The history of early medieval Orissa constitutes a significant part in the history of early medieval India. The death of Harṣavardhan was followed by a period of multiplicity of states in the history of northern India. The Śailodbhavas of Koṅgoda, the Gauḍas after the death of Śaśāṅka and Kāmarūpa under Bhāskaravarman in eastern India had all been under the paramount overlordship of Harṣa who was the lord of entire northern India. However soon after his death the local dynasties of Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa asserted their independence and played prominent roles in north-eastern India.

A number of semi-independent states were carved out in Orissa towards the later part of the seventh century A.D. as a result of the internecine war and struggle for power. They came to be known as maṇḍalas and played significant roles in the then Orissan politics till the foundation of the enlarged Orissan kingdom under Choḍagaṅga Deva, the famous Gaṅga monarch. The early history of Orissa contains numerous references to some maṇḍala states having the dimension of a kingdom. The word maṇḍala appears somewhat ambiguous because even territories like Kaliṅga, Utkala, Kośala and Oḍra were sometimes being referred to as
maṇḍalas. According to traditions recorded in Dharmasastra a state is called a maṇḍala when it is roughly a square either of twenty Yojanas or of forty Yojanas. However these maṇḍala states were geographically located in between two imperial powers on either side. The eastern coastal region extending from river Gaṅges to mount Mahendra was ruled by the Bhauma-Karas and in the western part we find the powerful Pāṇḍuvaṁśīs who later on came to be known as the Somavaṁśīs. In between these two we find some buffer zones in the form of semi autonomous units acquiring the nomenclature of maṇḍala states. Those were Koṅgoda maṇḍala, Śvetaka maṇḍala, Kodālaka maṇḍala, Yamagartta maṇḍala, Airāvaṭṭa maṇḍala, Khiṅjali maṇḍala, Khiṭṭha maṇḍala, Daṇḍabhukti maṇḍala, Baṅāi maṇḍala, Khirāśṛṅga maṇḍala, Chakrakoṭṭa maṇḍala etc. The rulers of those maṇḍala states were sometimes found as feudatories under some sovereign powers and sometimes independent. Like the sovereign kingdoms they had their own army and issued charters with their own seals. In fact those maṇḍala states flourished under the patronage of the Bhauma-Karas to serve the purpose of a shield in order to protect their kingdom from external threat.

In the eighth century A.D. the Bhaṅjas established their rule as feudatories of the Bhuma-Karas in Baud-Sonepur region
known as Khinjali maṇḍala. The capital of this kingdom was Dhṛtipura, which may be identified with Baud. Khinjali maṇḍala has often been referred to as Ubhaya-Khinjali which indicates that this maṇḍala was divided in to two parts, probably the river Mahānadi being the dividing line. After the Bhaṅjas were ousted from Khinjali maṇḍala by the Somavamśīs in ninth century A.D. they migrated to south-east and established themselves in Ghumusar-Daśapallā region of modern Gaṅjām and Nayāgarh districts respectively with their headquarters at Vaṅjulvaka. About the middle of tenth century A.D. they again shifted their headquarters from Vaṅjulvaka to Kumārapura. Besides this, another Bhaṅja family is found to have granted charters from Kolāḍa Kaṭaka.

The Bhaṅjas who held their sway over the territory between Toṣali of the Bhauma-Karas and South Kośala of the Imperial Somavamśīs were most powerful among the feudatories of the Bhauma-Karas. With their seat of power at Dhṛtipura and Vaṅjulvaka, they occupied a position of strategic importance which helped them to regulate the relationship between the Somavamśīs and the Bhauma-Karas, although they failed to maintain their existence as an independent power in the face of the imperialistic design of the Somavamśīs of South-Kośala. Being emerged from an
humble tribal stock and going through many ups and downs in their career as the feudatories of the Bhauma-Karas, the Somavamsis and the Imperial Gaṅgas, they made an imperishable epoch in the political and cultural history of Orissa.

Scholars like F. Keilhorn, R. L. Mitra, R. D. Banerji, B. C. Mazumdar, C. C. Dasgupta, P. R. Srinivasan, Rai Bahadur Hiralal, B. Mishra, T. C. Rath, C. R. Krishnamacharulu, R. C. Majumdar, D. C. Sircar, A. Banerji, K. C. Panigrahi, S. N. Rajguru, N. K. Sahu, J. Mahapatra and R. K. Ray have done some pioneering researches in this field. But their treatment was more or less fragmentary. There has been no sincere attempt for a systematic and comprehensive study on the origin, genealogy, chronology, administration and cultural heritage of the Bhaṅjas even though they continue to be an important factor in the history and culture of Orissa. Therefore, an attempt has been made to bring forth a chronological and comprehensive study on the socio-political and cultural history of Khinjali mandala during the rule of the Bhaṅjas. Further this work is the first comprehensive attempt on the socio-economic life and religious condition of Khinjali mandala.

The main aim of this dissertation is to determine the importance of the Bhaṅja ruling family of Khinjali mandala and to provide them a high and honourable place in the history of Orissa.
Moreover, a concrete picture of the contribution of the Bhañja rulers of Khiñjali mañḍala has been presented.

In order to materialize our objective we have taken the assistance of the Bhañja epigraphs of Khiñjali mañḍala and the epigraphs of the neighbouring kingdoms. For the extent of territories, centre of trade and cultural activities, monuments and sculptures a thorough field study programme has been carried on. Necessary map and photographs have been used to substantiate our findings. After the collection of the data, relevant books, journals and periodicals have been consulted for an analytical study. Finally after the collection of the data historical criticism have been adopted for findings and conclusion.

History of Khiñjali mañḍala, the subject matter of this dissertation is based on the study of original epigraphic and archaeological sources and is divided in to eight chapters.

Chapter one presents a brief sketch about the political condition of Orissa in the post-Harsha period and the emergence of the mañḍala states. We have also presented a list of the Bhañja copper plates which are valuable sources for the study of topography, chronology, political history, administration, socio-economic life and religious condition of the period. We have discussed in details about different styles followed by the Bhañjas.
The Bhanja rulers of Khinjali mandala are known to have followed two distinct principles in dating their records. Some of their records are found dated in Samvat years where as some other charters have been dated in specific regnal years of the concerned donors which provide a clue to judge their political status. Another interesting thing is that some Bhanja charters have been issued on the occasions like Viṣuva Saṁkrānti, Akṣaya Tṛtiyā, Kārtika Śukla Dvādaśī, Mārgaśira Chaturdaśī, Mahānavami etc. Apart from the charters of the Bhanjas we have also utilized some charters of the Bhauma-Karas, Somavamsis, Dhavalas of Khīṇḍiraśṛṅga manḍala, Imperial Gaṅgas of Utkala and Kalachuris of Ratnapura which give a clear picture about the inter-state relation. We have also discussed about the archaeological remains ascribed to the Bhanjas which forms an important source for the study of religious and art history.

The second chapter deals with Historical Geography of the Manḍala states. One important feature of the historical geography of medieval Orissa is the rise of the manḍala states which were ruled by the feudatory chiefs enjoying internal autonomy. The earliest and most important among them was Koṅgoda manḍala of the Śailodbhavas. These manḍala states were mostly located on the borders of two sovereign and rival states and the overlord against the enemy power used them as military bases. In ninth-tenth centuries
most of the maṇḍala states were under the Bhauma-Karas who were at that time at war with the Somavāṃśīs of South Kośala and the Imperial Gaṅgas of Kaliṅga. The history and the geographical extent of these maṇḍala states were greatly affected by the aggressive imperialism of the Somavāṃśīs and the decline of the Bhaumas. In this chapter we have discussed the historical geography of the thirteen maṇḍala states throwing new light on each of them. Special attention has been given to the identification of villages and towns basing on the views of different scholars. We have also presented an exhaustive treatment of the geographical extent of Khinjali maṇḍala by identifying most of the topographical sites recorded in the Bhaṅja epigraphs.

In the third chapter we have discussed the origin, genealogy and chronology of the Bhaṅjas by examining the dates and genealogy mentioned in different charters of the dynasty. It presents a critical analysis of different theories advocated by various scholars with regard to the origin of the Bhaṅjas. The totemic origin of the Bhaṅjas of Khijjiṅga Koṭṭa and Khinjali maṇḍala and their hailing from a common stock have been discussed in this chapter at full length. It also describes in details about the literary accounts found in the epigraphic records of the early Bhaṅjas of Khijjiṅga Koṭṭa. We have also attempted to establish relationship between the
Bhañjas of Khijjiṅga Koṭṭa and Bhañjas of Khīnjali maṇḍala basing on the views advocated by various scholars. Basing on the geographical lists furnished by the Bhañja copper plates we have established relationship between Neṭṭibhañja of Aṅgulakapaṭana with the Bhañjas of Dhṛtipura and Vañjulvaka. We have also tried to establish fraternal relationship between Śatrubhañja Maṅgalarāja of Tekkāli charter who was ruling over Salvaḍa viṣaya with Vidyādharabhañja of Vañjulvaka.

More than thirty-five sets of copper plate charters of the Bhañjas of Khīnjali maṇḍala have been discovered so far. Although it has become difficult to arrange them in a chronological order we have attempted to do it basing on the genealogical lists and place of issue of the charters. The date of the Bhañja kings cannot be determined with certainty. However in the light of the paleographic consideration of the script inscribed in their charters they can be ascribed to eighth century A.D. at the earliest. Basing on the character of the script of the Bhañja charters a thorough examination of the dates found therein, the chronology of the Bhañja family has been worked out in chapter three. This chapter presents a critical study of different problems connected with the chronology of the Bhañjas of Khīnjali. The dates assigned to different rulers of this family are tentative and are based on synchronism of events and
contemporaneity of the Bhaña kings with the rulers of other dynasties whose dates have been determined by scholars. The Bhañjas of Khiñjali ruled over their kingdom for fairly a longer period suffering temporary eclipses. They appeared in the political scene of Orissa at least in five phases from eighth century A.D. to early thirteenth century A.D. their centre of activities being shifted from Dhṛtipura to Vañjulvaka, Kumārapura, Kholipāti, Salvaḍa, Kolāḍa Kaṭaka and Gandharvāḍi in different periods.

Chapter four deals with the dynastic history of the Bhañjas. Neṭṭbhaña of Aṅgulakapaṭana, the first ruler of the Bhañjas of Khiñjali maṇḍala, was ruling over Angul area. His successor Śilābhaña however left this place and established himself in Baud region making Dhṛtipura as his capital. After the assassination of Raṇabhaña I of this line the Bhañjas left Baud area and established their new kingdom in Ghumusar of Gañjām district with Vañjulvaka as the capital city. During the fag-end of Somavarnāśī rule the Bhañjas recaptured the Baud-Sonepur area and named it as Gandharvāḍi maṇḍala. This chapter describes in details about the various land grants made by the rulers of the dynasty. The diplomatic relations of the Bhaña kings with their neighbouring states and how they reacted to the contemporary political changes have been discussed in exhaustive from.
Chapter five is an in-depth study of the administrative organization and working of bureaucracy of Khinjali mandala on the basis of epigraphic records. The chapter explains how the Bhaña government and bureaucratic framework profoundly influenced the administration in inaccessible Orissa. In fact the Bhañjas of Khinjali mandala were not only famous for their military prowess but also they established themselves as efficient administrators whose sole motto was the welfare of the people. They introduced a systematic method of administration with the help of their efficient bureaucracy. The administrative system of the Bhañjas was an echo of the Bhauma-Kara administration. Being the feudatory dynasty of the Bhauma-Karas it was quite natural on their part to adopt an administrative system, which was in vogue in the kingdom of their overlords. It is noticed that most of the titles of the Bhañjas officials found in their copper plate charters tally with those of the Bhauma-Karas.

Chapter six deals with the social and economic condition of Khinjali mandala. In fact the original sources do not throw much light on its socio-economic condition. But the social system of the kingdom bears similarity with other parts of the subcontinent. However the epigraphic records of the Bhañjas and the contemporary ruling families provide us with some facts about the
social condition of Khinjali mandala in particular and that of Orissa in general. This chapter provides a brief sketch about the four varānas of the society i.e. Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras and about some tribes like Šavaras, Goṇḍs, Biṅjhāls, Kondhs, Dumāls etc. We have also discussed here about marriage system, role of women in the society, food and drinks, dress and ornament, entertainments, education etc. on the basis of original records. It also highlights about land, land sale, right over land, purpose of land grants, nature of land and demarcation of boundaries, revenue system, agriculture products, forest, industry, trade and currency system.

The Bhaṇjas had patronized a number of religions like Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaktism and Buddhism. Many of their royal charters speak about their patronage towards these religions. Having been influenced by their overlords, the Bhauma-Karas, they had brought about a religious synthesis in their kingdom. In chapter seven we have discussed about different religions that prevailed in Khinjali mandala. The growth and development of Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaktism and Buddhism and how they influenced the people of Orissa till the time of the Bhaṇja rule have been narrated here in comprehensive form. While dealing with these main cults of Brahmanic form of Hinduism due emphasis has been given to the
cult of Stambheśvarī, which occupied a prominent position in the religious life of the people of Khinjali. This study shows that the religious activities of the Bhaṅjas were politically motivated. This culminated in the synthesis of various religions under the zealous patronage of the Bhaṅja kings.

In the realm of architecture and sculpture also the contribution of the Bhaṅjas is noteworthy. Chapter eight narrates about the art, architecture and sculpture of the kingdom. A critical account of the architectural and sculptural details of the twin temples of Gandharādi on the basis of the findings of earlier scholars as well as on our own observation has been given. On the strength of epigraphic evidence and religious condition that prevailed in Khinjali it is shown in this chapter that the twin temples of Gandharādi, one dedicated to Siddheśvara Śiva and the other to Nīlamādhava Viṣṇu can be ascribed to the Bhaṅjas who ruled over this territory. These temples not only speak about the patronage of the Bhaṅja kings to architecture and sculpture but also about the artistic skill of the then artists.

Although the Bhaṅjas were not Buddhists yet they are known to have patronized that faith which was followed by their overlords, the Bhauma-Karas. In this connection, we have for the first time made a thorough field survey of the Buddha images found
in and around Baud. In this chapter we have attempted to bring out the time period of these Buddha images on the basis of the views of different scholars, published in various periodicals and journals.

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