Chapter – I

INTRODUCTION

Upland regions of western Orissa and adjoining areas of present day Chhattisgarh are dotted with temples of myriad size and shapes, some of which are dated to c. 6th-11th century A.D. These early temples have withstood the vagaries of time and nature. Some others have perished, while the remaining witnessed many phases of renovation, which resulted in significant alteration of their plans.

These early temples of South-Kośala region have attracted the attention of art historians from an early date. Their style, decorative motifs, plans and material used have been copiously studied by numerous art historians.

But these temples are much more than architectural monuments. Given the preponderance of religion in individual and social life, it is a truism that temple occupied an important place in the cultural and social life of early medieval India. Recent research on this period revolves around the formation of regional states in which 'Religious processes' are seen as a part of the formation of the state, its role being defined as providing legitimation to the emerging kings.

The religious process of the early medieval period has been studied largely through epigraphic, literary or anthropological data. Scholars have suggested that religious transformation was a part of political changes and state formation. The primary data on this hypothesis was provided by royal endowments to religious institutions and Brāhmaṇas. These Brāhmaṇas and religious institutions were considered as agents of acculturation and as
benefiting political authority in consolidation and the expansion of territorial boundaries of the newly formed state.

This research shifts the focus from the state to the temple and studies the cultural history of the South-Kosala region in the early medieval period (between c. 6th century A.D. to c. 11th century A.D). The thrust of the research is to analyse the 'religious processes' of the said period by focusing on the temples and their role in the religious transformation of the region under discussion. But, as the subject has mostly been studied in relation to state formation, here I would like to survey some of the works related to it.

Regarding the early medieval state formation, scholars have put forward various hypotheses but the central debate is between the 'feudalism model' and the 'integrative model' of state formation.

According to the proponents of the 'feudalism model' of state formation, the donation of tax-free lands to Brāhmaṇas, religious institutions and secular donees with various immunities (puribārā) e.g., freedom from taxation, inspection by royal officials and with royal prerogatives, e.g. jurisdiction and collection of fines, led to the emergence of a class of landed intermediaries. They assert that the process of administrative and political decentralization through land grants, which started under the Sātavāhanas, intensified during the Guptas and reached its climax in the post-Gupta and in the early medieval period.¹

According to them,² the land grants with various immunities led to the fragmentation and decentralization of the central authority. Taking advantage

¹ Sharma, R.S. (1965), Indian Feudalism, Calcutta, also see - (2001), Early Medieval Indian Society: A Study in Feudalisation, Kolkata.

of the situation, the feudal chiefs extended their power and area of dominance at the cost of their overlords and declared their independence. On the whole, the political development of the early medieval period was marked by the decline of imperial power and the formation of local, sub-regional and regional powers. In this context, they argued that land donation to Brähmaṇas and religious institutions were crucial. The Brähmaṇas played a seminal role in legitimizing the role of the newly emerged king and provided the much-needed ideological support. Bhakti, the core of the ideology of this period, according to them, accentuated the relationship of loyalty and devotion, which are believed to be the hallmark of feudal ties.

Diametrically opposed to the views propounded by the ‘feudalism model’ is the ‘integrative model’ of state formation. Herman Kulke is of the view that after the decline of the Gupta Empire and of the transient successor states under king Harsha in the early 7th century A.D., the overwhelming majority of the early medieval states of India emerged from a process of continuous agrarian expansion and political integration. According to him, land donation to Brähmaṇas, religious institutions and more importantly the royal temple policy played a major role in the whole process of state formation, the legitimisation of royal authority, and stabilisation of state structure. The Brähmaṇas were not only ritual specialist but also by virtue of their monopolistic access to the Śāstra texts, had command over a considerable body of knowledge on agriculture, state administration and

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political economy. The material reproduction of this new form of political authority demanded a continuously increased appropriation of surplus produced by society, which required new forms of religio-political legitimation. Creating such legitimacy was the task pre-eminently incumbent on the invited Brāhmaṇas. Raising the status of the new rulers was an urgent necessity in order to legitimise their claim to a regular system of imposts and later, revenues. This happened through different ways (i) by creating genealogies which traced the origin of the new local ruling dynasty (Vamsa) back to a mythical progenitor of remote epic antiquity or even directly to God (ii) by vesting the new ruler with the paraphernalia of Hindu royalty, for example, the obligatory royal umbrella (Chattra) and the construction of the first Hindu temples.

Kulke asserts that the most important aspect of royal legitimation was the cult appropriation, or the inclusion of the autochthonous, tribal or local deities into the Hindu pantheon. In his case study on the cult of Jagannath, Kulke tries to show how the Jagannath cult emerged as a pan-Orissan phenomenon through the inclusion of tribal deities and royal patronage.

Besides these two theories, scholars like B.D. Chattopadhyaya, Upinder Singh and B.P. Sahu have also emphasized land donation to Brāhmaṇas in the formation of regional states and legitimation of royalty.

In their methodology, the above-discussed studies on the early medieval period have been influenced by other streams of research. The notion of centre and periphery which is used in geographical study is

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commonly used by historians. In the Indian context, it was extensively used by Subba Rao⁷ who developed the hypothesis of the 'Region of Attraction', 'Region of Relative Isolation' and 'Region of Isolation'. His classification influenced early medieval research to a great extent. Based on the present geomorphology of a region, early medieval historians categorised certain regions as 'core regions' and others as 'periphery'. According to them, the historical development of peripheral regions took place at a later date and largely through the migration of Brāhmaṇas, extension of state boundary and 'Diffusion of Culture' from core to peripheral region. Secondly, they studied the early medieval period as different from the early historical and did not perceive it as a continuation of the early historical period.

With regard to sources, these studies are primarily based on the epigraphic and literary records, and do not incorporate archaeological or numismatic data. Interestingly, their study on religious process is neither based on extant temple remains nor religious imagery and sculptures. Issues such as these are dealt in this work pertaining to the South-Kośala region. It is a promising region to study the religious process of the early medieval period. Culturally, South-Kośala had close contacts with the Ganga valley in the north, Deccan in the south and coastal Orissa in the east. The movement of men and materials from different parts of the country accentuated the process of historical development of this region and added to the internal dynamics of change. This is reflected in the material culture of the early historical period and in the form of temple in the early medieval period.

In my present research, I intend to emphasise the cultural dynamics of South-Kośala by focusing on the factors behind the emergence of the temple on the one hand and the role of the temple in the religious processes of the early medieval period on the other.

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⁷ Subba Rao, B. (1958), Personality of India, Baroda.
Geomorphology as an important tool for historical development is hardly recognised in the case of South-Kośala. The undulating topography, small and medium hill ranges, thick forests make this region a homogenous unit, and geographically separate it from coastal Orissa and Central India. This region can be divided into two distinct landscapes. First, the plain (the land below the 300m MSL), concentrated in the valley of the major rivers and it provided the much needed agricultural land for subsistence. Second, the upland (the land above the 300m MSL) which constitutes the small and medium hill ranges and abounds in mineral resources and forest products.

The salubrious climatic condition (tropical rainy climate with dry winter) plenty of rainfall (130cm to 150cm) and diverse flora sal, bijasal, dhaura, teak, sisoo and bamboo and a variety of grass provided the much needed raw materials to build houses for sedentary life, and fauna like bison, sambar, nilgai, spotted deer, barking deer, wild boar, and birds provided suitable hunting ground which attracted the early inhabitants to settle in this region. Recent archaeological excavation at Khambeswaripali on the bank of the Mahanadi reveals the proto-historic adaptation strategy. A large number of animal bones have been found from the excavation. Such bone remains have also been found from exploration in other parts of this region, whose dates have not yet been established. The appearance of terms like hastidanta (elephant tusk) and baghacama (tiger skin) in the Somavarśī records (10th century A.D) refers to the importance of the faunal remains.

The rivers were the main artery of communication which connected this region with coastal Orissa. The Mahanadi (Manada of Ptolemy and
which was famous for trade in oil and timber) are two principal rivers of this region. The navigability of these rivers and their use for travel and transportation led to the exchange of goods and commodities with coastal Orissa, a fact corroborated by the discovery of the hoards of punch-marked coins, especially, from the valley of the Tel (see Table on numismatic findings of South-Kośala region Chapter 2). The important feeders of the Mahanadi are the Jonk, Seonath, Hasdo, Mand, Pairi, Tel, Jira and Ib. The tributaries of Tel are Under, Sungad, Suktel, Rual, Haiti, Utei, etc. These tributaries played a prominent role in the mobilization of men and materials from the hinterland to the settlements found on the bank of the major rivers. The discovery of huge fortified sites like Asurgarh (Narla) in the upper reaches of Sungad, a tributary of Utei, which is in turn a tributary of the Tel, and Budhigarth in the upper reaches of Raul a tributary of the Tel testify to this fact.

Geologically, this region forms a part of the Deccan plateau. It is one of the oldest landmass of the earth and possesses rich mineral resources. The important resources are iron ore, bauxite, gold, lead and a variety of precious and semi-precious stones i.e., carnelian, agate, jasper, sapphire, quartz, ruby, garnet, and alexandrite. The Geological Survey of India has identified Jillingadar in Kalahandi district as the largest ruby deposit belt in Orissa. Kalahandi is the only district in Orissa which has such deposits.

The most important point is the exploitation of these resources in the historical period as is evident from the archaeological findings of South-Kośala region. (See Chapter 2 for detailed discussion on the mineral resources of this region and their exploitation in the early historic period).

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9 Geological Survey of India (1976), 'Geology and Mineral Resources of the States of India (Madhya Pradesh)', Miscellaneous Publication, Delhi, see also, GSI (1974), 'Geology and Mineral Resources of the States of India (Orissa)', Miscellaneous Publication, Delhi.
In the ancient period, we have two territorial units of identical name called Kosala. While, one of them belonged to the category of Mahajanapada and located in the Ganga valley. The other one was simply a Janapada, which corresponded to some portion of Chhattisgarh and western Orissa, and is focus of the present study. Like the former, the latter one was also frequently mentioned in the literary texts of early India and in the epigraphic records of the subsequent period. The similarity in name had great historical significance and draws attention of the scholars working in the historical geography of the ancient period. The early scholars have tried to trace its origin, location and extension but failed to provide any historical explanation behind their identical names. In this regard, the epigraphic records are also not of much help. They only bear the name Kosala, but do not contain any other information. However, unlike the epigraphic records, the epic, puranic and narrative texts are replete with references related to origin, location and extension.

The epic literatures record three important traditions which are related to origin of another Kosala territory.

(i) Lord Rama, Son of Dasaratha had spent ten years in the forest in his exile. The forest has been identified in the present Koraput and Kalahandi district of Orissa and southern part of Chhattisgarh. According to Pargiter, the long stay of Lord Rama in Chhattisgarh region might have connected it with his home country Kosala, and hence the name Dakshina Kosala came in the vague.

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10 The synonymities in name draw the attention of eminent scholars like D.C. Sircar, B.C. Law. Nanda Lal Dey, A. Cunningham, F.E. Parigter, K.D. Bajpai, etc. But their works mostly revolve around the references found in the literary texts and their identification.

11 Sahu, J.K. (1997), Historical Geography of Orissa, New Delhi, p. 57.

(ii) The second tradition traces the origin of South-Kośala to another episode of the epic Rāmāyaṇa. In the Rāmāyaṇa, it is mentioned that Lord Rama had divided his empire into two parts. He founded the city of Kusavati at the foothill of the Vindhya and installed Kusa as its king, which came to be known as South-Kośala, whereas Lava was installed at Ayodhya and became the king of North-Kośala. This tradition is also recorded in the Purāṇa like the Vāyu and Padma.

(iii) The third tradition is recorded in the Mahābhārata, which refers to a mass migration of people of North-Kośala to the South, due to the terror caused by Jarasandha. It is suggested that these migrants of North-Kośala might have settled in Chhattisgarh region which come to be known as South-Kośala.

There is a fourth tradition recorded in an unpublished manuscript called Kośala-Khaṇḍa, dated to c. 10th-11th century A.D. The text mentions that there was a king named Kośala, who ruled the territory to the South of Vindhya and after him it came to be known as Kośala. According to it, in the same lineage comes a ruler named Bhanumant, whose daughter Kausalya married Dasaratha the king of North-Kośala. As Bhanumant had no male issue, the territory passed to Dasaratha after his death. Therefore, to distinguish it from North-Kośala (Ayodhya) it was re named as Daksīṇa-
Kośala. Further, it is known from the Rāmāyaṇa that Dasaratha and Bhanumanta were contemporary.

Though these traditions are not historical in nature, but they associate South-Kośala with important mythological episodes of the east. The Sabhāparvan of the Mahābhārata mentions a territory called Purva-Kośala. It further mentions that in their digvijaya Bhima conquered Uttara-Kośala, whereas Sahadeva conquered and annexed the territory of Dakṣiṇa-Kośala. In the Āsvamedhikaparvan, Kośala is mentioned along with Vangas and Pundras residing near the sea coast. The Vanaparvan mentions that king Nala, who was wandering with his wife Damayanti in the Vindhyan forest pointed out three routes, one of which run towards the South after crossing the country of Avanti and the Kusa mountain, the second toward Vidarbha (Berar) and the third towards South-Kośala. In the Mahābhārata, it is further mentioned that Brhadvala, who belonged to the line of Kusa was the king of South-Kośala during the time of the Bharata war.

In the early historical period, the South-Kośala region was known by various names, as mentioned in the literary records. The Aṣṭādhyayi of Panini (c. 5th century B.C.) refers to a territory called Taitala Janapada, which flourished to the west of Kaliṅga and was famous for trade in the commodity called Kadru. Scholars have identified Taitala Janapada with the modern township of Titlagarh, located near the bank of the Tel river in Bolangir district. The Titlagarh region is famous for its early historical remains. The

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20 MBH – Āsvamedhikaparvan, LXXXII, 29.
21 MBH – Vanaparvan, LXI,
Arthasastra of Kautilya24 (c. 3rd century B.C) refers to a landmass called Indravana, which was famous for diamond. A Historical Atlas of South Asia of Chicago University25 has identified Indravana with the landmass between the river Indravati and Tel in Kalahandi district. Recently, the Orissa Mining Corporation has identified the same region as one of the rich diamond deposits of India.26 The Greek geographer Ptolemy27 (c. 2nd century A.D.), in his book Geographike refers to a town named Sambalaka situated on the bank of the Manada which was famous for diamond trade and diamond extract from this region was highly appreciated in the Roman empire. Sambalaka and Manada can be identified with modern township of Sambalpur and the river Mahanadi respectively. Ptolemy further refers to the diamond mines near the town Kasa located at the mouth of the river Adamsas in the territory of Sabarai. Adamsas has been identified with the river Ib which meets Mahanadi at Hirakud, a submerged diamond mines, whereas, Sabari is identified with Western Orissa.28 The historian Edward Gibbon29 (1737-1794), in his monograph Decline and fall of Roman Empire, states that Rome was being supplied with diamonds from the mines of ‘Sumelpur’ in Bengal. Sumelpur in Bengal was none other than the present Sambalpur of Orissa. The Sambalpur region is famous for its diamond deposits about which I have discussed in the next chapter.

27 McCrindle, J.W. (2000), Ancient India as described by Ptolemy, (reprint), New Delhi, pp. 71 and 169.
28 Panda, S.C. op cit., p. 89.
29 Gazetteers of India, Orissa, District Sambalpur, p. 3.
South-Kośala as a distinct politico cultural unit is mentioned in the literary text of the early historical period. The Buddhist text *Avadana Satakā*\(^{30}\) distinctly refers to two Kośala, which flourished during the time of Gautama Buddha. Jaina text *Harivanśha Purāṇa* \(^{31}\) mentions that one Abhicandra had established the Cedi dynasty at the foothill of the Vindhyas in Kośala territory having the capital at Suktimatipura. The *Harivanśha Purāṇa* and the *Adi Parva* of the *Mahābhārata* locates this capital on the bank of the river Suktimati. Some scholars have identified the Suktimati with the river Suktel in Bolangir district of Orissa, while some others have contested this identification. Furthermore, the Jaina non-canonical literature, the *Jambudvipapannati* of Padmanandi refers to Kusavati as the capital of South-Kośala.\(^{32}\) The *Vesāntara Jātaka* also mentions that the Cedis were ruling over the Vindhya region close to Kalinga and the capital of Cedi kingdom was at a distance of only ten *Yojanas* from Durnivistha Brāhmaṇa village of Kalinga.\(^{33}\)

The *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata\(^{34}\) (c. 2\(^{nd}\)-3\(^{rd}\) century A.D.) mentions Kośala country along with Tosala, Kalinga and Mosala and placed these countries between the Southern Ocean and the Vindhyas. Vatsyayana in his *Kāmasūtra*\(^{35}\) (c. 3\(^{rd}\) century A.D.) refers to South-Kośala while dealing with various erotic practices, prevalent in different parts of India. The *Brhat Saṁhitā* of Varahamihira\(^{36}\) (c. 6\(^{th}\) century A.D.) mentions South-Kośala along with the

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\(^{32}\) Panda S.C. *op cit.*, p. 87.

\(^{33}\) Sahu, J.K. *op cit.*, p. 60.

\(^{34}\) *Nāṭya Sastra*, tr. by Manmohan Ghosh, Ch XVIII, verse 104-05, p. 108, also Ch, XIV verse,38-39, p. 247.

\(^{35}\) Pandita Durga Prasad (ed.) *Kāmasūtra* (Jaipur), Ch-II, section V, verse 27.

territory of Oḍra, Kalinga, Vidarbha etc. which were located in the Āgneyakоṇa or in the south-east direction.

The Purāṇas like Brahmāṇḍa,37 Vāyu,38 Matsya,39 Markandeya,40 Vāmanas41 etc., repeatedly mention South-Kośala as a territory located to the South of the Vindhyas. The Purāṇas also record the Māghas rule over South-Kośala whose coins have been found in plenty from Malhar, an early historic site located in the Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh.

The most comprehensive reference to South-Kośala, its location and extension has been provided by Yuan Chwang,42 the Chinese pilgrim who visited South-Kośala in c. 639 A.D. He states that the kingdom of Kośala (South-Kośala) was of 6000 Li in circuit and about 1800 Li away from the capital of Kaliṅga in the north-west direction. According to him, the frontiers consisted of encircling mountain crags, forest and jungle. The capital was of about 40 Li round. The soil was rich, fertile and yields abundant crops. The town and villages were close together. The population was very dense. The men were tall and black-complexioned. The disposition of the people was hard and violent, and they were brave and impetuous. They were both heretics and believer. The most important data furnished by him is that there were about one hundred Sangharamas, and somewhat less than 10,000 priests, they all lived and studied the teaching of the Great Vehicle. There were about seventy Deva temples, frequented by heretics of different persuasions.

37 Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, Ch. 49, verse 44-71.
38 Vāyu Purāṇa, Ch. 45 verse 133.
39 Matsya Purāṇa, Ch. 113. verse 53.
40 Markandeya Purāṇa, LI, 53.
41 Vāmanas Purāṇa, Ch.13, verse 55.
Apart from the above discussed literary evidence a large number of epigraphic records, both issued by the ruling dynasties of this region and contemporary ruling dynasties of neighbouring region, refer to South-Kośala. The special Kaliṅga edict XIII of Asoka (c. 3rd century B.C.) refers to this region as Āśāvika Rājya (forest tract). The Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta (c. 350 A.D.) mentions the name Kośala for the first time while referring to the territory of Southern campaign. The Balaghat plates of the Vākāṭaka ruler Prithvisena II (last quarter of c. 5th century A.D.) states that the command of his father Narendrasena was honoured by the Lords of Kośala (South-Kośala), Mekala and Malava. The Ajanta cave inscription states that Harisena (c. 5th century A.D.) of the Vākāṭaka dynasty (Basim branch) had conquered Kuntala, Avanti, Lata, Kośala (South-Kośala), Kaliṅga, and Andhra. In the Aihole inscription of Pulakesin II (c. 7th century A.D.) he has been credited with the conquest of Kaliṅga and Kośala (South-Kośala).

The above-discussed literary and epigraphic records reveal that South-Kośala was an independent politico-cultural unit located to the South of the Vindhyas. It flourished throughout the early historic period and had close interaction with the neighbouring regions. The literary and epigraphic data are corroborated by the archaeological and numismatic findings and have been discussed in detail in the next chapter.

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44 *CII*, III, pp. 1-17.
45 *EI*, IX, p. 271.
46 *EI*, XXVI, p. 137.
47 *EI*, VI, p. 6.
POLITICAL UNITS OF EARLY MEDIEVAL ORISSA

Map No.1
(III) Political Boundary and Beginning of Organised Polity

In the early medieval period, Orissa was divided into a number of small and large kingdoms viz. Kalinga, Odra, Utkala, Tosali, Tri Kalinga, Kosala (South-Kosala), etc. These kingdoms were not only spread over present-day state of Orissa, but also regions neighbouring to it, i.e., Midnapur district of Bengal, Raipur, Raigarh, Bilaspur and Bastar districts of Chhattisgarh, and Srikakulam, Vishakhapatnam, and east Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. It is very difficult to distinguish the political boundaries of the early medieval Orissan kingdom as they kept on shifting throughout the said period. But on the basis of the provenance of charters and the topography mentioned in these, we may postulate tentatively the territorial boundaries of a kingdom in a given time frame.

South-Kosala was one such territorial unit whose political boundaries kept on shifting throughout the early medieval period. Though scholars still debate about its precise territorial extension, but there is a broad consensus that South-Kosala comprises of the districts Raipur, Raigarh, Bilaspur, Durg and parts of Bastar district in Chhattisgarh and Kalahandi, Bolangir, Sonepur, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Nuapada, Boudh districts and parts of Koraput district of Orissa.

The two major chapters of the study (Chapter III and Chapter V) discuss settlement patterns and patronages based on epigraphic records. Here, I would like to give a brief outline of the ruling dynasties, their chronology and the time period of their rule.

The early historical period of South-Kosala was marked by the emergence of multiple power centres, most probably under the rule of petty

chiefs or kings. This fact is corroborated by the discovery of a number of elaborately fortified early historic settlements and their rich material remains. Malhar is one such site whose political affiliation is attested through the numismatic findings. The coins of Silalusiri, Achadasiri, and Dhammabhada, dated to c. 3rd-2nd century B.C. have been found from the site. But due to lack of corroborative evidence their political status and dynasty is not known. Later the Māgha dynasty ruled Malhar. Therefore, a large number of coins of various Māgha rulers like Māghasiri, SiriyaMāgha, ŚivaMāgha, etc., have been found. These numismatic findings are important in the context of a passage of Vāyu Purāṇa, which refers to the rule of nine Māgha rulers over Kośala. The numismatic data along with the puranic reference makes it clear that the Māgha had ruled over South-Kośala region. The legend on Māgha coins are written on Brāhmī script and are palaeographically dated to c. 1st – 2nd century A.D. After the Māghas, the same site was occupied by ruler of an unknown dynasty whose coins have also been found from Malhar. Like Malhar, all other fortified sites might have gone through the similar political processes but the concrete evidences regarding the same are still awaited.

The Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta is the earliest epigraphic record which refers to the polity of this region. Here, it is stated that Samudragupta in his southern campaign defeated twelve kings. Out of these, Mahendra of Kośala, Vyaghrrāja of Mahākāntāra and Manṭarāja of

49 For a detail discussion see the next Chapter.
51 Ibid.
52 Vāyu Purāṇa, LI, 373-382.
54 CII, III, pp. 1-17.
Kaurala belonged to South-Kośala region. In other words, South Kośala in c. 4th century A.D. was ruled by three independent rulers or local chiefs.

The Nalas came, who started their rule in the territory of Mahākāntāra (Koraput, Kalahandi and Bastar region) and subsequently spread to Kośala and Kaurala as well. They were the earliest ruling dynasty of this region who issued their own records. So far four Nala records have been found. They provide information about their protracted war with the Vākāṭakas. They also issued gold coins. It is difficult to work out the Nala genealogy and chronology, as the epigraphic and numismatic records reveal a large number of names and some of the names from the numismatic source are not found in the epigraphic records. Unfortunately, the Nala records do not bear any date, but palaeographically their rule has been placed to c. 5th century A.D. and continued at least up to c. 6th – 7th century A.D.

While the Nalas were ruling over the Koraput, Bastar and southern portion of the Kalahandi, the Tel valley was under the rule of Tuṣṭikara. His


56 The Rithapur Copper Plates of the Nala King Bhavadattavarman was issued from Nandivardhana, the then Vakatava capital. It shows the Nala conquest over the Vākāṭakas (EI, XIX, 100-04). But the victory was a short-lived one. The Balaghat copper plates indicates that Vākāṭaka king Pravarasena II, son of Narendraśaṇa drove away the Nalas and inflicted a crushing defeat on Arthapatiśañja, son of Bhavadattavarman (EI, IX, 271). The Podagada stone inscription of Skandavarman, successor of Arthapatiśañja states that he had rebuilt and re-peopled the capital city Puskari (EI, IX, 153-157). But, the reign of Skandavarman was peaceful one. Towards the end of his rule the Vākāṭaka king Harīśena invaded Kośala and brought the Nala rule to an end (EI, XXVI, p. 137).

57 The Nala epigraphic records refer to the names like Varahāraṇa, Arthāpati, Bhavadattavrman, Skandavarman, Vilasatunga, Prithivirāja and Virupaṇā (Patel, C.B. op.cit., Singh, U., op.cit.). However, the name appeared in the numismatic findings are Varahāraṇa, Arthāpati, Bhavadattavrman, Nandanaṇāraṇa and Stambha (JNSI, I, 29-35, XLII, 110-112, XLV, 46-50, PP. Vol. 5, 68-74).

58 Singh, U., op.cit., p. 45.
solitary copper plate charter\textsuperscript{59} was found from the village of Terasingha. It is situated on the bank of the river Tel in Kalahandi District. This charter refers to two political headquarters i.e. Parvatadvāraka\textsuperscript{60} and Tarabhramarakā\textsuperscript{61} from where the king and his queen-mother donated land. He adopted the title of Mahārāja. But due to lack of sources nothing can be ascertained about his ruling dynasty, genealogy, and chronology. Palaeographically, his rule is placed to c. 5th century A.D. Another copper plate charter (c. 5th–6th century A.D) of one Sri Nandarājadeva\textsuperscript{62} has also been found from Tel valley. It was issued from Parvatadvāra, perhaps same as Parvatadvāraka mentioned in the Terasingha plates. But we do not know whether any relationship existed between them. This charter also does not furnish any data about his dynasty, genealogy and chronology.

In the c. 6th century A.D., the Sarabhapurīyas had emerged as an important ruling dynasty in the plains of the upper Mahanadi valley.\textsuperscript{63} So far eighteen copper plate charters\textsuperscript{64} and a large number of coins\textsuperscript{65} (only of Sri Prasanna) of the dynasty have been found. The earliest known ruler of this dynasty was Mahārāja Narendra. He described himself as the son of Sarabha, after whom their capital was named as Sarabhapura. Sarabha is identified with

\textsuperscript{59} EI, XXX, 274-78.

\textsuperscript{60} Parvatadvāraka has not yet been identified. But, the name indicates that it was located near the gateway of a mountain.

\textsuperscript{61} Tarabhramarakā has been identified with the village Talabhramara situated on the bank of the river Utei near its confluence with the Tel. The site and its adjoining localities have yielded archaeological materials and temple remains dated to early medieval period.


\textsuperscript{64} See Table No. XV.

\textsuperscript{65} See Table No. XVI.
Sarabharaja, maternal grandfather of Goparaja, a feudatory of Gupta emperor Bhanugupta, who died in battle at Eran in Gupta era 191 (= 509-10 A.D.).

The earliest political headquarter of Sarabhapuriyas was Sarabhapura from where majority of their charters were issued. But unfortunately it has not yet been satisfactorily identified. In the later part of their rule, Śrīpura became their second seat of power. Śrīpura has been identified with Sirpur, located on the right bank of the Mahanadi in Raipur district. The inscriptions of the Sarabhapuriyas do not bear any date, instead they are dated only in the regnal year of the ruling king. In the absence of any era mentioned, it is difficult to determine the span of their rule. But palaeographically their rule is placed to c.6th–7th century A.D.

The Sarabhapuriya rule in South-Kośala was supplanted by that of the Pāṇḍuvamśis around the first half of c. 7th century A.D. The early rulers of this dynasty ruled over the neighbouring Mekala territory (area around the Maikal range). The Bambani, Malhar, and Malga copper plates provide an account of their rule over the Mekala kingdom.

So far, thirty two inscriptions (both copper plates and stone) of the Pāṇḍuvamśi dynasty have been found. Tivaradeva was the earliest ruler of the dynasty. He issued charters from Śrīpura, the political headquarter of the later Sarabhapuriyas. His charters referred him as one who acquired the

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67 For a detail discussion on the identification of the Sarabhapura see Chapter III.
69 Ibid., pp. 117-132.
70 For copper plate charters see Table No. XVII.
lordship over all of Kośala (Prāpta-Sakala-Kośala-Adhipati), and lord of Kosala (Sakala-Kośala-Adhipati).

Sivagupta or Mahasivagupta Balarjuna was the most important ruler of the dynasty. He ruled at least for a period of sixty years. A majority of the Pāṇḍuvamśi records found so far were issued during his reign. Similar to the Śarabhapuriṇyas, the Pāṇḍuvamśis inscriptions are not dated in any era, and instead, dated in the regnal year of the ruling king. Their rule has been dated to c. 7th-8th century A.D.

While the Pāṇḍuvamśi were ruling over the upper Mahanadi basin, the Tel valley was under the Rāṣṭrakuta chief. So far two records of the dynasty have been found from the village Terasingha, where the record of Tustikara was found earlier. Both the charters were issued from Udayapura. Udayapura has been identified with the village Udeypur, located near the bank of Tel in the outskirt of Titlagarh town in Bolangir district. The village and its adjoining areas contain a large number of temple remains dated c. 9th-10th century A.D. Their rule has been assigned to c. 8th century A.D.

In the same period, the middle Mahanadi basin was under the rule of the Bhañjas of Khañjilimanḍala. A large number of the copper-plate charters

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71 This expression is recorded in the Bonda (EI, XXXIV, 111-116) and Baloda (EI, VII, 102-107) copper plates of the king himself.

72 The Lodhia plates (EI, XXVII, 319-25), a stray plates found from Burhikhar near Malhar (Shastri, A.M. (1995), op cit., pp. 162-164) and Malhar plates (JeSI, XVIII, 15-24, SIE, XXVII, 25-48, Ibid., 380-81). Plates of the king MahāSivagupta Balarjuna were issued in his Fifty-seventh regnal year. It indicates that he ruled at least for a period of 60 years.

73 In the Manikyapur Museum plates found from Terasingha (Agrawal, 2001; 15-24) the issuer is described as Paramamahestāra-Rāṣṭrakuta Vams'-Odbhava-Kulaṭilaka, originated from the family of the Rāṣṭrakuta. It shows that there was a branch of the Rastrakuta family which ruled over the Tel basin in c. 8th-9th century A.D.

74 The temples remain at Udeypur and its adjoining localities have been discussed in chapter III and IV.
of this ruling dynasty have been found from Sonepur and Boudh-Phulbani area.75

After the long rule of Mahasivagupta Balarjuna nothing is known about the Pânduvaṁśi dynasty. They have either expanded towards the east or declined, or another branch of the Pânduvaṁśi dynasty entered the boundary of present-day Orissa with the name Somavaṁśi. However, the reason behind this is not known. In their gradual expansion towards the coastal Orissa the Somavaṁśi had marched through the Tel valley. They initially established their rule over there at the expense of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa rule. Kisarakela76 was their first political centre from where Mahabhavagupta issued his copper-plate charters. After consolidating their rule over the Tel basin, they further moved towards the east and fought with the Bhañjas for the supremacy over the middle Mahanadi basin. Unlike the Rāṣṭrakūṭa, the Bhañjas of Kharjalimandala resisted their eastward expansion. The struggle between these two powers was a prolonged one, but the Somavaṁśis were able to wrest the Sonepur-Binka region.77 Mahabhavagupta I Janamejaya was the first Somavaṁśi ruler of South-Kośala who issued his charters from Suvarnapura (Sonepur). The Gopalpur copper plates78, issued in his first regnal year refer to the coronation ceremony at Suvarnapura, which is dated to c. 850 A.D.79

76 Kisarakela has been identified with Kisarkela in the Bolangir district. The site has yielded one copper plate charter (EI, XXII, 135-38) which belongs to Mahabhavaguptaraṇa the earliest Somavaṁśi king of the Tel basin. Another charter of the same king has also been found from Ruchida (Panda S.C. et al., 2003; NAHO, 72-82) in the Bargarh district.
79 The Sambalpur University Museum Plates of Devapya (Dee vapriya) a feudatory of Janamejeya I donated land on the occasion of a solar eclipse which has been dated to 28 August A.D. 873. Since, this plates was issued in the 23rd regnal years of Janamejaya I, his first regnal year must be 850 A.D. (873-23 = 850). So his coronation ceremony
After consolidating his position over the Sonepur-Binka region, Janamejaya continued his struggle with the Bhañjas for the supremacy over the Boudh-Phulbani region and succeeded in his venture. He was followed by a number of able successors who pursued the expansionist policy, they were able to establish their rule over the territory of Kośala, Oḍra, Kalîṅga, Utkala and Kongada which included the whole of coastal Orissa and western Orissa towards the first half of the c. 11th century A.D. Their long rule over the middle Mahanadi basin led to the establishment of a number of political headquarters such as Suvarnapura, Mūrasimhakaṭaka, Ārāmakāṭaka, Vinitapurakaṭaka and Yayātināgara. Here they issued a large number of copper plate charters, of which around thirty have been found so far.

In the first half of 11th century A.D., the Somavamsis moved towards the coastal Orissa and Kośala (middle Mahanadi basin) became one of their provinces. It was under a prince of royal blood. Yayati II appointed his son Abhimanyu as its administrator. He was replaced by Kumāra Somesvara. His Kelga charter reveals that this area was known as Pāśima-Lankā at that time. In the last part of their rule over the middle Mahanadi basin, the Somavamsis were attacked by the Kalachuri, Naga and Telegu Coda, which ultimately cost them their territory.

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80 was taken place in 850 A.D. as has been mentioned in the Gopalpur plates issued in the 1st regnal year. Nayak, P.K. op cit., p. 225.

81 Ibid., pp. 25-28.

81 For political centers and their identification see Chapter III.

82 See Table No. XXI, Sl. No. 37.

83 EI, XII, 237-42.

84 In his Amod Plates (EI, XIX, pp. 75ff), dated to 1079 A.D., The Kalachuri King Prithvideva I proclaimed himself as the lord of whole of Kośala.

85 The Ratnagiri plates (EI, XXXIII, 263-68) of Karnadeva refers that Janamejaya II fought against the Naga King who is identified with Somesvaradeva of the Chindaka Naga dynasty of Chakrakota.

86 The Telegu Coda chief Yosarājadeva invaded and captured the Kośala province (middle Mahanadi basin) from the Somavamsi administrator. Nayak, P.K. op cit., p. 234.
Hence in the second half of the c. 11th century A.D. the middle Mahanadi basin came under the rule of the Telugu Cholas. So far three copper plates of the dynasty have been found in the region.

**Review of Literature**

The history of South-Kośala finds little space in the historiography of Orissa. In Orissa the general trend has been to write the history of Kalinga, Utkala, Odà, etc. Hence, a comprehensive investigation of the historical development of South-Kośala has been neglected.

The existing historical writings on South-Kośala can be categorized into three broad divisions (i) South-Kośala in the general historiography of Orissa, (ii) Historical writings on South-Kośala in particular, and (iii) South-Kośala in pan-Indian writings. Moreover, thematically all the historical writings can be divided into (a) political history (b) Socio-economic history (c) art and architecture (d) and archaeology.

Initially, the political history of South-Kośala was written in the broader context of Orissan history. Scholars like R.D. Banerji, B. Mishra, K.C. Panigrahi and N.K. Sahu are pioneers in the study of political history. But they treat the present-day Orissa as a homogenous political entity and are unable to provide adequate emphasis to the political evolution of different territorial units mentioned in the literary and the epigraphic records. As political history of South-Kośala did not get enough space in the pan-Orissan history, scholars have made attempt to study the history of a single

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ruling dynasty of South-Koşala. In this regard, mention may be made of C.B. Patel's\(^92\) study of Nalas, S.P. Tiwari's\(^93\) on the Sarabhapurīyas and S.R. Nema,\(^94\) K.C. Panigrahi,\(^95\) and Bina Kumari Sharma's\(^96\) on the Somavamśi ruling dynasty. But unfortunately their approaches remain the same. They have tried to focus on all aspects of life during the rule of a single dynasty. However, their work mostly deals with political history. They have extensively dealt with the issues like genealogy, chronology, war and conquest and personal achievements of ruling kings. They saw political change as the change of power from one dynasty to another. Therefore, the subject like state formation, the forces which provided impetus to it, social complexities, trade and exchange, resources mobilization and religious processes did not receive any attention. In the recent years, A.M. Shastri\(^97\) has done some useful work on the political history of South-Koşala. His book, *The Inscriptions of the Sarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvaṁśins and Somavamsīns* consists of two parts. The first part deals with an analysis of political history of South-Koşala from the Sarabhapurīyas to Somavamsīs (c. 6th–11th century A.D.), exclusively based on epigraphic records. The second part deals with all the available epigraphic records and their translation in abstract form which I have used in my present study. However, his work also does not discuss issues pertaining to state formation, resource mobilization, trade and exchange, social complexities and religious transformation of the said period.


The above-mentioned issues formed a part in the writings of scholars like Hermann Kulke and Upinder Singh. Hermann Kulke’s study on the cult of Jagannath is a pioneering work on state formation and religious process of early medieval Orissa (for detail, see earlier discussion and Chapter V) and became a model for subsequent study on early medieval period. But his work is not bereft of limitations. Firstly, his classification of region as ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ is not based on proper historical investigation. According to his proposition, western Orissa region was a peripheral zone. Here, the historical development has taken place in a later date (after c. 5th century A.D.) and because of intensive land donation, migration of Brāhmaṇas, settlement expansion, wet rice cultivation, cult appropriation, and cultural diffusion. But recent archaeological investigation in the said region reveals a rich early historical cultural phase with large scale distribution of settlements. Some of which had fortification, a monetary system, craft specialization, belief system and a complex material culture (for detail, see Chapter II). Secondly, he also overemphasises the role of Brāhmaṇas in the expansion of the state and religious process. Thirdly, his study on the religious process does not analyse the existing temple structures and loose sculptures. Last, but not the least, his work is also solely based on the epigraphic record. Upinder Singh’s study deals with the state formation in Orissa between c. 300 A.D. – 1147 A.D. In her empirical analysis, she followed the model of Kulke, and talks about internal dynamics as a factor in the formation of early kingdom. But like Kulke, certain shortcomings are inherent in her work. She is also of the opinion that land donation to Brāhmaṇas through royal initiative was important factor in the formation and stabilisation of state structures in early medieval Orissa. Her study is only based on the epigraphic records. The discussion on religious institutions does not include extant temple structure

98 See footnote no. 3.

but is based on inscriptive data. As her work deals with a long span of time and Orissa as a whole, it fails to provide a comprehensive analysis of the respective ruling dynasties dealt with. Also, she does not use all the available epigraphic records, especially in the case of the Śarabhapuriyas and Pāṇḍuvaṃśis of South-Kośala.

Socio-economic and religious studies give emphasis to different social groups, their daily life (i.e., food, drink, dress and custom) craft production, trade and commerce, and prevalent form of different religious sects, like Saivism, Vaisnavism, Saktism, Jainism and Buddhism etc. In this regard, work done by A.P. Sah, B. Das, B.K. Rath and N.K. Sahu are noteworthy. Nonetheless, as their works cover Orissa as a whole and is based on literary and epigraphic data only, still much remains to be done. J.P. Singh Deo’s study on the cultural history of South-Kośala reveals some interesting facts. His work is insufficient as it covers a long span of time (from earliest time to the medieval period). Again, it only deals with the eastern part of South-Kośala (i.e., the western Orissa region).

The study on the temple architecture of South-Kośala can be divided into, (a) study on the temple of middle Mahanadi and Tel basin, and (b) study on the temples of the upper Mahanadi basin. The temples of the middle Mahanadi and Tel basins have received little attention in the broader framework of Orissan temples. Although, scholars like T.E. Donaldson and Vidya Dahejia have made some useful contributions but they studied

selective temples of this region. They considered the temples of this region as a sub-type of Kalingan style of architecture. Moreover, amidst the large temple structure, the magnificent art and splendid sculpture of coastal Orissa, the squat, simple, undecorated and dilapidated temples of western Orissa region lost their identity.

J.D. Beglar has documented a large number of temple sites of western Orissa in his journey through this province. His report became the basis of many subsequent writings. In the past few decades, scholars like D.R. Bhadarkar, S.K. Saraswati, K. Deva, Devala Mitra, D.R. Das, S.S. Panda, S.S. Biswas, S.C. Panda, P.K. Ray and J.K. Pattnaik have

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carried out research on the temples of this region. But unfortunately, these works either concentrated on individual temple site or selected temples of a certain type. Their works are also solely architectural in nature. Thus, a comprehensive analysis including all the extant temple structures of this region in a historical perspective still remains a desideratum.

Like western Orissa, the temples of the upper Mahanadi basin have also been documented by J.D.Beglar, A. Cunningham, and A.H. Longhurst. In subsequent period the temples of upper Mahanadi basin have received attention from some of the eminent art historian like K.Deva, Michael W. Meister, Donanald M, Stadtner, M.G. Dikshit, Joanna, G. Williams etc. Among them the work done by Stadtner is most


extensive, systematic and comprehensive. His work focuses on the origin and evolution of South-Kośala’s art tradition and its contribution in the development of nāgara style of North-Indian temple architecture of post-Gupta period.

On the whole, temple has remained a theme of art and architectural study. The art historians consider it as a splendid creation and monuments of past glory. They also consider it as inorganic and static objects made of stone and bricks. However, few works have ever been tried to evaluate the religious shrines in a historical perspective. Issues like the relationship between settlements and shrines, role of communities in their construction and maintenance and the role of temple in religious transformation have not been undertaken for historical research.

Archaeology is still in its infancy in this part of the country. The peculiar topography leads scholars to consider this region as culturally isolated. Hence, no major archaeological research has been done here. Initially, the Post-Graduate Department of History, Sambalpur University, Orissa brought some of the early historic sites into limelight. But their work was restricted to exploration of individual site(s) and in some cases digging a few trial trenches.126 In recent years of individual scholars like P.K. Behera127 S. Pradhan,128 P.Mohanty and B.Mishra129 and M.Brandtner130 have unearthed

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130 Brandtner, M. (1993), 'Archaeology of Western Orissa finds from Nehna', *South Asian Archaeology*, pp. 110-114.
many archaeological sites and highlighted the archaeological potential of this region. Besides them, a number of M.Phil students like A.K. Sethi,131 A.K. Das,132 D.K. Debata,133 S.Gadita,134 L.K. Meher,135 S.Patel,136 and D.B. Garnayak137 of P.G. Department of History, Sambalpur University, Orissa, have conducted field-surveys on the river banks of the Mahanadi and its tributaries as a part of their Dissertation. Their unpublished M.Phil dissertations bear valuable information on the location and distribution of a number of early historic sites. As these works give emphasis to reporting of sites, the systematic documentation and the interpretation along with the issues of settlement pattern, state formation, resource mobilization and network system has not yet been taken up.

In the recent years, the monograph edited by P.K. Mishra and J.K. Samal,138 S. Pradhan,139 and K.K. Basa and P. Mohanty140 are important contributions to the history of Orissa. The multi volumes monograph of Mishra and Samal contain a large number of essays pertaining to socio-

economic, political and religious history covering a long span of time (from earliest time to c. 1568 A.D.). The first volume deals with the early historic and early medieval periods, and contains some informative essays on the history and culture of South-Kośala. Similarly, Pradhan’s book also contains number of essays on various aspects of Orissan history and covers a long span of time. Moreover, Basa and Mohanty’s book contains articles on the recent archaeological investigation in Orissa.

ISSUES

It is in this background of above-discussed historiography, the present research intends to raise issues which are stated below.

(a) Scholars have treated present-day Orissa as a single cultural zone, while studying its ancient history and culture. By doing so, they not only undermine the ancient history and culture of various independent politico-cultural units like Kaliṅga, Oḍra, Utkala, Kośala (South-Kośala), Tosali, Trikaliṅga etc., mentioned in early literature, but also negates the diversity in the nature of historical change of these political units. So my present research on ancient South-Kośala is an attempt to study the region as a separate cultural unit.

There is discrepancy within the sources of early India regarding South-Kośala region. While the inscriptional records of the Maurya, Satavahana, Kuśāṇa, Sunga, etc., do not mention this region, literary texts like the Arthāśāstra, Aṣṭādhyāyī, and Geographike reveal that this region was very prosperous in the same period. However, South-Kośala as an independent politico-cultural unit is mentioned in the epics and puranic literature. These sources are corroborated by the archaeological and numismatic findings from South-Kośala region. Archaeologically, it has been established that this region was well-settled in the early historic period and had a rich material culture. Similarly, the wide range of numismatic findings show the nature of early
historic trade and exchange network, and South-Kośala's interaction with neighbouring regions.

South-Kośala, however, was not a homogenous cultural unit, but may be divided into three sub regions i.e., (i) the Middle Mahanadi basin (ii) the Tel basin, and (iii) the upper Mahanadi basin. These three sub-regions are not mere geographical creations but have certain historical standing. Their distinct cultural patterns are manifested in settlement patterns, temple styles, and religious belief and practices.

(b) Historical writings on South-Kośala are solely based on epigraphic and literary records and hence deal with developments in c. 5th century A.D onwards. But a wide range of source-materials like archaeology, numismatics, extant temples, and sculptures are available for this region. A systematic study and comprehensive analysis of these source-materials provide evidence of the early beginning of settlement in this region and its continuity in subsequent periods. This continuity of settlements is neglected by historians of medieval period, which view this as an expansion of settlement in the early medieval period and attributed it to land donation to Brähmaṇas. According to them, the migration of Brähmaṇas to the so called peripheral regions like South-Kośala led to its colonisations where new settlements emerged. But a systematic analysis of the epigraphic records, their distribution and a probable identification of the topography mentioned in it shows that the early medieval settlements were more or less located in the same localities where the early historic habitations are found. Thus, the settlements were continuous in nature but for the first time they were recorded in the early medieval inscriptions. Moreover, shifts and changes in settlements are a historical phenomenon and a variety of factors are involved in it. Hence, it should not be solely attributed to a prime mover as has been done in the case of South-Kośala.
(c) Scholars working on the state, society and religion of the early medieval period assume that temples were a product of royalty making donation to Brāhmaṇas in the peripheral region. They further assert that these temples were meant for acculturation of tribal folk and Sanskritisation or Brahmanisation of autochthonous deities on one hand and expansion of newly emerged kingdoms and legitimisation of kings’ rule on the other. This hypothesis not only ignores the role of the local community who were involved in the construction and maintenance of the temple but also downplays its vibrant and multi-dimensional contribution. Several social groups were involved in the dissemination of sastric knowledge, through story telling and by narrating the epic and puranic literature.

(d) Temples are not only centres of worship but are also the manifestation of cultural traits of a regional art tradition. South-Kośala n temples are excellent examples of this. In spite of commonalties, the identified sub-regions retained distinctiveness in temple style. The temples of the upper Mahanadi basin are closer to the nāgara style of temple of post-Gupta period and were influenced by the Vākāṭakas and Western Cālukyan features in decoration of doorjamb. In contrast, the temples of the Tel basin are more heterogeneous in nature. A majority of these temples are squat, simple and devoid of any decoration. They are mostly single cell stone temples and do not have any elaboration in the vertical as well as horizontal axis. Similarly, the temples of middle Mahanadi basin have close resemblance with their counterparts in coastal Orissa. Certain architectural features, which evolved in these temples, became the standard features of Orissan temples in the later period.

(e) As with temple styles, there is no homogeneity in religious beliefs and practices of the three identified sub-regions. The extant temples and vibāras, their religious affiliation, the deity or deities enshrined and narrative panels attached to these, the loose sculptures and other cult objects (i.e., terracottas,
seals, deities engraved in the epigraphic records etc) provide information regarding the nature of religious beliefs and practices. On the basis of this, we can say that the upper Mahanadi basin displays the co-existence of many religions. In contrast, the Tel basin shows a preponderance of mother goddess and tantric manifestations of Brahmanical deities. The middle Mahanadi basin is also no different from the Tel basin.

(f) Patronage has always been misunderstood as donation of land or money by the royal authority for the construction and maintenance of religious institutions and for legitimising their own rule. But, a systematic analysis of the epigraphic records of South-Kośala region suggests that patronage was more diverse in nature. It was not only the prerogative of the royal authority, but other social groups and individuals were also involved in it. The location of major temple sites and epigraphic data pertaining to royal participation in the temple-building activities clearly show the separation of the political domain and religious practices. Early medieval patronage is a very complex issue and to understand the mechanism of patronage, one has to understand the role of the local community in temple building activities and their maintenance. Though these communities did not always donate land or huge sum of money, their participation in daily worship and their offering of ritual objects like flowers, dipa (lamp), dhupa (incense), naivedya (food grains) played a major role in the maintenance of the temple. Also, nritya (dance) and vāditra (instrumental music) were two important aspects of temple worship, which was probably offered by the local communities. The long survival of the religious shrines depended on periodical repairs, restoration and proper maintenance. This need was also fulfilled by the local communities. So daily worship and maintenance of the temple is as important as its construction and this was largely depended on the local communities who lived in and around the temple rather than on the royal patron.
Similarly, scholars have emphasized the role of the Brāhmaṇa in religious transformation and state formation in the early medieval period. But a close scrutiny of the inscriptive records found from South-Kośala region reveals that Brāhmaṇas were not a homogenous social group. Hierarchies existed within them, and there is hardly any evidence to suggest their role as priests of religious institutions. The growing complexities in Brāhmaṇa identities and genealogies were more a means to draw political attention rather than to show their ritual superiority. The Brāhmaṇas were involved in diverse professions i.e., in administration, as traders, engravers, goldsmith, etc. Another aspect which has not been touched in the context of the early medieval religious transformation is the role of Saivaśacya. The inscriptions of South-Kośala region reveal that they played a major role in the construction, installation and consecration of the religious shrines.

**Chapterisation**

To analyse the above-mentioned issues, the present study is divided into six chapters with the first and the last being the introduction and conclusion respectively. First, unlike other scholars, who have studied the early medieval period in isolation, I would like to discuss the early historic development of South-Kośala region in continuation with the early medieval development. Later, I will discuss religious processes of early medieval period by focusing on the temples, which is the main thrust of this research.

The second chapter is an attempt in this regard. Here, I have discussed the early cultural attributes of the South-Kośala dated between c. 5th century B.C. to c. 5th century A.D. For a comprehensive analysis this chapter has been divided into four sections, each one of them deals with a different theme.

The first section deals with the settlements. Here the main emphasis is to ascertain the geographical location of settlements, their spatial
distribution and emerging patterns. To analyse these aspects the South-Kośala macro-region has been divided into three sub-regions, i.e., (i) the upper Mahanadi basin, (ii) the Tel basin, and (iii) the middle Mahanadi basin. Moreover, these sub-regions are not mere geographical entities, but they have certain historical standings. In the early medieval period they emerged as the main cultural zones.

In the second section, resource mobilization has been highlighted. The abundant natural resources and the strategic location of South-Kośala make it one of the focal points of early historic trade and exchange. Hence, the trade and exchange, routes and participation of South-Kośala in the broader network of early India is the main theme of third section. The beads of precious and semi-precious stones, iron ore and metal objects, glass objects, and product relating to the flora and fauna were important items of this region which might have been exchanged with cloth, oil, salt, luxury goods and ceramics. The discovery of Northern Black Polished Ware, knobbed ware, red glazed Kuśāṇa potteries and, black and red ware with white paintings and graffiti indicate that these pottery types were not local in nature and might have been brought to this region in exchange of other goods. The existence of intra and inter-regional trade and trade routes in the South-Kośala region has been established by the discovery of a large number of coins in the form of hoards, from stratigraphy and stray finds. These findings consist of punch-marked silver coins (pre-Mauryan, Mauryan and post-Mauryan), local silver and copper punch-marked coins (Kośala Janapada type) punch-marked coins issued by cities such as Ujjain and Eran, Kuśāṇa, Sātavāhana, Yaudheya, Western Kshatrapa, Gupta, Roman (Gold coins) and Chinese coins.

A large number of silver and copper punch-marked coins bearing four symbols on the obverse and blank on reverse have been found from this region. Due to their distinct symbols and high concentration in this region,
they can be called 'Kośala Janapada type' of punch-marked coin. These coins were probably issued by the local authorities of this region and were used for the purpose of transaction. This is corroborated by its discoveries from coastal Orissa, Vidarbha, and Central India. This tradition even continued up to the beginning of the early medieval period. Gold coins issued by one Mahendraditya and copper coins of Sri Nanda have been found from this region. Both of them have been identified as local rulers and placed to c. 4th-5th century A.D. Gold and silver coins issued by the two ruling dynasties like the Nala and the Sarabhapuriyas have also been found.

Unlike other parts of India, South-Kośala did not possess any religious structures prior to c. 6th century A.D. There are very few sculptural pieces of early date that have been found from only Malhar. But in the absence of standing religious structures and sculptures we cannot say that the people of this region did not have any religious belief system. Therefore, the section four is an attempt to identify the forms of religious beliefs and practices prior to the emergence of temple in c. 6th century A.D. Every society has its own belief system which changes with time, the same can be said for South-Kośala region as well. The rock paintings with engravings, terracotta figurines and burial practices can be seen as varied manifestations of the religious belief systems and practices of this region. South-Kośala is replete with rock painting and burial remains. Though their date, nature and functions are matter of close scrutiny, however, the long continuity in these practices might have to some religious or cultural significance. The same problem occurs with terracotta figurines too.

In the backdrop of the early historical development I would like to analyse early medieval period as the main focus of the present research. The next three chapters are an attempt in this direction.
Location of temples and distribution of settlements in the early medieval period is the theme of Chapter III. Here the main emphasis is to study the temples from a settlement perspective. Furthermore this chapter is a part of larger discussion on early medieval settlements expansion and the role of Brāhmaṇa and to see whether there was any major shift in the distribution or consolidation of earlier inhabited areas.

The critical examination of the distribution of epigraphic records, the topography mentioned in these, their proposed identification and numismatic findings show that there were no major shifts and expansion in the settlements. The early medieval settlements were distributed in the same areas, which were already occupied in the early historic period. The analysis of epigraphic records brought interesting facts to the forefront. Except one, not a single inscriptive record of this region refers to the donation of virgin land, or forested areas or setting up of new settlements. Instead, they record the donation of villages, which were already settled.

The systematic analysis of the spatial distribution of temples indicates that there was a conterminous relation between settlements and shrines at least in the upper Mahanadi and middle Mahanadi basin. In other words, shrines in these two sub-regions emerged in those areas which were dotted with settlements. However, due to dearth of epigraphic records we do not know about the relationship between the shrines and settlements of Tel basin.

The temple structures and related issues are the theme of the Chapter IV. This chapter is divided into four sections which discuss the various aspects of the temple.

In the first section, I have discussed the temple types, architectural components and regional variations in the temples of this region. The South-Kośala temples followed the nāgara style of north Indian temple of post-Gupta period in broad principles. But there is a lot of variation in their style.
Within the nāgara style, South-Kośala witnessed the origin and evolution of new types of temple which are specific to this region. The stellate temple or the star-shaped temple is a contribution of South-Kośala to the rich architectural tradition of India. This region possesses the earliest star-shaped temple of India. The complete evolution, from nascent to mature star-shaped temples shows their long continuation and experimentation. mandapa or frontal pillared hall is also a special feature of the South-Kośalan temple. Unlike the early Gupta temple, the mandapa was an integral part of South-Kośalan temples and evolved over the period of time which shows its importance.

More importantly, there was no linear movement and set pattern in the temple-building tradition of this region as is evident from the existence of a variety of temples having different plans, elevations, and dimensions within a geographical space. The temples of the upper Mahanadi which are considered as the earliest group of temples were largely influenced by the Gupta style in plan and elevation and Vākāṭakas and Deccan in doorjamb decoration. Brick was the chief material preferred for the superstructures whereas stone was used only in the foundation, door frame and pillars and pilasters. Some significant changes have occurred in plan, elevation, decoration and materials in the temples of the Tel and the middle Mahanadi basin.

In comparison to the temples of the upper Mahanadi basin, except the Indralath temple, all other temples of the Tel basin are squat, simple, plain and bereft of any decoration. They are mostly single cell temples fronted by a small porch and made of stone. But there are few complex structures as the case in the Chausathi Yogini and Indralath temple. The circular Chausathi Yogini temple is the only one of its kind in this region and is also a rare phenomenon in the whole of the Indian sub-continent. The ornately decorated Indralath temple is the tallest structure in the whole of South-Kośala and is the only surviving brick structure of the Tel basin. More
importantly, none of the temples bears any decoration in the door frame and jambs of the sanctum, which was the dominant feature of the upper Mahanadi valley temples, and which betrays Vākāṭaka and Deccan influences.

Unlike the temples of the Tel basin, the temples of the middle Mahanadi basin bear all the components in horizontal axis i.e., the sanctum, vestibule and the decorated pillared mandapa, and show affinities to the temples of coastal Orissa.

The second section deals with the hierarchy of religious shrines. In this chapter I have argued that there is no linear hierarchy in shrines and centres. As it is a complex issue and heterogeneous factors (and not size alone) determine the importance of a shrine. While plan, elevation, elaboration, addition, decoration (in case of a temple), and number of structures (in case of a site) was one aspect of hierarchy. The functional aspect, sacred geography, location, community participation, and diversified patronage, elaborate but simple ritual structure communication and network linkages were equally important determinants in the hierachisation of religious shrines. Some of these aspects have been discussed in this section.

Religious affiliations of the temples and sites have not been a part of earlier studies which I have dealt with in the third section. The examination of the religious affiliation of temples and sites through the study of enshrining deity or deities, pārśvadevatās, cult objects, carving on the door frame and doorjambs and loose sculptures shows multiplicity in the religious order and co-existence of diverse belief system, both sectarian and non-sectarian within sites.

The depictions of Saivite deities on the doorframe of the Vaisnavite temple and vice versa are unique features of this region. In this section I have also shown that the inscriptions are insufficient for the study of religious conditions of the early medieval period as it only provides information
regarding the dominant religious sects like Saivism and Vaisnavism, whereas on the ground we have multiplicity of religious orders. Saktism, (or the worship of mother goddesses) tantricism, Buddhism and Jainism flourished in the said period, but are not represented in the inscriptive records.

Ritual practice is also a neglected area in early medieval research, which I have dealt in the fourth section. Here I have shown how inscriptive data are insufficient for the study of the complex nature of ritual practices. The inscriptive records only provide some generic terminology like *bali, caṇu, naivedya* as ritual practices which were meant for the Saiva and Vaisnava worship. But as I have argued, the South-Kośala region had diverse religious orders like saktism, tantrism involving complex ritual practices, which are not represented in the inscriptive records.

Royal patronage to religious institutions and Brāhmaṇas has been the dominant framework in the study of the ‘religious processes’ of early medieval period. In the Chapter V, I have discussed the issue of patronage extensively and its role in the construction and maintenance religious structures of South-Kośala region. This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I have surveyed the writings on patronage so as to suggest an alternative perspective on the issue.

In the second section, I have analysed all the inscriptions which record donations to religious institutions. It is evident from the inscriptive data that, religious donation was not only the prerogative of royalty, but other groups like officials, Brāhmaṇas, merchant associations, Śaiva-cāryas and individuals were involved in it. Not all the donations led to the construction of new shrines rather some of these inscriptions record donations to existing temple. The important aspect of donations was for the maintenance, repairs and conduct of daily worship of the temple. Free feeding houses or *Sattra* were an integral part of the temple for which land was donated.
As far as the royal participation is concerned, the Nalas built two temples. But the Sarabhapurīya charters do not refer to their participation in temple building activities, instead one charter refers to donation to an existing temple. Majority of the inscriptions record the donation made by the Pāṇḍuvanīśis especially by king Sivagupta Balarjuna. All the donations of this king were meant for the shrines located at Sirpur, but the Somavamśī records reveal the participation of royal authority in temple building activities. The analysis of the records brings some important facts into forefront. First of all, the number of temples found are much more than the number of inscriptions which record donation to religious shrines. Secondly, twenty-two out of twenty-eight inscriptions talk about land donation to the temples of the upper Mahanadi basin, whereas only two record each available for the Tel basin and two for the Middle Mahanadi basin.

In the third section, I have analysed the donation to Brāhmaṇas and their role in the religious processes of the period under review. The inscriptions reveal that, firstly, Brāhmaṇas were not a monolithic community. Hierarchy was there within this community as is evident from Brāhmaṇas of various professions of administrator, astrologer, merchant (vanika), scribe, (karanika), priest, etc. Secondly, over the period of time the Brāhmaṇa identity became more elaborate and increasingly complex. In the beginning the Brāhmaṇa donees were known to us by their name, rarely by father’s name, gotra, sākhā, and carana. But it became very complex in the later period and especially during the rule of the Somavamśīs. The Brāhmaṇas not only mentioned their names, gotra, sākhā, carana, pravara, and anupravara but the name of father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, became a part of the Brāhmaṇas identity. The place of ancestral home and permanent residence are also mentioned in the inscriptions. Thirdly, the Brāhmaṇa donees were not associated with the temples. Except the Sirpur Lakshmana temple stone inscription, which refers to the role of Brāhmaṇas as priest, no other record
associated Brāhmaṇas with the temples or assigned them the role of priest. Instead inscriptions vividly describe the role of Śaivācārya in the construction of maintenance and installation of religious shrines.

**Sources**

The sources for the present study can be classified into primary and secondary. The primary sources consist of Archaeological Materials, Numismatics, Epigraphy, Art and Architecture and Literature.

(a) **Archaeology**: South-Kośala region has a great potential for archaeological research. The recent exploration and excavation (mainly trial trenches) in various parts of the region unearthed a large number of sites starting from the pre-historic to medieval period. It comes to us through published reports (IAR), or in the form of articles published in various journals.

I have also used some of the unpublished dissertations submitted at P.G. Department of History, Sambalpur University, and the materials (artefacts) which are in the personal collection of Dr. P.K. Behera, Dr. Baba Mishra, Dr. B. P. Singh, and Gulab Singh.

(b) **Numismatics**: A large number of coins ranging from c, 4th century B.C. to c, 7th century A.D, have been found from South-Kośala region. The significant findings are the punch-marked coins (Silver and Copper) of imperial (Mauryan), local (South-Kośalan), and city-state (Ujjain and Eran) types. This region also yielded the coins of Roman Empire (Gold), the Sātavāhanas (Silver, Copper, and Bronze) Kusāṇa, Yaudheya, Western Kshatrapa, Gupta and the Chinese. The ruling dynasties of South-Kośala like the Mahendraditya, Nala and Sarabhapuriya issued a large number of gold coins. These coins are published in various numismatic journals and provide a
great deal of information regarding trade and trade routes and South-Kośala’s interaction with neighbouring regions.

(c) **Epigraphy:** South-Kośala region has yielded around hundred inscriptions from the period c. 5th century A.D to c. 11th century A.D. These inscriptions belong to major ruling dynasties like the Nalas, the Sarabhapurīyas, the Parvatadvāraka, the Pāṇeṇuvamāśis, the Rāṣṭrakuṭa, the Somavamśis, and the Telgu-Choḍa. These records consist of both copper-plate charters and stone inscriptions, and have been published in *Epigraphica Indica, Indian Historical Quarterly, Prachi, Pratibha, Archaeological Survey of India Annual Report,* etc. The monographs by S.N. Rajguru (1960-65) A.M. Shastri (1995), and S. Tripathy (1997) are notable in this regard. The epigraphic records reveal valuable information on a wide range of issues. This will help us to study the settlement pattern, religious order, ritual practices, patronage, and role of Brāhmaṇas.

(d) **Art and Architecture:** South-Kośala region is full of extant temples (both standing and ruined) and loose sculptures. But unfortunately, writings on South-Kośala have seldom used these as a source of history. Here I have tried to use extant temple remains and loose sculptures as a major part of my discussion on the emergence of a regional art tradition and their role in religious process of early medieval period, and to understand the dynamics of patronage.

(e) **Literature:** There are hardly any literary records which explicitly refer to the history of South-Kośala. But stray references to South-Kośala are found in the *Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Purāṇas* and in the *Āśṭādhyāyī* of Panini and *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya etc. Hiuen Tsang’s account is the earliest literary source which vividly described South-Kośala, its location, extension, capital, people etc. *Kośala-Khaṇḍ,* an unpublished manuscript of 11th-12th century A.D
also deals with Kośala and provides valuable information regarding the history of this region.

The present study is an attempt to draw attention to a wide range of source materials available for the South-Kośala region. Earlier only inscriptions have been used whereas other sources like archaeology, numismatics, extant temple and sculptures have been neglected. The study of the archaeological materials shows continuity in the cultural phases, whereas the numismatic sources reveal the nature of interaction which South-Kośala had with the neighbouring regions. Similarly, the study of the extant temples manifest that, there was no linear movement in the temple building activities and within the South-Kośala region different types of temple cropped up, some of which have retained classical features and are very complex in nature whereas others are very simple and display the emergence of a regional art tradition. The religious affiliation of temples and the loose sculptures found from this region show religious order within a temple complex as well as in sites. The study of these sources reveals the emerging complexities in the historical development from early historic to early medieval period on one hand, and the complexities in the religious process in the early medieval period on the other. More importantly the study of these sources has changed the earlier perception of South-Kośala region.

The ‘religious process’ of early medieval South-Kośala was autonomous in nature and should not be attributed to state formation as is evident both from the inscriptive records and extant temple remains. One aspect which is completely left out is the role of the local community who lived in and around the temples. Since the temples of this region are very small and simple in nature, they might not have required huge resource mobilisation and elaborate labour management which generally comes from the royal patron but could have been managed by local communities. That is why we have very few inscriptions which record royal endowments to
temples, and temples themselves do not bear any inscription as it was the product of local participation. Secondly, the maintenance, sustenance and venerability of religious shrines depend on the local community who lived in the vicinity of the shrines than to the royal patron. The perceptions of local communities regarding their religious sanctity, their participation in daily worship and in major festivals and in maintenance of the temples were vital to their emergence as a religious centre and long survival. So the role of the local communities and distribution of settlements need to be understood in the emergence of the temple of South-Košala region.