CHAPTER-1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
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The ancient History of Keonjhar is shrouded in mystery. There are no authentic written records about the earliest period of the State. Some sites of the early stone age, however, can be traced in the Baitarani Valley. They are located in Champua, Jagannathpur and Ramla regions. The sites are clear indications that men in early ages lived on the open plains and high lands near the river. The most plentifully available materials of the early stone age are hand-axes and scrapers. A large number of tools made of big chunks of rocks have been discovered. Other rocks which were used for the manufacture of tools were the red ochre, a variety of jasper and the milky veined quartz. Altogether thirty six tools, which belonged to the early stone age, have been collected. A large number of hand-axes of different shapes with developed techniques of early stone age have been discovered in the Baitarani valley in Keonjhar. It can, therefore, be safely assumed that the early stone age in Keonjhar was a period of fairly developed culture.

There are a number of sites within the confines of Keonjhar which offer evidence of human habitation during the middle stone age. A few such sites have been discovered in

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2 Ibid.
Champua, Jagannathpur, Patna and Ramala. All these places are situated in the Baitarani valley. At all these places a variety of tools such as scrapers, borens points and nodules belonging to the middle stone age are generally found. Manufacture of blades was also fairly well known to the people of the middle stone age. A few important sites of the 'Polished Stone Age' were also discovered in Keonjhar. They were located in places like Danguaposi, Ramala, Thakurani and Udayapur.

The Baitarani Valley has antiquities of the old stone age and new polished stone age is mentioned in the Mahabharata. It is stated in the Vana Parba that when Yudhishthira reached Kalinga during his wanderings, which started from the banks of the Ganges the sage Lomas is reported to have told him, "Kalinga is the land through which the river Baitarani flows and where Dharma or the God of Virtue performed Yajna." It appears that the Kalinga country stretched from the Ganges up to the northern bank of the Baitarani (in Oriya same as Baitarani river). Pliny also observes that Kalinga stretched from the Ganges in the north to the Godavari in the south. This stretch included hills and forest tracts of Keonjhar.

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4 ODG, Keonjhar, P.41.
5 H.K.Mahatab, History of Orissa, (Cuttack 1948), P.5.
6 Ibid.
- K.C.Panigrahi, History of Orissa (Cuttack),P.4
- M.M.Ganguli, Orissa and her remains (Calcutta, 1912) P.8.
region. Probably a part of the former princely state of Keonjhar was included in the mighty Kalingan territory at the time of the Mahabharata. Most probably the land to the south of the river Ganges did possess a different name, i.e., Utkal. M.M. Ganguli writes that according to the Mahabharata, Utkal was bound on the south by the Baitarani and in the north by Tamralipta or modern Tamluk. So it can be assumed that the land to the north of Baitarani was under the Kalingan territory when the other side was included in the Utkal region.

The discovery of an inscriptions at Asanapat 15 Kilometres away from Jhumpura and 20 Kilometres away from Keonjhargarh, near the village of Raiakona, by Nabin Kumar Sahu in 1963 pushes back the history of Keonjhar to the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. The Asanapat inscription is supposed to be the first recorded writing in the area. It is known from historical records, inscriptions and legends that the ruling dynasty of Bhanjas has been ruling from ancient times. The well decorated inscriptions have been shifted and preserved in the Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, since 1965.

The inscription contains seventeen lines out of which nine are in the Devanagari character and Hindi language, while

7 M.M. Ganguli, Op.Cit, P.9
- O.D.G. (Keonjhar) PP.41-42.
the remaining lines are in the Oriya language and Oriya character. Satyanarayan Rajguru holds the view that the inscription is written in pure Sanskrit. Just above the inscription is engraved the image of Lord Siva who is engaged in the Tandaba dance in the Nataraja form. The inscription clearly reveals that Maharaja Sri Satrubhanja got this inscription engraved towards the 4th and 5th century A.D., a time which happens to belong to the Gupta period. Satrubhanja was the son of Maharaja Mana Bhanja and Mahadevi Damayanti. He belonged to the Naga clan and the Sasipa Gotra and was very likely a contemporary and a subordinate ruler of Chandragupta II.

Maharaja Sri Satrubhanja earned repute both in war and in peace i.e., in philanthropic deeds and religious matters. He also acquired knowledge in a number of fields like Purana, Itihasa, Byakarana, Sankhya, Nyaya, etc. He was as bright as the Sun.

The inscription clearly throws light on the power and prestige of Maharaja Sri Satrubhanja. His only inscription

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-S.N. Rajguru, Odisara Itihasa (Cuttack 1985), PP.184-185.
* Quoted in ODG (Mayurbhanja) P.60
"Bharata Puraneitihasa Byakaranapi Sanskhyaa Nyaya Mimansa Chhanda Srutivedas Pravakarana Shankhyajyana Sarbalkala Vijyana Maharaa Sri Satrubhanja Yataram Karahmita"

10 ODG (Mayurbhanja) P.60
-ODG (Keonjhar) P.43
-S.N. Rajguru, Op.Cit, P.186
11 ODG (Mayurbhanja) P.60.
brings out the fact that he was one of the most powerful kings of the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. He fought with great success in a hundred battles against his enemies and earned fame. Coins discovered by modern historians from this particular site reveal that Maharaja Satrubhanja defeated the Kushanas (Devaputras) and gained victory over them. These later Kushanas were the Murunda Kings or the Puri Kushanas. According to historians there were some small patches of Murunda kingdoms in many parts of Orissa. King Satrubhanja was a semi-independent ruler over the kingdom called Vindhyatabi, which most probably comprised modern Upper Keonjhar, Mayurbhanja and Singhbhum districts and the Bonai region. Historians like S.N. Rajguru observes that once upon a time the territory of Orissa extended from the Vindhya mountains to the Keonjhar region and hence the territory was identified as Vindhyatabi. Most probably Keonjhar was a part of the vast territory, and was used as the royal headquarters. Satrubhanja brought under him a number of Feudatory Kings (Samanta Raja).

Maharaja Sri Satrubhanja earned fame not only as a warrior but also as a great donor. He donated lakhs of cows in Pataliputra, Gaya, Dandavardhana, Pendravardhana, Vardhamana, Gorhati, Khadranga, Tamralipti and Ubhaya Tosali. He also

- Artibus Asiae, Institute of Fine Arts (New York University) Vol.XIV, PP.21-22
13 Ibid
donated gold to the Samkhakara Matha of Ahichhatra, the Manibhadra Matha of Laksheswar and different other mathas of the territory. The Raja extended his principle of liberalism and toleration to all sects. He created dwelling Viharas for Brahmacharis, Charakas, Parivrajakas, Nigranthas, and Bhikshus. His own inscription throws bright light on his knowledge. He was well versed in the Mahabharata, the Puranas, Itihasa, Vyakarana, the Upanishadas, Nyaya, Mimansa, Vedopakarana, Sankhya, Vigyana etc.\textsuperscript{15}. The inscription mentions that the Raja was a devotee of Lord Siva. Yet he was tolerant towards other religious faiths. He donated a lot of wealth to Hindus, Buddhists and Jainas. The inscription of Satrubhanja at Asanapat, mentioned earlier, contains an image of Siva with eight arms, holding different things. He holds a snake, a trident, and a dambaru. However, the Asanapat inscription is absolutely silent regarding the sons and successors of Maharaja Sri Satrubhanja.

Towards the 4th and 5th centuries A.D the Gangetic Valley was under the sway of the Nagas. They acquired great power and prestige and were able to overthrow the Kushanas\textsuperscript{16}. They acquired overlordship in Northern India. The Nagas were worshippers of Lord Siva\textsuperscript{17}. The Allahabad prasasti of Samudragupta states that Samudragupta defeated two Naga kings.

\textsuperscript{15}ODG (Keonjhar), PP.42-44.
\textsuperscript{16}D.C.Sircar, Age of Imperial Unity, Bharatiya Vidyabhavan (Mumbai 1964) P.169.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid.
However, it is known that the Nagas became one of the important powers contemporaneous with the Guptas. Maharaja Satrubhanja of the Naga dynasty of this Asanapat inscription earned repute both in war and in peace, by his philanthropic activities\(^\text{18}\).

In the midst of dense forest, in an inaccessible tract of Keonjhar at Sitabinji, near the village of Danguaposi about 40 Kilometres from Keonjharagarh, there exist archaeological remains, which most probably belong to the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. Binayaka Mishra and Dr. Krushna Chandra Panigrahi, along with Laxmi Narayan Bhanja, the brother of Balabhadra Narayan Bhanja, the last Raja and ruling chief of keonjhar, brought the historical remains at Sitabhinji to limelight\(^\text{19}\). There is a painting which represents a royal procession. It shows four pedestrians marching ahead, followed by some horsemen and a royal elephant rider attended by a servant holding an umbrella aloft over his head. Below the painting there still remains a one-line inscription which reads 'Purudhasa Chhichha Maruta' i.e Maruta, the disciple of Purudha\(^\text{20}\). The painting has been severely damaged and cannot be

\(^{18}\)D.C.Sircar, Age of Imperial Unity, Bharatiya Vidyabhavan (Mumbai 1964) P.169.  
- OHRJ, Vol.XII, No.2, P.45.  
^{19}\)Ibid.  
- ODG (Keonjhar) P.46  
- Modern Review (March 1938) P.81.  
^{20}\)OHRJ, Vol.IV, P.281  
deciphered properly. So the subject matter of the painting has not been clearly identified as yet. In the royal procession the Raja is identified as Maharaja Sri Disabhanja.

The man on the elephant occupies an honourable position in the procession. He is preceded by a horseman and footmen and followed by a female attendant. A male attendant sitting on the same elephant holds a trasa (a modified umbrella bearing the insignia) aloft. He wears a turban and a belt and holds an ankusa (a metal prod to direct and control the elephant) in the right hand, and a lily in the left hand. The female figure wears a garment, a breast band and a necklace. This female figure has strong similarities with depiction of women at Ajanta and the Bagh caves of the Gupta Age. The paintings in Ravanachhaya cave shelter at Sitabhinji in Keonjhar belongs to the time when it was a part of the Khinjigakotta Kingdom.

Basing on Paleography, the writing can be traced back to the 4th and 5th centuries A.D., which is contemporary with the age of the Guptas. Historians, however, are not unanimous about the periodicity of the painting. Scholars like T.N.Ramachandran place it towards the 4th and 5th centuries A.D.. D.C.Sircar places the time between the 8th and 12th century A.D. Historians like S.R.Balasubramanium and

21OHRJ, Vol. XII, No.2 (1965), P.23.
22Ibid.
23Ibid.
N.K. Sahu\textsuperscript{25} date it to the 4th or the 5th century A.D. R.C. Majumdar is in agreement with N.K. Sahu and traces the painting to the 4th and 5th century A.D\textsuperscript{26}.

The painting along with the writing has been severely damaged due to various causes. Though not clear, the colours of the painting are still visible. However, historians are not unanimous regarding the nature of the painting. Arjun Josi identifies it as Fresco painting\textsuperscript{27}. But S.R. Balasubramaniam identifies it as Tempera painting\textsuperscript{28}. The language of the inscription is indistinguishable. Pundit Binayaka Mishra reads it as "Purudhasa Chhichha Maruta\textsuperscript{29}". Historians have reservations about the language used in the inscription. It is quite similar to some of the south Indian languages. South Indian languages like Telugu and Kannada were derived from this language\textsuperscript{30}. The local tribal inhabitants claim that it is the ancient language of the hill people of the area.

It is quite evident from the painting of the Ravanachhaya cave shelter that a glorious civilisation flourished in the region towards the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. A large part of

\textsuperscript{22}OHRJ, Vol. VI (1958), P. 281.
\textsuperscript{25}Ibid.
-Modern Review (Nov. 1938), P. 72
\textsuperscript{26}R.C. Majumdar, Outlines of the Bhanja Kings of Orissa (Calcutta 1951) P. 25.
\textsuperscript{27}OHRJ, No. 2 (1965), P. 21
\textsuperscript{28}Ibid, Vol. VI (1952), No. 4, P. 281.
\textsuperscript{29}Ibid, No. 2 (1965), P. 24
\textsuperscript{30}Ibid.
the painting which represents a royal procession has unfortunately been destroyed. The most important person who assumed the key position in the painting is Maharaja Sri Disbhanja. The picture of a heroic and resplendent Raja, on his journey represents the artistic qualities of the time. The artists have given the picture a lifelike quality through painting.

Some caves have been discovered near Ravanachhaya and Sitabinji. These might have been used as abodes of ascetics in the 5th and 6th centuries A.D\(^{31}\). In the vicinity of the inscription there remains a "Chaturmukha Siva Image\(^{32}\)" in a damaged condition. It proves that once upon a time Saivism flourished in the region. The Chaturmukha Siva Linga clearly proves that the rulers of Vindhyatabi region were staunch devotees of Lord Siva\(^{33}\). The ruins of a great fort, erected with very large, hard bricks (16"x18"x3"), are also to be found in this locality. The architecture of the building and the stone works can be assigned to the Gupta period\(^{34}\). There are as many as fourteen votive inscriptions inscribed on boulders strewn in the area of Sitabinji\(^{35}\). The inscriptions are written in the southern variety of Brahmi script belonging to the Gupta period. Out of the fourteen, five refer to

\(^{32}\)Ibid.
\(^{33}\)ODG(Keonjhar) PP.42-43
\(^{34}\)Ibid.
\(^{35}\)OHRJ No.7(1965) P.24.
Saivacharyas like "Sasalanmchha-nandhra-Pada of Sasidhara-pada and Sasadhara Vamsa."

Some inscriptions record, the name of "Ganga Paramadhisa, Gangavadi Ganga" and Sasadhara Vamsa. These refer to the fact that the ascetics who established the Saiva Shrine belonged to the South. The eastern Ganges belonged to the Lunar race and was known as the "Sasadhara Vamsa." It is apparent that the inscriptions are in some way associated with the Eastern Gangas. The original home of the Eastern Gangas was on the banks of Ganganadi or the river Ganges.

Historians like S.R. Balasubramium, however, reject or rejects the view that the Sitabinji region was a Saiva Kshetra. He ascribes the holy land to Lord Buddha the Great Master. He interprets the scene of the royal procession at Ravanachhaya cave shelter differently. According to him, in the days of the Buddha there lived a king, Kapina by name, at Kukutavati. As a result of meritorious deeds in his past life, he had an intuition of the coming of the Buddha, and was eagerly awaiting his arrival. One day he learnt from a group of merchants that the enlightened Buddha had come to Sravasti. As soon as he heard this, Kapina entrusted his kingdom to his wife and set out for Sravasti. Buddha had a supernatural

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36OHRJ No.7(1965) P.24..
37Ibid.
38Ibid.
39Ibid, Vol(VI), Jan 1958 No.4.pp-281-283
vision of the coming of Kapina and he too proceeded to meet his would-be disciple. He stayed there under a Banyan tree on the bank of the river Chandrabhaga. Kapina crossed three rivers, covering a great distance and came to the place where Buddha preached the law to the king. The king gave up his kingdom and his worldly life and became a monk. In course of time, Kapina became one of the greatest disciples of Lord Buddha. Broadly, according to S.R.Balasubramanium, the painting at Sitabinji represents King’s journey to meet the great master, Lord Buddha. Hence, according to him, it was an important Buddhist shrine and the man who occupies the key position in the royal procession was king Kapina.

The discovery of the Puree-Kushana coins is a matter of interest. The Puree-Kushana coins or the Murunda coins were issued by the rulers of Kalinga in the 4th and 5th Centuries A.D. On the other side of the coin, there is a standing figure of a Kushana king wearing Kushana type of garments. In some other coins there are royal figures riding on elephants. On the reverse side of the coin, the Moon God or the Sun God has been engraved. Since the coins were discovered in the vicinity of the painting (Ravanachhaya cave shelter), these are believed to be contemporaneous.

40OHRJ, Vol(VI), Jan 1958 No.4, PP.281-283
41Ibid.
42Ibid,
The history of Keonjhar is obscure after the early Bhanjas of the Naga dynasty. The copper plate grant of the Bhaumakara rulers refer to Keonjhar as a feudatory state under their suzerainty. When the Bhaumakaras were the paramount authority in Orissa (8th to 10th century A.D): a number of feudatory rulers or Samanta Rajas ruled under them in the states known as Mandala States. One of the most important Mandala States enjoying a feudatory status under the Bhaumakaras was that of the Bhanjas of Khinjali Mandala in the west, whose territory comprised Baud, Sonepur and Phulbani regions with their capital at Dhartipura; the Bhanjas of Khinjiga Mandala in the north whose territory comprised Mayurbahnja, Singhbhum and Upper Keonjhar with its capital at Khinjigakotta identified with modern Khichhing; the Sulkis of Kodalaka mandala in the south comprising Dhenkanal and a part of Cuttack; the Tungas of Yamagetta Mandala covering a part of Dhenkanal and the Western Part of Keonjhar region; the Nandodhhaba of Airabata Mandala; the Maurayas of Bonai Mandala dominating the land of Bonai and Gangapur and the Gangas of Svetaka Mandala with their capital at Svetaka or Vijaya Svetaka. In the words of Binayaka Mishra the Bhauma Kingdom was generally called Tosala, but at some time it was

43R.C.Majumdar (Ed) Age of Imperial Unity, (Bharatiya Vidyabhavana Mumbai 1955) P.67
44A.Joshi, Op.Cit, P.1
46JORS, Vol.VI, PP.238-240
47B.Mishra, Dynasties of Medieval Orissa, (Calcutta 1923) PP.33-34
48JAHRS, Vo.II, P.184
also called Utkal. In ancient times, the Bhauma kingdom was divided into two administrative units known as Uttara-Tosala and Dakhin-Tosala. The areas North Tosala and South Tosala have frequently been mentioned in the Bhaumakara Charter. However, modern Midnapur, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal and Boudh-Phulbani were included in Dakhina Tosala.

Under the Bhaumakara paramountcy, Keonjhar remained a vassal state included in the Khinjinga Mandal and enjoyed the feudatory status in the 7th and 8th centuries A.D. The Talcher Charter of Sivakara III mentions 'the Keonjhar region and Suruchipur'. These two places can be identified with kalion in the Modern Keonjhar district and Suruchipura with Sirdarpur in Talcher. It is clear from the official charter of the Bhaumakaras that the Chiefs of Khinjigakkota used the "Bhauma Era'. The Bhaumakaras enjoyed sovereign imperial titles like Maharajadhiraja Parambhattaraka and Parameswar. The Dhenkanal copper plate of Tribhuban Mahadevi mentions that her lotus like feet were softly kissed by the diadems of the great feudatories bowing down in devoted loyalty. The feudatory Chief of Khinjjiga Mandala as well as the Chiefs of other

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49B.Mishra, Orissa under the Bhauma Kings, (Calcutta 1934) P.8.
50Ibid
51EI, XXXXX (1951-52)P.85.
53A.Joshi, Op.Cit, P.4
55Ibid, P.106
-JBORS VoII, P.419-427
Mandalas were addressed as Maharaja, Ranak, Mahasamanta, Mahasamantadhipati, Samadhigata panchamahasabda etc.\textsuperscript{56}. Ranaka was a feudatory title which means a subordinate Chief. Samadhigata Panchamasabda was another feudatory title enjoyed by the ruler of a vassal State who enjoyed five sounds like Sringa (Horn), Sankha (Conch), Bheri (Drum), Jayaghanta (the bell of victory) and tamata timbre\textsuperscript{57}.

Khinjiga Mandala which included the territory of Keonjhar enjoyed a semi-independent status. The relationship between the Mandala State and the Bhauma ruler was similar to the relation between a sovereign State and its Feudatory State\textsuperscript{58}. In the words of S.N. Rajaguru, these Mandala States formed a group of Feudatory outposts strengthening the land of the imperial Bhaumas\textsuperscript{59}. No Feudatory States was annexed to the central dominion and the Raja of the Mandal State was left independent after he acknowledged the supremacy of the emperor. The Feudatory Raja had to render military assistance and offer tribute as fixed before\textsuperscript{60}. The Raja had the liberty to maintain his own officers and armed forces, and consultation with the paramount authority was rarely needed. 

\textit{Jagannath Pattanaik writes} that as an act of homage the

\textsuperscript{56}B.Das, Op.Cit, P.104
\textsuperscript{57}ODG (Keonjhar) PP.41-42
\textsuperscript{59}-N.K.Sahu, Op.Cit, P.112
\textsuperscript{60}B.Das, Op.Cit, P.104
\textsuperscript{59}OHRJ, Vol.XI, No.2, P.100
\textsuperscript{60}-S.N.Rajguru, Op.Cit, P.127.
\textsuperscript{60}OHRJ, Vol.XI, No.2, P.100.
feudatory Chiefs were required to attend the court of the Bhaumakara rulers on ceremonial occasions as well as at periodical intervals. R.C.Majumdar remarks that the Raja of Khinjigakotta who was a feudatory ruler under the Bhaumakaras played a prominent role in the politics of the Kara Kingdom.

Thus Khinjiga Mandala which included Keonjhar as its major part became one of the important Feudatory States under the Bhaumakaras. Of course, its Chief enjoyed high sounding titles and considerable autonomy. Khinjigakotta was important not only for its vastness, but also for its strategic location. The chief enjoyed a semi-independent status. As a token of allegiance the Chief paid tributes and rendered military assistance at the time of need as decided in mutual treaties.

During the dominance of the Bhaumakaras, Keonjhar breathed an air of cultural and religious significance. The copper plate grant of the Bhauma Kings tells us that it was a part of North Tosali. So the frequent mention of Anandapur Tosali refers to modern Anandapur on the Baitarani river in Keonjhar. Thus B.Acharya writes, ".......... with much plausibility this place may be identified with Anandapur in Keonjhar which is situated on the bank of the Baitarani."
Religions like Jainism, Buddhism, Saktism and Saivism were in a flourishing condition in Keonjhar. Places like Podasingidi, Hatadiha, Ana, Thungaon, Shainkul, Panduapalli, Deogaon, Asanpat and Sitabinji are inexorably bound with the antiquities. In the Jaina literature also the words “Anandapur and Chakratirtha: find frequent mention.

The Anandapur region including Podasinghidi Thunigaon, Ana, Janghira, Banchua and Shainkul are related to Jaina antiquities which belonged to the time of the 8th to the 10th centuries A.D. A Ramchandi Temple, Yogichata, the ruin of a Garh or fort silted tanks and a large number of statues of Jaina Tirthankaras and Sasanadevi images are found even today in the mountain region of the Boula range of hills. In the Ramachandi temple, there is a series of images of Jaina Tirthankaras fixed on the outer wall. Of these images three are of Parsvanath, one of Risabhanath one of Padmaprabha. Two images of Parsvanath, one of Risavanath are found in the Yogasana posture. They have the conventional canopy of seven-hood snakes over their heads. Two Jaina statues were identified as those of the Tirthankara Rishabhanatha. One image, seated in the Yogasana pose on a lotus pedestal, bears an inscription dated back to the 8th century A.D. It indicates the name of Risabha Bhattaraka. The other images of Risabhanatha is in the standing kayotsamga pose.

The Samaj (Cuttack) 28.06.92, P.8
The recent excavations in the hilly region by the State Archaeological Department have brought many new things into light. The most important discoveries are a huge boulder with three lines of inscriptions in Devanagiri script and a number of Jaina images in the meditative posture. It is assumed that these findings belong to the 9th century A.D. A number of terra-cotta figures have also been discovered.

Two images of the Jaina Tirthankara Parsvanath were discovered in Sainkul. Both the figures were carved in the Yogasana posture on a lotus pedestal. Canopies of seven-hooded snakes were noticed on their heads. At Thunigaon also two Jains relics were discovered. The figures are identified as Tirthankara Rishabhanatha and Yaksha Gomedha and Akhini Ambika on a common platform. From Keonjhargarh two Jaina images were collected. In the centre of the village Jambhira Jaina image is found fixed to Tulasi (basil plant) pedestal.

The figure of Lord Buddha in the Bhumisparshamudra posture was discovered in Sadha a village in Anandapur Sub-division. If the words of S.R. Balasubramanium are accepted, it can be said that the Gajarudha man (man riding elephant) who occupied the key position in the tempera painting of Ravanchhaya cave shelter was kapina, a great devotee or Lord Buddha. S.R. Balasubramanium writes that the painting depicts

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66The Samaj (Cuttack) 28.06.92, p.8.
67M.N. Das (Ed) Sidelights on History and Culture of Orissa (Cuttack 1977) PP.308-310.
Raja Kapina of Kukutavati proceeding to visit the Great Master. A Buddha image of the 8th Century A.D which was discovered in Keonjhar has been preserved in the Orissa State Museum. Along with the Jainism and Buddhism, Vaisnavism also flourished in Khinjiga Mandala. The hill tract preserves Brahminical figures like the images of Mahisamardini Durga.

Saivism was in a flourishing condition under the suzerainty of the Bhaumakaras. The image of Asanapat inscription depicts an eight-armed Siva in Tandava dance posture. Two arms are engaged in playing the Veena, one in Varada Mudra, indicating the offering of boon, one holding the Trisula (trident), one akshamala, one with damburu, his favourite musical instrument and the last two holding a srake over his head. The image is in the naked urdhwalinga form, indicating the Tandava dance. The discovery of the image of a Chaturmukha (four faced) Siva in Sitabinji indicates that it was a place sacred to Saivism. Deogaon is famous for the Kusaleswara Siva Temple which was erected in the 10th century A.D by the Bhanja ruler. Deogaon is a place on the river Kusai, a tributary of the river Baitarani. The Jagamohana and Muktimandapa and the Radhanasala were dedicated to Kapileswar and Dadhibamana. Due to the thick coat of plaster, it is not

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69 OHRJ, Vol.VI, No.7, (1958), P.281
70 ODG (Keonjhar), PP.44-46.
71 Ibid.
possible to trace out the details of the sculptural features and other finer embellishments. The main temple along with the Jagamohana can be assigned to the 10th century A.D when Keonjhar was ruled by the Bhanjas who were feudatory chiefs of the Bhaumakaras. The temple contains the images of Bhairaba, Varaha, Vishnu, Mahisamardini Durga with eight hands holding the usual attributes like Khadga, Sula, Chakra and Sara in the right and Kuthara, Dhanu, Dhola, and Sarpa in the left. The Padmapani Avalokitesswara image is the brightest specimen of ancient Orissan art during the Bhaumakaras in Keonjhar.

The Somavamsis ruled over Orissa after the decline of the Bhaumakaras. It is known that at one time the Somavamsis were feudatories under the Bhaumakaras. Harekrushna Mahatab writes "The Soma dynasty came to power not by defeating, but by succeeding the childless family of the Bhaumakaras". Probably these two dynasties had matrimonial alliance between them. However, the Somavamsis, who claimed to belong to the Lunar Dynasty, became the supreme authority over Orissa after the Bhaumakaras. The Somavamsis assumed imperial titles like Maharajadhiraja and Parameswara and formed Mahakosala which included the whole of modern Orissa along with Keonjhar.

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Ultimately they became masters of the whole Kalingan region. It is learnt from the copper plate grants of the Soma rulers that they assumed the titles of Kalingadhipati and Kosalalendra. This shows that the Somavamsis were the paramount authority over Orissa after the decline of the Bhaumakaras, Keonjhar might have been one of the Feudatory States under them. They were Saivas, whereas the Bhaumas were Buddhists. It is known from copper plate grants that while the Soma rulers were the paramount authority of Kalinga, a different dynasty appeared in the history of Keonjhar. The rulers of this dynasty had the suffix of “Bhanja”. Hence the dynasty was known as the Bhanja dynasty.

The history of the last Bhanja Chiefs of Keonjhar can be traced back to the time of the Somavamsis, or the Keshari period. References have already been made regarding the early Bhanjas of Khinjigakotta, the Capital of Khinjiga Mandala. Rai Bahadur Hira Lal identified Khinjiga with Keonjhar or Kendujhara. The rock-cut inscriptions painting and architecture of Sitabhinji at Danguaposi give a clear picture of Maharaja Sri Disabhanja. Similarly, the Asanapat inscription refers to Maharaja Sri Satrubhanja. But it is a matter of regret that due to the paucity of definite sources

77ODG, Keonjhar, PP.43-49. 
78Ibid.
of information, it is impossible to connect these two Bhanjas of Keonjhar, with the present Bhanjas.

It is believed that the first Bhanja raja of Keonjhar was a prince from the royal house of Mayurbhanja who happened to belong to the Vasistha-gotra. The first Raja of this lineage was Maharaja Joti Bhanja (11128 A.D-1158 A.D). On the basis of tradition it is known that one Jai Singha, son of Man Singha a Kachua Rajput of solar race, and the Chief of Jeypore in Rajputna, came to Puri in 1098 A.D. and married the daughter of the then Gajapati Chief of Puri and received as dowry the territory of Hariharpura. Two sons were born to this union and the father before his death divided the territory of Hariharapura between them. The elder son Adi Singha received the Mayurbhanja portion and ruled from Adipura and the younger son Joti Bhanja received the Keonjhar portion and ruled from Jotipur. These two places were in opposite banks of the Baitarani and later on the brothers shifted their respective headquarters to the central places. However this tradition does not find true, because the poet who has discussed the early history of Keonjhar in the Sanskrit Drama "Bhanja Mahodayam" written in last part of 18th century A.D. has not given any reference to the Rajputs and the origin of the Bhanjas. Further according to the Bhuyan tradition has it that

80Nilakantha, Bhnja Mahodayan (Cuttack 1792) (Reprinted 1920) PP.27-30
they stole their boy chief from the Royal house of Mayurbhanja. The Bhuyans of Keonjhar had difficulty in going to Mayurbhanja to lay their grievances before the Chief, which was the cause of stealing the boy chief. The folk song of the Bhuyan has it that they stole the Boy-Chief and hide him at Kuruagada inside the in-accessible forest tract of Keonjhar. They arranged the royal shelter in the midst of the greenwood forest. The Bhuyans, according to their own tradition, took all care and installed him as the Raja endowing him with all types of royal power when he attained majority. Another tradition assigns a very humble origin to Joti Bhanja. According to this tradition Birabhadra, the founder of the Bhanja dynasty came out of the egg of a pea-hen and Joti was descended from him. The Bhanjas enjoyed the surname of ‘Bahanja’ because of the fact that the founder of the dynasty saw the light of the day when he came out of breaking an egg.

However the early history of Bhanja Kings of Keonjhar belonging to the family of Joti Bhanja is not yet properly known. It is believed Maharaja Joti Bhanja ascended throne in 1128 A.D and ruled up to 1158 A.D as a Feudatory ruler under the Somavamsis. Though the Raja was a Feudatory Chief, he

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82 B. Mishra, Dynastic History of Medieval Orissa, Calcutta (1933) P.58
* Joti Bhanjaya Churainle Kuruagada Raja” A folk song of the Bhuyan Community. Quoted in K. Mishra ‘Keondjhara Ithasa” (Cutack 1932) PP.16-17
83 Madan Mohan Mishra, Milani Banabina’ (Cutack 1932) PP.16-17.
84 B.C. Mazumdar, Orissa in making (Calcutta 1925) PP.132-133.
85 Ibid
enjoyed a considerable freedom in the governance of his domain. The Bhuyans took all care of their beloved Raja.

After the death of Maharaja Joti Bhanja, the throne passed on to Udaya Narayan Bhanja who continued to rule over the territory up to 1173 A.D. He erected a fort on the bank of the River Baitarani at Udayapur whose ruins are still visible. He was followed by Jagateswara Bhanja (1173 A.D to 1176 A.D). Ananta Bhanja (1176 A.D to 181 A.D)., Dayanidhi Bhanja (1181 A.D. to 1201 A.D) and Ratnakara Bhanja 1201 A.D to 1218 A.D).

From the 13th century A.D. to the 15th century A.D the Eastern Gangas became prominent in the political arena of Orissa. The Gangas came from South Kalinga, and became masters over the vast territory extended from the Ganges in the north to the Godavari in the south. A part of this territory was under their direct rule while the other part was left in the hands of the different ruling Chiefs. A number of petty chiefs of Orissa acknowledged the Ganga’s suzerainty and enjoyed a Feudatory status. They were also known as Samanta Rajas. Ananga Bhimadeva, one of the most important kings of the Ganga dynasty who is credited with the building of the Jagannath temple at Puri, created sixteen samanta Rajas in his territory.

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86 M.M.Mishra, Op.Cit, P.10
-ODG (Keonjhar) P.44
SRKS PP.37-39
* Vide appendix No G. The succession list of the Rajas of Keonjhar.
during his rule. Ganga ruler like Anangabhima Deva, Narasingha Deva and others enjoyed imperial titles like Gangeswar, Bhupa, parameswara, paramadhattaraka etc. The whole Cuttack and Sambalpur groups of States were included in the Ganga territory. The ex-state of Keonjhar was one of the Feudatory States under the Eastern Gangas. The Chief of Keonjhar appears to have had to pay tribute to the paramount authority according to the mutual settlement between the Chief and the paramount authority.

It was during the time of Champakeswara Bhanja or Chuneswara Bhanja (1218 A.D-1236 A.D) that Keonjhar passed into the hands of the Eastern Gangas and the Bhanjas of Keonjhar continued as feudatory Chiefs under them. His period was quite insignificant. He was succeeded by Santha Bhanja, who ruled only for a decade which ended in 1246 A.D. He was a pious and peace-loving man with saintly qualities and abandoned the material luxury of the palace to accept the hermitage. He practices Yoga in the thick forest near Palasapanga. The cave in which he practised Yoga is known as "Santha Bhanja Gumpha" by the local people.

Santha Bhanja seems to have patronised Buddhism after leaving the Gadi, i.e., after abdicating. Further, he was

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87Sterling's Orissa (London 1828) P.46.
90E.I. Vol.XXVII, P.112.
91A.B.Mohanty (Ed) Madela Panji, P.37.
known as “Buddha Siddha Charya Krupa”, ‘Santideva’ and ‘Bhrusha Krupa’. As he was a peace-loving man: he was also known as Shantideva, when Santha Bhanja patronised Buddhism, he identified himself as ‘Bhrusha Krupa’. He was followed by a number of Rajas namely Narahari Bhanja (1246-1266 A.D), Jadunath Bhanja (1266-1292 A.D), Gobardhana Bhanja 1292-1329 A.D), Gangadhar Bhanja (1329-1340 A.D), Jagannath Bhanja (1340-1354 A.D), Sridhara Bhanja (1354-1378 A.D), Srikara Bhanja (1373-1441 A.D), and Hrushikesh Bhanja (1412-1456 A.D)*.

The chief of Keonjhar sometimes rebelled and showed insubordination to the Ganga rulers. So war between the Chief and the paramount ruler became inevitable. The Madala Panji, the day-to-day chronicle of the Jagannath Temple, records that Narasinghadeva IV (1377 A.D to 1413 A.D) led campaign against the feudatory State of Keonjhar due to the insubordination of the then Chief of the State. Under the able command (Patra) of Gopinath Bhatta, the Ganga ruler Narasinghadeva IV defeated and subdued the chief of Keonjhar in Jharkhand. On the return journey, he defeated the other subordinate rulers.

Kapilendra Deva usurped the throne of Orissa by ousting the last Ganga ruler with the help of some feudatory chiefs of

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91Gadajata (Gadajat Cultural Council) (1990), P.67.
* Vide Appendix No. G Keonjhar, The succession list of the Rajas of Keonjhar.
92A.B.Mohanty (Ed) Madalapanji, PP.98-99
93Ibid, P.37.
Orissa. Copper plate inscriptions and 'Ganga Vansanucharitam' of Vasudeva Rath refer to the vast territory of the Gajapatis which mainly stretched in the coastal region. A number of feudatory Chiefs served him by paying annual tributes. It is revealed from the Lingaraja temple, Inscription of Kapilendra Deva in 1436 A.D., that he warned that all the Feudatory Chiefs of Orissa should be loyal to the Lord and should work for his benefit. Chiefs showing misconduct, misbehaviour and disloyalty might be prosecuted. Since Keonjhar was adjacent to the Gajapati territory, it might have survived with the feudatory status under the Gajapatis. However, Kapilendra Deva established unity in Orissa by controlling the feudatory chiefs with an iron hand.

Under Purushottam Deva, Keonjhar played a very significant role. Tradition has it that Govinda Bhanja, being driven out by his father, went to Puri and rendered service in the Gajapati King's armed forces, Govinda Bhanja, the great warrior, participated in the war in Kanchi (Kanjeevaram in Tamil Nadu) and earned victory for the Gajapati King of Puri. As a reward Govinda Bhanja obtained the Zamindary of Athagarh and Bancho, identified with the modern Anardapur

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94 JABS XII (1893) Part I, PP.103-104
- K.B.Tripathy (Evolution of Oriya Language and Script) Utkal University 1962, P.272
95 Ibid.
96 Feudatory State Gazetters, PP.214-215
- M.M.Mishra, Op.Cit, P.21
- B.Acharya, Bhaktabinoda (ed) (Cuttack 1930) Preface (Page not mentioned)
97 Gadajat, Op.Cit, P.8
subdivision\(^98\). After the death of his father, he was coronated as the Raja of Keonjhar and enjoyed a vast territory comprising upper and lower Keonjhar.

Thus under the Gangas and the Gajapatis, Keonjhar played a distinguished role. The Rajas of Keonjhar acknowledged the suzerainty of the Gangas and the Gajapatis. The Raja extended tribute to the paramount authority including military assistance. After the decline of the Gajapatis, the political reins of Orissa passed into the hands of the Afghans and the Mughals respectively, towards the 16th century A.D.

As the Gajapati dynasty grew weaker, the feudatory Raja began to assert their independence, which in turn gave rise to growing instability. The time was opportune for Suleman Quarani of Bengal to invade Orissa. It was an irony of fate that the native Chiefs helped the Muslim invaders instead of helping the paramount ruler of Orissa.

During the reign of Akbar The Great, the most important Emperor of the Mughal dynasty, Orissa came under his dominion\(^99\). But the Keonjhar tributary state was annexed to the Mughal territory only during the reign of Shah Jahan\(^100\). This annexation took place during the Governorship (Subedarship) of

\(^98\)Feudatory State Gazetteers, P.214-215.
\(^99\)B.C.Ray, Orissa under the Mughals (Calcutta 1981) PP.231-233
- JBORS, Vol.II, P.159
\(^100\)Ibid,
Khan-I-Duran (1660-67) in Orissa. Khan-I-Duran received his order of appointment at Allahabad on the 3rd April 1660. The Suba of Orissa was in a state of anarchy. The zamindars of Orissa, including the Chief of Khurdha, the Gajapati Raja of Orissa, became rebellious. The Chief of Hariharapura or Mayurbhanja spread his power from Midnapur to Bhatinda and prepared himself to challenge the Mughal administration. The fort of Machhara or Bachhara was no more in the hands of Shuja’s men, but had been taken over by Laxmi Narayan Bhanja, the Raja of Keonjhar, during the time of disaster.

It was at this critical juncture that Khan-I-Duran assumed the Subedarship of Orissa, Subedar Khan-I-Duran wanted to suppress the zamindars of Orissa and bring an end to their in-subordination and rebellious activities. Khan-I-Duran first wanted to destroy the power of the Chief of Khurdha. He was the most powerful and influential among the Chiefs in Orissa, whom all zamindars of the country worshipped like a God. However Khan-I-Duran later on sent the army to suppress the other rebels. He made rapid progress to Khurdha which frightened the Raja. The Raja fled with his life.

After the downfall of Khurdha, Khan-I-Duran led his army to the north, to Mayurbhanja and Keonjhar. These two

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101 JBORS, Vol.II, PP.159-160
102 Ibid, P.162.
103 Ibid., Vol.II, P.159.
zamindars did possess immense strategic importance. Khan-I-Duran who was fully aware of their strategic importance declared war against Laxmi Narayan Bhanja of Keonjhar in 1660-61 AD which ended with the defeat of the latter. Keonjhar was recognised as a feudatory State of the Mughal empire during the reign of Aurangazeb\textsuperscript{106}.

After the occupation and recognition of Keonjhar the Mughals settled the area and identified it as Zamindary\textsuperscript{107}. The remote highlands and densely forest tracts of Keonjhar were excluded from the Imperial administration. The administration of the area was vested in the Chief. The Chief of Keonjhar had to send the collected revenue to the Imperial treasury at Delhi\textsuperscript{108}. The Chief of Keonjhar enjoyed subordinate status under who were placed fifteen petty Zamindars and fifty five killas (forts)\textsuperscript{109}.

The Chief of Keonjhar, thus became a tributary Raja under the Mughal Imperial administration. Hereditary succession was allowed to the Raja, who had to rule according to traditional methods. He had to render military service to the Mughal authority as and when needed\textsuperscript{110}.

\textsuperscript{106}JBORS, Vol.II, P.164-165
\textsuperscript{107}B.C.Ray, Op.Cit, P.45
\textsuperscript{108}Ibid, P.46
\textsuperscript{109}Ibid, P.47.
\textsuperscript{110}Ibid, P.1
At times the Feudatory Rajas rebelled against the Mughal Government by refusing to pay tributes to the latter. The Chief of Keonjhar took a major part in the revolutionary activities. Particularly during the reign of Aurangzeb a number of Chiefs of Orissa including the Chief of Keonjhar refused to pay tributes. Ultimately Mughal Governor in Orissa, Khan-I-Duran, declared war against Keonjhar and subsequently the revolt was suppressed.

The Bhonslas of Nagpur became the virtual masters of Orissa towards the second half of the eighteenth century. They have been identified as the "Rajas of Berar" by European writers. Rajaram Pandit (1778-1793) succeeded Madhaji Hari as the Maratha Governor Orissa. He was an intelligent and judicious man. He established sound relationship with the British. During the time of Pratap Balabhadra Bhanja (1764-1792) the Maratha Subedar Raja Ram Pundit invaded Keonjhar; Chimansji Bapu a Maratha General reached Cuttack with a vast army. While marching with the troops Chimansji passed through Dhenkanal and Hajirpur. Then he marched towards Keonjhar. The Chief of Keonjhar along with the Diwan allowed them to march through the territory by extending him honour. The Chief of Keonjhar Pratap Balabhadra Bhanja also supplied

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12Ibid.
14ODG (Keonjhar) P.45-46.
military assistance in the form of twenty thousand Khandayat to the Maratha army\textsuperscript{116}. This shows that the Raja of Keonjhar did not want to waste money and material by engaging in a fruitless war with Marathas. He established friendship with the Marathas by signing a treaty to extend military and financial assistance to them at the time of need.

"Bhanja Mahodayam", a Sanskrit play of the last decade of the 18th century A.D., however, gives a graphic though different picture of the Maratha-Keonjhar battle. It mentions that Raja Prataprudra Deva of Bamra, along with the Chief of Keonjhar Paratap Balabhada Narayan Bhanja (1762 A.D.-1797 A.D.), jointly challenged the Maratha army\textsuperscript{117}. The combined strength of Keonjhar and Bamra easily repulsed the Marathas\textsuperscript{118}. Mutual animosity, however, developed later on between Keonjhar and Bamra which resulted in the defeat of the allies at the hands of the Marathas. Ultimately Keonjhar became a feudatory State under Maratha supremacy\textsuperscript{119}.

During the rule of the Mughals, Orissa was divided into two political divisions, viz. Mughal-bandi and Garhjat. However, the Marathas did not change the system of administration introduced by the Mughals and continued the administration introduced by the Mughals and continued the

\textsuperscript{117}Nilakantha, Bhanja Mahodayam, (Reprint Cuttack 1936) PP.30-33
\textsuperscript{118}Nilakantha, Op.Cit, pp.30-33.
\textsuperscript{119}Ibid.
same method. The Chief of Keonjhar was left to himself and the Marathas never interfered in the internal administration of the State\textsuperscript{120}. In lieu of this noninterference the feudatory Raja had to deposit a stipulated amount in the Maratha treasury\textsuperscript{121}.

At some point of time or other, some feudatory Rajas, including the Chief of Keonjhar, were involved in activities of insubordination like nonpayment of annual tribute to the Marathas\textsuperscript{122}. Such insubordination compelled the Marathas to interfere in the affairs of the Garhjat States\textsuperscript{123}. One such circumstance occurred when the Chief of Keonjhar rebelled and challenged the authority of Bhonsla Raja of Nagpur\textsuperscript{124}. And though the Garhjat States were generally left free in the conduct of their internal affairs, but situation compelled the Maratha Government to interfere. One such occasion was the interference of the Marathas in the rift between Keonjhar and Mayurbhanja. When Damodar Bhanja, the Chief of Mayurbhanja died and the Chief of Keonjhar aspired for the Gadi(throne) Rani Sumitra Dei appealed to the Maratha for military aid\textsuperscript{125}.

\textsuperscript{120}B.C.Roy, Op.Cit, P.22.
\textsuperscript{121}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{124}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{126}Bd. Procd. (OSA, Acc.No.8) E.Impey to W.B.Baylay Secretary to Govt. Oct. 17, 1815
Contemporary literature of Keonjhar and other neighbouring states show Keonjhar in a different light. The rule of Pratap Balabhadra Narayan Bhanja (1762-1797 A.D.) is quite significant in the history of Keonjhar. The State came under Maratha supremacy during his reign. Though a feudatory ruler under the Marathas, he was quite powerful from the military point of view and brought about an enlargement of his domain. In the early phase of his rule he annexed Rathipur and Jujupada; two Mughal bandi areas to Keonjhar. In the next stage he annexed Kaliahata to his own territory, Kaliahata used to be a buffer territory between Keonjhar and Dhenkanal. In 1771 A.D Pratapa Balabhadra Narayan Bhanja acquired authority over the Soso Zamindari. He also purchased the Zamindari of Dhenka from the Marathas, who overthrew the previous Zamindar because of irregular and nonpayment of revenue. Reference has also been made about the Keonjhar-Sukinda battle in "Bhanja Mahodayam". The contemporary sanskrit play "Bhanja Mahodayam" and an Oriya lyric "Bamanda Koili" also refer to the war between Keonjhar and Bamanda.

The "Samara Taranga" of Brajanath Badjena refers to the war between Keonjhar and Dhenkanal which resulted in the defeat of the former. But since the poet Brajanath Badjena was in the court of the Raja of Dhenkanal his work "Samara

\[\text{Nilakantha, Op.Cit, P.15-21.}\]

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
To sum up, it can be said that Keonjhar during the Maratha rule enjoyed considerable autonomy in its internal administration. Towards 1780 A.D the British came and Anglo-Maratha war occurred. The Marathas plundered the Garhjat and Mughalbandi territories. Ultimately the supremacy of the Marathas was destroyed when Keonjhar was occupied by the British.

On the whole it is seen that Keonjhar remained as a feudatory State almost during the whole period of its history. Keonjhar, however, under its Bhanja chiefs enjoyed internal autonomy all through.

With the advent of the British, Maratha, power declined. Subsequently, Keonjhar passed into the hands of the British, under whom it also remained as a feudatory state. During the time of Janardan Bhanja, the Raja of Keonjhar, by a treaty-engagement accepted British dominance on the 16th December, 1804 A.D. Under British suzerainty also Keonjhar occupied a distinguished position in comparison with other feudatory states of Orissa. The clauses of the treaty-engagement clearly highlight the distinguished position of the Raja of Keonjhar. The Raja was a friend to the East India Company. The Raja only promised to pay annual tribute in time. In return the Raja
enjoyed considerable autonomy in the internal administration of his State. The British period passed with friendship and cordiality. The British occupation of Keonjhar is a significant event, discussed in the following chapters.