomati river *in situ* and exposed at the banks and looks like sun-baked blackish-clay.

While the black chlorite or basalt was abundantly used in Bengal, it is absent in Tripura and its environs. Examples, sculpted from black stone, so far discovered in Tripura, are very few in number and apparently the relevant material was brought here from the Rājamhal hills.

Clay is the primeval and tractable plastic material used through the ages, being easily available in the riverine plains. In Tripura also, terracotta or burnt clay has been used for plastic art, next to stone, but as in Bengal, objects of this medium are not found in bulk. This may be due to the presence of a large quantity of sand particles in the alluvial deposit, which is a hindrance for clay modelling. A number of terracotta temple-plaques are chance findings , and figures in the round, or dolls and toys, have not been found as yet.

Specimens of metal casting , so far discovered in Tripura, are vry few in number. Though they have not been chemically analysed, they are apparently made of *ashtadhātu* (octo-alloy) which was generally used by the casters of Bengal. The neighbouring area, e.g., the erstwhile Tipperah district (now in Bangladesh) has yielded a variety of metal sculptures of considerable aesthetic value.The relative scantiness of metal images in Tripura may be due to one of the two reasons or to both: first, no scientific excavation has yet been done and many more sculptures may be still lying unexposed, and second, similar sculptures particularly the small-sized ones, might have been smuggled away from the State.As regards coins bearing art devices, the repertoire is satisfactory[4] ; in Tripura coins were chiefly struck on silver[5]. In this context the evidence of Tavernier, who came to India when Chhatramāṇikya was the ruler of Tripura (1661-67 A.D.), may be cited. The French traveller says in his account that the king of Tipperah sent his gold and silk to China for which they brought him silver which he used on fabricating coins[6].

Though wood and bamboo are of major use in the present day handicraft of Tripura, no example of wood or bamboo, even hundred years old, has come to our notice. The phenomenon may be due to the perishable nature of the materials and

such specimens are likely to have disintegrated in course of time.

Examples of plastic art are lying scattered all over Tripura. Most of them are found in old capitals and in and around the areas of some old culture complexes so far discovered. The notable places yielding rich sculptures include Pilak, Udayapur, Amarpur, Devatāmuḍā, Bishālgarh and Ūṇakotī. A few words on these findspots will not be irrelevant.

1. Pilāk

Pilāk and adjacent *mouja* Jolāibādi are the extensive plains of Belonia, one of the southern subdivisions of Tripura (see Map). Jolāibāḍi is about 98 kilometres from Agartala by Agartala-Sabrum Road. The ancient mounds of this region, situated in a low lying area, are now being largely covereted into agricultural fields and homestead lands. Fortunately a few mounds have survived the destructive operations carried out by human agencies for centuries. In course of these operations, many antiquities including stone and metal sculptures, terracotta plaques and sealings, coins etc. have come to light. They may be ascribed to the 7th-12th centuries of the Christian era. Incidentally, it may be mentioned here that the sub-division Belonia was contiguous to the southern part of Chāklā- Rosnābād (a Zamindari of Tripura rulers in later period ; see supra, ch. II) viz., Khaṇḍal, Bangāsāir, Chauddagrām, Lāksām, Deulbāḍi, Chhāgolnaiya etc. and antiquities recovered from these places testify to the prevalence of Brahmanical and Buddhist faiths.There is no doubt that the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi region and the surrounding areas in this subdivision were included in the same culture zone as mentioned above. Belonia is still regarded as a place of concentration of Maghs who are Buddhist in religion.

2. UDAYAPURA

About 55 kilometres away from Arartala and situated on the left bank of the river Gomati, Udayapura[5] enjoyed the position of the capital of Tripura upto the first half of 18th century of Christian era and is presently the headquarers of the South Tripura district. A number of pāla-sena sculptures on black-stone have been recovered from this place among which images of Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Umā-Maheśvara, are worth mentioning . Barring a few stray specimens, this type of black-stone sculpture in bulk has not been found elsewhere in Tripura. Besides these, numerous terracotta temple-plaques of 15th-17th centuries are also coming to light.

3. AMARPURA

Amarpura now the headquarters of the sub-division of the same name, and its surroundings have yielded a number of aesthetically commendable and iconographically interesting images.

4. DEVATĀMUḌĀ

The peak of gods or Devatāmuḍā[10] as it is called , is an extensive hill-range (a bifurcation of Baḍamuḍā hills) is situated between Udyapura and Amarapura on the both banks of river Gomati. This has become a place of interest owing to the panels of rock-cut sculptures carved out of high rocky walls facing the river Gomati. The sculptures are of post-14th centuries and depicit the regional style marked by ethnic elements of the local area.

5. VISĀLGARH

Situated on the bank of rivulet Buḍimā, Visālgarh is lying at a distance of about 20 kilometres from Agartala. As the name suggests, perhaps there was once a big fortress here. The place figures in the Rājamālā on many occasions and of the many sculptures that have been found in its vicinity a metal statuette of Devī and a stone image of Mahisa-mardinī deserve mention (Figs. 14, 20).

6. ŪṆAKOTĪ

Ūṇakoṭī, a picturesque place with its hillocks, jungles and streamlets, is situated at Kalishahar sub division of North Tripura district and about 180 kilometres north-east from Agartala. Here on a vertical rock cliff extending over a kilometre numerous rock-out sculptures are lying. Besides rock-cut sculptures on either side of the hill, the remains at Ūṇakoṭī consist of a number of sandstone sculptures scattered here and there, stone pavements, debris of bricks and stones, and a brick basement of a temple. One may feel by standing on the top of the hill the vastness of this culture-complex which was once full of vigour and beauty, and was busy with number of visitors and pilgrims. The place is one of the most important archaeological sites of Eastern India, if we consider the massive and stupendous rock-out fogures which do not conform to any iconoplastic prescription of Indian artidiom and thereby appear to be exotic. Unfortunately, however, frequent earthquakes and other natural agencies and human negligence have damaged this site to a large extent converting it into a deserted area with heaps of stone scattered here and there. Yet whatever remains, is not insufficient to show that Ūṇakoṭī was, and still is, perhaps the most interesting and valuable site for the study of art history of Tripura as well as of Eastern India.

Besides the above-noted findspotes of importance, numerous objects of art hailed from different parts of Tripura. Some of them may be met with in Government Museum at Agartala, personal collections and temples. For the sake of comprehensive study of art in Tripura they have an obvious importance.

It is felt necessary to say a few words in general about the specimens before we enter into the detailed discussion. All the objects, so far recovered, are examples of religious art. But the sancturies housing them having been lost, their spiritual and histotical background are not available and hence we are not able to appraise them in their totality[11].

II

Beginning of art :

The exact beginnings of art in Tripura are not known. The Prāchya (eastern) division, comprising of roughly Bihar, Orissa, Assam and Tripura, formed, as it were, a culturally homogenous unit[12]. Significantly enough, while plastic remains of the Maurya (or Maurya-Sunga), Kushana and Gupta idioms have been found in other parts of the Prāchya country, they are till untraceable in Tripura. Even a terracotta art object of any of these culture epochs has not so far come to light in this territory. The phenomenon may be primarily explained by the fact that systematic archaeological excavations and explorations at the old sites of Tripura have not yet been undertaken and may such relics might have been lying buried below the ground. The other reason for the non-discovery of such relics may be sought in the perishable nature of materials like clay, wood and bamboo, which appear to have been the main media of expression of creative impules of the artists of the region in the past. The terracotta objects so far recovered[13] are of 'time-bound' variety assignable to the period from the 7th-8th century onwords. Another reason of the non-existence of plastic records of the pre-Gupta and Gupta periods seems to be historical. Major parts of Bengal, particularly South-Eastern Bengal, came into close contact with the Aryans of Madhyadesa when the Imperial Guptas effectively penetrated into these regions, and hence the autochthonous people of Tripura, which was still a far-off territory, remained outside the pale of the Aryan influence for about a century or so. Shortly it became a part of the culture-zone of Eastern India. This will be evident from the material remains themselves (Figs, 1-3). First, all the sculptures of the Gupta tradition recovered from the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi region, being of local Hrishyamukh sandstone of Gajāliā shales, were manufactured in local atelier and therefore, Tripura, like her neighbours also appears to have begun her essays in plastic art under the inspiration of the Gupta style in the 7th-8th century A.D. Second, a large number of 'Gupta imitation' coins have been found in Tripura particularly in the Pilāk sector, which has yielded the sculptures, as referred to above[14].

While the art of Bengal in the 7th-8th century was in a phase of transition between Gupta idiom and the beginning of Pāla art, as evidenced by Sarvāni and Sūrya images found at Deulbāḍī near modern Comilla town of Bangladesh and lying in the south-western border of present Tripura ; artists of this region were still under the fold of the Gupta tradition. This may be illustrated, *inter alia*, by a Sūrya and a Mahisamardinī image found at Sāgardhebā in the pilāk area (see below). Even in the mediaeval period, they were not free from the plastic treatment which appear to be nearer to the Sāranath ideal which is evidenced by a few number of Buddhist icons (Fig. 8) Presumably this style moved to Ārākān and Burma *via* land routes through Tripura. Three sandstone sculptures, recovered from Mrohung (Ārākañ) and from the ruins of Mahāmuṇi Pagoda bear on them a distinct stamp of what we call late Gupta tradition of art, of which a Sūrya image may be definitely dated to the 8th century

A.D. on the basis of a writing on the reverse of it[15]. These sculptures have got close resemblance with those recorded from Sāgardhebā, as mentioned above. A sandstone image of Buddha[16] of the 7th-8th century hailing from Java and now preserved in Bangkok Museum exhibit the characteristics of the Tripura sculptures mentioned above.

III

General Characteristics of Tripura plastic Art :

From the available evidence, stone appears to have been a popular medium among the artists of Tripura. This was but natural, since they got abundant stones, though of inferior quality, from the local hills like Gājaliā, Baḍamuḍā, Ūṇakoṭī etc. All the stone sculptures (with a very few exception of black stone specimens), be it a colossal (Fig. 6) or a miniature one (Fig. 12) are carved out of coarse-grained sandstone, which was also abundant in Arakan and Burma. All the specimens are reliefs,carved out of back slabs, and figures in the round assignable to our period have not yet come to our notice. The relief is comparatively high in earlier sculptures, while the later ones are on low relief, which more of less give a two-dimensional effect of a painting (fig. 43)

Human figure plays the pivotal role in the realm of plastic art of Tripura, which combines in itself both spiritual and emotional features. As to their affiliation, these are icons of Brahmanical and Buddhist pantheon. Irrespective of creed, they are uniform in style and conform to the canonical injunctions of the mainstream of Indian art[17]. Despite the inferior quality of raw material and canonical constraints some gifted artists of Tripura were able to manifest their creative impulse in full-limbed figures sensuously modelled and endowed with vigour and dynamism (Fig. 8, 27). Undoubtedly they come close to the best known plastic examples of the same genre hailing from other parts of India.

Conceptually and stylistically, Tripura sculptures articulate a tradition which is directly derived from the age-old Indian art. yet at the same time they express a local idiom which is noticeable in the general heaviness and coarseness of plastic texture and sometimes in broad and heavy physiognomical form (Fig. 1). By and large, the Tripura sculptures of the pre-Māṇikya period demonstrate the parallel trends visible in the art of other parts of India, especially Eastern and south Eastern Bengal. Their relationship with the art of Ārākān, Burma and other South-East Asian countries are also unmistakable. Lying midway between Bengal and Ārākān-Burma, Tripura developed an art style blending the traditions of the art of both these countries. Probably artists of respective regions travelled or migrated from one area to the other and thus cemented the relation. Besides this common denominator, a purely autochthonous stlye worked more dominantly side by side (Fig. 33-42). In fact, it is not from purely indigenous works that the style of the Tripura art appears to have been derived. It is indeed an outcome of the combination of local idiom on the one

hand and the eastern version of Indian art as well as the art of South-East Asia, on the other.

Much abrasion on the faces of the sandstone images is a hindrance to appreciate the facial expression, which might have been one of bliss and tranquillity, as noticeable in their counterparts elsewhere. Yet there is no difficulty to recognise the attitude and movement of the individual figures articulating the inner experience of their creators. Though in some images the cult-divinities as well as their attendants display a variety of poses expressing different emotional levels of human beings, ultimately they appear to transcend the limits of their mortal framework and aesthetically reach the supra-mundane, as exemplified by some of the best known works of the Gupta culture epoch (e.g., the Sāranāth Buddha)

The plastic examples of Tripura, so far recovered, represent an essentially religious art and the majority of them are cult-icons. From the iconological point of view, the art of Tripura of the early and mediaeval period is in conformity with Eastern Indian images. In the later period, however, Tripura developed an icono-plastic diction of her own, as it were, as Assam did during the Ahom period of her history[18]. The phenomenon appears to have owed its origin to the Indo-Mongoloids with a different cultural background who were dominant in the socio-political fabric of the States of Tripura, Assam and adjoining territories atleast from the 14th century.

The precise chronology of the sculptures of Tripura is far from certain. Ancient Tripura has not bequeathed to us a single dated sculpture so far. Some help is taken from many a Bengal sculptures and a few hailing from Arakan to determine the chronology with which they are stylistically affiliated. Hence the dating of the plastic examples under review is made chiefly on their styles.

At the present state of our knowledge, the sculptures of Tripura may be tentatively assigned to three differnt periods : the early phase covering the 7th and 8th centuries comprises a few sculptures coming from the southern part of Tripura, i,e., the Pilāk-Jolāibādi region (see Map); the early mediaeval period from the 9th to the 13th century, to which belongs the major corpus of the art objects recovered from different parts of the territory; and the late mediaeval period from the 14th to the 18th century to which are assignable the well-known reliefs of Ūṇokoṭī and Devatāmuḍā.

IV

EARLY PERIOD

The eastern version of the Gupta art with an emphasis on sensuousness and emotionalism persisted for a longer time in Eastern India including Tripura, perhaps because of its human appeal. To the 7th-8th century of the Christian era may be assigned *inter alia* an image of Mahisamardinī (Fig.2.). Marked by an appreciable grace and dynamism, this relief is not overloaded with elaborate garments and jewelleries, and aptly exemplifies the Eastern Indian tradition of combining the

classical and the local idioms. An analysis of the Mahisamardinī and the other cognate images (Figs. 1, 3) brings out the plasticity and supra-mundane feelings which were the characteristics of the products of the Gupta epoch and thus they appear to represent the eastern version of Gupta art. No less insignificant is the local idiom, which is manifest for instance, the sensuous modelling of the figures on the one, in the absence of a shining and smooth texture on the other (the latter feature is due to the coarse-grained sandstone of whic they were made). The device of using semicircular backslabs appears to be a local feature and as it is encountered on an Ārākānese sculptures of the 7th-8th century[19], they may be assigned to the same period.

Religiously, the sculptures of this period belong to the Brahmanical pantheon, representing divinities like Sūryā, Durgā, Ganeśa etc. Sūrya (Fig.1) from the Sāgardhebā mound of the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi region (now installed and worshipped in an Ashram at Muhuripur in the Belonia Subdivision) rided in his chariot drawn by seven horses. The squating horse in the centre placed in a rectangular compartment, faces outward and the remaining six, three on each side, are shown as galloping. Legs of the sun-god, his charioteer and the male attendants are not visible. Sūrya holds, as usual, stalks of full-blown lotuses in his both hands and a sword which is suspended from the waist-girdle on the left (girdle is not clear at present). He wears high Kiritamukuta with a flattened top, a simple curly wigs come upto the shoulder (not clear in the photograph). At the top corners of the backslab are seen flying Vidyādharas. The figure conforms to the iconographic tradition of the northern variety of Sūrya images. The face and garment of the deity being partially painted, the original nature of the facial treatment except its oval shape, can hardly be ascertained. Aesthetically, the modelling is somewhat stiff, but a sense of rhythm has been sought to be created in the composition by the soft movement of the lotus stalks, flying Vidyādharas, and the galloping horses. It appears, however, from the pleasing curves of the face and body of the deity as well as the gliding contours of the accessories that this sculpture deserves to be placed in works of the later Gupta tradition of the 7th-8th centuries. Incidentally the Sāgardhebā Sūrya image is strongly reminiscent of an inscribed image of the same God from Mrohung (Ārākān)20. which bears a family likeness to it. And as Ārākān Sūrya icon is palaeographically datable to the 7th-8th century[21], the present sculpture is also to be assigned to the same period[22].

Stylistically datable to this period are a number of images of Mahisāsurmardinī and Ganeśa from this region, of which a Mahisāsura-mardinī and a Ganeśa from Sagardheba are woth illustrating. Elegant, at the same time, vigorous and forceful image of eight armed Devī (Fig.2) is seen here uplifting the hind part of the buffalo-demon in its theriomorphic form by holding its tail by her lower left hand and piercing its neck with a *sula* by one of her right hands, while tramples the animal in its neck with her right foot. It seems that the *Mārkaṇḍeva* purāna tradition about this mode of attack was well known to the artists of this region. She wears a high-matted bun,

heavy earrings, and a simple necklace. Apart from the hands described above, the remaining six bear clockwise arrow, discus, sword, snake, shield and bow. Devī images of this group recovered from Tripura do not show the lion-mount which is an early tradition depicting the goddess, as is seen elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent (cf. Mahiṣamardiṇī from Udayagiri)[23]. Though the sculpture is largely restored and painted in the hands of the current sevaits, it still shows much animation and when in a good state of preservation it must have belonged to some of the best specimens of later Gupta idiom of Eastern India. Among the number of Ganeśa images, stylistically datable to the period under discussion, an icon along with his *śakti* (Fig. 3) deserves more than a passing mention. This type of Śakti-Ganeśa seems to be associated with Vamachari-Tantrik variety of worship and few of this form of images are actually met with in the Gupta and post-Gupta art and is thus of great interest. This is the only image of Śakti -Ganeśa so far discovered in Tripura, though Ganeśa icons of different periods are prolific here. This beautiful four-handed image of Ganeśa is seated on a crudely carved double-petalled lotus in *lalitāsana* with his consort sitting on his left lap. The God covered the whole stela. The long trunk softly curled over the pot-belly to reach upto the right knee (which is a peculiarity of the Ganeśa images of Tripura, belonging to this period), which brings the effect of rhythm and gliding softness in the modelling . The sculpture is so badly defaced and abraded that only outlines of the modelling is recognised and is difficult to make a proper appraisal of its artistic qualities. But the disciplined modelling, soft and emotional appearance on a crude variety of stone, easy flow of lines, rounded contours of the body and the treatment of light and shade effect are at once recognised with not much difficulty.

A group of Sculptures assignable to this early period includes some colossal icons of Brahmanical deities . Majority of them are in fragments. Only four among them are more or less in a good state of preservation and enables us to recognise some of their characteristic features. This important group comprises four large-sized stone images of Sūrya, Durgā-Mahiśa-mardinī, Narasimha and Viṣṇu (Fig. 4-7), all recovered from the Pilāk-Jolāibaḍi region. Stylistically all of them belong to the last phase of Gupta sculpture which is evident from tender modelling and heavy bodily forms (Fig. 4). A boldness of composition is particularly noticeable in these sculptures and the facial and physiognomical type is also clearly a late Gupta survival (Fig. 5). Simple dress and jewellery, the absence of decorative work in the composition point to the early date of sculpture. Absence of the lion-mount as well as of sharp-cut curves in the *atibhanga* stance of the deity and also the theriomorphic form of the demon in the relief of the Mahisāṣur-mardinī indicate an early date for it. Though executed in roughstone, the figures are so modelled as to suggest the soft texture of flesh and skin (figs. 4,7). The heavy form and gigantic size may remain one of the 8th-century rock-cut sculptures of Deccan. This type of massive sculptures are not being met with in Bengal and the style, particularly of Durgā abd Viṣṇu, spell out a blending of the Deccan trend and the local style. The possibility of such a blending may thus be

explained below.

It is most likely that this influence has passed to this southern part of Tripura from Burma, through Ārākān and Chittagong . South Indian Artists had come over to Burma with South Indian traders and colonists *via* sea route and were responsible for creation of many beautiful sculptures. Burma and Bengal were culturally linked in those days and they had to move bothways *via* Tripura. Perhaps those artists succeeded in having good workshops as well as royal and popular patronage in the plastic activities, while travelling through Tripura. The simple autochthonous people of this region are always responsive to superior culture and the peripetatic artists got much scope to fulfil their zeal in Tripura than in Bengal proper which was the better stronghold of a superior culture. Artists obtained massive boulders from the local hills (perhaps from Gajāliā range of South Tripura) and inspired local artists to fashion monumental sculptures of the genre of massive rock-cuts. As a result, a happy blending of two styles emerged in Tripura which is evidenced by these colossi. The style of execution, modelling and bodily form, to some extent, are influenced by the South Indian style, while the iconography is purely North Indian. Above all, a distinctively local idiom permeates all these works. For example, the subsidiary hands are weaker and issue from the main pair like snouts of an octopus, as seen in many a later sculptures (fig. 28). Evidently this is one of the deviations from the canonical injunctions of the mainstream of Indian art. Indeed it appears that as in other parts of India, regionalism came to paly an important role in the socio-cultural life of Tripura since the 8th-9th century A.D. as exemplified by an endeavour to develop an art - language of their own. The sculptures under discussion, notwithstanding their classical undertone, articulate their regional spirit and outlook, ane hence a discussion of this group may not be irrelevant.

Among these figures, a Sūrya image (Fig. 5) is still in a good state of preservation and this may be taken as a denominator of execution of style of this group of sculptures. The heavy and solidly built (but at the same time of reposeful, delicate and highly spiritual modelling) massive sandstone image is lying *in situ* in the Thākurāni tila mound at Pilāk. This is the biggest among the Sūrya images so far found in Tripura[24]. The figure, perhaps a standing one, holds eight-petalled lotuses in both hands, held with beautifully carved soft finger tips. The lotus in his rounded backslab is missing, though the stalk exists. The god wears a *kiritamukuta* which seems to have flattened on the top, a dangling *karnakundals* and a necklace with a pendent. Locks of hair fall upto chest on the each side. The square type of face instead of being ovoid, the sharp-cut eyes with heavy drooping eyelids, fleshy lips and the absence of intricate ornamentation, which are the characteristics of the later Gupta art, are all prevailling in the image. The deep shadow below the lips, soft gliding of the lines, and rounded modelling of the figure which slowly and softly emerges from the backslab, the long wigs of the god and the simplicity of the ornamental devices are all reminiscent of the later Gupta tradition. It is evidenced from the piece that sculptor took much pain to achieve success on such a crude type of stone where it

was a difficult task to bring out the sensuous modelling and it also proves that some earlier tradition of sculpting on heavy stone was there prior to the period without which this type of creation would not have been possible. But this type of monumental sculpture or rock-cut works of earlier period have not come to our notice as yet. This is one of the reasons to presume the influence of more powerful artists of South India who had an earlier tradition of such type of sculpting, as said above.

An image of Durgā-Mahiṣasur-mardinī (fig. 4), found at the Devdāru mound of the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi region, portrays the same style . The eight handed goddess with matted bun, flattened on the top, had a square face and portrays the similar style of execution, but less spiritual in comparison to the above-noted icon of Sūrya. Conceptually and iconically, the two Durgā images (first one), as illustrated in (Fig. 2. is earlier) are practically identical, but there is a considerable difference in their artistic treatment. The modelling of both the figures is more or less same. But the larger one (Fig. 4) is schematic, mechanical and comparatively less dynamic than the earlier image (Fig.2) which is more animated and expressive. The treatment of the plastic surface is more facile in the former than in the latter image. The feminine grace and softness is absent in the latter figure except the execution of sensuous abdomen. Despite all the drawbacks in comparison to the other image, the sculpture under discussion reveal a sure hand of chiselling on a huge block of coarse grained stone and no doubt a product of a school of art with earlier tradition and has the majesty of Śaiva panels of Ellora, Badami and Elephanta. The simplicity of composition and iconographic details suggest an early date for this sculpture and in comparison to detailed modelling it is slightly later than the Durgā figure from Sāgarḍhebā (Fig.2). The treatment of hands other than the main pair has been done in such a way as to suggest that the artist was unable to execute the anatomical details correctly. This type of delineation of hands is interesting characteristic of the Pilāk sculptures.

The third sculpture of this group (fig.6) appears to be image of Viṣṇu-Lokeśvara, a syncretism between Buddhism and Hinduism. The four-armed god recovered from Kalmā of the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi region, stands erect on a crudely executed lotus-pedestal. His two main hands are disposed in the *varada* pose and bear lotus and conchshell marks on the right and left palm respectively. The two remaining arms, smaller in size, emerge from below the main hands and are placed on two attendants on either side of the god. The sinister figure, no doubt, is that of four-handed Hayagrīva, while the dexter one is beyond recognition due to much abrasion. But from the outline of the modelling and the *tribhanga* attitude it appears to be a female figure, most probably of the Buddhist goddess Tārā. The main figure has high matted bun, square face, heavy *karnakundala*, *vanamālā* (which is a characteristic feature of Viṣṇu images), diaphanous drapery (as seen in the Buddhist images of Gupta and later Gupta artidiom) coming upto the ankle. As far as the attributes permit, the image may be identified Visnu-Lokeśvara. But the canopy of serpent-hoods and Dhyānī-Buddha are absent, as is generally seen on Viṣṇu-Lokeśvara figures of Eastern India[25]. Whatever the identification may be, the style of execution of a

massive block of stone is clear despite much redoing of the face. The heavy muscular body has a three-dimensional effect and the backslab has hardly any role to play in the composition . The scuplture is more realistic and abstraction of the classical Gupta art is nowhere felt. The heavy form and muscular male body with fleshly sensuousness is felt everywhere on the image. The paucity of ornaments, prominent *trivali* marks, diaphanous drapery and strict simplicity of designs are chracteristic of the Gupta artidiom. But the warm and sensitive modelling is missing here.

Stylistically the much-mutilated relief of Narasimha (fig. 7) from the Thākurāniṭilā mound of Pilāk may also come under the purview of the above group. In respect of modelling it is better than the icon of Viṣṇu-Lokeśvara. Whatever remains of the present image is enough to suggest the lively and soft medelling of the body, the pleasing curves of the arms and gliding contours of the figure in its original state of preservation. The torso is broad in the upper section and attenueted in the lower, the latter being compared to waist of a lion (*simhakati*). Stylistically this may be assigned to the late 8th century A.D., when a trail of Gupta idiom was still in view.

It is not diffcult to make out the style of these massive sculptures as described above which is decidedly included into the mainstream of Indian art, but had an independent local development. The sculptures are worked out in bold relief and the general treatment, though not very refined, shows yet a sure hand of chiselling . The heavy and monumental body extends over the whole composition which may belong to a tradition essentially autochthonous, in manner, notwithstanding possible outside influence as mentioned above and are incompatible with the notion of eastern version of Gupta art. Being concentrated in height, the figures seem to be of sturdier build. Though heaviness overtakes the art, a distinct local tradition gives them a charm of its own which is no less important in the development of the art history of Tripura. Moreover, the introduction of colossal figures is one of the chracteristics of plastic art of Tripura, begins from this period, a peculiarity which is very rarely met with in the art of eastern region.

V

EARLY MEDIAEVAL PERIOD

Lying contiguous to Bengal the art of Tripura of the mediaeval period, shared the same characteristic feature of the contemporary art of Bengal to a certain extent. The historical background of Tripura is still shrouded into obscurity. But plastic art tradition is clearly felt in the ample evidences in the shape of better preserved specimens, which though undated indicates that the trend in the mediaeval sculpture of this area runs parallel to the contemporary Bengal movement and allied to it (figs. 17-25). Had not the findspots been known, such sculptures, hailing from the West and South districts of Tripura, could easily be passed as examples of Bengal School. It is not unlikely, in view of the propinquity of those findplaces with the art centres of Bengal. Like the Bengal School, the mediaeval plastic style of Tripura has

its foundation on the residual of the Gupta idiom, surviving in the 7th-8th century. In this context may be mentioned a few images from the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi region including one Buddha figure (fig.8) more or less of Bengal style. Indeed among all the Eastern Indian States, Bengal appears to have sent its plastic reverberations to Tripura to a marked extent. The art of Tripura of this period is represented by abundant sculptures hailing from all parts of the country. They were executed in coarse-grained sandstone, double-layered sandstone, fine grained black-stone, and occasionally of shale and metal. The extant remains, so far recovered as chance findings, are cult-images of Buddhist and Brahmanical pantheons. A study of findspots of the objects will indicate that important centres of activity were distributed in the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi and Udayapura regions in the South and Ūṇakoti[26] in the North, and the objects discovered here articulate local dialects in respect of appearance and expressions, albeit their common Eastern Indian denominator. Among the abundant productions in stone, a metallic polish characterises the works on black-stone and the artistic level of these specimens (perhaps due to the fineness of the material) is fairly high.

It has been noted above that the sculptures, of the period under review, are all cult-icons and are worked in bold relief, but the tendency to carve in the round is noticeable when the main figure is more of less separated from the background(fig. 18, 25). The stela from now on becomes more organically related to the sculptural composition than it was before. The flat plinth of the earlier epoch comes to be divided by graduated projections, *triratha* (fig. 26) *pancharatha* (fig. 17) *saptaratha* (fig. 19) and so on. Flat semicircular plinths without any projections are also avaiable in comparatively later instances (fig. 24). On the plinth are placed the respective *vāhana* of the deity, the devotees and the donor etc. amidst vegetal ornamental decoration. Over the plinth in the centre is the lotus throne, where the deity either stands or sits, with smaller lotus-seats on either side for the attendant figures (in Tripura standing figures are more in number than the seated ones). The entire group is framed by the stela which has rounded top in earlier images and pointed in later examples[27].

As to the chronology of the sculptures under review, those of the Buddhist pantheon found in the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi region may be included in the earlier phase of the mediaeval school. The main ground for this dating lies in the presumtion that the tradition exhibited by them is mainly of the Bengal type. As for instance, in early examples the back-slabs of the deities remain severely plain. As the evolution of style preceeds on, decorative designs increased lavishly and profusely,which finally became conventionalised. In an ordinary Viṣṇu or Sūrya image, we find leogryphs, scrolls, architectonic devices, Kinnaras, Vidyādharas, etc. The ugly Kirtimukha on the top in later specimens, was perhaps to express more effectively the beauty of the deity beneath it by producing a striking contrast. What have been noted above are all strictly connected with the black-stone examples so far recovered from Tripura, and are of later date, i.e. the 11th-12th century A.D.

However, these furnish us with a more of less definite trend of Bengal art from about the late 10th-12th century A.D. which are fully in keeping with our sculptures on black-stone. Such a close affinity may apparently suggest that the black-stone remains of this period had been imported from great centres of art in Bengal. But the observation of S.K. Saraswati[28] on different rules of image-making, laid down by Silpa texts may be enumerated here to take aside the above suggestion. The selected stone has to be brought to the site of the temple in which the image is to be installed. The actual manufacture of image has to pass through some rituals and a special hut has to be erected by the side of the main temple for the above purpose. "In view of such *sastric* injunctions", as Saraswati observes, "the custom of importing images from abroad does not appear to have been looked upon with much favour. Rather the common practice seems to have been the importation of stone for manufacture of the image locally at the site "[29] However, services of reputed artists from famous art-centres of contiguous territory might have been requisitioned, where possible. In form and appearance, in modelling and composition and in their general treatment, these specimens have a striking similarity with the Bengal examples, and it is assumed that these are certainly works of artists from Bengal, no doubt, done under patronisation of Tripura.

It is important to note here that all the black-stone sculptures (which are datable to 11th-12th century) so far recovered in Tripura, pertain to the Brahmanical faith, though Buddhism was a predominant faith in the earlier period in South Tripura as evidenced by relevant relics and it is still a living religion among the Chākmā population of the said area, not a single Buddhist image or any such specimen has been come to light from there or from any part of Tripura. Indeed examples of Buddhist art on black stone have not come to our view till the end of the 18th century, the terminus of our period of investigation. The absence of Buddhist images on this material may be explained by the gradual decline of Buddhism since the 11th-12th century, chiefly owing to the resurgence of Brahmanism in Tripura as well as in East Bengal[30].

There is another group of sculptures executed on coarse-grained sandstone having same stylistic manifestation, with less decoration and finish in comparison to the above-mentioned specimens. They have the same 'mediaeval'[31] characteristics as is seen in the Bengal art, though with a local accent. We may enumerate the general features (other than the points noted above) of mediaeval art of Tripura including both the group of sculptures, as below.

Both the group of sculptures so far recovered are all cult-icons and affiliated to Buddhist and Brahmanical pantheon. They are the plastic commentary of the *Śilpaśāstras*. What the *sadhaka* conceived in dhyāna, the artist gave them form on stone or metal but he had to do it in several shapes and forms in correspondence to new developments in religion and philosophy. Indeed, Indian art, particularly of mediaeval times was essentially a religious art and was governed by canonical

prescriptions, though talented artist could produce beautiful works even within the framework of the rigid rules of iconography and art. This general observation is true of the art of Tripura as well, as exemplified *inter alia* by two admirable hailing from Pilāk and Udayapura (fig. 8. 18). Viewed as a whole, sculptures of Tripura testify to a fairly high level of excellence and skill.

The attitudes and movements, which are again canonised by the respective cults, are the same as in Bengal art province. Of the sculptures, *sthānakamurtis* take the major role. Among them Visnu and Sūrya in the *samapadasthanaka* are found in largest number. Images with slight bhanga (Buddha and Avalokiteśvara) are also very common. *Tribhanga* attitude has been depicted generally on attendant figures. *Asana* images are those of *vajraparyaṅka* (Fig. 12) and *maharajalilā* and *lalitāsana*. Examples of first variety of seated images are relatively scanty. The group includes only four sculptures, a seated Buddha (fig .12), an unidentified Buddhist Devi (fig. 13) , a Śaivaite Devi (fig. 14.) and a Chundā image (fig. 31). Ganeśa and Ālingana-murti of Siva in *lalitasana* are found in plenty. In addition to the static stance (*samapadas thānaka* and *vajraparyaṅka*) and attitude (*abhanga*, *tribhanga* and *lalita*), animated and dynamic movements have also been exhibited by several icons such as those of Mahisāsur-mardinī and dancing Śiva. Sayanamurtis have not been found as yet. What even the posture, be it static or dynamic, the facial expression is the same, which is permeated by bliss and calmness[32].

The plastic treatment of the surface glides more softly on the blackstone specimens and the whole mass is more pliable. The course of style is analogous to that of Bengal. The sandstone reliefs are stiff and rigid in comparison to blackstone examples. The sandstone figures , though much mutilated, are distinguished by an almost identical physiognomical form with those executed in blackstone. On these examples, the contours are sharper and the plastic content are stiffened to a certain extent. As a result, the rythm of the Eastern School of Bengal is lacking in them in a greater or lesser degree. There are, however, exceptions to this prevailing trend . The Buddha from Pilāk (fig. 8) with its grace and suavity offers a pleasing contrast to this general trend.

Slender and elegant body-type was perhaps more preferred to the heavier and shorter one, though occasionally specimens of the latter type have come to our view (fig. 15, 22). Sandstone examples are generally characterised by columnar legs and feeble hands. It is to be noted here that anatomically misinterpreted limbs were executed in later period also.

The sandstone examples of this period are comparatively free from decorative accessories on the backslabs. The reason probably lies in the character of the less compact coarse-grained or double-layered stone which is not suitable for intricate ornamentation. And it was perhaps due to this reason that artists concentrated more on size than on decoration ; colossus figures are common in this period as evidenced by many specimens of which a massive Avalokiteśvara deserves attention.

The sculptures of Tripura appear to disfavour the presence of a host of attendant figures on the backslabs of sandstone specimens and reduced their number as far as possible, though within canonical paradigm. Even Visnu figures of Unakoti do not have the never-failing attending figures of Lakshmī and Sarasvati. Whether they used texts other than those followed in Bengal, is not known as yet. The specimens from the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi region provide separate false stela carved out of the main backslab for each attendant deity. As a result, different elements forming the composition do not seem to be knitted in a single plastic mass as is realised in blackstone specimens.

In delineating the *āyudhas* and *mudrās* in the hands of the deities, the artists of Tripura followed the canonical prescription as their brethren in Bengal art, deities in the art of Tripura are found to have been clasping the āyudhas generally by their fingertips. In later period, however, a change in the mode set in as illustrated by the grasping of the same by their grips.

In respect of jewellery and garment, the blackstone pieces are identical with the specimens of Bengal. The sandstone figures, being badly corroded, do not show any details of apparel and ornaments exccept in bare outlines and hence nothing in this regard can be said about them. Diaphanous drapery is, however, realised faintly in the Buddhist figures.

In the absence of any dated or inscribed specimen, it is difficult to make precise evalution of the stylistic trend of art that flourished during this long period. Yet an attempt may be made with the help of the allied sculptures found in Bengal, some of which bear inscriptions, dated as well as undated. Indeed, the evolution of Bengal art more or less corresponds to that of Tripura, with the exception of some minor details. This closer relation is apparently due to geographical and cultural propinquity.

To sum up, the art-trend of Tripura in the mediaeval period moves along with that of Bengal. Being a part of Eastern country (Prāchyadeśa), it played more or less the same role, which the other areas of this art province did in the development of Indian plastic art in general. The stylistic trend of the blackstone examples runs parallel to that of the Bengal specimens of the same material and of the same period, 11th-12th century A.D. The sandstone sculptures have, however, some impress of local features and are relatively inferior in quality.

Evolution of Style : 9th-13th Century A.D.

For tracing the evolurion of style of Tripura sculptures during this period we are to largely depend on the products of Bengal. With the present state of our knowledge, we may broadly divide the whole phase into two periods, of which period I includes the sculptures datable to the 8th-10th cetury A.D. and specimens, stylistically belonged to 11th-12th century, come under the purview of Period II.

Period I : 9th-10th Century

The 9th century Eastern India has left for us several lithic and metal sculptures some of which being dated in the regnal years of different Pāla kings ; besides them, inscribed images are also available which are paleographically datable to this period. All of them, however, hail from Bengal and Bihar, and belong to an aesthetic tradition of fleshiness and even in more or less abstract type of relative softness. The shape of the stela is generally semicircular at the top, occasionally with suggestion of pointed end. The composition is free from exuberant decoration. The body is soft, pliable and also rhythmic in nature. The naturalism and simplicity endow the sculptures with a charm of their own, recreating the eastern version of Gupta calssical concept with a fresh vigour as it were . This appears to be true of the sculptural art of Tripura as well though no dated image has been noticed so far here.

The abundant output of Buddhist sculptures from the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi region may be dated to this period stylistically, if we consider the rounded top of the backslab, simple decoration, plain plinth without any projection, importance of the modelling of the central deity, absence of too many attendants etc. These features more or less conform to the art trend of Bengal of this period. Unfortunately all of the sculptures are badly corroded beyond a proper aesthetic appraisal. Majority of them are executed in stone having two layers, super imposed one above the other. The weathered upper layer has mostly disappeared exposing the smooth, comparatively fine-grained yellowish-grey core (fig.9). Originally the sculptures appear to have beén good ones with tall and elongated physiognomical frame. The features of the faces have completely been lost except that of the Buddha (fig. 8) image, which though somewhat, rubbed shows the calm and contemplative expression. Stiffness of the body, flat shoulders and chest as well as columnar legs may be largely due to the exfoliation of the upper layer of the material, which appears to have been compact than the core. This doubled-layered stone used by the artist of the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi region during this period gives a peculiar appearance as a whole, for which they differ from all the well-known schools of sculptural art of the subcontinent as far as their appearance is concerned. They have, however, some amount of similarity with those recovered from Maināmati, where this type of stone was occasionally used. Due to the loss of upper core, the relief became subdued and the fully modelled body is nowhere felt and the limbs have become weaker for that reason also. It appears that the presence of both the cores may perhaps give a style of their own, but unfortunately even a solitary example of such peculiar and uncommon trend of Indian art has come to our notice yet.

The back-slabs of this group of sculptures are also peculiar. They are broad on the top and narrow in the lower part, and look like the winnowing fan of East Bengal[33]. The broader upper portion endows the sculptures with some sort of top-heaviness and due to this reason, the modelling become a bit unbalanced. The back-slab is completely free from any decoration, except the stupa motif (with a moulded base, a

cylindrical drum, an elongated hemispherical dome and a low harmikā) on either side of the head of the central deity, flying Vidyādharas and two attendant deities. The accessory deities are portrayed with smaller size in comparison to black-stone examples of Bengal of this period and Tripura in the 11th-13th century A.D. The sculptures appear to have given sole importance to the main deity.

It has already been noted that sculptures of this period are recovered fro the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi region. The corpus mainly consists of Buddha and Avalokiteśvara images, majority of which of the latter type are massive, the smallest one being of seven feet high. Unfortunately, however, they are badly defaced and exfoliated and baffle a proper aesthetic appreciation. But as has already been pointed out, our task has been rendered easy by the sculptures from the regions like Śrihatta, Tipperah and Dacca (all in Bangladesh). In the Tripura art under review Avalokiteśvara is invariably two-armed and accompanied by Tārā and Hayagriva. Except the attendant deities and the *stupa* motif on the back-slab, the central deity is stylistically related with the inscribed Lokanāthā image from Śrihatta (now in Dacca Museum), which is paleographically datable to 9th century A.D.[35]. The sensitive modelling of the figure is suggestive of the warmth and softness of skin and flesh. The position of hands, legs and fingers are dictated by the usual iconographic prescriptions but the artist succeeded in imparting a grace and suavity in the slender body of the Compassionate one. Avolokita figures from Pilāk-(fig.9) appear to be the handiwork of the artist of the status of Lokanāthā, as it was , in respect of general modelling and style. Indeed conceptually and aesthetically, the Pilāk-figures look like the colossal lithic copies of Lokanāthā of Śrihatta, or conversely, the latter is the metal version of the Pilāk-Avalokita[36]. Yet a difference between the two is not difficult to be traced out. The Pilāk-examples give an unfinished look, and are endowed wih a flattened instead of rounded plastic mass, sharp and angular lines, which it is presumed, is mainly due to the exfoliation of the upper-layer of the double-layered stone. Fortunately however, this type of double-layered stone was not used in all the examples and blackish type of very coarse-grained sandstone was also used for sculptural work. For instance, a Buddha image (fig. 8), perhaps the finest among the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi findings, shows the sensitive and proportionate modelling of the body ; the face, though rubbed, shows the calm and contemplative expression. Bearing the imprint of late Gupta idiom, the image does not appear to be later than 9th-10th century A.D. The ideal of art form is one of soft fleshliness within definite outline which is the tradition of early mediaeval art of Eastern India. The stela is semicircular with slight suggestion of pointed end, though the entire right part of the backslab is missing. The hem of the diaphanous garment is placed on the left palm. The legs, particularly knees, are so modelled to give an impression of elasticity and pliability despite their uprightness. The backslab is free from exuberant ornamentation except a *stupikā* on the top corner and an attendant figure (Hayagriva?) in the bottom. Monotony of the plain backslab has been broken by a marginal line. The volume of stone is used as much as possible to translate main figure while the corners are balanced by

miniature *stupa* and attendant. Slight flexion of the body of the Exalted One, the bends of the attendant, the rounded mass of the *stupa* and the main figure, lines of drapery and stela have made the modelling animated, pleasing, expressive and divine ane no doubt, it was executed by a gifted artist. The sculptures of Pilāk attained different standards of artistic excellence and it is most likely that they are the works of different artists ; but it seems certain that they belong to the same school of art and the same period of artistic activity comprising of roughly the 9th and 10th century A.D.The artist achieved same success in executing soft plastic mass and unbroken gliding lines on the metal image of Lokanāthā (fig. 15) now much corroded. Composition of the image is same as that of Srihatta-Lokanāthā but the slender elegance of the latter is missing here ; instead it is somewhat shorter and heavier. In addition to the figures of Buddha and Avalokiteśvara, a few more divine images have come to light, the workmanship of which is more indifferent than that of the above-noted Buddha image though stylistically they belong to the similar artidiom, of which one figure of Mārichi (?) deserves mention (fig. 16).

Three Buddhist sculptures executed on coarse grained yellowish variety of sandstone, have been recovered by us from the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi region (figs. 11,12,13,). They belong to the identical tradition , though they spell out some differences in modelling. In appearance they are stiff, their legs are column-like and and limbs comparatively weak in comparison to the body. The standing and seated Buddha[37] (figs. 11,12), and the unidentified Buddhist goddess (fig. 13) displaying such features, may be cited as representative of this group. Compared to the latter image, a Brahmanical Devī figure on metal (fig. 14), however, is more attractive and sensuous in appearance. Above noted seated Buddha is miniature in size (1' including the tenon, fig. 12) and this type of miniature images on yellowish sandstone are found in plenty in Pilak. Perhaps they were manufactured in large quantity for the use of the common people.

A stupa on eaither side of the deity is a common feature of the Pilāk-sculptures. *Stupas* executed on each and every sculpture are of identical design; the *stupa* device on the Buddha figure (fig.8) which is in a good state of preservation, shows a moulded base, a cylindrical drum, a hemispherical dome bulging a little towards the top, a lone harmika and a yashṭhi as its constituents. In form and appearance this stupa is similar to a 7th century broneze votive *stupa* from Āsraſpur (Dacca, Bangladesh)[38]. And if we consider this *stupa* as a denominator for dating these Pilāk sculptures of the mediaeval form and conception, we are to place our examples in the so-called early mediaeval sculptures of Easternn India. If this dating is correct, and the stupa-device as a style-criterion is accepted, it has to be assumed that the mediaeval trend of art srarted earlier in Tripura than in any other part of North India and in that case Tripura was the first to articulate the idiom of mediaeval Indian art. The suggestion is, however, by no means certain in the absence of any dated material or any other chronological evidence.

Period II : 11th-13th Century A.D.

The findings of this period attest to the relative preponderance of Brahmanism and important findings of this group are blackstone sculptures which include the images of Visnu (numerically maximum), Umā-Maeśvara, Naṭaraja, Mahishamardinī and Sūrya. Three sandstone images of Ganeśa, and Chaturmukha-liṅga bear the affinity of the same style as mentioned above,(figs. 28,29,30) though they lack the finer finish and intricate ornamentation of the blackstone variety, owing chiefly due to the difference of the material. The centres of art during this period seemingly removed to further north (Udayapura, Ūṇakoṭi). In the 11th-12th century Bengal witnessed an efflorescence in the realm of plastic art, and the iconography of the cult images became more varied than ever. Bengal sculptures of this epoch were reckoned with an account of their elegance of modelling, richness of ornamentation and an overall technical virtuosity. The reververation of this idiom easily reached Tripura due to its close proximity to the eastern sector of Bengal. The sculptures under review, which are stylistically affiliated to those of Bengal(Eastern Bengal in particular), may be broadly divided into two broad groups : the first comprises of refined examples; and the second, of crude specimens.

To the first group belong the sculptures executed in fine-grained blackstone, occasionally on sandstone of good quality. Hailing mainly from the Udayapura region and some parts of west and North districts (Visalgarh, Khowai, Ūṇokoṭī etc.) they exhibit the similar characteristic features and same artistic treatment as those of the Bengal school. The aesthetic excellence of this group of sculptures lies in the combination of its wealth and exuberance of decorative designs with the translation of inner state of mind of the deity. When worked out by a master hand, they lend a grandeur and beauty to the whole piece. Take, for example, the images of Viṣṇu(fig. 18) and Naṭarāja hailing from Udayapur and Khowai respectively. The facial treatment in each case is oval with pointed chin and the lips, the lower oneof which is slightly modelled in a rounded curve, are drawn downwards, bearing with the smile of bliss and contentment. A not very sharp nose, which merges into two curves of eye-brows gives a restful shade to the half-closed eyes below. From the space between the two eye-brows to the pointed chin, there is a downward trend which is relieved only by the round cut of the face. The lively modelling of the torso is suggestive of warm flesh. The mood of the attendant figures in the relief of Naṭarāja is in full consonance with that of the main figure ; the bull dances in ecstasy with his lord and so also the attendant figures on the pedestal. To a large extent the vivacity that permeates the productions of this group has been possible not only due to the minute carving, high polish and supple finish but also because of non-crystaline grains of blackstone. Same type of works on sandstone did not successfully come out as their blackstone counterparts (fig. 27).

A Chaturmukhaliṅga from Ūṇakoṭi deserves mention here. It is a fine specimen of mediaeval art of Eastern India (fig. 29). Two of the four faces are in a good state of

preservation and they testify to the skill of the sculptor in delineating the placid form of Siva. The other Chaturmukhaliṅga (fig.30) though similar in details, is much inferior and rigid in execution in respect of the treatment of plastic masses and lines. The inscription on this sculpture, the lone example of Pre-Māṇikya period, consists of a couple of words in the proto-Bengali character of the 11th-12th century[32]. The double curves of the eye brows on both the Mukhaliṅgas spell out the sensitivenness of the eyes which is characteristic feature of the 11th-12th century sculpture of Bengal.

The other group of sculptures, coarse and crudely executed and found in plenty appears to be the result of mass production. They hail mainly from Ūṇakoṭi. Among these sculptures the icons of Viṣṇu, Śiva, Ardhanariśvara, Narasimha, Umā-Maheśvara, Mahiṣamardinī etc. are important. The only Buddhist sculpture tentatively assigned to this period is a Chunda image from Pilāk. Heavy as well as of large size and proportions, these works were fashioned of coarse-grained blackish sandstone and show the figures either as standing or seated on double-petalled lotus pedestal. Majority of them are in a bad state of decay ; the faces are almost wiped out and the modelling of the body has suffered extreme loss. The specimens are worked out in bold relief and the general treatment, though not very refined, demonstrate a sure hand of chiselling and a keen sense of Indian form.All the *sthanaka* images are marked by stiff and rigid modelling of the body ; heavy and stolid form is preferred to the graceful elegant figures. The linear treatment is sharp and angular. But aesthetically the best sculpture seems to be the one that represents Śiva seated with his consort Umā; it is recovered from Ūṇakoṭi. Though much of the details have been lost now, the rounded modellig, sympathetic response of lines and soft and lively handling of coarse stone to impart the sense of living flesh to it bespeak the the admirable competence of the unknown sculptor of this hilly region[40]. It is indeed no less inferior to its blackstone counterparts of the Bengal atelier.

Another interesting example (fig. 83), also recovered from Ūṇakoṭi is important stylistically as well as iconographically. The five-faced and ten handed (of which the full set of right hands is missing)figure is perhaps an image of Śiva, because a snake clings to his body like a sacred thread. All the five faces are arranged in a single tier of which the relatively well-preserved central face is prominant. The facial treatment bears an impress of a stamp of South-East Asian idiom and looks like a Javanese sculpture delineating an Indian theme. The god stands with slight flexion and the body is little bulky and heavy. Hands and legs are bold and heavy, but less pliable. The garment is tied with a broad waist-band. Among the āyudhas a bow can only be recognised which is clasped in the middle with all the five fingers, a mode met within the Burmese sculptures.

The Mongoloid faces of these sculptures (where recognised) are not unexpected in this hilly and interior region of Tripura, where Tripura tribes of Indo-Mongoloid stock are overwhelming and apparently the reliefs were the handwork of the local artist . Similar Mongoloid influence in the facial treatment of the works of Bengal is also

visible but this treatment is more refined and abstract than that of the Unakoti piece. In feeling and appearance it is more humane than divine and more earth-bound than spiritual. Another peculiar feature of these Unakoti examples except the above mentioned Umā-Maheśvara, lies in the neck of the figure which is and not of the *Kamvugrīvā* variety of Indian *silpa* texts. As a result the figures become stiff as well as disproportionate to some extent. Perhaps this is also the result of the local ethnic influence.

As regard the date of this group of sculptures they may be assigned to the last part of the 12th and 13th century. Stylistically, the spontaneous elasticity of the earlier works appeared to be getting thinner and the signs of desiccation of plastic content were on view. The Indian art-form as practised here for a long period seems to have been terminated with these works of Unakoti and a new idiom, characteristic of Tripura as well as other North-Easternn States of India was gradually coming of its own.

VI

ART FROM THE 14TH CENTURY ONWARDS

Creative impulses suffered a set back in Northern India mainly owing to the invasion of the Muslims in the 13th century A.D. In Tripura and Assam, however, the Muslim rulers failed to establish their political power and even in those days of their dominance in the rest of India , Tripura was able to maintain its independent entity as a Hindu kingdom. In the realm of art, Tripura, which was integrally linked with East Bengal, found her neighbours with her source of creativity almost dried up. As a result she had to look into her own source and to express her creative impulses in new icono-plastic terms. Art objects produced from the 14th century onwards were iedeologically Indian yet distinctively defferent in character and expression .

The localism of the Tripura art marked by a sort of indifferent workmanship but at the same time by some concepts hitherto unknown. As to the conceptual background, the artists might have followed such iconographic texts which are yet to be known. Alternatively, the cult icons of Tripura spell out the results of the blending of traditional Brahmanism with the religious beliefs and institution of the local people , mostly of the Indo-Mongoloid origin[41].

The art objects of Tripura of this period may be divided into two groups stylistically; the first group consists of the colossal rock-carvings of Unakoti the style of which is distinctly different from that of the second type ; the socond comprises of the items which were produced under the patronage of the Court and this courtly art is best illustrated by the numismatic records of the Manikya rulers.

A. The Art of Unakoti

The date of origin and the artistic affinity of the rock-cut sculptures of the great

religious complex of Ūnakoṭi(North Tripura) have remained an open question. The carvings are, undoubtedly, works of many hands. The most finished and sophisticated among them were probably executed by sculptors brought in from other areas and their works local artists tried to emulate.

Here at Unakoti, we find a vertical rock-cliff extending over about a kilometre and it contains laminated grey shales. The rocky walls of Ūnakoṭi hillock contain a series of colossal sculptures depicting both human and animal figures. The growth of large tress over the area, heavy rains and perhaps earthquakes have produced a serious damage, as a result of which most of the releifs have now disintegrated. Being victims of both natural and human fury, these magnificant rock-cuts are mostly worn-out and defaced .

A glance through this series of sculptures reveals that the figures have been horizontally carved from one end to other . In high and bold relief they appear to narrate some Purānic tales, the threads of which are practically beyond recognition. Some of the surviving reliefs represent Hindu deities like Siva and his consorts, Ganeśa and Visnu .

The objects, as seen and reported by K.N. Dikshit, are not in the same state of preservation at the moment. While some have been completely damaged, many others have been exposed as a result of occasional explorations. The corpus consists of full length figures as well as busts and heads.

Among the numerous rock-cuts, the central bust along with two female attendants appear on either side of the headgear of the God (fig 33) is the first object that arrests the attention of the visitor. That the bust is indoubtedly that of śiva is evidenced by the third eye, half moon on the crest and trident as well as the accompanying figure of the bull; the female figures identified with Durgā and Gangā on account of their respective vehicles (simha and makara) lend support to this view. The three -eyed deity holds firmly a trident in the middle of the shaft with his grip in the manner which is not found in the classical or mediaeval art of Eastern India, though often met with in the art of Burma [43]. Rest of the hands are missing. The figure is about 33' high including minutely ornamented headgear which is itself 11' in height. The sculpture is carved out of flat square plane. The divine face with three bulging eyes does not express any mental state of bliss and calmness, as is felt in the images of earlier period. An interesting feature of the rock-cuts of Ūnakoṭi lies in the absence of eyebrows in most cases and the specimen under discussion is a relevant illustration. The mouth is a long narrow slit with vertical lines representing teeth, broad ears, like those of an elephant, which is nowhere found in Indian art, are decorated with '*dheri*' type of ear-ornamant of the tribal people of Tripura, again a noteworthy feature of the art of Ūnakoṭi. The figure has long moustache turned upwards ending in a loop. The headgear, broken on the top, is interesting, and from what remains it is clear that it is intricately ornamented and not the traditional

jatāmukuta of Śiva; this type of crowning of Śiva is absent even in other examples of Unakoti.

This colossal bust of Śiva appears to have had a significance in the cultural history of Tripura which has so far been missed by the scholars. We are inclined to take the above noted bust as the only surviving record of the influence of the Devaraja cult which was prevalent in the mediaeval Cambodia and adjacent countries. In brief Devarāja signifies Siva represented by a movable image (*Chalanti-pratimā*) and the Cambodian king with the help of the priest entered supposedly in the union with the God and became his part [44]. In othere words, this cult of deified kingship was a major trait of the cultural history of south-East Asia[45]. Now as regards Tripura though no epigraphical or monumental record testifying to the existence of the said cult has been discovered at Unakoti or in any other part of Tripura as yet, certain facts tend to allow us to make presumption that it had penetrated into North Tripura, possibly through the land route of Upper Burma, Manipur, Ahom State and Cachhar. First Śiva is known as 'The king of Gods' among the tribes of Tripura. Second, the *Rajamala* legends ascribe the foundation of the lunar dynasty of Tripura to one Trilochana (of whom the Manikyas were descendants), who was born by the blessing of Śiva. He was widely venerated by the people as a part of the God Supreme, i,e., Śiva. We are told that he has third eye and the *triśula* emblem. Evidently this portrait is strongly reminiscent of the Devarāja cult and Trilochana was the deified king of Tripura. Thus the Rājamālā tradition indicates the influence of the Devarāja cult in Tripura in early mediaeval times, and this seems to be corroborated by the above-noted bust of Śiva with an ornamented crown instead of the usual *jatāmukuta*. In this respect one may recall the colossal heads of Lokeśvara at Bayon in Cambodia, suggested by some as portraits of the king as incarnation of Bodhisatva Lokesvara[46]; conceptually they are similar to the Unakoti bust of Śiva, though the latter lacks the beauty and workmanship of the Bayon examples.

The above-noted example is flanked on either side of his headgear by two female figures, may be identified as Durgā and Gangā standing on simha and makara respectively (fig. 34). Both the figures are standing with slight flexions, bedecked with simple jewellery, pronged headgear, a characteristic feature of Mānikya and Ahom sculptures and also common in earlier Burmese specimens. Close-fitting garment with floral decoration, clings fast to the waist and thighs like pair of shorts. The figures are sturdy and columnar legs support in each case rather a heavy torso. Though in flexions they are marked by a general stiffness. Broad face bulging eyes, faint eyebrows, sharp but broad nose and wide open mouth with an effect of smile do not appear to have been organically related to each other to make the images aesthetically perfect. Both the vehicles of the goddesses have been executed in a stylised manner and this type of animal motifs are common in Unakoti as decorative features.

Crude and rudimentary execution of an Indian theme, the physiognomy of their

faces, expression on the lips, and artistic treatment as a whole of this full panel differ from all well-known schools of sculptural art of the Indian subscontinent. These features apparently spell out a non-Indian character. Lines are angular and broken except in the rounded torso of the figure of Gaṅgā (fig. 34, Pârvatī image is fragmentary), even in which an amount of petrification persists. In short pliability and dynamism are hardly noticeable in these, as well as other reliefs of Ūṇakoṭi, which are not often met with in the Southern and Western Indian rock-cuts of earlier periods.

Other panels have been arranged on other side of the central one. On the left of the central panel, there might have existed several figures, but at present only two heads, one of Śiva (fig.37), and the other a Devī (fig.35) though very badly defaced, survive. Of these two, the devi head (fig. 35) with her spreading matted locks, third eye and soft neck-lines is one of the best specimens of Ūnakoṭi, so far as the quality of modelling is concerned. Though fashioned in accordance with the usual canons, a careful study of the same shows it to be a work of a more competent hand. Swirling matted hair animates the sculpture. Long ears with *kuṇḍalas*, carved on the same plane, are not as disproportionate, as noticed in other examples. Soft fleshliness of the ears and the neck attest to a sure hand of chiselling. The figure is bedecked with a pearl necklace, minuetely designed earrings and a beaded tiars on the forehead used to tuck the swinging hair (equally an outlandish feature), as it were. The sculpture is regrettably so damaged as to make its proper appreciation difficult. On the right of Devī is another male head, probably of Śiva with his third eye and high matted bun tied by a pronged band. The artistry is crude.(fig. 37)

On the right of the central panel, on a slightly raised plane, there is a bearded male bust with matted locks of hair spreading over his either side (fig.38). The god is two-handed and has a conchshell and a rosary in his two hands[47]. Iconographically, this may stand for Śiva. Though in general the image is stiff and disproportionate, some amount of animation is noticeable in the modelling in the fluttering of the matted locks.

On the dexter of this example, a four-handed full figure is executed which is standing in *pratyālidha* position (fig. 38). Clad in *dhoti*, the figure has a bow and a arrow in his normal hands and a khaḍga in the upper right, the upper left hand being lost; he has three eyes, matted hairs arranged in a high bun and heavy earrings with spiral design of the patrakuṇḍala type; he is standing on a vehicle, which is beyond recognition . This is apparently related with the above-noted figure and probably stands for a deity.

Next is a colossal hybrid figure (fig. 41) with a human face and animal body, not yet identified . As to its style of execution, it appears to be a product of the same school of art and cult as described above.

The last group of this series is interesting and carved in a different style. The group

consists of two female figures carved in low relief (fig. 40) mostly with the help of incised schematic lines. Among them the right one is standing on a one wheeled chariot in atibhaṅga pose. Her right hand rests on her waist, while the left raised, presumably holding something, is now lost. On her sinister another female figure carved in the same style, is squatting on some animal. Both of them have long matted hair tied with pronged hairband. It deserves to be noted, instead of the usual long 'elephant-ears', normal ears with heavy earrings have been depicted. The relief is very low and mechanical in feeling and execution . The facial type is somewhat squarish and little different from that of the examples described above. The torsos are not heavy like the previous ones. The stupor of heaviness of form is being relieved here by lightness of curvature, though not at all easy-flowing. It looks more like a painting than a sculpture . It appears that this is a work of separate group of artists and perhaps of different religious faith. Several panels, next to this , have been carved continuously on the same perpendicular rock, but they are so badly damaged that it is hardly possible to say anything about them.

A little down the valley, from the stream-bed rises a block of perpendicular rock measuring about 35'x 90' approximately. The whole wall has been utilised for a single panel, which consists of a seated Ganeśa, two elephant-headed standing human figures and Viṣnu in the proper right end (fig. 42). Two central elephant-headed figures are uncommon, so far as Indian iconography is concerned. They are undoubtedly connected with the cult of Ganeśa, but differ widely from the usual image of the God. Among the two, the left one appears to be a female figure. They are standing with slight flexions. They attenuated waist and three and four tusks respectively instead of protruded belly and single-tusk, as prescribed for Ganesa images in Indian iconography. The emblems held by them are sankha, chakra, akshamālā, damaru etc. They have conches on their upper ear, a feature not metr with in Indian art. Each of these Ganesa images has a trident on the crest of the diety, apparently related it to Saivism. Of them the two attenuated figures have been described by Getty as local deities in some way associated with Gaṇeśa cult[48]. The Visnu figure with usual emblems has been carved on the extreme right . The god has a high kiritamukuta, heavy earrings and a necklace, and he is clad in a short *dhoti* reaching the thighs. All the figures are stout and heavy but some of the limbs, particularly the hands, are apparently weak. It seems that the iconometric canons as practised in earlier period, were not known to the artists of Unakoti and they failed to treat the anatomical features in a proportionate manner. Inspite of several such short comings, it appears that artists endeavoured to carve out soft, pliable and sensuous figures, as seen in the curling of the elephant trunks and fluttering of the scarf, soft attenuated waist, though they eventually did not achieve substantial success. The lines are sharp and broken.

Besides these panels as described above, numerous heads of different sizes (fig.39) are carved all over the complex on different hieghts of the rocky walls of Ūnakoṭi. They are characterised in general by rounded face, long ears, long and broad nose, open

and closed mouth, short and broad bulging eyes, marked moustache, with or without eyebrows, with or without third eye etc. Whether these heads have any connection with the cult of Chaturdasadevatā, as practised in Tripura even now, in the medium of fourteen metal heads in lieu of full images is not known[49]. It may be mentioned here that same type of heads, though of better medelling are carved in Mikir hills inMeghalaya .

In addition, there are a number of massive humped bulls carved in the round , a basement of a constructions, perhaps that of a temple (not yet exposed). stone pavements etc. It seems that the bulls were placed here and there on the paved courtyard of this eminent place of pilgrimage, as is seen in other religious sites.

Though nothing definite can be said regarding the creation of Unakoti culture-complex or about its artists, it is apparent that most of the sculptures belong to a compact group, stylistically and iconographically. Their uneven plastic standard tends to show them to be the works of different hands of varying competence. Apparently a centre of pilgrimage and veritable resort of Brahmanism particularly of Saiva sect, Unakoti presents a noteworthy narration of some mythological stories in such a plastic language which is somewhat unrelated to mainstream of Indian art of the classical or early mediaeval period. The plastic volume of the classical era or the soft linear movement of the mediaeval period are absent in the colossi of Unakoti; instead they are crude, stiff and angular. The very crude and rough execution, the physiognomy of the faces, the quaint expression of smile of their lips, their iconography in general, are all combined together to give them an exotic character though thematically these reliefs are basically Indian. The artistic treatment of the subject-matter is equally foreign to any known school of Indian art; rigid lines and sharp angularities, the incoherent composition and schematic surface treatment have made most of them petrified, the few exceptions having been provided by the seated Ganesa in the Ganesa panel (fig. 42), the Devi head (fig. 35) and the figure of Gangā (fig.34).

The gap between the earlier sculptures of Tripura and the present phase of art-activities of Unokoti may be separated by about two centuries. The stagnation of the age-old artistic tradition that set in North India from about the 13th century appears cheifly due to the domination of the Muslims and the thread of rich heritage was lost. It has earlier been noted that though the Muslims failed to take roots in the soils of Tripura and other States of North-Eastern India, the damage they did to the art of Bengal, the source of inspiration of the art of Tripura was dried up. The art of Tripura was shortly revived under the aegis of the Mānikya rulers, though the Unakoti complex, probably initiated under the early Mānikyas, presents a different tale. In other words, the Unakoti reliefs were carved before 16th century when Indian artists of North-Eastern region of India imbibed many features from the Muslims such as multifoiled arch, floral and vegital motifs of Indo-Saracenic type. This will be urdent in the plastic art of Tripura and Assam during 16th-17th century, while absent in

the art of Ūṇakoṭi. Thus the art of Ūnakoṭi may be placed before the Ahom Mānikya art of post 15th century, and since no example of Ūṇakoti style is datable to the Mānikya period under our study (15th-18th century), it stands to reason that all the Ūṇakoṭi objects were produced by the end of the 14th century. Of them the first group (figs. 28-30,83) may be assigned to the 11th-13th century on the basis of their affinity with the contemporary Eastern Bengal examples, second, now under review, which has no parallel to any known examples, may be dated tentatively to the 14th-early 15th century.

As to the origin of Ūnakoṭi, a suggestion may be advanced. It is more or less definite that a Hindu dynasty of Indo-Mongoloid race, established itself sometime in 14th century in Tripura. Perhaps it had relations with Burma and with the fall of Pagan, its seat of political power in the 13th century as a result of the invasion of Kublai Khan, the artists of this region, irrespective of Indian and non-Indian origin might have migrated towards India through Assam and got shelter in the northern hilly region of Tripura. On the active patronage of Tripura rulers, they decorated the rocks of Ūnakoṭi, then a place of pilgrimage[50]. Alternatively, the alien influence might have come from further South-East through lower Burma and then through Assam; this is indicated by the mask-like appearance of the individual heads of Ūṇakoṭi, strongly reminiscent of similar South-East Asian heads (e,g., heads of Lokeśvara at Bayon and mask-like heads from different temples at Java,)[51]. Not only the heads, but all the sculptures partake of a mask-like character. This may explain the outlandishness of the sculptural art of Ūnakoṭi. Whatever the origin and affiliation, it is reasonably clear, that the art of Ūnokoṭi was not bequeathed any tradition to the heritage of Tripura sculpture which came to its own in the 15th century. The Ūnakoṭi examples form a class apart and present a style, exotic and sporadic. It declined and fell apparently due to lack of sustained patronage, either royal or popular. Even the place of its origin and maturity was shortly relegated to the oblivion. Since then we are negligent to protect such unique examples of our heritage.

B. Art During the Regime of the Manikyas

The sculptures of this period comprise Devatāmudā rock-cuts, a few stela-carved icons, as well as those met with on stone pillars and stone plaques of temples (fig. 43,63,84), bearing a stylistic affinity with the figures depicted on the coins of the Manikyas. The antiquity of these objects hardly goes back beyond the 15th century when these Indo-Mongoloid rulers came within the fold of Hinduism and the temple building and coin-minting activities began under the Mānikya patronage. The first among them known to have accepted Hindu customs and rites was Ratna-mānikya I, as is evidenced by his coins[52].

There seems to be a hiatus of about two or three centuries between the art of the early mediaeval period (upto 12th century) and that of the period of the Mānikyas from the 15th century onwards. There are no monumental remains which can be

definitely ascribed to this chronological gap (with an exception of Ūṇakoṭi-rock-cuts which seems to be sporadic and exotic as described in the preceding pages); references to art activities in literature are also absent. Culturally, however, this time lag is significant since it seemingly coincides with the consolidation of the Indo-Mongoloid power in the North Eastern region of India, and the foundation of a new culture resulting from fruitful blending of the various Aryan and non-Aryan socio-cultural elements appears to have been born in the late-15th century. A school of art, which may be designated as the North-Eastern Indian School of late mediaeval art prosperously flourished in Tripura and Assam. This regional school of sculpture plays an important role in Indian art no doubt. With the coming of this new school in operation, stone was again increasingly employed as the medium of artistic expression but the artists used this material in a some what pedestrian manner, betraying their lack of knowledge and experience inherited from the past. They began from the scratches, as it were.

Sculptures of this epoch mostly of sandstone and rarely of slate-stone, are thematically connected with Brahmanical pantheon; only one metal example has so far come to light (fig. 63) though the figures on the metal coins deserve a separate perusal for the sake of comprehensiveness of our study. Strikingly enough, despite the plenty of temples inTripura, only two cult icons, meant for worship, have so far come to our notice . All the other example appear to be used as decorative features of religious edifices. Plastically, these sculptures were done in a very low relief, giving them a flat appearance and creating a two dimensional effect.

Majority of the divine figures are marked by frontality, even when the face is shown in profile, the rest of the body has been given a frontal treatment (fig. 51). The animal vehicles of the deities are always in profile ; the exact cause of this mode of depiction is not known. Lack of adequate anatomical knowledge of human and animal beings and inability of placing them in the compositional frame properly give the sculptures a somewhat ridiculous look. Different limbs of a figure are mostly disharmoniously fixed. Take for instance a figure of Brahmā (fig. 84) where the heads are placed asymmetrically and produce a funny and inartistic effect. The modelling of the sculptures are equally poor and in this respect they are far removed from the earlier phase. They are frankely earth-bound and lack spiritual interospection, which is suggested by their open eyes and smiling countenance. Further, they are stiff and rigid. The absence of noteworthy aesthetic quality in these works may be explained by the fact that they were the creations of artists who had to find out and develop their own plastic language. And they had to do it perhaps because they were either unfamilier or very little acquainted with the age old and rich-heritage of India. Notwithstanding with all shortcomings, these sculptures have a primitive charm of their own; unfortunately, however, the sculptural tradition of Tripura failed to go beyond this charming primitivism and could attain aesthetic maturity probably because of constant political turmoil as well as the absence of suitable environment and necessary patronage to artistic activity.

The Tripura sculptures under review have developed an art language of their own. Iconologically, the dresses and jewelleries underwent a change, such as the headgears are not the usual *Kirita-mukuta*. It is replaced by a head-dress consisting of prongs, made of either leaves of a tree or bird feathers, as it were. This type of head -gear is found to adorn the heads of all deities, central as well as attendants. This type of head-dress betray the influence of Burmese tradition[53].

Likewise, regionalism was accented in ornaments and clothings. *Dheri* type of *Kuṇḍalas*, used by the local tribes are depicted instead of different varieties of earrings used in the earlier period and this variety of earrings were also used in Ūnakoṭi. The bangles used to decorate the fore-arms of female divinities are seen to have been in use among the Riāngs. An ornament used in the upper ear called *Taia*, also used by the Riāngs is encountered in an image of Durgā from Devatāmudā (fig. 43). Female figures , especially those in Devatāmuda are clothed in skirt (pācchara) and breast-band(ria) which were and still are in use by the tribal ladies of Tripura.

Distinctiveness is noticeable in respect of the manner of holding āyudhas too. In divine images of this period ayudhas are seen to be held in their grips in the natural manner, while in Eastern Indian sculptures in earlier period, these are disposed in *Kaṭaka-mudrā* and in a modified form of *Tripataka*. This manner of holding *āyudhas* by the deities in Tripura sculptures is similar to that which is found in the sculptures of Assam (mainly of the Ahom age) and of Burma. Incidentally, it has also been met with in some specimens of Unakoṭi rock-cuts.

Regarding facial physiognomy generally two types have come in view: one with clear-cut Mongoloid features having broad face, high cheekbones, broad nose and oblique eyeys (fig. 59); and the other with rounded face, flat nose and round eyes (fig. 43). The first type is portrayed realistically while the second in a stylised manner. Stature is generally short and stout in all the instances. The eyes of the deity are invariably depicted wide open in lion of drooping eyes of the earlier period.

As regards iconography, we have not yet come across Viṣnu images of *Dhruvabera* and *Vyuha* classes. But *avatāra* manifestations are common. Animal forms of avatāras are depicted in the usual hybrid form. As for Narasimha , he is always depicted as seated in *pralambapada* pose (fig. 63). This is a departure from the mediaeval northern tradition where he is depicted in either *ālīdha* or *pratyālidhā* posture. Paraśurāma is shown with a battle-axe and a human head in his hands (fig. 62). Sūrya figures are four-handed holding lotus buds and bow and arrow in hands[54]. Some of the figures in Devatāmudā are horned and they are Śaivait deities. Among the vehicle, tiger is an innovation, perhaps an element of folk culture . Jackal(dog?) is also seen in some cases.

All the images have been carved inside multifoiled arched frame which serves as the backslab of the figure. The plaques, definitely datable to the 18th century[55] have been lavishly decorated with floral and vegetal motifs of Indo-Muslim character.

Parrots are used in some of them as decorative device. It is presumable that the comparative plainness of the background is a general feature of earlier sculptures. The Devatāmuḍā reliefs may be included in this earlier category.

The sculptures are so modelled so as to look like moulded plaques and they seldom display any effect of stone carving. Even colossal figures at Devatamuḍā (with a height varying between 45' and 48') which are larger than those of Unakoṭi, do not reveal any monumental despite their massiveness which is better articulate in the reliefs of the Unakoṭi complex. The phenomenon appears to have been due to the lack of technical knowledge, such as that of perspective and proportion, of the artists of Tripura as well as their inability to properly handle stone while carving reliefs; perhaps because, they were habituated to clay and wood as plastic materials. The coarse nature of rock also added to their difficulty. Another probable cause of such technically poor output may lie in the inexperience of the tribal people of this region in the art of image-making who were non-idolatrous till they came under the fold of Brahmanism towards the end of the 15th century and started practising it in keeping with their new religion. In any case, aesthetically speaking, sculptures of this period are by and large crude and clumsy. And the plastic masses are so flattened that the contrast of lights and shades and suggestion of action and vitality are hardly visible. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the Tripura sculptures of this period have a definite contribution to the art heritage of India. They are the products of an age when plastic tradition almost dried up in the eastern part of the country. In that dark period, the sculptors of this region atleast tried to revive the age-old tradition with a new orientation formally as well as conceptually. As they had to start from the beginning, so to speak, errors and short comings are but natural. And in spite of their comparative crudeness and earth-bound character these sculptures have a charm of their own.

Yet it may be worthwhile to discuss some of the works of this period which are in a better state of preservation. A majority of them hail from South Tripura while a few have been found in West Tripura. The distribution of examples tends to show that this style was not popular in North Tripura. Again, they bear a close affinity with contemporary Ahom sculptures.

The examples include, *inter alia*, the rock-cuts at Devatāmuḍa, carved on the hill. They are overlooking the river Gomati and situated between Amarpura and Udyapura. A number of images, considerably, colossal have been carved here among an image of Mahiṣamardinī (fig. 43) and a tiered panel including five divinities (fig. 44) deserve attention. Both the examples measure 45' in height and they are carved in very low relief. The image of Mahiṣamardinī with round face and bulging round eyes, is executed frontly. The heavy torso, broad shoulders and sturdy hands are mechanically joined with each other, as it were, and the total effect, that the image creates, is not of an organic whole. The fluttering hairs of Devī is bounded by a pronged headgear and the jewelleries and garments that she is wearing include

taiā.dheri, *riā* and *pācchrā* of the Riāng lady. The ten-armed deity on her lion mount is seen trampling the buffalo demon in its anthropomorphic form. Marked by sharp angularities, broken linearism and stiffness of plastic mass, the image has a close stylistic affinity with the Ardhanāriśvara figure depicted on the coins of Vijayamanikya dated Śaka 1482 (A.D. 1568, fig. 57) The Devi figure is carved inside a multifoiled arch, generally found in the Shajahani architecture. Though multifoiled arch has been noticed in Bengal in the Simhavahinī temple at Ghātāl in the Medinipur district, (1490 A.D.), in Tripura it has not been encountered before the 17th century; support to this contention is given by an incomplete allegedly built by Sujah in Udayapura when he took shelter here in the later part of the 17th century. In other words, most probably during this period this arch became popular in Tripura and came to be used as a decorative device. And if this motif offers any clue for dating, the Durgā image and all the allied sculptures are to be placed not much earlier than the middle of 17th century . The coins of Tripura bearing figures of similar idiom, which are perhaps the source of inspiration of such carvings may be called for in this context (*infra* pp. 153-57)

A group of five figures carved inside a multifoiled arch are so arranged as to assume a cruciform pattern (fig.44). The topmost figure in the panel represents Śiva as a dancer with a *damaru* and a *siṅgā* (Flute made of animal-form) in his hand. The middle one may be identified with the same God in his Vatuka-Bhairava form on the ground of the presence of dogs in the pedestal; he is flanked by Kārtika and Ganesa (?) and all these divine figures are depicted as seated. In the lower part is a seated female figure which suffered considerable damage. The composition consists of five registers of uneven shape and size which are schematically arranged and each of them has been carved individually almost in the same plane and in low-relief with the result that there is hardly any scope of display of light and shade. In comparison with the Durgā relief, the present panel is technically more advanced and the relief is comparatively bolder than the earlier one. Though much exfoliated, the relief gives an impression of rounded modelling, not seen in the previous one. Further, the interplay of light and shade has been effected here to some extent through the deep cuts of the panels and the parallel lines ; and rhythm and animation have been created by the flexions of the body, fluttering of the matted hair and the carve of the horns of the deities. The style of carving of this panel closely resembles to that of the figures executed on a hill at Lungley in Mizoram which is not very far away from our site[56].

A long running panel consisting of forty seven figures carved individually inside niches, which are pointed as well as rounded at the top, deserves more than a passing notice (fig. 45). It seemingly portrays a secular scene.A representation of a procession, the panel is lively on account of the presence of a number of gay and happy figures consisting of dancers, musicians, palanquin bearers, king or royal personage in a bigger frame. Though the figures are badly defaced, from what remains, the panel appears to have partaken of the character of a folk painting with

a linear accent.

Another better preserved and interesting specimen of Tripura art of this period is a stone gateway consisting of three members, (two carved pillars and one architrave, (fig.48,49) made of huge blocks of sandstone. Recovered from Amarapura, these pillars,(curiously of uneven size) and the multifoiled top appear to have once served as gateway of temple. The figures on the pillars are coverd in a very low relief and are arranged vertically on the surface inside separate compartments. The upper member, i.e., the architrave, is executed on a soild block of stone measuring sbout ($3^1/_2$' X 8') which is arranged horizontally. The central deity is Vaisṇavī on Garuḍa; she is flanked by Lakshmi and Saraśvati (fig 49) seated on lotus and swan respectively. Two female devotees in *anjalī* mudra are on either side of the panel. The entire composition is arranged inside a multifoiled arch carved on the same place. The nineteen figures (eleven and eight) carved on the pillars include some of the Dikpālas, Mātrikās and Lakshmi, a few others cannot be satisfactorily identified[57]. These pillar carvings have a stylistic affinity with reliefs encountered on different Ahom temples of the Sibsagar area of Assam, the only difference being in style of presentation of the multifoiled arch being in style of presentation of the multifolied arch over each figure. Individual cusps of the multifoiled Ahom motif is sharp and pointed at its end while the Tripura motif is rhythmic, elongated and easy-flowing recalling arched doorway of the Shahjahan edifices[58]. As to the carvings of the Amarapura pillars, the figures have been given a frontal treatment even when the face is in profile. Composition of each compartment is simple and identical : inside a multifoiled arch is executed the main figure; stylised lotus motifs decorate four corners of each compartment. The lines are stiff and angular. Roundness of modelling is nowhere felt, instead they are considerably flat. The figures are very much stylised, practically without any antimation.

Only two cult-icons with back-slab, have, so far come to our notice. Both of them are worshipped now. The image of Tripurāsundarī ((5'2" high) carved on coarse-grained sandstone is installed in the Tripurāsundarī temple, Udayapur, dated 1501 A.D.[59]. In the composition the goddess under a multifoiled arch stands in the *samapadasthānaka*; posture on a short figure like the South Indian apasmarapurusha; the latter is locally known as Mahādeva, perhaps on the analogy of Kali standing on prostate Śiva. The goddess wears a somewhat elongated pronged headgear and exhibits in her four hands clockwise varamudrā, ankusa, pāsā and naramuṇda respectively. It is believed that the image was installed in the temple in the 17th century after its renovation by Ramadeva- mānikya (1681A.D). Stylistic considerations also point to a similar dating on the basis of the presence of multifoiled arch on the back-slab[60].

The other cult icon, that of a Mahisamardinī, is now worshipped as Kālī in a temple at Kamalāsāgar founded by Kalayan- mānikya in the 17th century (fig. 46). The goddess standing on her lion is seeen slaying the buffalo demon in its anthropomorphic form, the buffalo head being kept aside. Her flutering matted hairs are arranged

mechanically in three parts tied by a hairband on her forehead. She had elongated slim torso and forceful well-formed legs but her hands are comparatively weak and arranged in a schematic manner. And in general this image seems to bear a family likeness as it were, with the figure of Tribal Durgā from Mangaldi (now on display in Assan State Museum), though our sculpture is more sophisticated than the latter. The entire composition is covered in a pointed top back-slab which looks like a pointed niche. Stylistically the image is included in the same catagory of art object of the period under review. The sculptor partly succeeded to impart force and dynamism in this piece and as far as modelling is concerned, this is perhaps the best sculpture of this period.

Attempt of rounded modelling is, to some extent, visible in the stone plaques recovered from the Kālikāganj temple, dated A.D.1775 (figs. 59-62,48). Fashioned of fine-grained slatestone, the plaques have an average mesurment of 2'6"x1' x 8". The main figure is in general carved under a multifoiled arch which sprouted from pilasters from either side of the deity (fig.61.)[61] The plaques are over-burdened with floral and vegetal designs. The figures are characterised by heavy physiognomical form, broad face with high cheek bone, rounded eyes, short and faint eyebrows, broad shoulders and hips; legs have been shown in profile. Projected ears, though smaller in size, remind one of the ears carved at Ūṇakoṭī rock-cuts. The *āyudhas* are clasped firmly by the grip of the hands (fig.59). Though rigid and inexpressive, the figures are marked by a rounded softness, not met with in the above noted sculptures, albeit a general identity of style. The plaques are decorated exuberantly with floral and vegetal design as well as human figures but the individual carvings have not been harmoniously synthesised to create a compact composition as in the sculptures of earlier period (11th-12th century). Aesthetically, the divine figures are crude, unsophisticated and mundane, bereft of any spiritual feeling, whatsoever.

The creative articulation in terms of plastic materials (including terracotta, which has been dealt with in separate section) seems to have come to a close at the end of 18th century and the last examples of the epoch include the slate- stone plaques noted above. The next century witnessed a marked decline in plastic activities of Tripura. Perhaps due to lack of patronage and serious economic problem, the whole tradition become exhausted.

VII

Terracottas

Besides the work in stone and metal, clay had been a populr and favourite medium in which Indian artists expressed their cerative impulse from remotest times. This was due to the easy availability and pliability of this material. And hence the terracotta art had been the mirror of life and attitude of the humble folk, be it religious or secular.

Unfortunately, the terracottas of Tripura of the period under review are scanty and all of them are accidental finds. The scantiness is seemingly due to the damp climatic condition, lack of systematic excavation of the ancient sites and the presence of large quantity of sand particles in the alluvial deposit of the land. As a result the terracotta art of Tripura does not supply much data for the study of life and culture of the people of the region and for assessing their contribution torwards the development of plastic art of the land. An attempt, however, may be made on the basis of the available materials to delineate a picture of the terracotta art tradition of Tripura, however fragmentary.

The terracottas of Tripura belong to what Stella Kramrisch has designated as the 'time-bound' type. Fashioned out of moulds, they are mostly plaques possibly serving as the decoration of the exterior walls of religious edifices as found in Bengal. In respect of stylistic considerations, they may be divided into two groups: the first group consisting of plaques which have been recovered from the Pilak-Jolāibaḍi region of South Tripura district (figs. 64-68) and they may be regarded as products of the earlier period, that is, not later than 9th century A.D. This dating is suggested by the stylistic and thematic affinity with those from Maināmati (Comilla District, Bangladesh) assignable to the same period. The second category is also comprised of temple plaques and they hail mostly from Udayapura. They are found either fixed on the walls of temples built by the Manikya rulers or in a detached conditions. They may be dated to circa 16th century and onwards.

The earlier group of plaques, though nominal in number represents the rural art of the period and is distinctively different from the more conventional and sophisticated products of court-patronised atelier and thus free from academic injunctions and religious dictates. The well-preserved plaques among them depict flying monkey, wild boar, buffalo and Kinnari[62].

From such small findings it is difficulty and rather hazardous to comment anything definite. But it woluld be reasonable to assume that they are essentially popular in nature deriving inspiration from the mind and imagination of the simple village folk. The humble rural modellers failed to turn out artistically impressive products, but their inability was compensated by the vigour, dynamism and imagination which they succeeded to impart to them. The plaques have a very close stylistic and thematic similarity with those carved on the basement walls of Śālavana-vihāra at Maināmati in Bangladesh as well as those of Pahārpur and Bhāsu-vihāra[63]. It may be reasonably presumed that Pilāk, like Mainamati, was a Buddhist site, where monuments were decorated with similar type of terracotta plaques. Indeed, it appears that a local and indigenous school of art developed in Pilak in the line of Maināmati and Pāhārpur, and the present terracottas, howsoever small in number, appear to have faithfully represented its idiom. The monuments of Mainamati and Pāharpur have beem dated to c. 8th century A.D.[64] and on the basis of the affinity of the sites, the Pilāk terracottas may be datable to the above period .

It is hopefully believed that like Paharpur, Mainamati and Mahasthana, a rich religious complex will be exposed one day in the area by the spade of archaeologists.

The tarracottas of Pilak are separated by a long interval from those of the brick temples of the 16th-17th century. The latter are very scantily decorated with terracotta plaques. A hoard of plaques recovered from an area known as Phulkumari near Udayapura bear several motifs including figures of simha , gaja-simha and Garuda as well as lotus creepers, and various geometrical designs. The lion and the Garuda (figs. 70, 71) figures are seen on the obverse of the coins[65]. Surprisingly enough Krisnayana legends and Puranic stories did not seemingly inspired the artists. Does it mean that there was no influence of Smarta cults on the clay-modellers of Tripura ? From their works they appear to have had a penchant for animal and vegetal world. The absence of human and divine figures in the terracotta art of the later period raises a presumption that the rural artists came under the influence of non-idolatrous Muslims. Alternately, it may be suggested that the artists themselves were mostly Muslims. The multifoiled arch motif in majority of the plaques enhances the probability of such suggestions. Unlike the contemporary Bengal terracottas, which portray the life and religion of the people and thus suggest a sense of thematic and stylistic compactness, Tripura counterparts are confined to individual figures and the total effect of these works is incoherent.

Viewed as a whole the terracotta art of Tripura during this later period did not reach a high degree of perfection. Modelling is in very low relief almost like scratchy drawings. Vegetal designs are not spontaneous and rhythmic; instead they are stiff and angular. In number, the specimens are smaller than the stone sculptures. When the terracotta art of Bengal expressed itself in all its vigour and joy, the Tripura examples are by and large aesthetically unimpressive except the motif of lion and the Garuda. The phenomenon is somewhat inexplicable in view of the propinquity of Tripura to Bengal. Whether this was due to the unsuitability of the alluvial carried by the hilly rivers for clay modelling, is not known. In short, the terracottas of Tripura lack vivacity and spontaneity and the mechanically treated animal and vegetal motif appear to have been largly unrelated to the life of the people. Hardly they provide a picture of the lives of contemporary people of Tripura even in outline.

VIII

Coins

Coins of the Māṇikya rulers appear to have a rightful claim as objects of art. Indeed they have not so far received the attention they deserve. Though their standard of conception and technical quality is by no means comparable to that of the Gupta coinage, they may be profitably utilised for a comprehensive study of Tripura art during the Māṇikya period . Among the devices seen on the coins especially notable is the rampant lion. It is found on almost all the coins, though much experiment was done by the mint-masters for giving its mature shape (fig.55). The other devices

include a Garuda motif and figures of Viṣṇu, Ardhanáriśvara and Venugopāla (figs. 56-58).

The majority of the coins are struck in silver, gold specis being comparatively rare. Copper examples are non-existent. The coins are round in shape maximum and minimum diameter being 27 mm. and 5 mm. respectively; average weight (maximum and minimum) is 10 grms. and 2 gms. Within a very limited space, the mint-masters worked out figures and their *vāhanas*, occasionally along with their attendants of deities. Reliefs are bold in comparison to the stone sculptures and terracotta plaques of this period . Stone sculptures and terracottas appear to be enlarged versions of the figures of the coins. A comparative study of sculptures and the coin devices would reveal that the mint-masters achieved more success than their brethren working in stone and terracotta in depicting their subject matter much effectively and that too within a small format. Look at the Ardhanāriśvara or Viṣṇu type of coins of Vijaya-maṇikya (figs. 56, 57). They will show how the artist effectively and minutely used the space to depict the entire composition. Law of frontality is strictly adhered to in portraying the figures of the deities, while bull and lion in Ardhanāriśvara type are in profile. In the second specimen the head of the Garuda is shown in profile, the rest of the body in enface. The artists used the surface both vertically and horizontally for executing the minute details in limited space. The figures are solid and rounded. In theme and physiognomy they are allied to the contemporary sculptures but are more soft and sensuous in comparison to them. The composition of the coin devices is in general neat and appealing, the exeception being that of Yaso-māṇikya dated 1600 A.D. (fig. 58). Compositionally it is clumsy, overburdened with ornamentationn. The main figure, Venugopala, which is a combination of lines and dots only, is rudimentary in appearance and character. Stiffening of plastic volume, which is also noticeable in the stone sculptures of the Māṇikya, is also present here. Icnographically, however , Venugopāla is interesting. The flute-playing kriṣṇa here is unusually riding on a lion which is symbol of Śakti or Durgā. Whether it is an attempt to repress the Śākta cult by the Bhāgavata faith, is not known.

As said before , in delineating the lion motif, much effort and experiment was done to get the final shape (fig. 55). In the earlier coins,i.e., coins of Ratna-Māṇikya-I(A.D. 1464-67) the figure was simple and lion was executed in outline. Gradually it became a solid mass and a plastic effect was sought to be effected. Dynamic surging rhythm of the body of a charging lion was carefully spelt out on the coins of all denominations. With the gradual development of the form of the main figure, certain addition of motifs, e.g., trident, flag, half moon, fish (in the examples of Dhanya-māṇikya only) made. The whole composition is generally margined by scalloped or dotted lines. It may be mentioned here that coins of Jalal-ud-din (1418-33 A.D.) found in the Dacca district (Bangladesh) carry the figure of a rampant lion resembling the type found in Ratna-Māṇikya's coin. Ratna had a cultural and political relation with the Muslim ruler of Bengal. Perhaps he was impressed by this motif and introduced it in his coins. Actually the fabrication of Tripura coins is largely similar

to that of coins of Bengal Sultans.

The overse legend is also placed by using the space in a disciplined manner. The format has been made square or a hexagon by the help of marginal lines and three or four lines of legend was inscribed. As a whole, a sense of discipline and balance make coins of Tripura aesthetically impressive. Indeed, the artists of Tripura excelled more in monetary art than in carvings on stone and terracotta. Though the numismatic art is included in the category of 'Minor-Art', it is no less important in the history of the late mediaeval art of India. During a period when the Hindu kingdoms of India were influenced by the style and fabrication of Muslim coinage, Tripura largely maintained her originality by issuing completely different types of coins, which apart from their numismatic value, are of importance and significance as records of creativity of contemporary artists.

Notes & References :

1. The present author has discovered several such examples, chiefly from Pilāk and Devatāmuḍā.
2. See map.
3. The author has had the epportunity to examine the concerned sculptures at Mainàmati.
4. The art of fabrication of coins started with Ratna-māṇikya -1 (1464-67). The devices used on coins are peculiar and one may be attracted at once by their aesthetic quality. These offer the evidence of numismatic art on metal which are found in plenty in Tripura.
5. Debased gold coins of Gupta imitation type are being found in numbers . Māṇikya also struck gold coins on rare occasions.
6. Tavernier, *Travel in India*, tr, John Phillip, pp. 451-52.
7. Nothing has been known about the origin of the name of Pilāk except for a reference of the place-name Pilākka-Vanakā in an inscription of Anandachandra now kept in Mrchung, Arakan, *JASB, XVIII*, 1-4, p. 56. Coins bearing legend, '*Piraka*' have been recovered from Belonia in Tripura, which has a close affinity with '*Harikela*' coinage. If '*Piraka*' is taken as the name of a locality, this may be identified with Pilak, *JAIH*, X, 76-77,p. 169.
8. According to the *Rājamālā*, the place was originally called as Rāngāmāti and was renamed as Udayapur by Udyamāṇikya (1567 A.D.) *Rājamālā*, p. 45.
9. The place is reported to have been founded by Amaramāṇikya as a second capital.
10. The place is mentioned as Māchichā and 'Devadvāra" in the Rājamāhā p. 30

and Sri *Rājamālā*, II. (ed. K.P. Sen), p. 26.

11. Devvarman, S.C. in his *Tripurar Smriti*, Devvarman P.M. in *Ūṇokoṭi Tirtha* and *ASI, AR.* 1921-22, recorded some sculptures, but some of them have either vanished or are not in the original condition.

12. Though the Janapadas mentioned as belonging to the *Prachya* country in the *Purānas* do not include what is now known as Tripura, it is reasonable to believe that it was also considered to be an eastern territory in view of its geographical position. Perhaps it was included in Vaṅga (taken in a wide sense) or it may have corresponded to Pravanga. Orissa, at its northern part, may also be included in the *Prāchya* division though *Kalinga* has been assigned by the *Purānic* authors to the southern sector.

13. Terracottas of the '*ageless*' category, produced without any mould, have not yet been found in Tripura.

14. All of them have been recovered from south and south -western parts of Tripura.

15. *AR, ASB*, 1923, p. 28 and for illustrations pl.1, figs. 1-3 of the same publication.

16. *Indian Art and Letters ix*, 1, 1933, pl, v, 1.

17. This is valid for the art of pre-Māṇikya period. The later sculptures are new in conception, poise and modelling, and belong to a fresh culture-zone, embracing the states of North-Eastern India.

18. Take for instance, the image of Sūrya on the wall of the 18th century Jagaddhātrī doll at Śibsāgar (Assam) in which the God holds a bow and an arrow in his hands in place of his usual full-blown lotus emblems. Such interesting and significant icons of Assam have been discussed by Dr. K.K. Das Gupta in his article 'An Iconological Approach to the Study of the History of Assam (ancient and early mediaeval period) to be published in the '*Sources of the History of India*' (Vol.II) edited by S.P.Sen.

19. Ray, N.R., *Brahmanical Gods in Burma*, pl. 24.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *AR, ASB*, 1923, p. 28.

22. It is mentioned earlier that Indian colonists and traders from Bengal presumably went to Ārākan and Burma via land routes through the Southern part of Tripura. It may be tentatively assumed that the same traditionn was responsible for creation of art of these regions with local variations.

23. Banerjea, J.N., *Development of Hindu Iconography*, P1,XLI. Fig. 4.

24. The backslabs of the figures of this group excluding the Narasimha (fig.7) which has been found upto the knees, measure 3m. and 29 cm. high and 1 m. and 68 cm wide. Major part of the front side of the Sūrya image being buried below ground, the details have not been recorded.

25. *EISMS*, P1. XXXVIII.

26. The rock-cut sculptures of Ūṇakoṭi do not come under the purview of this period. Besides the rock murals, Ūṇakoti has yielded a good number of mediaeval sculptures fashioned on sandstone.

27. This chronology of style has been decided on the basis of dated sculptures from Bengal, some of which have been found in the contiguous territory of present Tripura (e.g., Bāghāura Viṣṇu, Sūrya and Viṣṇu of the time of Govinda-chandra etc.) and has got striking similarity of style and composition of the said sculptures.

28. Saraswati, S.K., *Early Sculpture of Bengal*, p. 114.

29. *Ibid.*, It may be noted here that two blocks of quarry-dressed black-stone have been recovered from the Kamalāsāgar area of west Tripura district, along with a black-stone Śiva-liṅga, which supports the above suggestion.

30. From about the middle of the 11th century to about the 13th century, East Bengal was dominated by the Brahmanical dynastics like the Varmans, Senas, Devas etc. Perhaps the same situation prevailed in Tripura and hence the overwhelming majority of Brahmanical image.

31. Growing linearism, academic nature, facials with spiritual and mundane suggestiveness, slender body type with grace and elegance, elaboration of image stela together with plinth assertion on regional idioms are some of the characeristics of mediaeval art of Bengal.

32. This facial expression is descernible in blackstone sculptures only. All the sandstone figures except two from Ūṇakoti (figs. 29, 30) are so corroded that it is difficult to visualise their original facial expression . It is presumable, however, that they are identical with the two better preserved specimens, as mentioned above and as also in respect of serene facial expression which marks their blackstone counterparts.

33. A streak of folk influence may be discerned here. Rural Bengalee people of Tripura still prepare wooden relief of Lakshmi and other decorative motifs and paste them on the miniature winnowing fans. Some of the Ḍālā paintings display similar type of back-slabs.

34. Bhattasali, N.K., *IBBSOM*, P1. 14.

35. Ibid.

36. While judging a sculpture from Pilāk, we are to always keep in mind that atleast one-tenth of the thickness and the upper layer of the figures is exfoliated and as a result the final modelling is hardly traceable in any object.

37. The standing Buddha mentioned above has no attendant figure as is seen on other Buddha figures of this region. Examples of seated Buddha are rare.

38. Majumdar, R.C. (ed), *History of Bengal*, p. 483, Fig. 68.

39. *ASI,AR*, 1921-22,p.85. The said inscription is not in view now a days due to exfolition of the stone.

40. The auther regrets her inability to illustrate it owing to her failure to persuade the local worshippers of this image to photograph it.

41. This applies to the contemporary art of Assam and contiguous territory.

42. *ASI, AR*, 1921-22, p. 85.

43. Ray, N.R., *Brahmanical Gods in Burma*, figs. 2, 21, 30.

44. This is known from the Sdok Kak Thom inscription (1052 A.D.) of Cambodia. See, Kulke, Hormann, *Der Devaraja Kult*, published from Sudasien Institute Universitat Heidelberg (reprint No. 159), 1974.

45. We shall attempt to trace the influence of the art of South-East Asia on Unakoti later.

46. Rowland, B., *Art and Architecture of India*, p. 412, Fig. 343. In this context we may cite a head of a king carved on the walls of Mikir hills. See Nath, R.M. *Background of Assamese Culture*, P1. XVIII.

47. Śiva figures of earlier period,carved on lingas having same attributes, have been recovered from Uṇakoṭi (figs. 29, 30).

48. Getty, Alice, *Ganesa*, pp. 30-31.

49. Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterjee traces this practice of worshipping in the representation of human heads in metal, stone, wood, of terracotta to the pre-Aryan folk cults in Assam and Bengal, possibly connected with the Nāgā head-hunting and cult of head or skull and with the Dayak head-hunting among the Austic Tribes of far away Borneo. see, Chatterji, S.K. *Kirata-jana-kriti*, p. 136.

50. A bulk of Brahmanical images datable to 11th-12th century have been recovered from Unakoti. From the presence of earlier sculptures, it is

apparent that Unakoti might have been enjoyed the position of a relegious site since an earlier period.

51. Rowland, B., *Art and Architecture of India*, figs. 343, 378. See also Fig. 39 of this work under review.

52. The earliest date of this ruler as known from his coins, is 1386 Śakābda, that is A.D. 1464.

53. Ray, N.R., *Brahmanical Gods in Burma*, figs. 11, 20.

54. Das Gupta, K.K. *loc. cit.*

55. See for instance stone plaque from Radhāmādhava temple at Kālikāganj (near Agartala-Bangladesh border) dedicated to Visnu on A.D. 1775 by Jāhṇavidevi, queen of Krishṇa-māṇikya (Fig. 63).

56. The photograph, now in my possession and still un-published, has not been reproduced here because of its indifferent quality.

57. The first one is riding on a tiger (Fig. 52) perhaps a folk divinity, worship of which is not extent these days. The second one apparently looks like Sūrya (fig. 55a) but the vehicles are horse and dog (or pig) a form not known in Indian iconography. The third one is completely weathered away.

58. Brown; Percy, *Indian Architecture* (Islamic Period) P1, LXXX, Fig.2)

59. Vidyavinode, Chandrodaya, *Śilalipi Samgraha*, p.6

60. It is regrettable that a photograph of the image cannot be reproduced here due to some Local conservation .

61. A copper-amulet of Krishṇa-māṇikya (fig. 64) has the same stylistic features.

62. The objects mentioned above are preserved in the Government Museum at Agartala, photographs of which are reproduced here. Besides these, moulded cornices of stepped pyramid design and with dental edges are available. A plaque depicting an antelope of Pāhārpur Maināmati type is kept in an Āśram at Pilak and our inability to reproduce the photograph is regretted.

63. The author had the opprotunity to examine the Maināmati terracottas in situ. For some of these terracottas see Samsul, A.K.M., *Mainamati*, P1. XII, XIII; Mitra, Debala, *Budhist Monuments*, Photo No. 142.

64. Mitra, Debala, *Ibid.*,

65. The Garuda motif is depicted only on the coins of Mukuta-mānikya dated śaka 1411(1489 A.D.).Lion device is used in almost all the coins of Tripura except a very few cases, since 1464 A. D.

CHAPTER IV

ARCHITECTURE

1. Architecture of the Early Period

It is not known when building activity had started in Tripura. But the discovery of some of the cult icons of the 7th-8th century, provided with tenons, appeard to testify to the existence of temples of the same period which were intended to enshrine them. Not a single piece of lintel or a door-jamb or even a fragment of pillars, be it religous or secular, throwing light on the genesis of ancient architecture has so far been discovered. The probable reasons of the non availability of old monuments lie in the damp climate, perishable building materials, thick growth of vegetation and the iconoclastic fury of the invaders. Thousands of large-sized bricks with smooth surface and moulded plaques (supra, ch.III 'Terracotta'), similar to those of Mainamati , have been found scattered in the same area and they point to the existence of brick edifices which were contemporaneous with Mainamati culture - complex. Like Pilak, the other notable site, Unakoti, has also yielded a number of bricks and a plinth (little of which is exposed now). Presumably many such architectural monuments are lying burried only to be revealed by the spade of archaeologists in the near future.

In regard to the architectural relics, the position of Tripura is worse than her neighbour Bengal. While the materials in the shape of representations of temple-types depicted in sculptural art and manuscript paintings, have enabled us to reconstruct the history of architecture of ancient and mediaeval Bengal, Tripura has not yielded any such remains except a single type of Stupa, portrayed on the back-slabs of the Buddhist sculptures as well as some terracotta sealings recovered from the Pilak-Jolaibadi region. As mentioned before, this stupa-type, carved on sculpture (fig. 12) and terracotta sealings (fig. 64), is exactly similar in form to the 7th century bronze votive stupa found at Ashrafpur (Dacca, Bangladesh)[1] This type of stupa architecture was also prevalent at Mainamati in the Comilla district, as evident from some sealings, three stupas exposed in its Kotilamuda section. The Stupas at Ashrafpur, Mainamati, and Pilak belong to one type : it consists of square base, a circular drum, a hemispherical dome and a harmika with finials. The dome bulges little towards the top in each case, and this feature is pronounced in the Ashrafpur example. As a result the stupas are endowed with a contour like that of the bell-shaped Stupas of Burma of later days. We may venture to suggest that this stupa-type went to Burma through the Pilak-Jolaibadi sector of Tripura sometime in the 8th-9th century A.D.

II. Architecture of the Manikya Period (late 15th-16th Century A.D.)

From the extant edifices, it is evident that the temple-building activity started in the early 16th century or towards the end of the 15th century [2] under the Manikya

patronage and practically came to a close in the last part of the 18th century due to decadence of the royal power. In other words the majority of Tripura temples are assignable to the period between the 16th and 18th century. Most of them are concentrated at Udayapura, which had been the capital of Tripura till the first half of the 18th century, and have disclosed 'a forgotten chapter of Indian architectural development'.

A survey of Tripura monuments, now in various stages of preservation amply bears out the fact that they architecturally form a compact group. The present study has been confined to temples which are better preserved.[3]

The temples of Tripura during the period under review may be divided into two groups: (a) chār-chālā stupa-śirsha temples (fig. 75) and (b) three-storeyed tower-like edifices (fig. 80). Though both the groups appear to have stemmed from a common tradition of architecture, they are of different shape.

(a)**Chār-chālā stupa-śirsha Temples :** It may be borne in mind when judging from the architectonic veiwpoint, that all the members of the edifices are not present in the standing buildings and ruined vestiges. It is possible to do so if we bring together every bit of evidence in order to reconstruct the forms and features of the temples of Tripura.

Built of bricks [4], the edifices of this group are constituted of two individual structural members, e.g. *torana* and the single-porched main sanctum. *Torana* is a *dochālā* construction. The inner roof is spanned by pointed barrel-vault. The outer roof, as a rule, is placed directly on the vault and follows its outline in the the exterior. The *toranas* are without any crowning member though some have wrongly viewed that they share identical finial with the sanctum. The consruction of *torana* has been made of two pointed keystone-arched doors in opposite directions and also windows of the same type on the side-walls.

In general, the main temple is built on a raised platform or courtyard, approached from the *torana* by ascending staircases. The plinth is constructed more or less on the same level of the raised courtyard [5]. The shrine is the combination of chār-chālā sanctum and a low-height porch, the hind edge of latter being interlocked with the facade of the sanctum [6]. Between the porch and the pointed arched entrance to the sanctum is the *antarāla*, not exceeding an average length of 1 metre. The group plan of the sanctum is round inside and square outside [7] (fig. 85). From the measurements of the outer surface and the inner space, it appears that the wall is sufficiently thick. The inner roof of the chār-chālā is not visible. Walls of the porch and the sanctum have been made so thick that the inner sides of the chālās became solid and the rounded sanctum wall rises gradually tapering to the inner vault of the crowning which is made by corbelling, supported by keystone at the centre of the top. The inner walls are provided with small niches with pointed arch shape (fig. 78). No pillar or pilasters was used inside the construction .

The outer brick wall rises perpendicularly forming a semicircle with moulded or dentate edge towards the drooping cornice of the roof.The flatness of the plain wall is relieved by horizontal rows of slate stones [8] This method also helps to strengthen the structure. At four corners of the sanctum are form tapering pilasters with a *kalasa* finial from which sprouts the carved cornice. These buttresses are imitations of Muslim minarets which happily synchronised themselves in a Hindu monument and decidedly an innovation since it is not met with in Assam, Bengal or Orissan temples. The exterior walls in general bear a number of squares and rectangles of irregular size which are created by a combination of horizontal and vertical mouldings. Such walls of the temples are not decorated with terracotta plaques, though instances of terracotta decoration was not altogether unknown as is evidenced by the findings of hoards of terracotta plaques at Phulkumari, apparently from the ruins of a temple (figs. 69,70). In rare instances in extant edifices lotus motif is seen just below the cornice; it is moulded on brick and is occasionally carved on slate-stone.

Next comes the *mastaka* on the crowning which gives the temples of Tripura an uncommon character. On the humped surface of the *chār-chālā* roof, stands the hemi spherical *aṇḍa of a stupa* [9] having a moulded base and an *āmalaka* disc over it, and on this disc again is placed a solid cylindrical member, probably harmika with the crowning finial *hti*. Both the porch and the sanctum possess the same type of crowning, which in individual example seemingly belongs to a common tradition, the distinction being merely in minor details. Perhaps a majority of the edifices had monolithic arched gateway (fig. 73), which are now, *however*, seen detached from the shrines.

Here we may examine some of the better preserved temples individually. The earliest extant shrine is the Tripurāsundari temple (as it is called now; fig. 75) built in Saka 1423 (1501-2 A.D.) (as known from the dedicatory inscription) by Dhanya-māṇikya. The edifice was dedicated to goddess Ambikā. Later it underwent repairs many times. This is a living temple and Tripurāsundari is the presiding deity. The temple has apparently lost its original character due to periodical maintenance. The floor of the sanctum and the circumambulatory passage are now paved with mosaic tiles. Several coats of plastering have hindered to find out architectural modes and features such as the technique of vaulting and the method of construction of vaulting and the method of construction of doorways. At present it appears from the temple that the west-facing edifice stands on a raised stylobato and the sanotum is round with an additional entrance in the south, which was most probably made later, in view of the fact that in other temples such a side entrance is absent. The construction is slightly tapering towards the cornice. On the plain wall the horizontal ribs meet with a few flat vertical bars giving rise to a number of rectangles of irregular size. The walls take semicircular shape with four moulded lines, towards the top which merge with the hut-shaped roof ; above the roof rises the Stupa-crowning with a row of small niches of the shape of lotus-petals at its base. On the moulded top of this stupa-shaped structure rises a similar member, smaller than the former and it is indented

by vertical lines like the ribs of *āmalakaśilā*. On this is placed the *harmikā* which again looks like an *āmalakaśilā* above it is *hti* (or *kalasa*?). Perhaps here two stupas were placed one above the other to accentuate the verticality of the temple. The lower drum is slightly elongated and distinctly different in shape from that of the similar architectural member met with in other extant examples of Tripura. The spire of this temple is strikingly reminiscent with that of the Nagayan temple at Pagan [10].

A monolithe arched door- frame is the only relic of a temple built by Vijaya-Māṇikya II in Śaka 1470 (1548 A.D). Now in possession of a local person, this doorframe contains a dedicatory inscription which discloses that the temple was built at Lakshmipur and dedicated to Viṣnu by the royal couple[11]. The masive stone gateway testifies to the magnificence of the said temple but it does not enable us to have a glimpse in the temple buliding activity during the period of Vijaya-māṇikya II, who was one of the greatest rulers of Tripura.

That Kalyāna māṇikya built several temples is evidenced by the extant temples having votive tablets. Among them mention may be made of three edifices locally known as Mahādeva group of temples. Located at East Udayapur, each of these temples was created within a walled compound and is slightly raised from the floor level of the Simhadvara of them the one in the east is the largest (10.60m. x 8.20 m. including the ambulatory verand and according to the dedicatory inscription placed below the cornice, it was dedicated to Gopinātha and constructed by Kalyāna-māṇikya in Śaka 1572 (1650 A.D.). Like the Dutiya group of temples (see below), the remarkable feature of the present temple lies in the monolithic arched entrance to the proch behind the multifoiled arch in brick and stone made by radiating wedges. The sanctum of the temple is circular from the base, while the plan of the porch is rectangular. The exterior walls of the sanctum as well as of the porch are decorated with parallel rows of corbelled ribs at equal interval. Each corner is a tapering buttress (except the inner corners of the porch) reaching upto the drooping eves of the *chala* roof. On the hump of the roof is placed a hemispherical drum of a stupa with a moulded base over which stands a notched vase-like member. Perhaps it is the *harmika* crowned by hti[12]. The porch appears to possess the identical crowning, though the upper members are missing. The wall of the sanctum rises from the base in circular shape, gradually tapering the towards the top which ends in a high vault provided with a keystone in the centre of the top. The sanctum-wall is provided with three niches at equal interval. The walls of the *antarāla* and the porch raised perpendicularly while that of the sanctum moves upwards in a circular shape from the ground and ends at the top where a keystone in provided to complete the inner domical roof of the stupa crowning. The porch and the sanctum are surrrounded by a *Pradakshinapatha*, the railings of which are broken. The floor of the shrine is paved with brick.

The remaining and adjacent two temples are of the same architectural form and conception. Each of them is, however, little smaller in size, than the one discussed

above. The shrine was dedicted to Viṣnu and created by Kalyāṇa-māṇikya (date not mentioned in the accompanying inscription) and renovated by his grandson Rama-māṇikya in Śaka 1595(1672 A.D.). The third temple, next to it, was dedicated to Samkara and constructed by Kalyana-māṇikya in Śaka 1573 (1651 A.D). This living temple, now known as *Mahādevabāḍi*, is lavishly white-washed and as a result, constructional details are lost. But in regard to the plan and elevation it is identical with previous shrines.

A couple of temples with common entrance to the courtyard are situated to a little east of the Mahādeva group which are called *Dutiyā* baḍi, as they are said to have been built by Dutiyā Devi, a cousin of Ratnamāṇikya II in saka 1621(1699 A.D)[13]. The inner plan of the sanctum is circular and that of the porch is rectangular. Both have monolithic entrances behind the multifoiled brick arches. The edifices are too badly mutilated to allow any glimpse into their architectural details. All the members of the crowning except the *anda*, have been lost. Tectonically, they appear to be of the same catagory of the temples desribed above.

About half a kilometer east of the Dutiyāvāḍi, there are three temples locally known as the Guṇavatī Group. The extreme right one of the group was built by queen Gunavati, wife of Govinda-māṇikya in Śaka 1590 (1668 A.D) and dedicated it to Viṣnu (fig.75). This temple is facing south. The remaining two temples facing west, are in a much ruinous condition. They have no dated inscription, but on stylistic grounds appear to be contemporary with the previous one. Architecturally, all the threee temples are identical and belong to the usual Tripura type, the distinction being merely in details. As regards the Guṇavati temple (fig.75). which is the better preserved, the eves of its *chārchālā* roof are more drooping than those of the majority of the Tripura temples. Five concentric moulded lines decorate the wall just below the cornice. Horizontal corbelled ribs on the walls are more projected and angular in appearance. The porch has no crowning. The most interesting member is an *āmalaka* disc over the *aṇḍa* on which again is a solid spherical cube with angular ridges all around, which is lacking in other examples. The overall appearance of this group of edifice is stiff and angular. The plan of the temple is similar to that of Gopinātha mandir, i.e, circular in sanctum, and rectangular in porch.

To the south of the Gunavatī group stands another group of two shrines. The southernmost of them is called Durgà temple. The other has no name now. Both of them stand on a platform of which traces of wall survive on the west and southernmost part. Their plan and size are the same as above. To their west is a small pavilion with a rectangular chamber in the centre, surrounded by an arched *verandāh* on all sides and in the centre of the flat roof of the edifice is placed a *chārchālā* hut-shaped crowning. This is locally known as the Jhulan temple and undoubtedly it served as *Dolamañcha* or *Rāsamañcha*, as is seen in the case of temples of Bengal. The said building have no inscriptions and have no referance in the *Rājamālā* or any other text. Stylistically they belong to the groups of temples described above.

Another interesting shrine with round sanctum is locally known as Bhuvanesvari temple and believed to have been created by Govindamāṇikya. The temple stands on the right bank of the Gomati and it is believed that the palace of Govinda māṇikya was situated in the same campus. And a huge pile or ruins lying adjacent to this temple may represent the palace of the king. The so-called Bhuvaneśvari temple was actually built by Rāmadeva- maṇikya in 1599 śaka era (1677 A.D) and dedicated to Visnu in referance to his deceased father Govinda-māṇikya. The temple is raised on a high plinth provided with stairways and an open ambulatory corridor. The porch is absent in this example. The inner plan of the sanctum and the roof are identical with that of the Gopināth temple described above.

The earliest temple of the group is perhaps the dilapidated edifice, now visible about two kilometers south of the modern Udayapur town. It has no dedicatory inscription. But stylistically it belongs to the same group. This is the only temple without corner buttress and it suggests that this architectonic feature was not introduced during the time when this edifice was built. In dimensions also it is bigger than those of the temples described above. The temple faces west. It has a stone gateway inscribed all over (fig. 73) . This type of inscribed gateway has already been discussed earlier.

Numbers of stupa-śirsa temples with rectangular porch and round sancta have been found in Udayapur in different states of preservation. Only the temple of this type has been recovered from Amarapur. Five edifices, said to have been built by Kalyāna-māṇikya are situated in Kalyānapura in West Tripura. Another temple built by Kalyapa manikya, now housing an image of Durga- mahisamardini, stands at Kamalasagar in the same district. They share the features of the temples cited earlier. But the description will be incomplete unless we mention two more temples at Udayapur, viz. Hari Mandir and Jagannatha Dol, which are situated on the east bank of Jajagnatha- sagar, a big tank excavated by Jagannatha, the younger brother of Govindamanikya.

The Hari temple gives a glimpse of the whole design of the temples of Tripura. All the members of the temple complex are in a good state of preservation. The temple faces west. Staircases give access to form the *dochālā torana* to the high platform. On the brick-paved walled courtyard stands the main edifice (porch, sanctum and the ambulatory path) which is completely damaged now unlike other examples, the sanctum is internally square which has been converted to a circle towards the top over which spheroid dome is carried out; by introducing a continuous series of three arches the square ground is turned into circle on the top (fig 79) . The arches occur in the centre of each side. The inner roofs of the sanctum as well as of porch and *antarala* are same as in previous examples. The torana has *dochālā* roof like those of Vishnupura, with arched doors and windows on four sides. A rectangular recess intended to contain the inscription is present below the cornice of the *torana*, which is unfortunately now missing . The crowning members are stylistically identical with

its fellow edifices. Though we do not know the exact date of its construction, stylistically it is assignable to the 17th century when all such temples were created.

The Jagannātha Dol or temple (fig. 76,77) is the most important of all the monuments in Tripura as it is lone example of stone temple in the region. Unfortunately, however, it is too damaged to allow a discussion of all its features in detail. Though typical of the brick- temples, it is entirely built of a kind of ash-coloured slate stone slabs, so far as the vertical portion is concerned. The inner vault and outher roof are, however, made of brick, but the base of the outer dome like the rest of the structures is of stone. Internally, it is square at the base; the square has been converted into a circle to form the inner vault by means of a series of eight arches. The arches occur one in the centre of each side and one at each corner above the heads of the main arches. Barrel-vaulted *antarāla* contains one niche on either side. There are no images on the building though eleven niches are found on the exterior walls. The main features lies in the absence of ribs all around the building. The crowning is a massive hemispherical *anda* of a stupa, the other members being lost. Tapering pilasters with *kalasa* finial support four corners of the monument. The temple was built by Jagannāthadeva, younger brother of Govindamāṇikya in 1661 and was originally dedicated to Viṣnu.

The temples that we have studied in the preceding pages may be assigned to the 16th and 17th centuries on the basis of epigraphy and architectural style. They belong to what may be designated as stupa-sirṣa chārchālā type of edifices and not to the stupa-śirṣa bhadra[17] or tiered type of temples illustrated in the early mediaeval manuscript paintings of Eastern India. There are reasons to believe that the chālā or the hut type structures with sloping curvelinear roof derived from the thatch- and-bambo prototype, the sloping roof being devised to cope with excessive rainfall and to off set damage caused by luxuriant growth of vegetation. And in Eastern India where rainfall is more than abundant, hut-type temple has a natural preference by the local people from very early period[18]. But while in course of time, architects of the other parts of India evolved new forms with permanent building materials, Tripura failed to adopt them, mainly because of her climatic condition and of the non-avilability of stone. Moreover, the similar temple-architecture of Bengal excercised no mean influance on the monuments of Tripura. But the importance of Tripura temples do not lie in the hut- shaped superstructure alone. It is the crowning which gives the monoments of Tripura a novel and unusual from in Indian architecture. As noted above, hut-type structures are frequent occurrence in India, especially Eastern Indian, architecture, but a stupa with component members is a very uncommon crowning in Indian monuments. No structural analogue of the type exists anywhere in India. A few temples at Pagan in Burma-Abeyadana, Patothamya, Nagayon, Payathonju[19] and Nat- hlaung Kyang[20], each shows a complete stupa as the upper element, though tiered roof of the Pagan examples has been replaced by the chārchālā roof in our edifices. These Burmese monuments may hence be considered as the structural counterparts of the temples of Tripura. At the same time it shows

extension of religious toleration in the part of Hindu kingdom where an idiom, especially associated with Buddhism is used in Brahmanical edifices.

Stupa-śirṣa temples were not unknown in Eastern India as is evidenced from the illustrations of Cambridge University manuscript of the *Astasahasrikā Prajñapāramitā* copied in the Newar Samvat 135/A.D. 1015 [21] though in view of the absence of structural shrines, it is difficult to reconstruct the history of such type of monuments. Since the 11th century nothing has been heard about the said type of shrines. How was it possible to revive the style in a remote corner of the Indian subcontinent, after a pretty long time? In the following may be found an explanation.

The stupa-śirṣa temples, as illustrated in the *Astasahasrikā Prajñapāramitā*, were most probably associated with Buddhism of *Tantrik* affiliation in Bengal. From this territory the architectural form seems to have spread to Burma and Java, where its popularity is amply illustrated by numerous famous edifices of this type, notwithstanding their local elements. With the revival of Brahmanism in the Sena period, this stupa-śirṣa type became obsolete in Eastern India but was continued in Burma upto the 12th -13th century, as evidenced from magnificent edifices of the country mentioned later. After the disastrous fall of Burma in the 13th century, the country sank into chaos and disorder and ultimately all artistic activity with Indian affinity came to a standstill and the Indian influence was superseded by the culture of savage tribes from the north . Moreover, India, the source of all cultural activity in South-East Asia, was herself dominated by Muslims and all her artistic activities fell into a stage of stagnation. In this period of chaos and disorder in both countries, the Indo-Mongoloids of North-Eastern India came to power and gradually they came under the fold of Hinduism. It is presumable that artists and architects migrated to India from upper and lower Burma via Assam and Chittagong-Tripura respectively. We have seen in the preceeding pages that the late mediaeval art of Tripura as well as other regions of North-Eastern India has a close affinity with that of Burma and it is assumed that the rulers of Tripura were somehow rather directly related with Burma (*supra*. Chapter II). Perhaps along with sculptures, architects from Burma took shelter in Tripura and received active patronage from the court . Significantly nowhere in North-Eastern India stupa-śirṣa temples have been encountered and the monuments of this forgotten architectural type, though much linked with the current trend, appears to constitute the most important contribution of Tripura to the history of Indian architecture.

In Tripura several styles got mixed up in the late mediaeval architecture. Tripura introduces Muslim minar-type of tapering pilasters in the corners, a feature not met with the contemporary temples of Eastern India. It works as corner-buttress, as if to support the drooping eves of the sloping roof. The particular architectural number has been blended with the structure so harmoniously that nowhere it is felt as superfluous. The temples of Tripura exhibiting three distinct features, viz., Indian *chāla* type of roof, Indo-Saracenic mineretes and the Indo-Burmese type stupa-

crowning, in totality may be unimpressive , but certainly important from the architectural point of view. A congenial meeting place of the Burmese and indigenous elements and a restorer of a forgotten style, Tripura thus plays a role no mean in the development of Indian architecture.

(b) Storeyed -type edifice

A unique tower-like brick-built monument is standing in the heart of the Amarapura town, once a temporary capital of Amara-mānikya (1577-81). This three storeyed (Three storeys are now clearly visible and there might have been a few more) edifice is locally known as the palace of Amara-mānikya. The monument is standing in a much disastrous condition and it is hardly possible to shed considerable light on its architectonic (figs. 80, 81). The remains of the tower appear to have a height of about 40 metres. It forms a rectangle from the ground (see plan and longitudinal cross-section, fig.87) The walls have a thickness of about 2.80 metres. The monument faces east with an arched opening to the corridor from which the hall is approached by another arch. The interior is extremely dark and highly infested by bats and snakes. Our on the spot study has revealed the floor to be paved by bricks. Eight niches rise from the ground on east and and west walls and they are of about 80 cms. high. The inner roof is a semi -pointed vault which rises from the east and west wall and supported by the corbelled pendentives on north and south. Arrangement of bricks of the vault is very irregular which bring a clumsy effect on it [22]. Outwardly it has an appearence of a storeyed tapering, structure, upper storeys gradually diminishing in size. The top of the each storey was originally demarcated by a set of mouldings serving as a cornice, a trace of which still survives. Below these mouldings a series of terracotta plaques having *gajasimha* motifs have been fixed. These plaques are tectonically affiliated to the late mediaeval art of Tripura. The entrance was originally decorated with a carved stone gateway, of which the pillars are housed in the Museum at Agartala and the architrave having carved images of Vaisnavi, Lakshmi and Sarasvati is worshipped in a temple at Amarapura. Pillars are also carved with images of different deities (*supra*, Chapter III). No trace of sculpture or inscription is visible. But there is no doubt that it was originally a religious edifice as evidenced by the gateway. The first floor has three arched-openings on north, south and east walls. The third storey must have some opening, but it is difficult to trace out due to thick growth of vegetation. Due to the same reason it is hardly possible to have an idea about the top. It appears from the pile of ruins that not a single slab of stone has been used in it except in its gateway.

The specimen is the long extant example of the type represented by it. Stupa-śirṣa hut-type of temples were popular in Tripura and numerous examples of this type have been found in different states of preservation. Even in Amarapura, number of said type of structures have been found. But nowhere in Tripura structures of this type have come to our view. Externally it looks like an un-Indian edifice. Whether this has any relation with the south-east Asian tower temples[23] is difficult to ascertain at the

moment in the absence of any intelligible evidence. Likewise nothing definite can be said about the antiquity of this type due to the lack of similar edifices bearing dates. The stone gateway,arched openings similar to those of the 16th-17th country A.D. and the moulded bricks with *Gajasimha* motif make it clear, however, that type was also in vogue in the same period, though seemingly it failed to gain much popularity among the royal patrons and common people, and hence the style was abandoned in Tripura and become a sporadic example of the architectural style.

It is evident from the discussion in preceding pages that only one type of temple become popular in the Kingdom of Tripura. Earlier examples prior to the 15th century A. D. are completely non- existent, though the discovery of a number of cult images indicates the possibility of existence of shrines to house them. Numerous extant examples however suggest that from the late 15th century onwards the temple-building activity began to receive a spurt and from the dated materials it may be observed that Tripura introduced during the 16th- 17th century a novel architectural type in stupa-śirṣa monuments which in one sense is a sort of revival of a forgotten type of Indian architecture. They imported corner minerets from Muslims, stupas from Buddhists and chālās from the indigenous trend . All the members happily synchronised themselves in a composite form to shape a unique type of edifices. The style introduced by the Indo- Mongoloid rulers of Tripura is a symbol of their religious toleration. They effected a symbiosis of Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim architectural elements in a single structure without any prejudice. This unrivalled variety of religious edifices is perchaps the greatest contribution of Tripura in the history of Indian architecture.

This temple-building tradition was active upto the middle of the 18th century. And from the end of the 18th Century, it rapidly declined both qualitatively and quantitatively owing to several socio- economic and political factors. Lack of adequate royal and popular patronage to this Tripura style, distinctive of the Land, met tragic end.

Notes & References :-

1. The date of stupa has been suggested on the basis of the copper-plate of Devakhaḍga in the 7th Century. See *History of Bengal*, Majumdar, R.C.(ed.),pp. 483-84.
2. A temple has been discovered very recently at Chandrapura, a suburb of Udayapura. Though included in the Tripura type in general, some of its architectural features suggest an earlier date.
3. No secular building datable to period under review has survived.Two or three debris of bricks are allegedly to have the ruins of palaces of the former rulers but they are beyond recognition. So our discussion is strictly confined to the temple architechture.

4. Banerji, Adris ,*Temples of Tripura*, p. 10.

5. The plinth of the Bhuvaneśvarī shrine at Udayapura is, however, more elevated than the courtyard level, the height of the plinth being 5' feet. The elevation of the plinth was apparently done in view of the rising flood-level of the Gomati, on the bank of which it stands, during the rainy season.

6. *Jagannatha* dol and *Tripurāsundarī* temple are exceptions. They have no porch.

7. Except in the case of *Hari Mandir* which has square sanctum (Fig. 90).

8. In the Bhuvaneswari temple this type of stone-plaques are met with corbelled diamond design; dentitions are however found on the walls just below the roof, more or less in all examples.

9. David Mccutchion classifies them as Muslim domes and places them at par with those of Coochbehar temples(*Late Mediaeval Temples of Bengal*, p, 56). But his view does not bear scrutiny. The Banesvara temple at Coochbehar and Jalpeśvara shrine at Jalpaiguri tend to show that the architect did not have had a stupa in his view. He completely Limitted the Bengal type of Muslim dome in these examples. Tripura temples, on the other hand are marked by a typical stupa as a crowning member and in this respect bear affinity with some of Burmese temples.

10. Sarasvati, S.K., '*Temples of Pagan*" *JCIS*, IX, 1942, Fig. 1. ßW2d*

11. Sircar D.C., *Two Inscriptions from Tripura State, IHQ*, XXXIII, No. 2, 1957, pp. 99-106. It is regrettable that a photograph of the said gateway could not be obtained due to religious dogmatism of its present possessor. It is however similar to one, recovered from Chandrapura and illustrated in fig. 74. The stone gateway under review has been recovered from a village called Mahārāni, near Udayapura.

12. Benerji, A., *Temples of Tripura*, p. 13.

13. Sircar, D.C., '*Two Inscriptions from Tripura State*',IHQ. XXXIII, No. 2. 1957, pp. 15-16.

14. Vidyavinode, Chandradaya, *Silalipi Samgraha*, p. 18.

15. At present the temple has no porch and ambulatory corridor . The main temple measures as 7 mts. by 6.40 metres; due to its extremely dilapidated condition, the inner part of the sanctum could not be measured.

16. It is so rubbed that not a single word is now readable.

17. Saraswati, S.K., 'Rare architectural type in Manuscript Illustrations,

Bangladesh Lalita Kala, Dacca, I, p. 7.

18. From ancient times thatched cottages with sloping roof were constructed all over Northern India . The sacrificial halls or *yajña-sālās* of the Vedic period were nothing but primitive thatched huts. Adris Banerji has noticed a joy-bāṅglā design from a Suṅga pillar which has been found at Saranath (*Temples of Tripura*, frontispieca). Audumbara coins prove clearly that single and double-hut types were in vogue during 1st and 2nd century B.C. in the north-western and central part of India. The Draupadi Ratha at Māmallāpuram(7th century) is a typical petrified thatched hut.This hut type continued their existence since very early period down to the present day.

19. Saraswati, S.K., '*Temples of Pagan*' *JGIS*, IX, 1942 pp. 11-13.

20. Ray, N.R., *Brahmanical Gods in Burma*, P.I.

21. Saraswati, S.K., *op.cit.*, *Bangladesh Lalita Kala*, pp. 1-2.

22. It has not been possible for us to climb to the upper storeys to get the details as no steps are found in any part of the edifice. Probably it was provided with some sort of temporary stairways when in use.

23. Rowland, R., *Art and Architecture of India*, fig. 365 .

CHAPTER V

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the preceding pages we have tried to present an analytical survey of the art and architecture of Tripura and their contributions towards the growth of Indian culture. Our knowledge of the history and culture of Tripura is far from complete. Inadequacy of definite chronological and historical data has impeded us to make a connected narrative of this State from earliest time. Culturally, it is rich as evident from a number of relics of art and architecture, majority of which are lying in the hills and jungles incognito due to our indifference and negligence. Manifestly without their evaluation, the cultural history of India will remain incomplete, and in fact they have not received the attention they deserve. The present study of all the available specimens of art and architecture, discovered by us and others, may thus be modestly claimed as a pioneering in nature. And we believe we have been able to underline the importance of the creative efforts of Tripura in the fabric of Indian art and architecture.

It is difficult to trace the beginning of plastic or building activity in Tripura, but presumably it started from very early times. Probably the autochthonus people of Tripura did not erect edifices of monumental nature at a very early date. Even if they did, all traces of them are lost, presumably on account of the perishable materials of which they were built. While Bengal, particularly the eastern sector, which is contiguous to Tripura, has yielded some monumental remains belonging to pre-christian and early part of christian era, no examples of art has so far come to light in Tripura datable to the period prior to the 7th-8th century A.D.. In view of the fact that artistic efforts during this early period followed a more or less uniform pattern all over the country, it is resaonable to believe that Tripura also produced works of similar idiom, which are likely to come up in near future as a result of proper exploration and excavations of sites.

Indeed, we have demonstrated before, that from the 7th-8th century of Christian era Tripura was following the traditions of the art- centres of Bengal. But what distinguishes the art of Tripura from that of other regions lies in the influence of the art of Ārākān and Burma. Physiognomical features, such as the broad shoulders, swelling chests, tubular arms and columnar legs of the Buddhist sculptures of the Pillāk- Jolāibāḍi region are akin to the characteristics of the Burmese Buddhist art, though the latter is more refined in quality. Expectedly, the few of the Buddhist sculptures of the contiguous territory of Bengal share similar traits[2]. It is, therefore, reasonable to suggest that stylistically Tripura was related with Bengal on the one hand and Burma and her neighbours on the other.

The phenomenon seems to have been due to the stimulus of Buddhism and geographical propinquity. Most probably the style was born in Bengal and later moved to Burma *enroute* Tripura. And it was initially a source of inspiration to the

local artists in both the countries in whose hands it was reoriented by the dictates of their psyche. Bengal's influence on the Bodo-speaking people of Tripura appears to have come through the pilgrims and cultural missions of Bengal on their way to Burma and other countries of South East Asia. With the passage of time, however, this influence began to wane with the consequent articulation of the local idom in clearer terms. In other words, local traditions and ideals endowed the art of Tripura with distictively regional character. Look at any divine figure at Ūnakoṭī, for example: Śiva of Ūṇakoṭī is conceptually identical with his counterparts of other regions, but stylistically he is different from them.

Sculpturally, it was the Gupta idiom which first appears to have reached Tripura through works produced in Bengal. Though contemporary evidence is lacking, its traces are visible in a number of Tripura sculptures dating from the 7th -8th century (fig. 5). Alongside a distant South- Indian impact is recognisable on some of the early sculptures of Tripura (fig.4). The influence of Bengal idiom was prominent during the 9th -12th century, gradually it was absorbed by the artists of Tripura and as a result there remained hardly any difference between a Bengal and a Tripura sculpture except in outwardly appearance: the Bengal sculptures are fine and technically more or less flawless, the Tripura examples are aesthetically indifferent, perhaps due to the coarse- grained sandstone which prevents the artist to carve well -finished products. Perhaps this is one of the reasons of Tripura's ardent love for simplicity, massive size and verticality. Since the earliest period, Tripura excelled in simple colossal sculptures, where emphasis was given on verticality. Some features are equally noticeable in architecture. It seems probable that since it was impossible for the architects, due to technical deficiency, to cover the whole height with a single superstructure, they developed an elevation by imposing a number of superstructures one above another to get desired height. And this love for verticality gave rise to a new style which somewhat different from any other known school of Eastern India.

It is earlier mentioned that preference of height perhaps derived in large part from the condition of the material used. Being of loose texture, Tripura sandstone, unlike Bengal blackstone, does not lend itself fine carving and the inter play of light and shade in a clearly defined volumes. So unrefined and coarse work appear to be a combination of blurring lines which accent,rather than define the plastic volume when closely viewed. But when viewed from a considerable distance, the same sculpture seems to be defined and all its details melt away as it were. This also is applicable to architecture . Normally, therefore, the sculptors and architects preferred height and boldness in order to make all the details legible from a distance. The rock-cut panels of Ūṇakoṭī and Devatāmuḍā have been carved in such a way that there is hardly any scope for closer views, rather the spectator has to stand at a distance for appreciating the aesthetics of these art examples. The images,often made in great heights, created effect by their powerful dimension. The sculptor's repertory was restricted solely to the principal deities in the static position, and no importance was paid to the accessory figures. Very few of the sand-stone sculptures expressess

movement . This is one side of the plastic diction of Tripura and not the only version. There is separate group of sculptures of quiet charm in which the blackstone specimens smile on us with their delicate perfection, sensitive faces with the lips accentuated by the sharp but rounded lines. It is pleasant to note how the stone sculptors of those days could appreciate the fresh beauty of youth. The most amiable among these is a Visnu image (fig. 18). One may still follow the hand that modelled it. The soft flesh quivers with the sensuous purity. The utmost degree of perfection has now been reached (11th-12th century). Henceforth the bodies became increasingly mechanical and cold. Ultimately, a complete stagnation of this trend of art set in Tripura, when its main source of inspiration, i,e, Bengal, lost its vitality due to the domination of an alien race.

Despite such obstructions, the creative impulse of Tripura did not cease, rather it began with a new zeal and distinct concept of style and ideology of art and architecture. This was largely possible for the patronage of art and architecture by the Hinduised Indo-Mongoloid kings since their rise to power in the 15th century. It is to be noted, that the Indo-Mongoloids formed a significant section of the population of the times, not only of Tripura but also of the other regions of North-Eastern India. In this connection special mention is to be made of the rulers of Tripura such as Ratna-mānikya, Dhanya-mānikya and Vijaya-manikya II, who were great conquerers as well as patrons of art and letters.

It will be erroneous to give entire credit to the Indo-Mongoloids for the contribution and the further development of art and architecture of Tripura. Indeed the culture of the land is the outcome of the blending of several 'elements' of which one came from the Indian mainstream and the other from the South East Asian countries, particularly Burma. Since the 13th century Hindu and Buddhists from the other parts of India, being harassed by the Turks, appear to have found a safe shelter in Tripura and its environs. After their settlement, they started propagatin to the people of the area their beliefs and doctrines, which became largely debased in form and content. On the other hand, the Hindus of South-East Asia under the similar pressure of the savage tribes of the north migrated towards the west and took shelter in the bordering states of North-India, which has already come under the fold of Hinduism. The evidence of an old unpublished manuscript in the Tripuri language in this context is interesting and significant. In it, the priests ask and pray to the God Supreme as for how many days they will have to confine themselves in hills and jungles, and they are very worried about their own land which is bounded by sea on all sides, rich, fertile and beautiful [3]. Whether this passage has any bearing on the migration, referred to before, is not definite but a suggestion to this effect is not beyond the range of probability. The admixture of bothway influences with the autochthonous trend gave rise to a new school of art and architecture in Tripura as well as in other neighbouring Indo-Mongoloid States. This new school is Hindu in inspiration but plastically represents a mixed type. In this mixed type a Muslim strain is also recognisable in the elements like arch and minaret of the edifices of Tripura

for example.

Expectedly, religion was principal source of inspiration of the plastic activities of Tripura in general. Whatever cult of religious practice was prevalent at different times in Bengal, reached Tripura and majority of them found expression in their respective forms in the new land. In this way Viṣṇu worship promted the people of Tripura to install Viṣṇu images in their temples. Likewise Śaivism caused installation of liṅgams and Śaiva images. That the Saura cult also gained much importance since the earliest period has been testified to by the findings of numerous Sūrya images from Pilak. Along with the Brahmanical faiths, Buddhism also reached here at an early date and left its mark on the life and culture of the people, as evidenced by numerous Buddhist sculptures. It deserves to be noted here that from early times tribal religious existed peacefully and '*Kharchi*' festival or the worship of Chaturdasa-devatā(Fourteen Gods) is performed as prominently as the Durgāpujā of the Bengali people. Some of the tribal gods and goddesses are identified with he members of Hindu pantheon : thus *Matai-Katar*. the supreme deity of the tribal people is identified with Śiva, *Tui-mā* with *Gangā*, *Mailu-mā* with Lakshmī. Seven Budiraka sisters with Sapta-matṛikas and so on. Mention is to be made, in this connection, of *Buḍa-chā* or *Bodo-cha*, i,e, the son of Bodo, a deity of distinctively tribal character, unrelated to any known god, and is venerated as one of the main Gods in the temple of Chaturdaśa-devatā represented by a svastik symbol, made of iron. Tripuris were all along sympathetic towards this kind of synthesis and this made their Hinduisation easier and inevitable. Indeed the whole of North-Eastern India including Tripura has given adequate evidence of their cultural acculturation without completely losing their identity. And their contribution to the pan-Indian civilization, ethnically as well as culturally, can now be hardly overemphasised . As regards the contribution of Tripura people to the history and culture of Eastern India, particularly it has its own 'unique charm' [4]

Last but not the least, a few words may be said about the artists. Howsoever powerful a tradition might have been in this religious art, the personal factors cannot altogether be brushed aside . In other words, the aesthetic vission and outlook of individual artists of the days played no mean role in the evolution of the Tripura art, though at present we cannot attribute any works to any individual artist of bygone days.

The art of Tripura is undeniably an expression of the psyche and creative impulse of the local people . This is amply borne out by the remains of Pilāk, Uṇakoṭi and Devatāmuḍā. The art is related with the Indian mainstream. Yet it has a distinctive character. Even in the darkest days, the artists and the art connoisseurs of Tripura kept the flame of their creativity burning. All through her history, Tripura maintained her spirit of assimilation and tolerance as well as the steadfastness to her own age-old traditions and it is in these qualities lie the inspiration, vigour and forte of her uninterrupted activities in the realm of art and architecture.

Note & Refeernces :

1. For comparison, see the examples in Gordon, H. Luce, 'Old Burma-Early pagan' *Artibus Asiac*, Supplementary No. 25, New york 1969.
2. Majumdar, R.C. (e. d. 1) *History of Bengal*, fig. 75.
3. Unpublished manuscript, copied in 1734 A.D. It is now preserved in the Government Museum, Agartala.
4. Chatterji, S.K. *op. cit.* p. 139.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure No.

1. SŪRYA driving a chariot drawn by seven horses; originally discovered at Ságardhebā mound, Pilak, Belonia Subdivision ; now worshipped in the Rajeśvarī Āsram, Muhuripur at Belonia ; badly mutilated and much redone. c. 7th-8th century A.D. (Courtesy; Chief Priest. Rajeśvarī Āsram, Muhuripur)

2. DEVĪ slaying the buffalo-demon ; originally discovered at Sāgardhebā ; now worshipped in the Āśram mentioned above ; in a good state of preservation; face redone ; c. 7th-8th century A.D. (Courtesy ; *Chief Priest*, Rajesvari Asram, Muhuripur.)

3. ŚAKTI-GANEŚA seated in lalitāsana ; originally discovered from *Thākurani tilla* mound, *Pilāk* now housed in the west pilak club; badly corroded ; c. 7th-8th century A.D. (Courtesy ; West Pilak Club, Pilak, Belonia).

4. DEVĪ slaying the buffalo-demon; found at Devdāru, East Pilak; now worshipped at Devdārū Āsram ; massive in size; much exfoliation of stone, otherwise in a good state of preservation; c. 8th century A.D. (Courtesy ; Davdāru Āsram).

5. SŪRYA burried under earth at Thākurāni tilla, West Pilāk; ventral side exposed upto the chest ; dorsal open ; right side of the backslab broken; massive in size; c. 8th century A.D.

6. VISNU LOKEŚVARA (?) standing; originally found at Kalma Asram in the border of Belonia and Sabrum ; now housed at Kalma Āsram ; massive ; much mutilated ; c. 8th century A.D. (Courtesy, Kalma Āshram, Belonia)

7. NARASIMHA AVATĀRA salying Hiranyakashipu ; found at Thakurani tilla ; Pilāk ; now in the Government Museum, Agartala ; much mutilated ; massive in size; c. 8th century A.D. (Courtesy. Government Museum, Agartala)

8. BUDDHA standing ; recovered from Āśhram tilla, Pilāk, now housed in Government Museum, Agartala; well-preserved though the upper layer of the stone exfoliated ; c. 9th-10th century A.D.(Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala.)

9. AVALOKITESVARA standing; recovered from Āśhram tilla, Pilāk, now kept in Government Museum ; well preserved to a certain degree, though the upper layer of the stone exfoliated ; c. 9th-10th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala).

10. AVALOKITEŚVARA standing ; recovered from the Pilāk-Jolāibāḍi region, now worshipped as Vāsudeva in an Āṣhram at Jolāibāḍi; well preserved ; face much redone ; colossal ; c. 9th-10th century A.D. (Courtesy, Vāsudevabāḍi, jolāibāḍi bazar, Belonia).

11. BUDDHA standing; recovered from Valir pāthar area of Pilāk, now preserved in the Government Museum, Agartala ; badly defaced; c. 9th-10th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala)

12. BUDDHA seated; found at Valir pathar, Pilāk, now in Government Museum, Agartala; face badly multilated, otherwise well-preserved ; small in size; c. 9th-10th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala).

13. Buddhist DEVĪ (Chunda?) seated ; found at Valir Pāthar, Pilāk, now in Government Museum, Agartala ; much weathered ; c. 9th-10th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala).

14. DEVI(metal) seated ; found at Lalsinghmuḍā, Visālgarh, now in the collection of Sri Tanu Singh, Lalsinghmuḍā ; well-preserved; probably an image of Saivait family; c. 9th-10th century A.D.)Courtesy, Tanu Singh, Lalsinghmuḍā, West Tripura)

15. AVALOKITESVARA (metal) standing; originally recovered from the compound of Pilāk Senior Basic School, now in the Government Museum; much corroded; c. 9th-10th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala)

16. MĀRĪCHĪ(?) recovered from the Pilāk Jolāibāḍi-region, now worshipped as KĀLI; well preserved; small in size ; c. 9th-10th century A.D. (Courtesy, Vāsudevabāḍi, Jolāibāḍi bazar, Belonia).

17. VISNU standing on lotus ; recovered from a tank at Udayapura, now in the Government Museum. Agartala ; well-preserved ; hands except the back-left broken; c. 11th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala)

18. VIṢṆU standing ; backslab missing ; hands are mutilated ;recovered from the same tank as above, now preserved in the Government Musuem. Agartala ; c. 11 the century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala).

19. VIṢṆU standing originally found at Visalgarh, now worshipped in the house of Late Surendra Kavyatirtha, Agartala ; well-preserved ; c. 11th-12th century A.D. (Courtesy, S. Bhattacharya, Jaynagar, Agartala).

20. DEVĪ slaying the buffalo-demon ; recovered from Visalgarh, now worshipped at Nalchar Āśhram, West Tripura ; well preserved ; c. 12th-13th century A.D. (Courtesy, Nalcar Āśhram. Visālgarh, west Tripura).

21. ŚIVA head; recovered from a tank at Udayapura, now in Government

Museum, Agartala; c. 11th-12th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala).

22. SŪRYA well-preserved; findspot not known (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala).

23. Part of VIṢṆU image; recovered from a tank, now preserved in the Government Museum, Agartala badly mutilated, broken into three parts which have been assimilated later; c. 11th-12th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala),

24. UMĀ-MAHEŚVARA seated; originaly recovered from a tank at Udayapura, now in the Government Museum, Agartala; well-preserved; c. 11th-12th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala).

25. VIṢṆU standing; recovered from Visalgarh, now in Nalchar Ashram; upper part of the backslab broken; otherwise well-preserved; c. 11th-12th century A.D. (Courtesy, Nalchar Ashram, Visalgarh).

26. DEVĪ (Sarvanī?), metal; recovered from Hrishyamukh near Pilāk, now in the Government Museum; upper part of the backslab broken ; hands badly mutilated; otherwise in good state of preservation; c. 9th-10th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala).

27. ŚIVA, samharāmurti; recovered from Thākurānī tilla, Pilāk, now in the Government Museum, badly mutilated; c. 11th-12th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum,Agartala)

28. GAṆEŚA seated; lying in situ, Ūṇakoṭi; well-preserved; c. 11th-12th century A.D. (Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India).

29. CHATURMUKHA-LIṄGA; Ūṇakoṭi; well-preserved; c. 11th-12th century A.D. (Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India).

30. CHATURMUKHA-LIṄGA; Ūṇakoṭi, well-preserved; c. 11th-12th century A.D. (Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India).

31. CHUNDĀ seated; originally recovered from Pilāk, now in Rājeśvarī Āśhram, Muhuripur, Belonia; much redone ; c. 11th-12th century A.D. (Courtesy, Rājeśvarī Āśhram, Belonoa).

32. DEVĪ slaying the buffalo- demon ; recovered from tank at Kamalasagar, now in the Government Museum, Agartala; badly exfoliated ; c. 11th-12th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala).

33. Central SIVA head; Ūṇakoṭi rock-cut; much mutilated; c. 14th-15th A.D. (Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India).

34. GAṄGĀ; Ūṇakoṭi rock-cut; well-preserved; c. 14th-15th century A.D. (Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India).

35. DEVĪ; Ūṇakoṭi rock-cut; badly defaced; c. 14th-15th century A.D. (Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India).

36. Part view of the Ūṇakoṭi rock-cuts; badly mutilated; c. 14th-15th century A.D. (Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India).

37. ŚIVA head; Ūṇakoṭi rock-cut; very badly defaced; c. 14th-15th century A.D. (Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India).

38. Figures of ŚIVA in different attitude; Unakoti rock-cuts; well-preserved; c. 14th-15th century A.D. (Courtesy, Archeological Survey of India).

39. ŚIVA head (?); Ūṇakoṭi rock-cuts; well-preserved; c. 14th-15th century A.D. (Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India).

40. Two female figures; Ūṇakoṭi rock-cuts; badly weathered; c. 14th-15th century A.D. (Courtesy, Archeological Survey of India)

41. A hybrid figure; Unakoti rock-cuts; well-preserved; c. 14th-15th century A.D. (Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India).

42. Gaṇeśa Panel; Ūṇakoṭi rock-cuts; badly mutilated; c. 14th-15th century A.D. (Courtesy, Archeological Survey of India).

43. DEVĪ slaying the baffulo-demon; Devatāmuḍā rock-cuts; well-preserved; c. 16th-17th century A.D.

44. ŚIVA family Devatāmuḍā rock-cuts; badly weathered; c. 16th-17th century A.D. (Sketch Courtesy, Sri Swapan Nandi)

45. Part view of a Procession; Devatāmuḍā rock-cut; badly corroded; c. 16th-17th century A.D. (Sketch: Courtesy, Sri Swapan Nandi)

46. DEVI slaying the buffalo-demon; worshipped as Kāli a temple at Kamalāsāgar; well-preserved; c. 16th-17th century A.D.

47. Lion; part of *Simhadvāra* of a temple ; Udyapura broken into pieces; c. 16th-17th century A.D.

48. SARASVATĪ; part of an architrave; now housed at Mangalchandi temple at Amarapura; well-preserved; c. 16th-17th century A.D. (Courtesy, Mangalchandibāḍi, Amarapura).

49. Carved pillar; originally recovered from a temple site at Amarpura; now in the Government Museum; well-preserved; c. 16th-17th century A.D. (courtesy, Government Museum).

50-54. Individual figures in each compartment of the above pillar.

55. Development of LION device on the Tripura coins; from right-lion on the coin of Ratna-māṇikya 1564 A.D. Lion (Dhanya-māṇikya 1520 A.D.) lion (Vijaya-māṇikya 1532 A.D.); (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala).

56. ARDHANARISVARA on the LAKSHA bath commemorative coin of vijaya-manikya II; provenance not known; now in the Government Museum, Agartala; much abrased (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala.

57. VIṢṆU on GARUḌA on the coin of Ananta māṇikya provenance not known, now in the collection of Jahar Acharjee, Agartala; well preserved ; (Courtesy, Sri Jahar Acharjee, Agartala)

58. VENUGOPĀLA on Lion , on the coin of Yaso-māṇikya dated 1522 Śaka era 1600 A.D.); provenance not known, now in the Government Museum; well preserved (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala)

59. Six handed KRIṢṆA

60. KRIṢṆA Chīra-harana scene

61. PARAŚURĀMA AVATĀRA

62. NARASIMHA AVATĀRA

Stone plaques from the Rādhāmādhava temple near Agartala, dated 1775 A.D. now in the Government Museum, Agartala; well-pre served (Courtesy,Government Museum, Agartala).

63. Copper amulet of Kriṣhṇa-manikya,originally collected from Bādhārghat, southern suburbs of Agartala when digging a tank along with a brass casket and coins of Kriṣhṇa-māṇikya, now in the Government Museum, Agartala; well-preserved (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala).

64-68. Terracotta plaques from Pilāk, now in the Government Museum : well-preserved c. 8th-9th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala).

69. Floral design on terracotta plaque; originally recovered from a temple site at Udayapura, now in the Government Museum, Agartala, well-preserved; c. 16th-17th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala).

70. GARUḌA on terracotta plaque; recovered from a temple-site ar Udayapura, now in the Government Museum, Agartala ; right part broken; c. 16th-17th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala)

71. LION on terracotta plaque; recovered from a temple site at Udayapura, now in the collection of Sri Jahar Acharjee, Agartala; well-preserved; c. 16th-17th

century A.D. (Courtesy, Jahar Acharjee, Agartala).

72. STUPA, depicted on terracotta scaling; recovered from Pilāk, now in the Government Museum; well-preserved; c. 8th-9th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala)

73. Monolithic temple gateway, Udayapura, c. 16th century A.D. well-preserved.

74. TRIPURĀSUNDARĪ temple (1490 A.D.) Udayapura.

75. VIṢṆU temple, Udayapura; built by Queen Guṇavatī, consort of Govinda-māṇikya; well-preserved; (Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India)

76-77. Jagannātha Dol, Udayapura; built by Jagannātha-deva, younger brother of Govinda-māṇikya in 1661 A.D.

78. Inside of Tripura temples.

79. Construction of side walls and roof of square sanctum of a Tripura temple.

80-81. A dilapidated edifice at Amarapura.

82(a) (b) Obverse and reverse of a 'Gupta imitation' gold coin; originally recovered from Pilāk, now in Government Museum, Agartala; well-preserved (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala).

83. Five-headed ŚIVA, Ūṇakoṭi, eight-handed, among which four right hands are broken; c. 12th-13th century A.D. (Courtesy, Archeological Survey of India)

84. BRAHMĀ-VIṢṆU-ŚIVA stone plaque form Rādha-mādhava temple near Agartala, now in Government Museum, Agartala; well-preserved; 18th century A.D. (Courtesy, Government Museum, Agartala)

85. Ground plan of a temple with round sanctum.

86. Ground plan of temple with square sanctum.

87. Longitudinal cross-section(conjectural) and ground plan of an edifice at Amarapura.

GLOSSARY

Abhaya-mudrā-Gesture of reassurance, in which the right hand with fingers raised upwards is turned to front.

Aṅkuśa-Elephant goad.

Āpasmāra-purusa- a short figure of an evil demon trampled on by Siva especially in his Nataraja aspect.

Atibhanga-An emphasised form of Tribhanga.

Aṇḍa-Egg; the hemispherical dome of the Buddhist stupa.

Avatāra- Incarnations of Vishnu in animal or human form.

Akshamālā-Rosary.

Ābhaṅga-A standing pose with a slight bend in the figure.

Ālīdha- a mode of standing, in which the right knee is thrown to front and the leg retracted, while the left leg is firmly planted behind; pratyālīḍha is just reverse of Ālīdha.

Āmalaka-śilā - Cronwing lotiform member of temple.

Antarāla- The passage between the porch and the sanctum of a temple.

Bhumisparśa-mudra- Earth touching gesture, used by the Buddha to call the earth goddess.

Chākrā- Discus of wheel.

Chala-Roof of a thatched hut ; the drooping roofs of four sides of hut is called char-chala.

Chhatrāvalī- Stylised screens of umbrellas on votive stupa. Also called Hti.

Chaturmukha-liṅga- A phallus having four faces.

Ḍamaru- A kettle drum.

Daṇḍa- A staff.

Dhanu- Bow.

Do-Chālā- Two sides of a gabbled roof.

Dvibhaṅga- A standing pose in which the body has one bend in the middle.

Gadā- Mace.

Gajasimha- Part Lion, part elephand; a monster.

Gandharvas-Divine musicians.

Garbhagriha-Inner room of a temple.

Garuḍa- Mythical sunbird; vehicle of Viṣṇu.

Harmikā-Railed balcony surmounting dome of stupa.

Jaṭā-mukuta-A sort of crown made up by arranging the matted locks of hair.

Kalasa- Rain vase; a jar like finial of temple.

Khaḍga-Sword.

Kirīṭa-mukuṭa-Jewelled head gear.

Kinnara-Fabulous being; half-man, half-bird.

Kirtimukha-Grotesque lion face on the top of the stela.

Kuṇḍala-Ear-ring; ratna-kundala-jewelled earring; patra-kuṇḍala-ear ornament made of leaf; sankha-kuṇḍala-ear ring of conch-shell.

Lalitāsana- A sitting posture in which one leg, usually left leg, is tucked up on the seat while the right one dangles down along it.

Makara-Crocodile; vehicle of Ganga.

Maṇḍapa-porch.

Mastaka -The crowing of a temple.

Nava-ratha- A type of pedestal with nine facets.

Padma-Lotus.

Padmāsana- Lotus seat; a sitting posture in which the two legs are kept crossed.

Paraśu-Battle-axe.

Pañcha-ratha-Pedestal with five facets.

Prabhāvalī --The stela or backslab of an image.

Śakti-Consort; a spear.

Samapada-Sthānaka--A standing posture, in which the body. without any bend in it , faces front.

Śaṅkha- a conch shell.

Saptaratha-Pedestal with seven facets.

Simha-Lion; vehicle of Durgā.

Stupa-Buddhist relic mound.

Śīrṣa-Top of roof.

Tribhaṅga- A standing pose with two bends of the body.

Triratha-Pedestal with three facets.

Triśūla-Trident; emblem of Siva.

Torana-The main gate.

Vajra-Thunder-bolt.

Vanamālā- a long flower-garland used by Visnu.

Vajra-paryaṅkāsana- Adamantine sittind posture.

Varada-mudrā- In which the hand is held down with palm outwards.

Vāhana-Vehicle of a deity.

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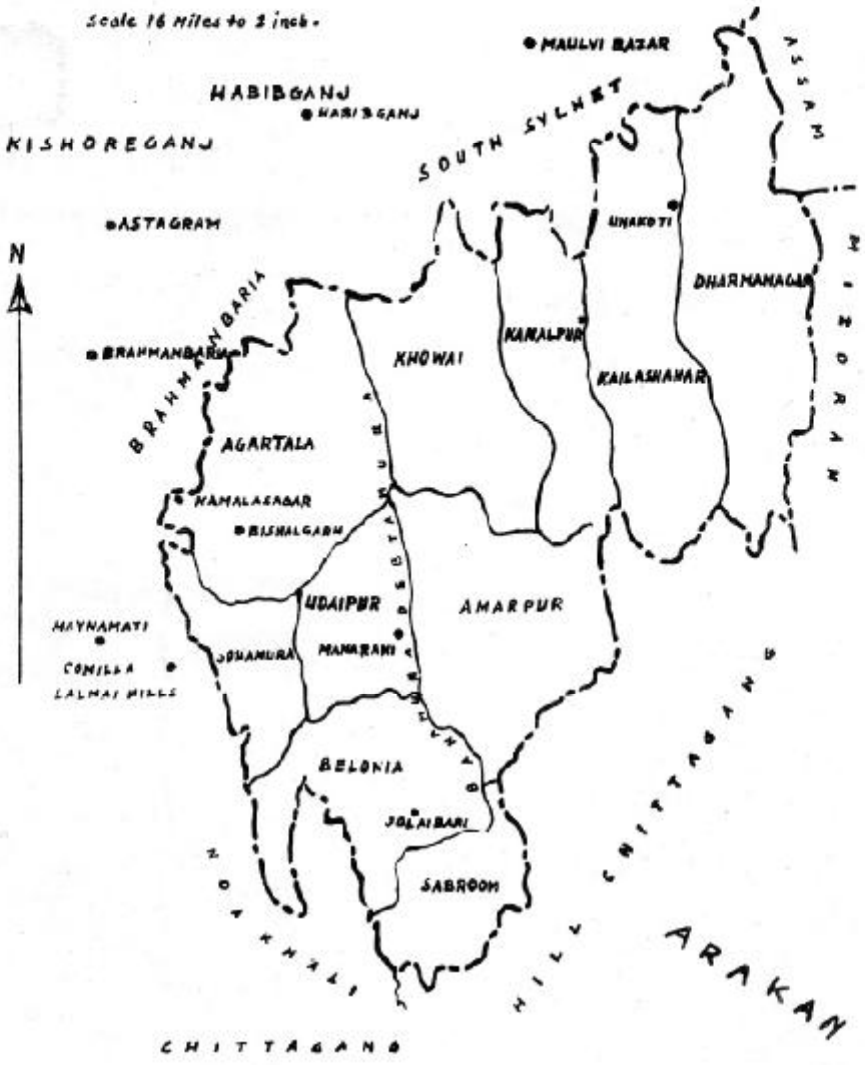
Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art
Journal of Indian Art and Letters
Journal of Numismatic Society of India.
Journal of Greater India Society
Memoirs of Archaeological Survey of India
Memoirs of Asiatic Society of Bengal
Quarterly Review of Historical Studies

D. *Reports*

Annual Report of Archaeological Survey of Burma
Annual Report of Archaeological Survey of India

TRIPURA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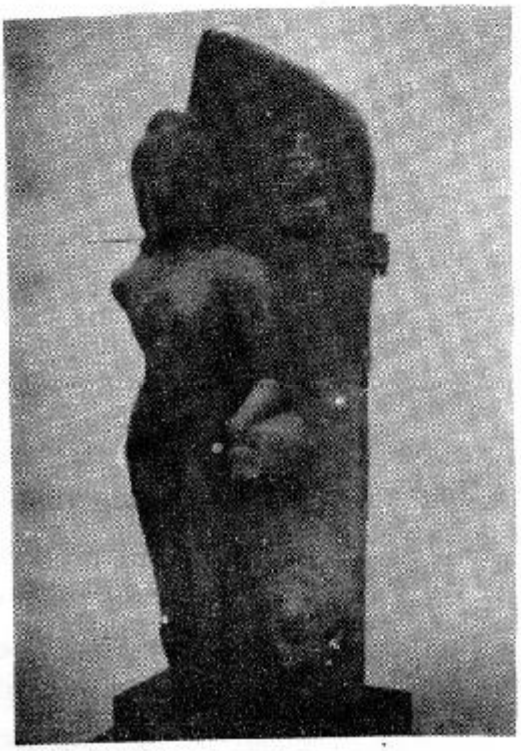

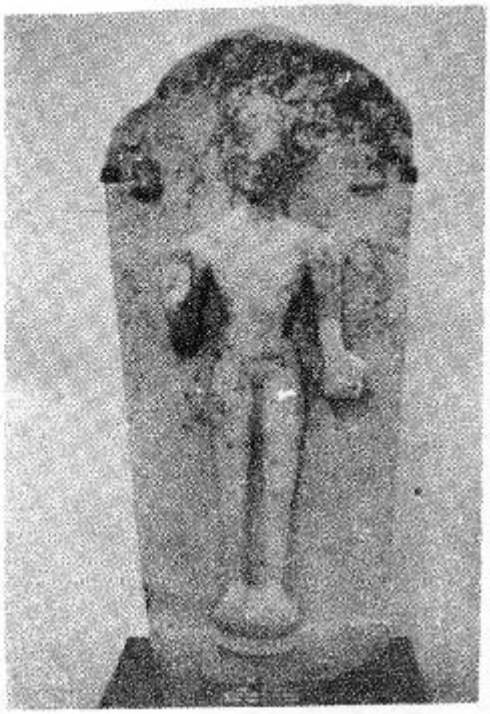

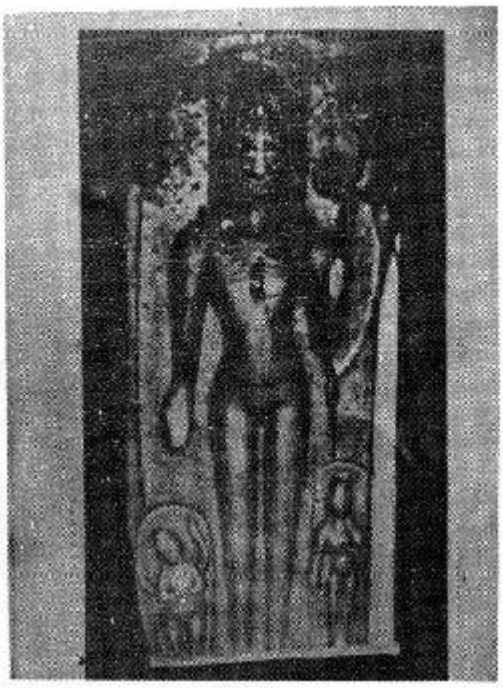

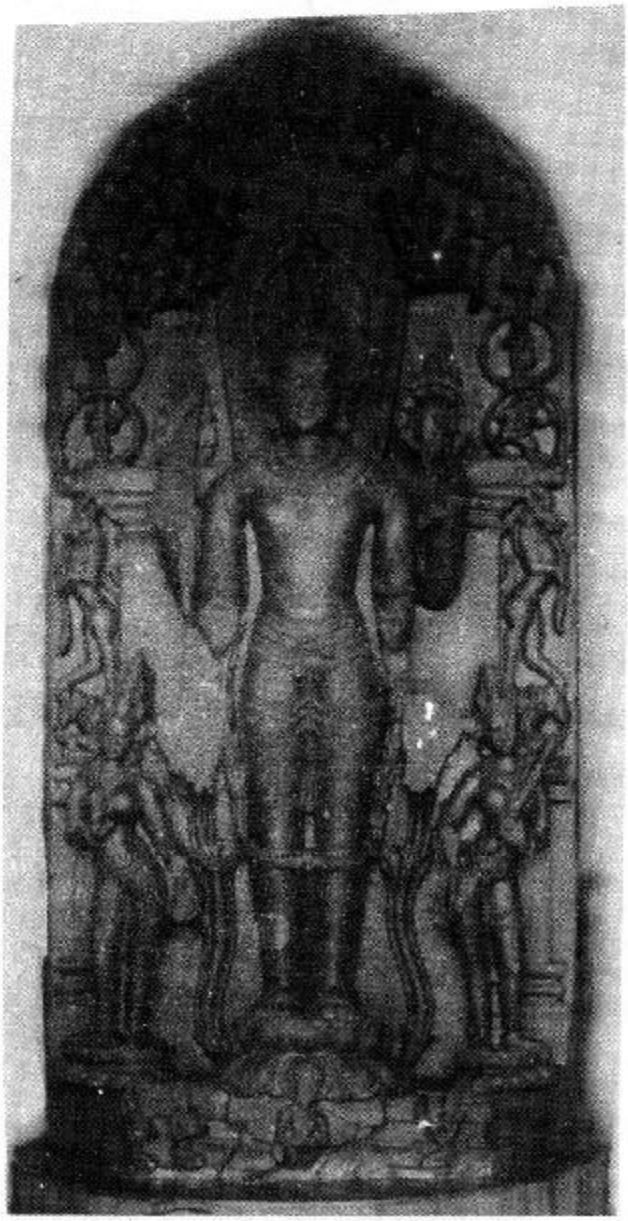

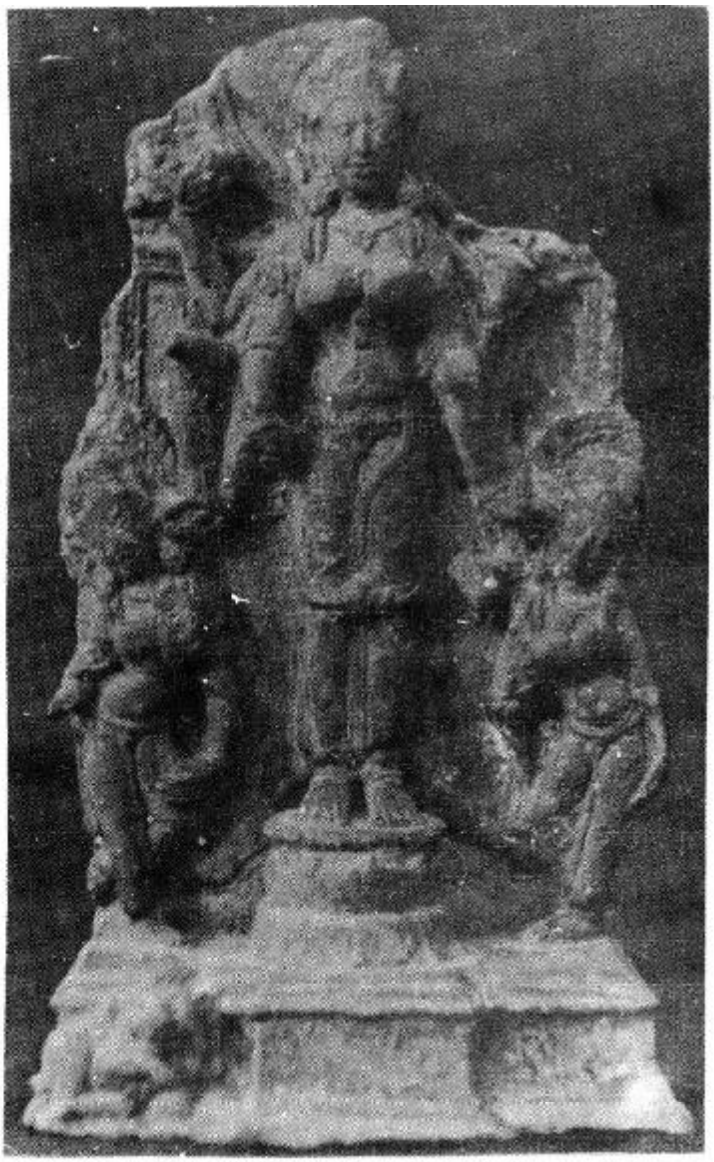

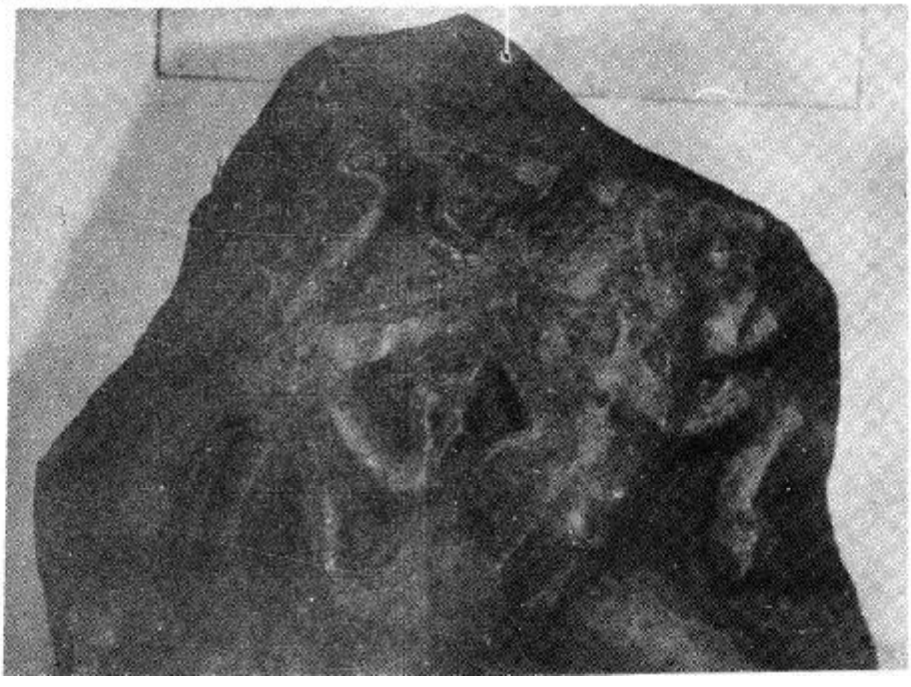

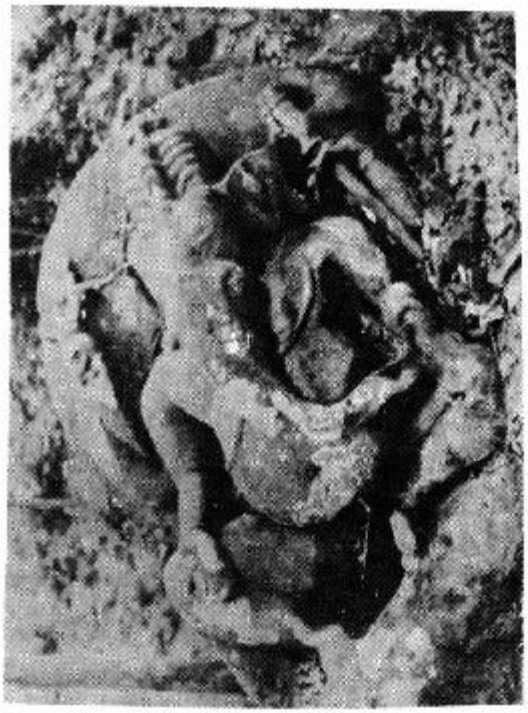

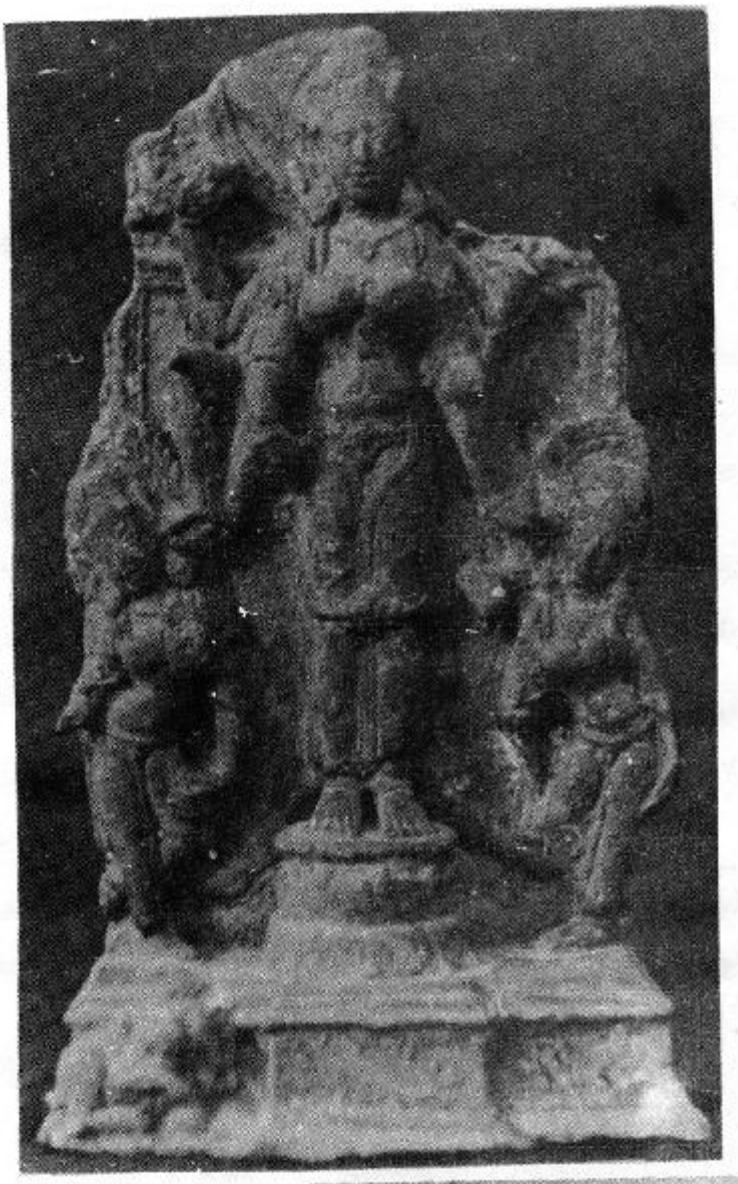

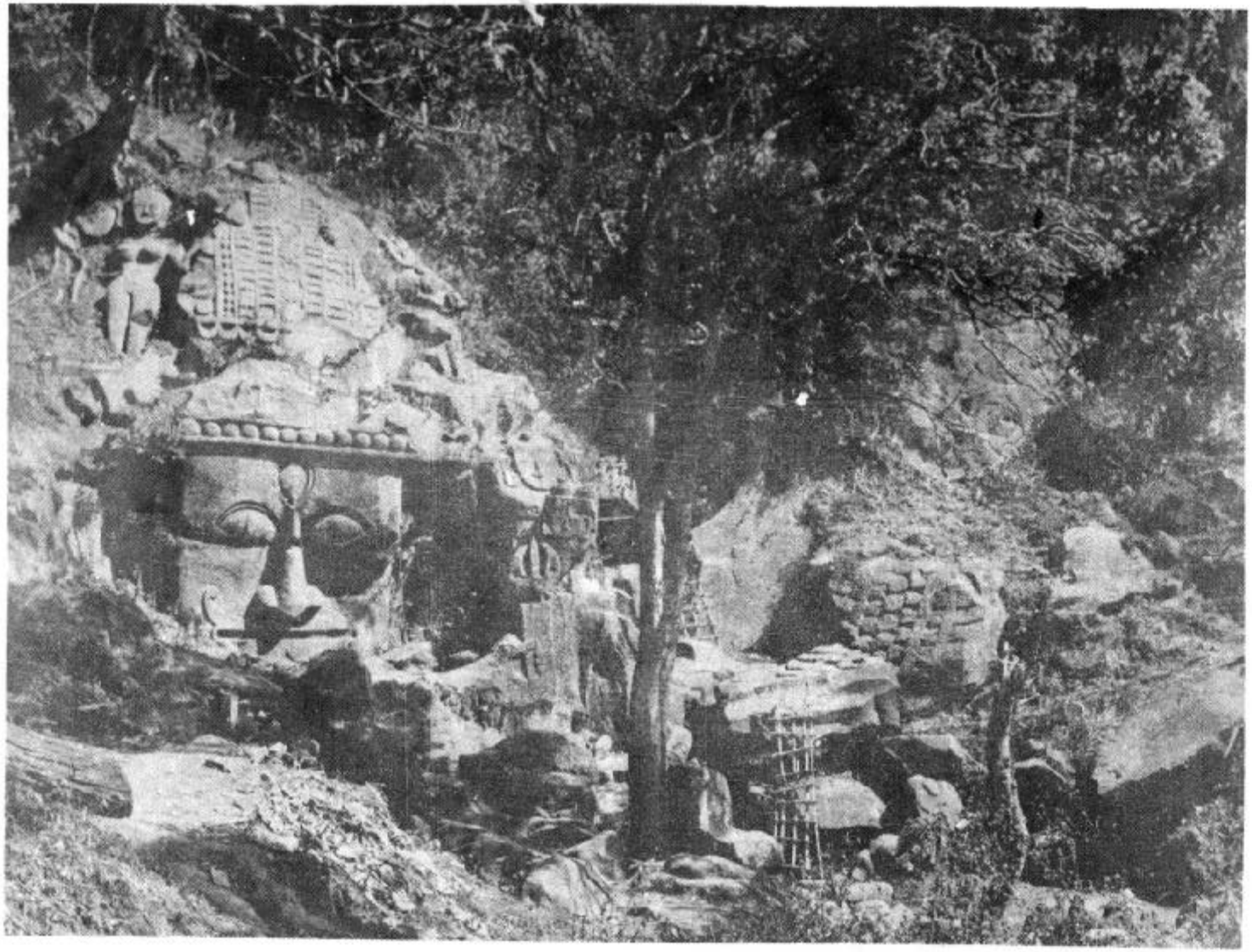

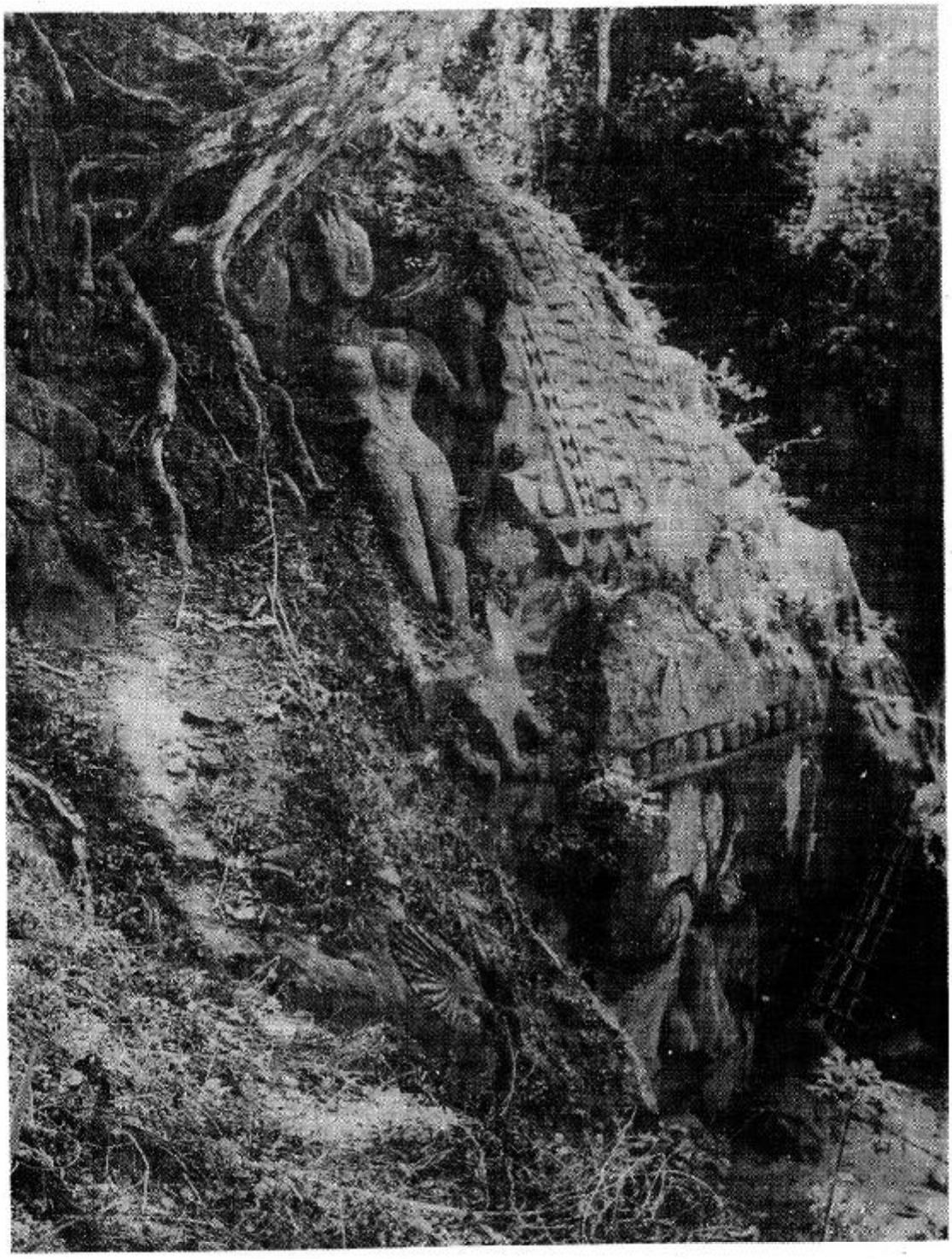

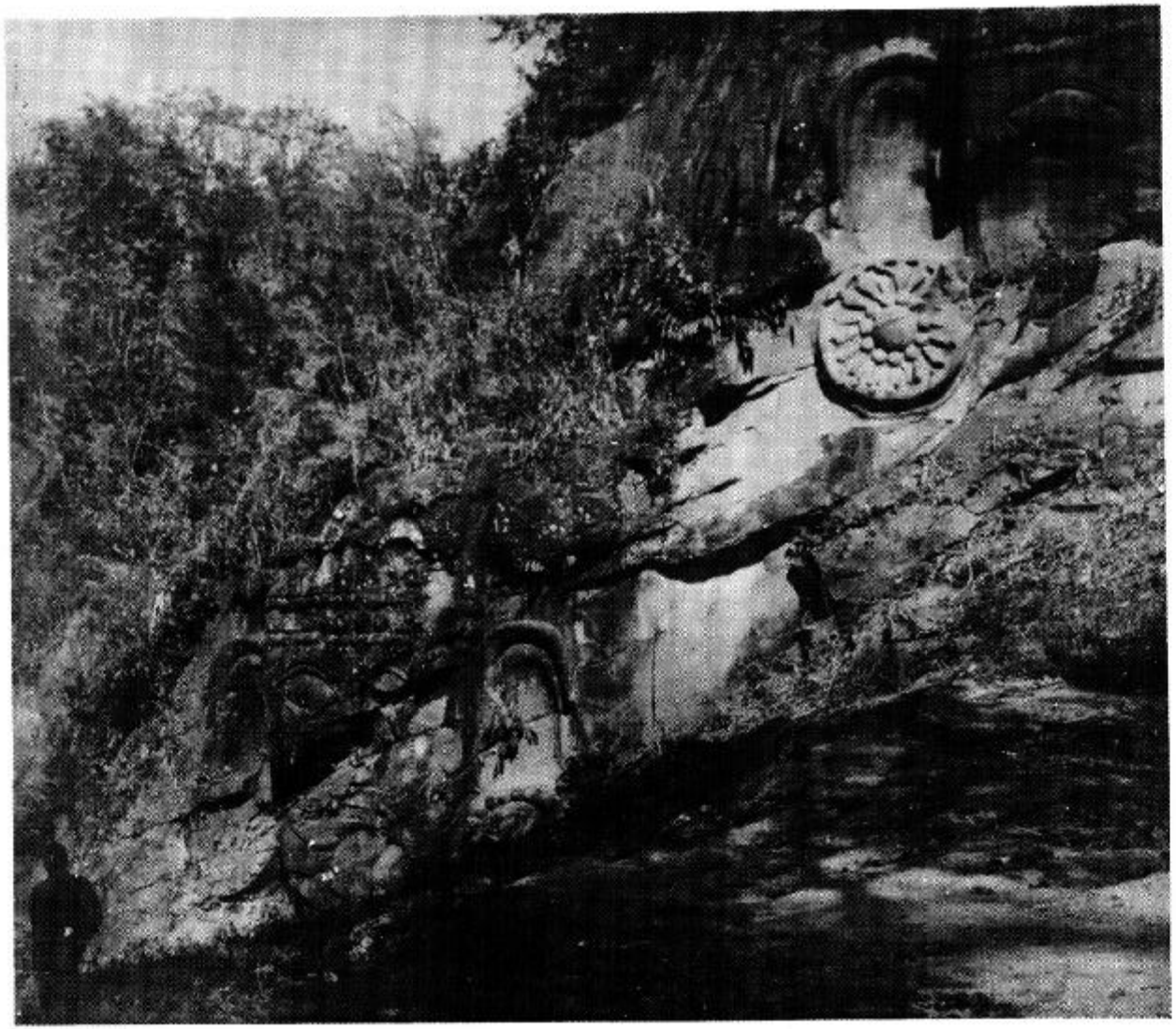

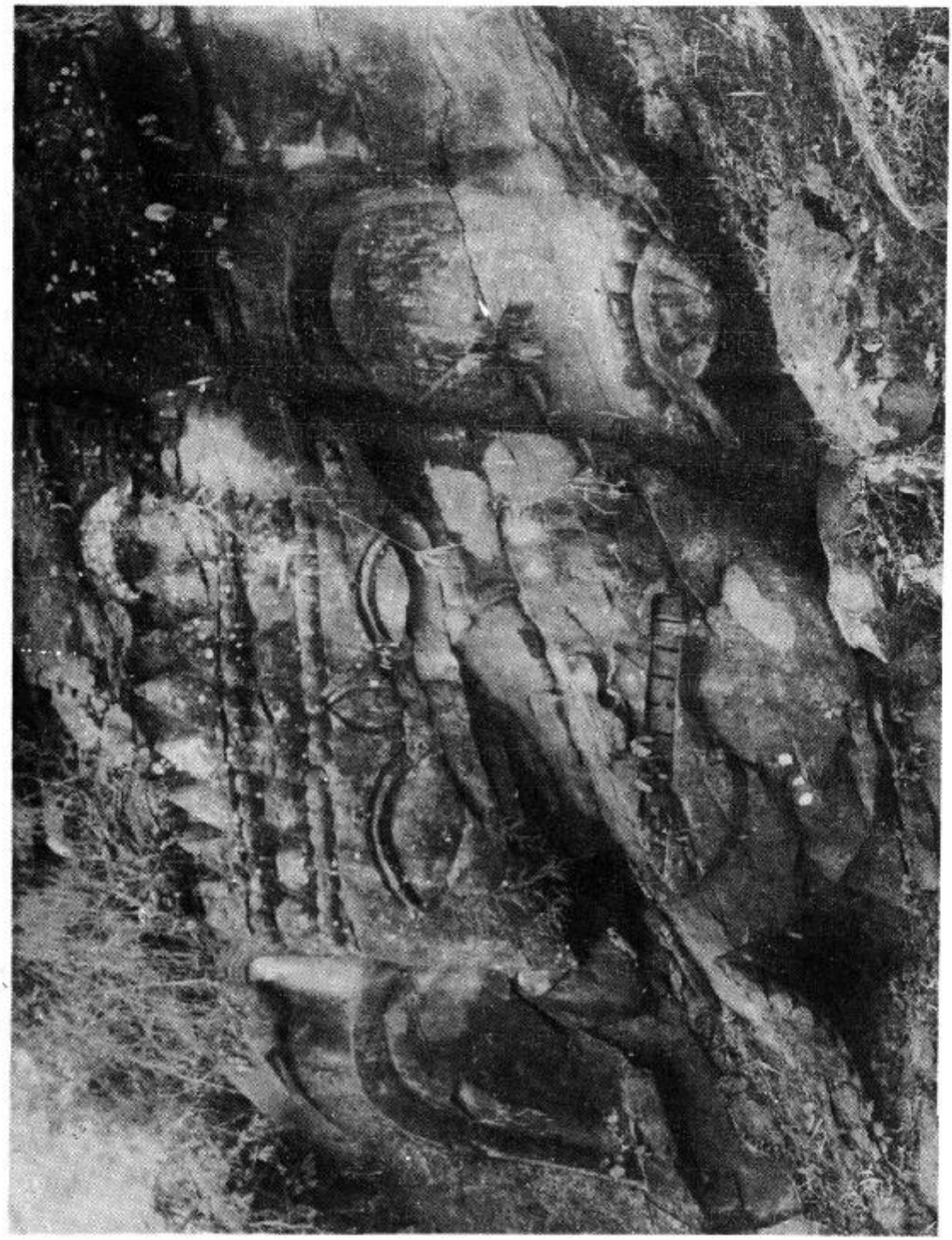

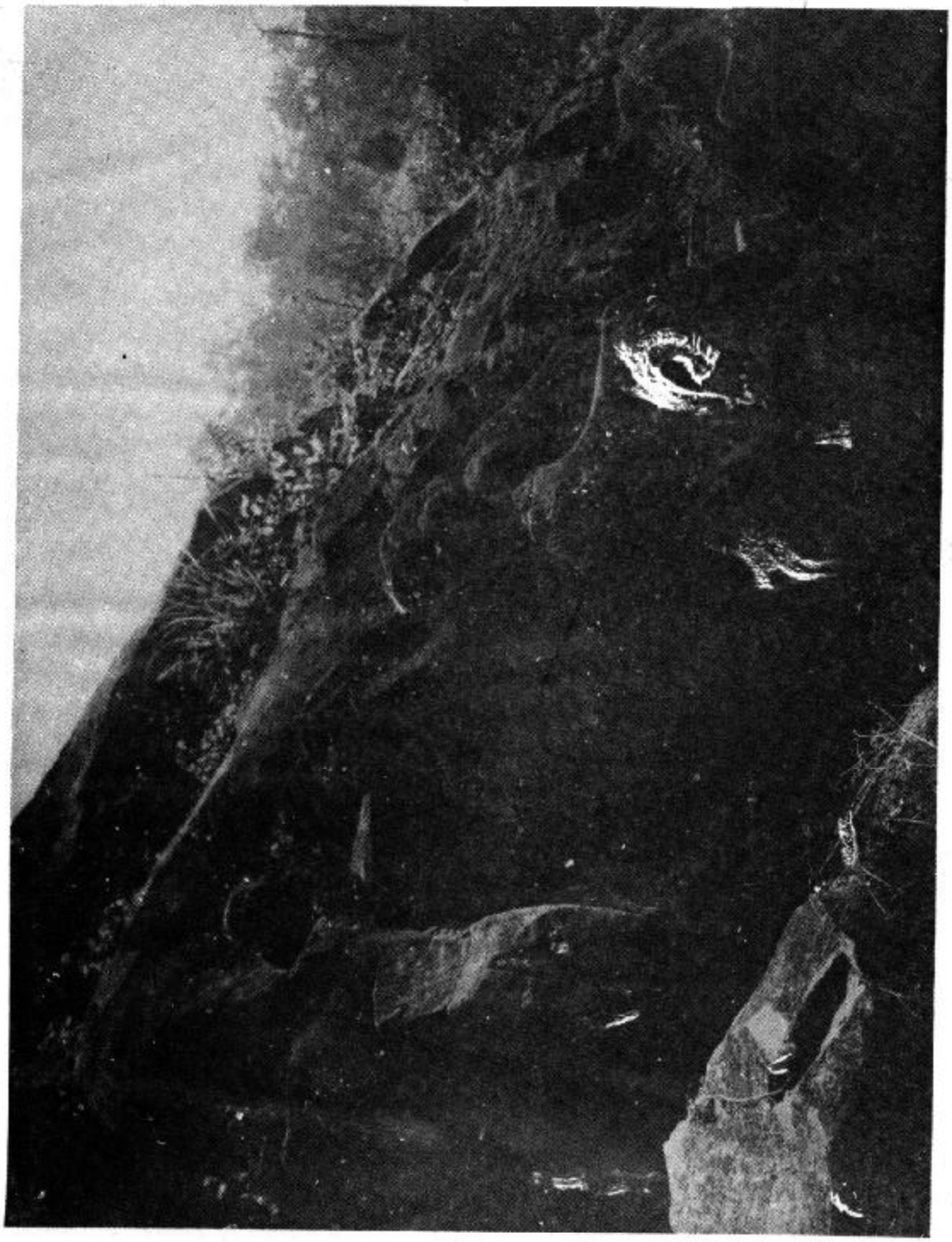

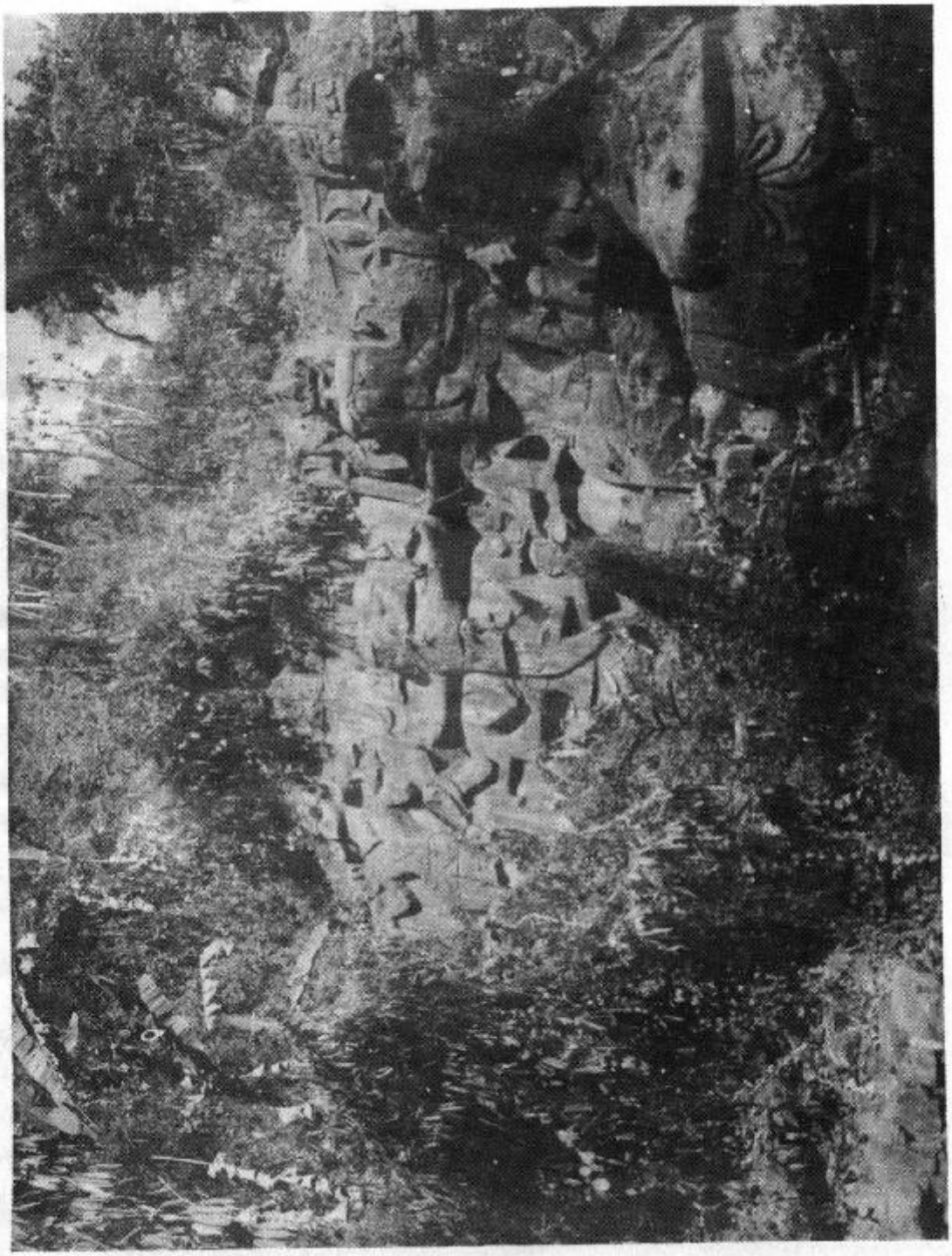

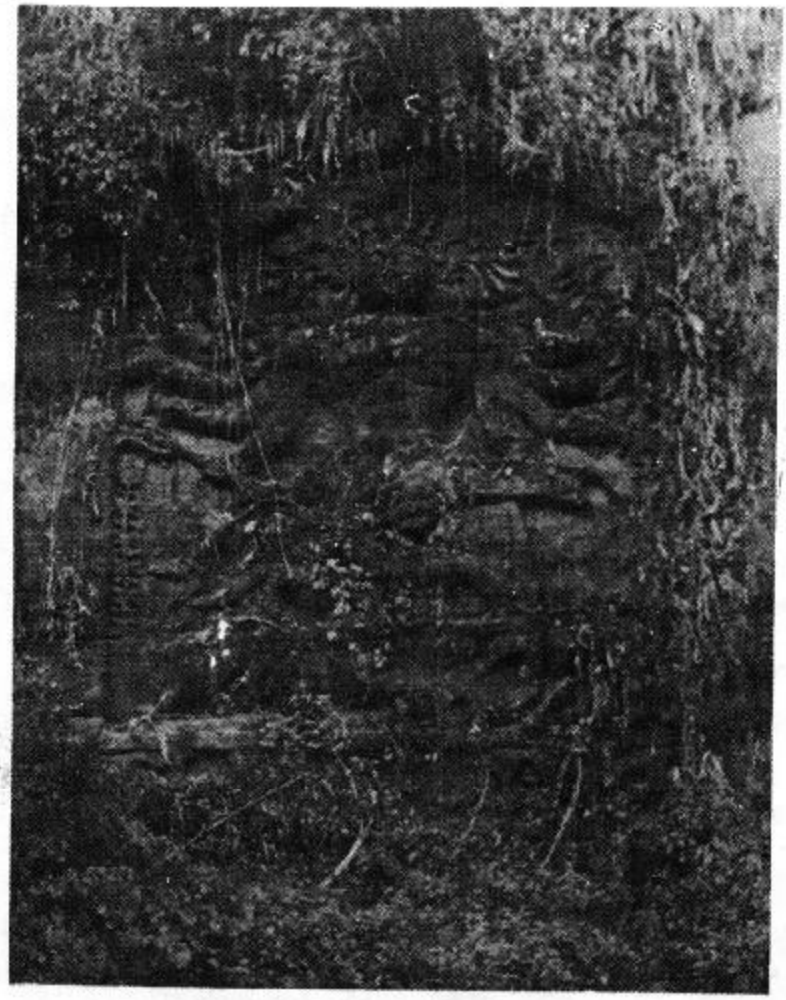

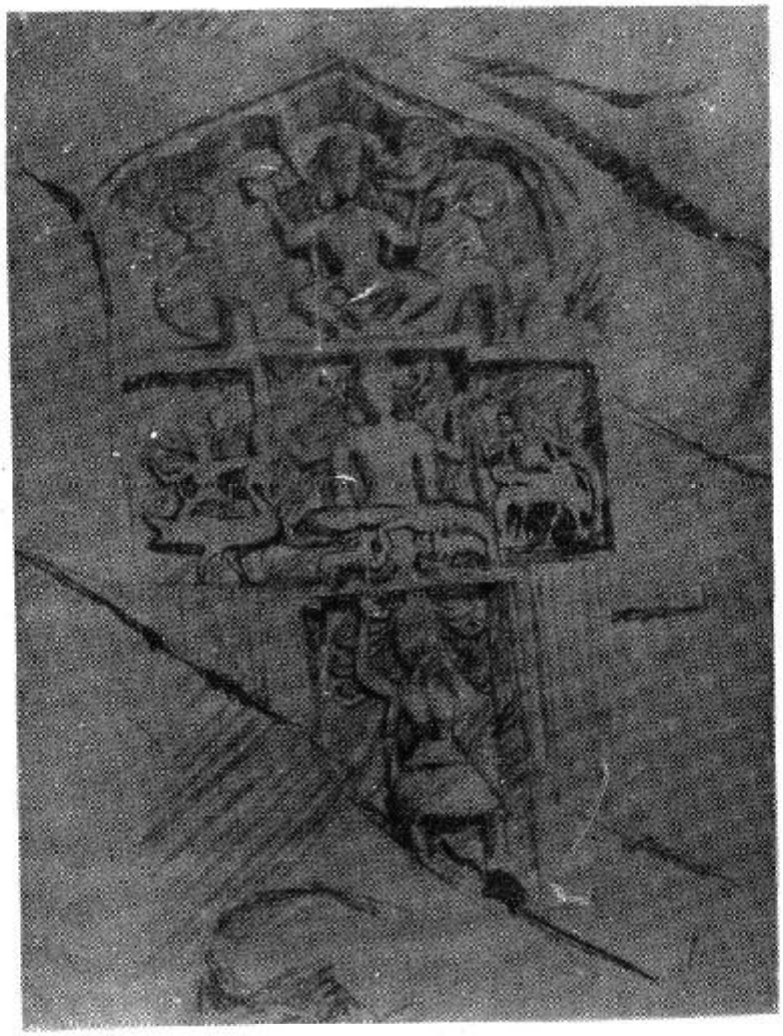

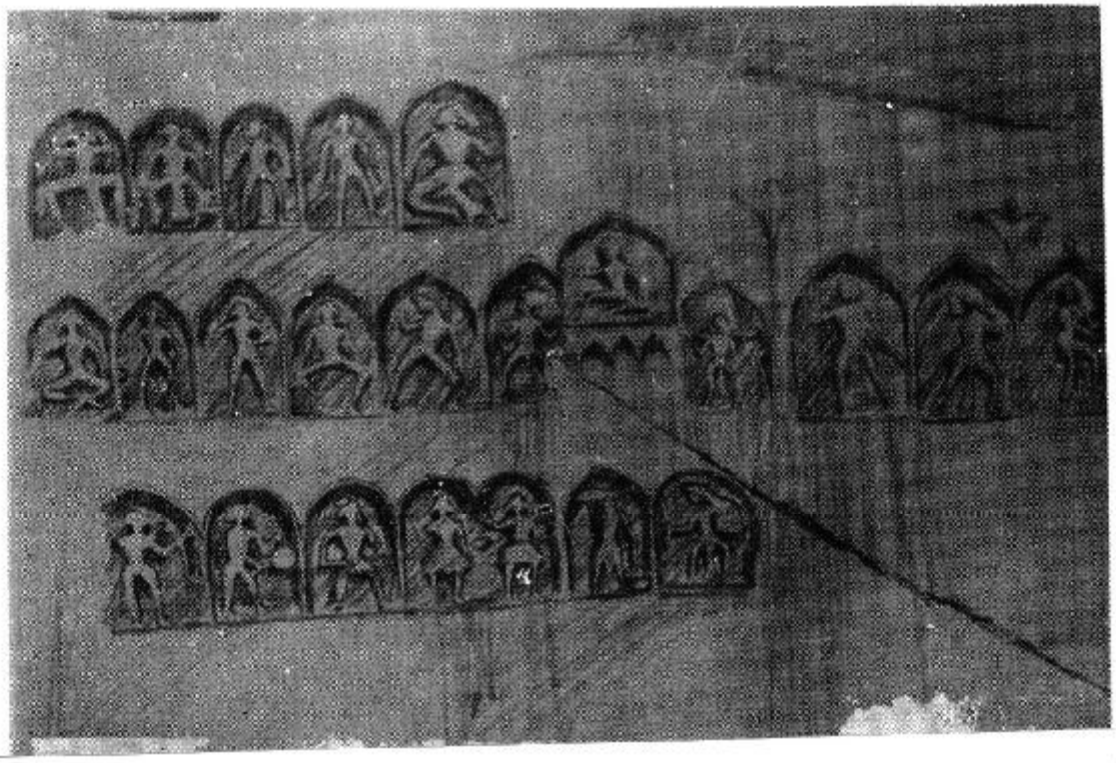

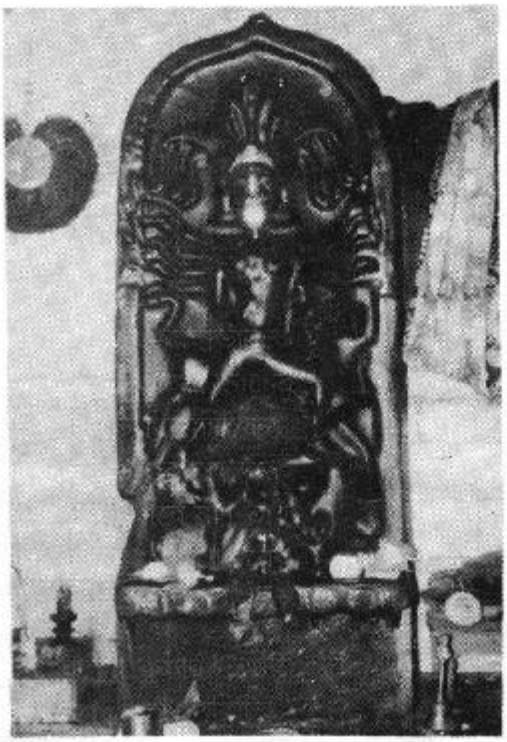

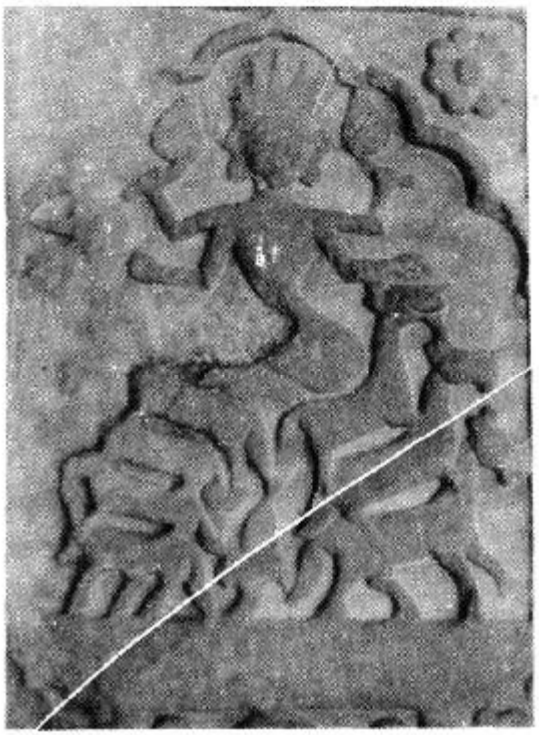

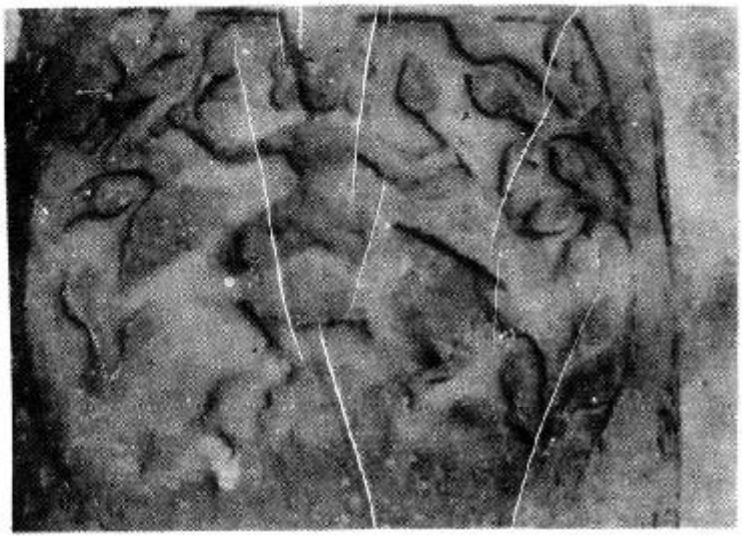

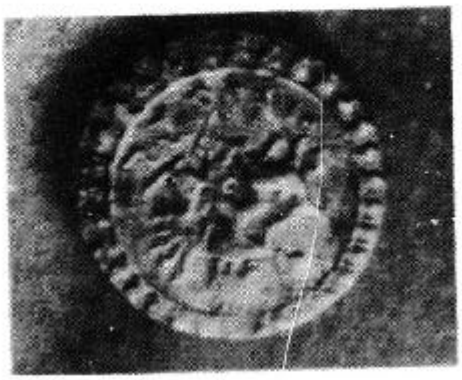

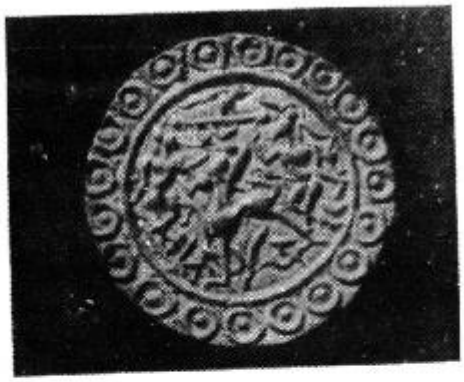

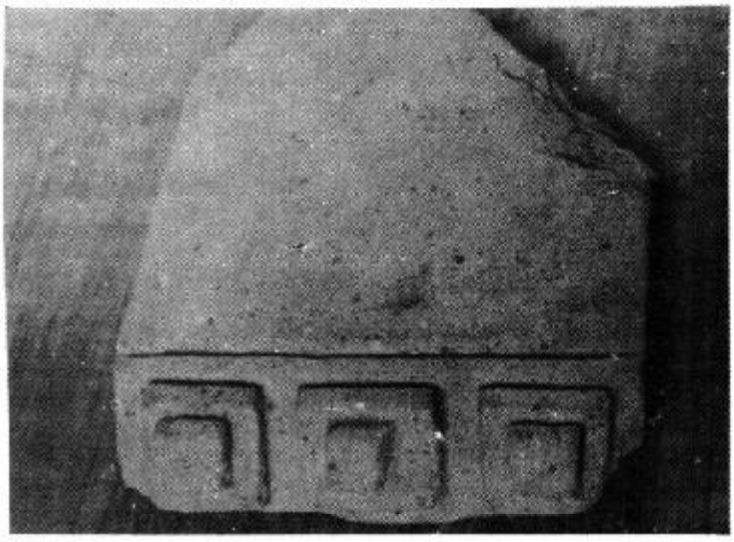

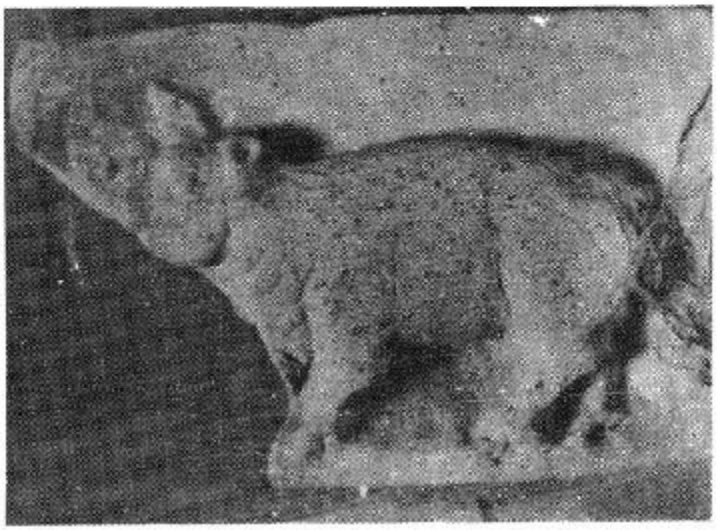

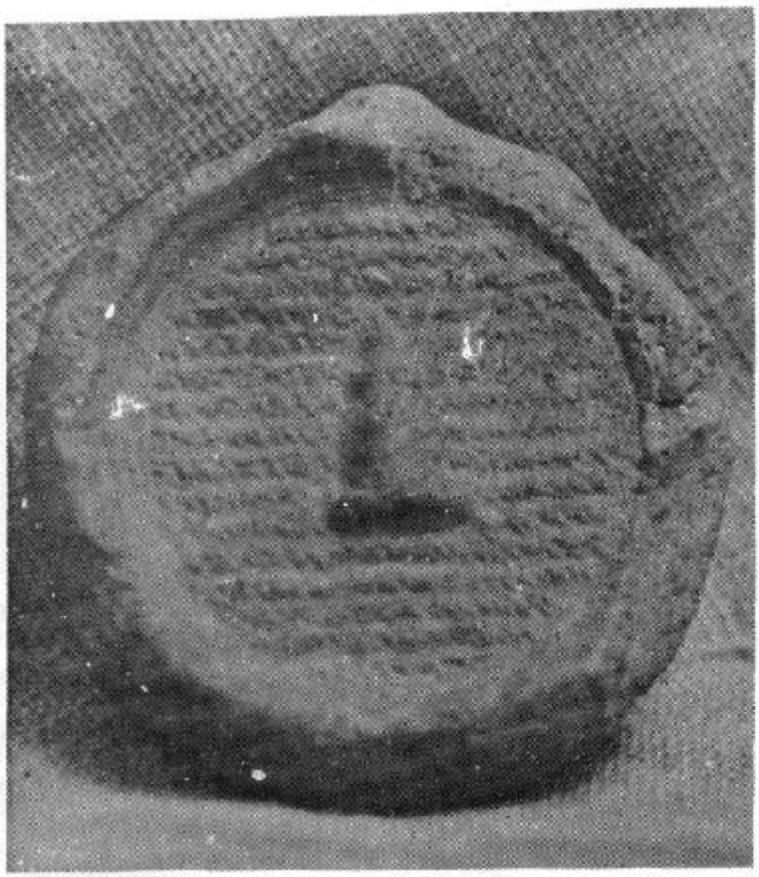

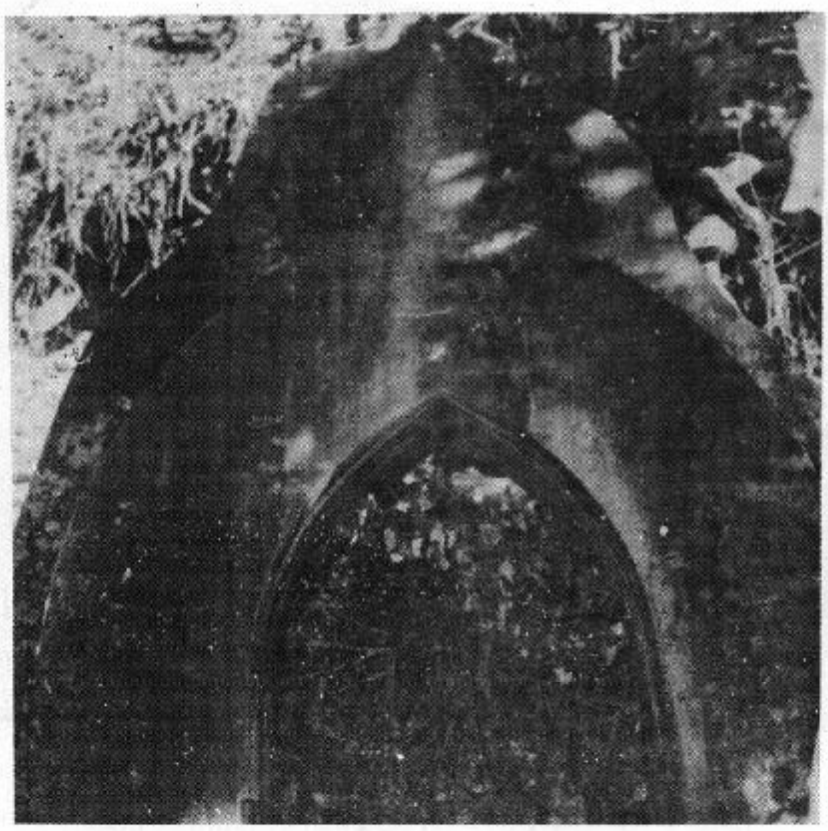

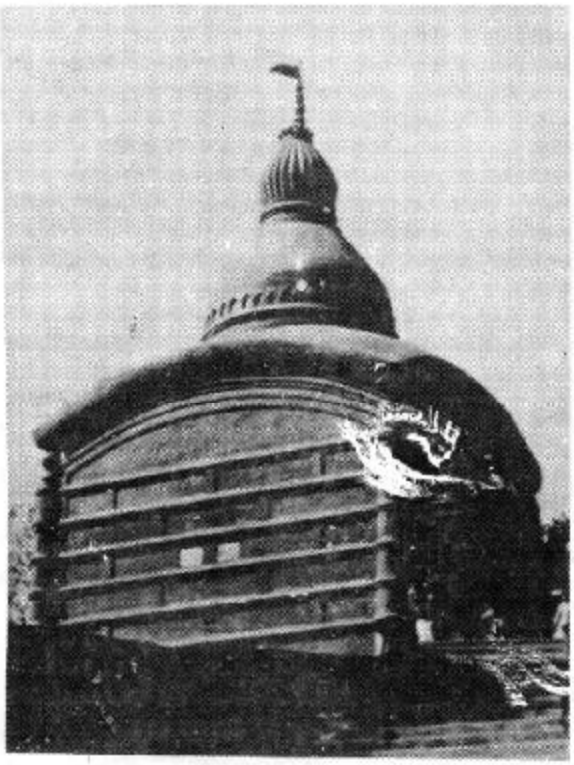

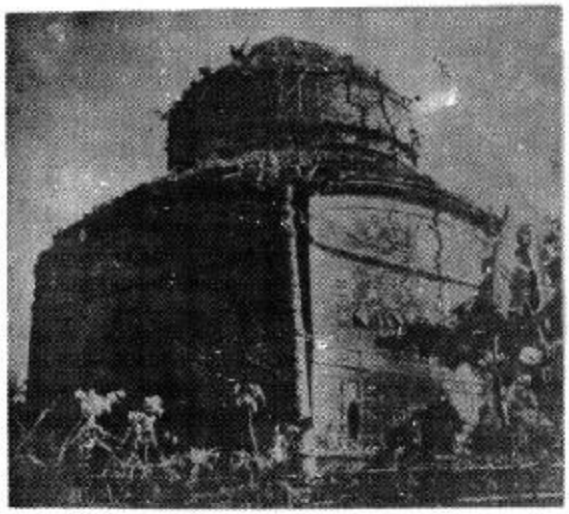

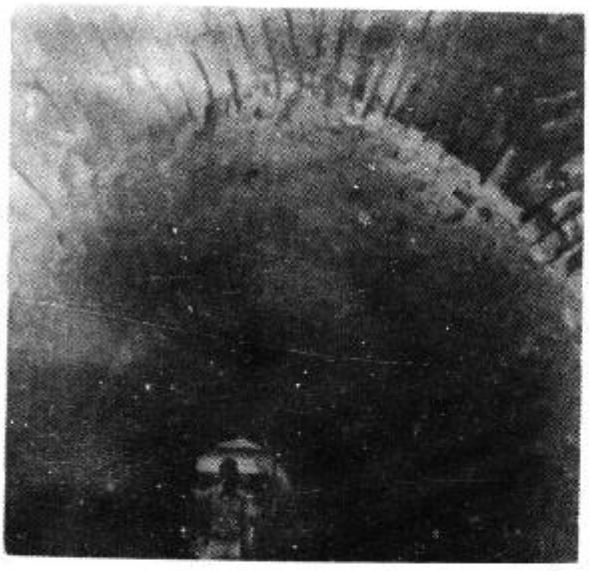

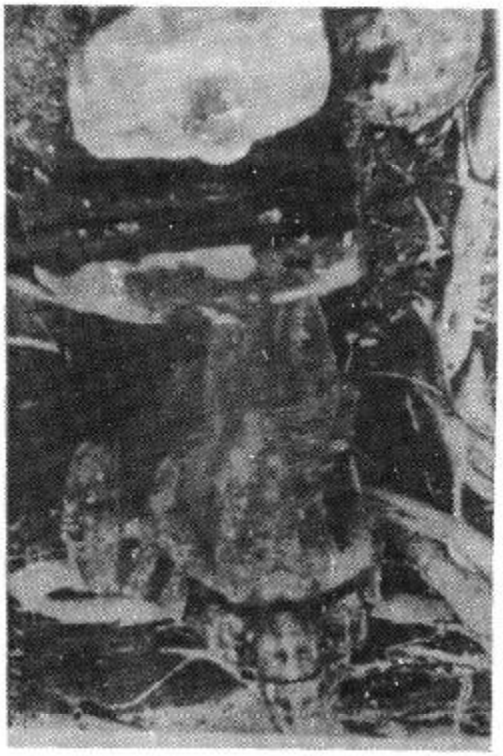

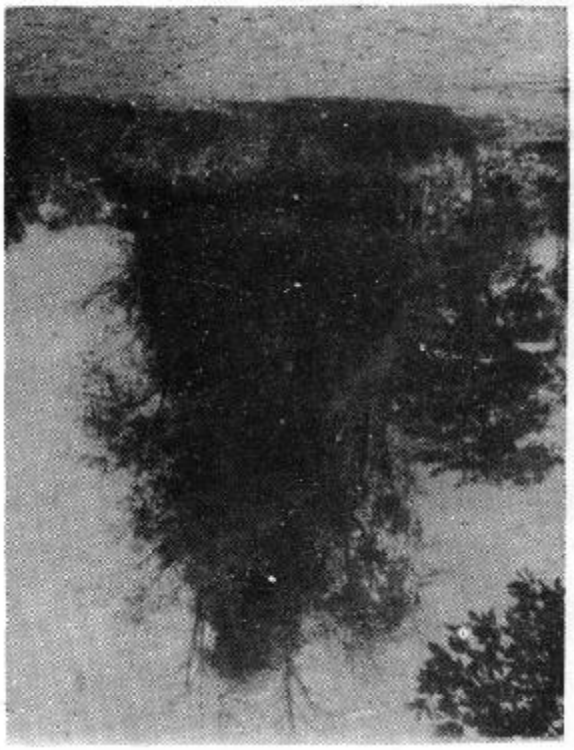

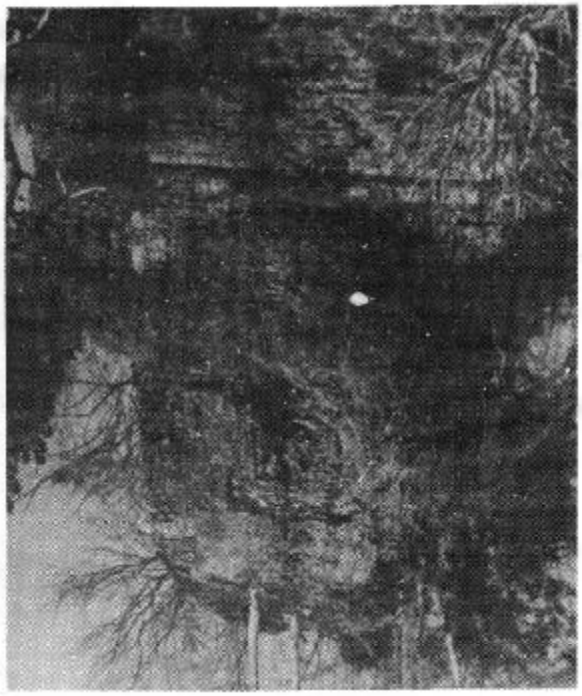

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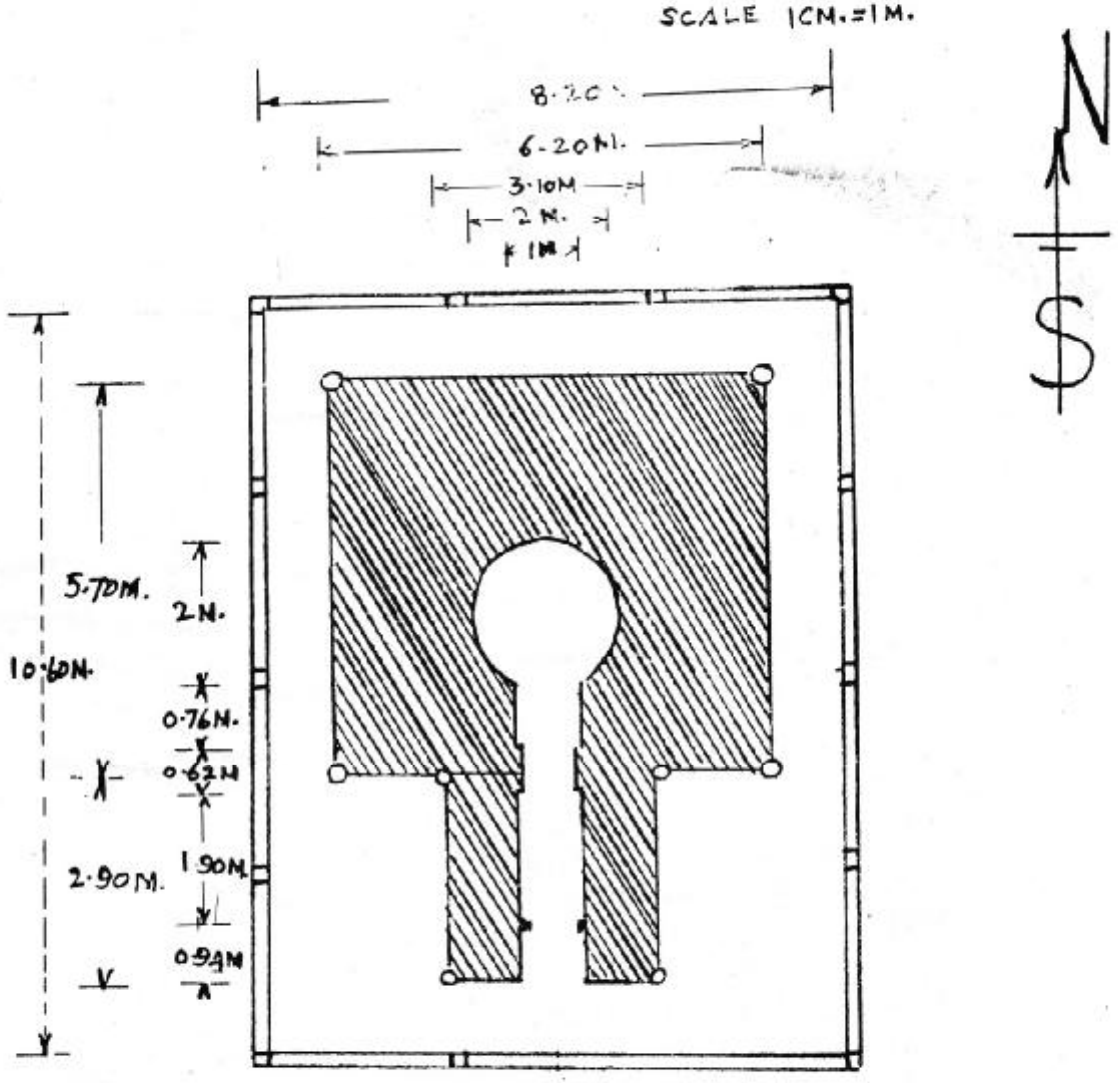

GROUND PLAN OF UDAIPUR HORI MANDIR

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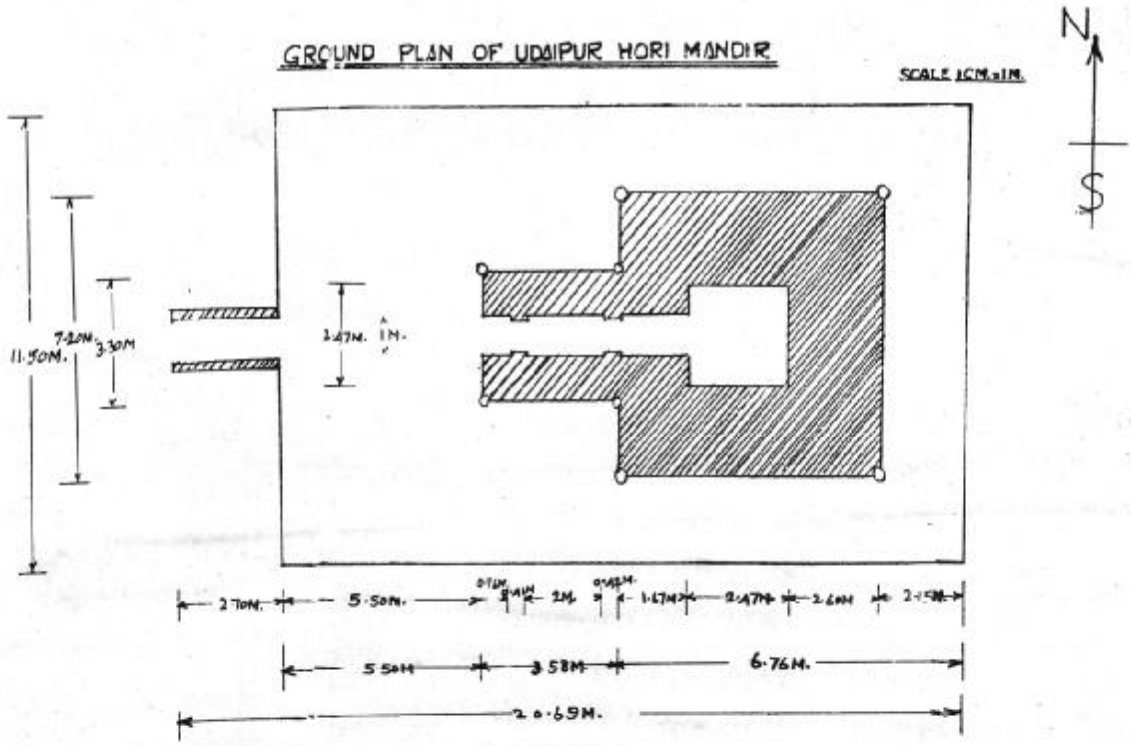

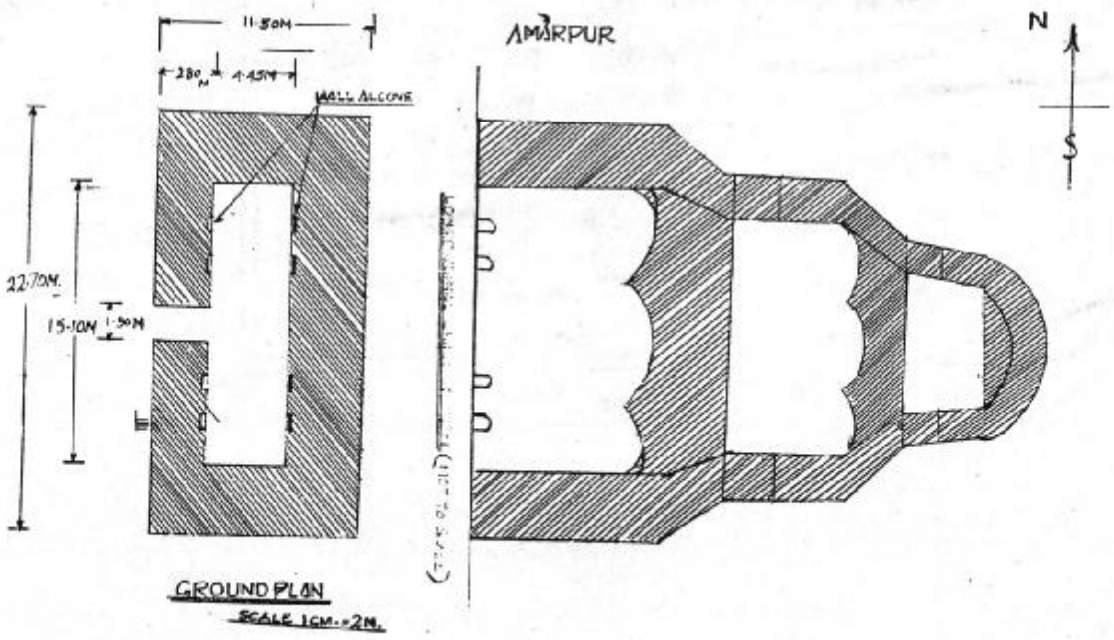

GROUND PLAN

SCALE 1CM.=2M.