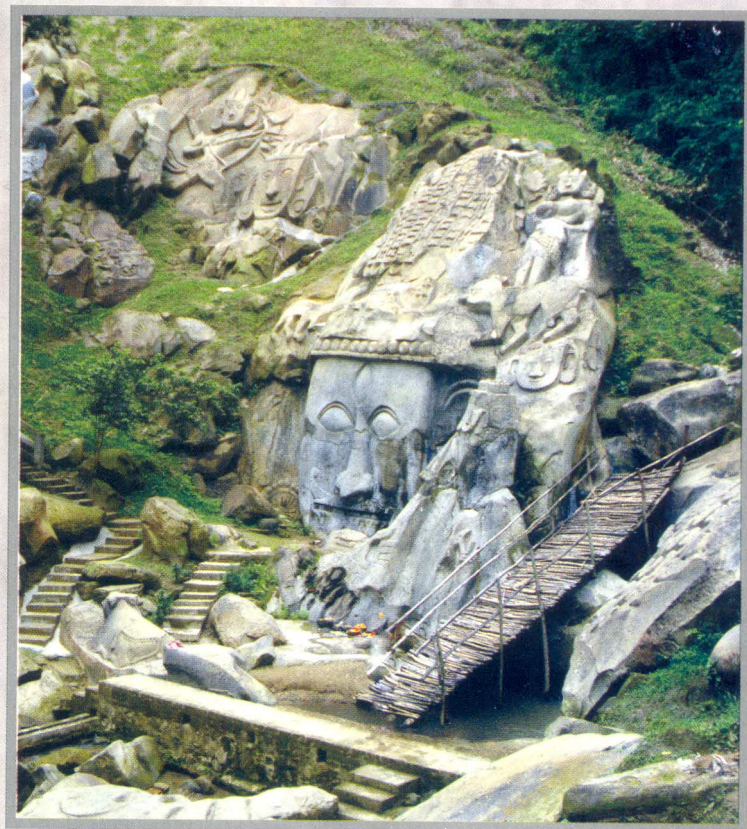




प्रत्नकीर्तिमपावृणु

CENTRALLY PROTECTED MONUMENTS OF TRIPURA



Rock-cut Sculptures, Unakoti

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA
GUWAHATI CIRCLE**

The State of Tripura in North-East India covers an area of 10,491.69 sq.km and is surrounded by Bangladesh in the north, south and west and the States of Assam and Mizoram in the east. The origin of the name of Tripura is uncertain. According to a local tradition the origin of the word 'Tripura' is attributed to the legendary tyrant king named Tripur. He was the 39th descendant of Durhya, who was a descendant of king Yayati of the lunar clan. The ancient kingdom of Tripura was under the extended rule of ancient *Samatata* and the Harikela rulers. The recent discovery of archaeological remains in the various parts of the state has not only enriched the cultural traditions of the past but assists in the reconstruction of the past of the land. The recorded history of the land begins with the founder ruler of the Manikya dynasty Dharmamanikya (AD1431-62). It was during his reign the historical chronicle of Tripura popularly known as the '*Rajmala*' was compiled. King Dharmamanikya is credited with building the temple of Tripurasundari, one of the sacred places of *saktipithas* located at Udaipur.

Cultural relics are wide spread in the state. The rock carvings, Buddhist remains, icons, brick structures etc. suggest the rich cultural heritage of the bygone era. In temple architecture although the diffusion of the chala temples of Bengal can be seen but it took a new architectural style with addition of votive stupa finial over the *chala* unlike the *Ratna sikhara* over the *chalas* as evident in Bengal. Most of these temples are similar in sizes and shape and built with brick, stone masonry etc. with tapering buttresses at the four corners. The notable *Brahmanical* temples constructed by the rulers of Manikya dynasty are Tripurasundari, Chaturdasa Devata, Bhubanesvari and Gunavati group of temples.

GUNAVATI GROUP OF TEMPLES, RADHAKISHOREPUR (UDAIPUR), DISTRICT- SOUTH TRIPURA

A group of three brick built temples popularly known as Gunavati Group of Temples lies adjacent to each other at the ancient capital of Tripura at 'Udaipur'. The northern temple bears an inscription which narrates that the temple was built by queen Gunavati, wife of



Gunavati Group Of Temples, Radhakishorepur (udaipur)

Govindamanikya (AD 1668-69), in s a k a 1 5 9 0 , corresponding to 1668AD. The temple is square on plan and attached with a s m a l l mukhamandapa on the front side. Other two temples in the complex are also similar in plan

and architectural features. The temples are covered by *chalas* surmounted with unique votive stupa like finials. The temples were dedicated to Vishnu by the queen in 1668AD.

TEMPLE OF CHATURDASA DEVATA, RADHAKISHOREPUR (UDAIPUR), DISTRICT- SOUTH TRIPURA

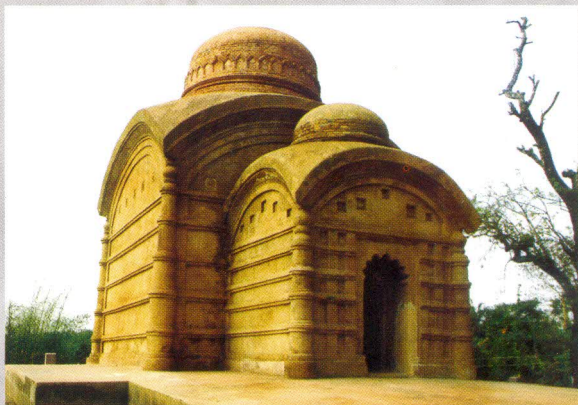


Temple of Chaturdasa Devata, Radhakishorepur (Udaipur)

The temple of Chaturdasa Devata was originally erected by Gopinath and dedicated to the fourteen gods of Tripura as evident from a dedicatory inscription. The present two edifices of brick and stone masonry adjacent to it were erected by Kalyanmanikya of

Tripura in *saka* 1572, corresponding to 1650 AD. The temples are

popularly known as 'Chaturdasa Devata' and 'Lakshmi-Narayana'. Both the temples are similar on plan and in architectural features. The roofs of which are covered by *chalas* and topped by votive stupa like finials. There is



Bhubaneswari Temple, Rajnagar, Udaipur

a *bhogamandapa* of brick masonry lying in front of the temple. It is topped by a *chala* roof. There is a brick-built ancient compound wall all around this group of temples.

BHUBANESWARI TEMPLE, RAJNAGAR (UDAIPUR), DISTRICT-SOUTH TRIPURA

The Bhubaneswari Temple was built by Govindamanikya (AD 1667-1676) which was dedicated to goddess Bhubaneswari. The architectural features of this brick and stone masonry temple resemble with the *chala* temples described above. The temple stands on a considerably raised platform, its finial resembles that of a votive stupa. Besides, there are four tapering buttresses which are attached at the four corners of the temple. A small

mukhamandapa is also attached to the temple in the front side.

THAKURANI TILA, PASCHIM PILAK, DISTRICT- SOUTH TRIPURA

Archaeological excavations of this ancient mound have brought to light a colossal image of Surya. The image was found installed within a brick built temple structure. The deity shown in standing posture holds lotuses as usual in both the hands and stylistically the image can be dated back to c.13th century AD. Further excavation has revealed ruins of eight small brick temples. A crystal *Sivalinga* believed to be fixed on a *yonipitha* is also found lying within another small shrine of the complex. A few mutilated stone sculptures of later period are found near the site.



Image of Surya, Thakurani Tila

SHYAMSUNDAR TILA, JOLAIBARI, DISTRICT- SOUTH TRIPURA

A brick built monastic complex is completely exposed after archaeological excavations. The plan of the central shrine is cruciform with *pancharatha* order. Its upper part is totally collapsed. The central sanctum of the temple is attached with four subsidiary shrines in four cardinal directions. The plan of each of the subsidiary shrine is square. Besides, there is a wide *pradakshinapatha* i.e, the circumambulatory path running all around the shrines.

The outer walls of the basement are decorated beautifully with terra-cotta plaques of Buddha in *dhyana* mudra, other Buddhist deities, Brahmanical figures including Ganesa & Kartikeya,



Excavated remains, Shyamsundar Tila

kirtimukha, dancers, musicians, archers, warriors, *gandharvas*, *kinnaras*, ducks, peacocks, parrots, eagle, snakes, fish, *makara*, horse, elephant, tiger, lion, deer, bull, buffalo, monkey, goat, mythical animal figurine, sunflower, lotus, *kalasa* etc. Besides a large number of terra cotta plaques have been recovered during excavation. A seated figure of Buddhist deity is also found. Among the stone sculptures the life size figure of Avalokitesvara flanked by Tara and Hayagriva is noteworthy. Stylistically the remains can be dated to circa 9th-10th century AD.

ANCIENT MOUND CALLED PUJA-KHOLA, PASCHIM PILAK, DISTRICT- SOUTH TRIPURA

The mound locally called Puja-Khola is marked with enshrining a standing image of Surya assigned to the 9th century AD.

SCULPTURES AND ROCK-CUT RELIEFS OF THE UNAKOTI TIRTHA, DISTRICT- NORTH TRIPURA

The famous bas relief sculptures of Unakoti carved on the



Rock-cut Siva Head, Unakoti

vertical rock cliffs display colossal sculptures of Siva-head (more than 6m high), Devi, group of rock-cut Ganesha figures along with two standing images of elephant headed figures & an image of Vishnu. They are ascribed to c.8th-9th century AD. The other notable sculptures

in round include '*chaaturmukhalinga*', '*kalyanasundaramurty*', and Trinity stylistically dated to c. 11th - 12th century AD. they are lying at various locality of the hilly terrain. Some loose sculptures identified as images of Vishnu, Hara - Gauri, Hari - Hara, Narasingha, Ganesha, Hanumana etc. are kept in a sculpture shed made at the top of the hill.

ANCIENT REMAINS, BOXANAGAR, DISTRICT- WEST TRIPURA

The discovery of massive Buddhist stupa, *chaityagriha*, a monastery and other associated burnt brick structures at Boxanagar has reflected the art and architecture & religious aspects of ancient Tripura hitherto unknown.

The brick built stupa exposed through archaeological excavation is of square plan having a dimension of 15.40x15.40m. The basement of the stupa is arranged in eight mouldings in diminishing order over which the tapering *medhi* is set with mud mortar and burnt bricks of different sizes.

The ruin of the *chaityagriha* has been exposed on the eastern side of the stupa which is



Excavated Stupa, Boxanagar

rectangular on plan and is aligned in east-west direction. The superstructure of the *chaityagriha* is completely damaged except the side walls which is survived upto 1.60m.



Bronze Image of Buddha, Boxanagar

The brick-built monastery is having a long corridor between rows of five cells on each side.

The excavation of another mound at Boxanagar has exposed a fully burnt-brick structure with triratha projections having a square sacred chamber which appears to contain the extant remains of three spokes. These spokes are found radiating out from a semi-circular structure located in the eastern side of the sacred chamber. In front of this structure there is a rectangular hall enclosed by a wall all around. A brick rammed floor is provided inside this hall probably for facilitating the congregation of devotees. A wide *pradakshinapatha* is also provided around these structures.

Notable antiquities found from the excavation of Boxanagar include three bronze images of Buddha, moulded bricks, miniature votive stupas, sealings, silver coins etc. The available archaeological evidences suggest that the Buddhist establishment at Boxanagar might have sprang up during c.6th century A.D. and continued till 12th century A.D. and during this period this Buddhist center might have played a significant role in spreading the Buddhist religion. It is also noteworthy to mention here that several Buddhist establishments had sprang up contemporary to Boxanagar in this region and in the adjoining areas like Shyam Sundar Tilla in South Tripura District, 'Somapura' of Paharpur in Rajshahi District and Mainamati in Comilla District of Bangladesh.



Terracotta Sealing, Boxanagar



Silver Coin, Boxanagar

As stated earlier the architectural style of the ancient temples which bears the pan-Indian traits are assimilated in a new style of terracotta *chala* temples with votive stupa finials. In the sphere of sculptural art the share of Tripura is not less significant as amply proved by the recent discoveries. It is therefore our prime duty to keep these priceless monuments free from encroachments and preserve them for posterity.

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