CHAPTER I

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The present state of Orissa is located between $17^\circ 49' \ N$ and $22^\circ 34' \ N$ latitude and $81^\circ 29' \ E$ to $87^\circ 29' \ E$ longitude on the eastern coast of India. It occupies an area of 155707 sq.kms. and is bounded by the Bay of Bengal on the east, Madhya Pradesh on the west, Bihar on the north, West Bengal on the north-east, and Andhra Pradesh on the south. The geographical situation has made this region exposed to cultural influences from the northern and southern parts of India all through the ages.

The state can be divided into two broad geographical divisions—the plains and the hilly areas. The plains have been formed by the alluvium of the major rivers of Orissa which flow into the Bay of Bengal. A greater part of the coastal districts of Balasore, Cuttack, Puri and Ganjam constitute the plains. The alluvium in association with the laterite gravels has made this area very fertile. This accounts for the higher density of population in the plains compared to the other division. Some of the important art-centres of Orissa are located here and thus most of the important monuments of stone were built in this region.

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1. This area accommodates about 35.3% of the total population although it accounts for only 15.5% of the total area of the state.
More than three-fourths of the total area of the state are covered by the hills and forests. The hills in the north and north-west along with the central and western plateaus form the parts of the Vindhyan ranges of the Gondwana variety. In the ancient time the forests supplied various commodities for commercial transactions. The hilly areas also constitute the mineral belt of the state. These areas are dominated by the tribal population. The Orissan culture has been greatly influenced by the tribal culture. The Eastern Ghat hills pass through the four coastal districts with an extension into the districts of Koraput, Dhenkanal, and Phulbani. These hills lie parallel to the coast and stand behind the plains.

Orissa is a riverine state. The Mahanadi is the biggest river. It originates from the mountains of the Madhya Pradesh and after traversing about 850 kms. through the districts of Sambalpur, Bolangir, Phulbani, Puri and Cuttack falls into the Bay of Bengal. The other important rivers are the Suvamārkhā, the Budhāvalāṅga, the Vaitarāṇī, the Brāhmaṇī, the Ruṣikulyā, the Vamsadhārā, the Nāgāvalī and the Indrāvatī.

All the rivers flow into the Bay of Bengal except the Indrāvatī which originates in the Koraput district and flows westward into the Godāvari in Andhra Pradesh as her tributary. The Vamsadhārā and the Nāgāvalī flow into the Bay of Bengal after passing through Andhra Pradesh. In ancient period the bulk of the inland trade was carried through these rivers. The Mahānadi was the main line of communication between the coastal and western districts of Orissa.

Orissa has a long coast-line extending about 625 kms. In the ancient and medieval periods there were a number of flourishing ports on the coast through which trade was carried on with the countries of South-East Asia, China, Sri Lanka, and the Roman Empire. The ancient and medieval ports declined perhaps due to the gradual recession of the sea and the rising of the land-mass. The Chilika, the biggest lake of Orissa, lie close to the coast. Originally it was the part of the Bay of Bengal, and has been formed by the sand dunes in course of time.

3. For ancient Orissa's marine trade see K. S. Behera, "Marine Trade in Ancient Orissa", Sidelights on History and Culture of Orissa, pp.115-121.


As a coastal state, the climate of Orissa is equiable, i.e., it is neither very hot in the summer nor very cold in winter. Of course, in the hilly regions and plateaus one experiences extremes in climate.

The above geographical features played a great role in shaping the general trend of Orissa's history and evolving a pattern for her culture.

The present state of Orissa was known by various names in the ancient and medieval periods. Even there was not a single name by which the whole of Orissa was known. Therefore Dr. D. C. Sircar, an eminent historian and epigraphist of India regrets,

"There was no ancient name to indicate the entire state of Orissa of today and that, some geographical names not only covered parts of Orissa but also of other territories, the names of territorial units to which particular areas belonged often changed, and the boundaries of such units also sometimes varied from time to time".6

It is held that the modern name Odisha or Orissa has been derived from the word Odra which denoted an area in

6. D. C. Sircar, foreword in D. K. Ganguly, Historical Geography and Dynastic History of Orissa, p. vii
the past. The Jagannāth temple inscription of Gajapati Kapilendradeva (A.D. 1436) for the first time mentions Odiśā rājya. In the Mahābhārata of Sāralādāsa (15th Cen. A.D.,) Orissa is mentioned as Oda rāstra or Odiśā rāstra. But Odra did not denote the whole of present Orissa. It is difficult to determine the exact extent of Odra country. It can be said, on the basis of information supplied by the Soro copper plates of Somadatta, a feudatory of Harṣavardhana and the accounts of Hsuan Tsang, that by the seventh century A.D. the Odra country comprised parts of the Midnapur district of West Bengal and Balasore, Cuttack and Puri districts of Orissa.

A greater part of Orissa in the ancient period was known as Kaliṅga. The Vānaparvan of the Sanskrit Mahābhārata mentions the Ganges as the northern boundary of the land of Kaliṅgas. Standing on the confluence of the Ganges and the Sea, Sage Lomasa says to the Pāṇḍava brothers,

7. *JASB*, LXII, 1893, p.93. Prior to this an inscription in the Simhāchalam temple dated A.D. 1352 mentions the name Odyadesa.
“This is the land, O Kunti’s son! where
the Kaliṅga tribe dwell. Through it
Passeth the river Vaitaranī.”

It is clear from the above passage that the land of the
Kaliṅgas extended as far as the mouth of the Ganges and
through it followed the river Vaitaranī. Thus Kaliṅga
extended in the north-east as far as the Ganges. It
appears that the southern boundary of Kaliṅga extended
up to the river Godāvarī. 11

Asoka conquered Kalinga in 261 B.C, and for administrative
convenience divided it into two divisions — northern and
southern with Tosali i.e., Dhauli, about 8 kms. south of
Bhubaneswar and Samapā, i.e., Jaugada in Ganjam district
as their respective headquarters. In the first century B.C.
Kaliṅga was ruled by Mahāmeghavāhana Khāravela. 12 Scholars
identify his capital Kaliṅganagarī with Sisupālagarh, 13
about 2½ kms. south-east of Bhubaneswar.

After the Mahāmeghavāhana rule the boundary of Kaliṅga
shrank considerably. In the middle of the fourth century
A.D. the Mātharas became powerful and established their

12. In the Hathigumpha inscription Khāravela assumes
the title of Kaliṅgañāhipati and in the inscription of his
chief queen the title Kaliṅgachakravartī.
rule in Kaliṅga. But at that time Kaliṅga did not extend from the Ganges to the Godāvari. It included portions of Ganjam district of Orissa, and Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam and East Godāvari districts of Andhra Pradesh. In Kaliṅga the Eastern Gaṅgas succeeded the Mahāras towards the close of the fifth century A.D., but at that time it was a much reduced one. Their capital Kaliṅganagara is the modern Mukhalingam on the Vaṁsadharā in the Srikakulam district.

Another name by which a portion of Orissa was known in the ancient and medieval periods was Utkala. The name Utkala became so familiar that it came to be associated with the whole of Orissa. A passage in the Raghuvamsa of Kalidasa (4th century A.D.) mentions that prince Raghu, after crossing the river Kapiśā, entered Utkala and the people of Utkala showed him the path to Kaliṅga. It is evident from this passage that Utkala extended from river Kapiśā (modern Kasai in the Midnapur district of West Bengal) to the borders of Kaliṅga.

It seems that during the rule of the Bhauma-कारas (A.D. 736-931) Utkala became Tosali. Its capital was at Virajā or Jajpur which is mentioned either Guhadevapātaka or Guheśvarapātaka in Bhauma-कारa records. It appears that river Mahanadi divided Tosali into two divisions. The northern portion was called Uttara-Tosali which is mentioned in the Soro copper plates of Somadatta (7th century A.D.) and the Daksina-Tosali denoted the southern portion. The Somavam्सिस occupied Tosali or Utkala in A.D. 931. There is no mention of Tosali in the records of the Somavam्सिस. This shows that after the first quarter of the tenth century A.D., the name Tosali was not used for any part of Orissa.

In the 7th-8th century A.D. a portion of Daksina-Tosali to the south of Chilika lake was renamed as Kaṅgoda. It was then under the Saȋlobhavas. The Bhauma-कारas conquered Kaṅgoda from the Saȋlobhavas. The present Sambalpur and Bolangir districts of Western Orissa constituted an area called Kosala which was held by the Somavam्सिस. Their capital was at Vinītapura which has been identified with modern Binika near Sonepur. This place was renamed as Yayātinagar by the Somavam्सि ruler Yayāti I. The Baud-Phulbani area in the Upper Mahānadi Valley and Khiching in Mayurbhanj district were called Khinjali Mandala and Khijingakota respectively in the ninth-tenth centuries A.D.

A brief account of the political history of Orissa is essential for the study of the evolution of her temple architecture. The dated history of Orissa starts with Asoka's invasion of Kalinga in 261 B.C. For the period preceding the Kalinga war we have no connected account of her history. It is stated in the Puranas\(^{18}\) that thirty-two kṣatriya kings ruled in Kalinga from the time of the Mahābhārata war to the rise of Mahāpadmananda in Magadha. A period of Nanda supremacy over Kalinga is speculated on the basis of certain information supplied by the Hāṭhīgūḍhā inscription.\(^{19}\) The Kālinga Jīna, mentioned in the said inscription, can be taken as the earliest representation of an icon in Orissa.

Kalinga came under the political and cultural domination of the Mauryas as a result of the Kalinga war. Being moved by the horrors of the war,\(^{20}\) Asoka contemplated a change in

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20. The Kalinga war resulted in the death of one hundred thousand people and deportation of one hundred and fifty thousand to Magadha as prisoners of war — R.E. XIII.
the principle which governed his relation with the subjects. Therefore he made a declaration to the effect that all his subjects were like his children and thus, he was concerned with their material and moral welfare. It was during the Mauryan rule that the Orissan art and architecture progressed in an organised form. So far as the medium of artistic activities are concerned, here, as elsewhere in India, a change from wood to stone can be marked under the Mauryan influence. The figure of the forepart of an elephant carved at the top of the boulder containing Asokan edict at Dhauli, 8 kms. south of Bhubaneswar represents the earliest specimen of the sculptural art in Orissa. This elephant, noted for its naturalism due to the anatomical treatment of the body, bears a majestic appearance. The absence of the characteristic Mauryan polish on the elephant figure is due to the inferior quality of the stone.

Dr. Panigrahi, after subjecting the lingam of the Bhaskaresvara temple of Bhubaneswar (about 2.74 M in


22. Excavation at the Mauryan level at Sisupalgarh have revealed wooden remains from which it can be inferred that it was used for sculpture and for other decorative purposes also.

Ancient India, No.5, p.68.
height and 12'15" in circumference at the base), the upper portion of the lion figure discovered in the close vicinity of the said temple and the fragmentary bell capital preserved in the Orissa State Museum to close scrutiny, comes to the conclusion that these were the parts of either one or two pillars set up by Asoka in his newly conquered territory. Like the Dhauli elephant, all these sculptural fragments lack in the brilliant polish characteristic of the Mauryan art. These sculptures appear to be the works of local craftsmen and not of the special craftsmen who were responsible for the execution of the pillars and the animal capitals found in other parts of the Mauryan empire.

The history of the period intervening the rule of Asoka and the rise of Mahāmeghavāhana Khāravela (1st century B.C.) is not definitely known. The Hathigumpha inscription at Udayagiri, about 5 kms. to the west of Bhubaneswar gives a detailed account of the achievements of Khāravela. Khāravela had a distinguished military career. He undertook series of successful military expeditions in different directions which added to the glory of his kingdom, Kalinga. As an

administrator, he undertook various welfare measures for his subjects. His capital Kalinganagara has been identified with Sisupalagarh, a place in the neighbourhood of Dhauli.

Khāravela's patronage of the Jainism led to the excavation of caves in the Udayagiri for the use of Jain ārhatas during the rainy season. His successors also continued the work of excavation in the same hill. Later on some more caves were excavated in the adjacent hill called Khandagiri. The caves of the twin hills are small, simple and utilitarian in character. They bear relief sculptures which are akin to those at Bhārhat, Sānchi, Bodh Gaya, Pithālkora, etc. Commenting upon the caves of the Udayagiri and Khandagiri Dr. (Mrs.) Debala Mitra says,

"The group of caves of Khandagiri and Udayagiri has an important place in the rock-cut architecture of not only in Orissa but in Eastern India where rock-cut caves are rather rare".

In Udayagiri and Khandagiri the sculptural art of Orissa of which the Dhauli elephant is the earliest extant