

The Archaeological Sites of Tripura: An Analysis of the Excavated Sites of Pilak, Boxanagar, Unakoti, Devtamura, and the Temples of Udaipur**Mandira Dasgupta^{1*}, Rajesh Bhowmik²****Corresponding Author's email id. eyeris555@gmail.com**

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Abstract: Tripura, the North Eastern state of India, has some important archaeological sites which define the ancient heritage of this country. The sites such as Pilak and Boxanagar which belong approximately to the fifth to twelfth century impart the Buddhist as well as Hindu philosophies. Like the other states flourished in its own way with the rule of different dynasties, Tripura too in its lush greenery and mongoloid ambiance, equally flourished in its rock-cut sculptures and religious architectures. This can be seen in the huge-sized bas-relief of Unakoti and also beside the walls of the hills of the Gomati River in Devtamura. In the later period when this place was ruled by the Manikya Kings, many temples were patronized by them. Among these, the 519 years old temple of Tripura Sundari and other temples carry unique architectural features. All these archaeological sites have been analyzed in the paper.

Keywords: Boxanagar, Pilak, Unakoti, Devtamura, Architecture, Manikya Dynasty, Tripura

Introduction

In ancient days, Tripura was known as *Sukshma Desh* or *Kirata Bhumi*. It is a state covered with hills and greeneries. The state comprises of rich history and culture. There are pieces of evidence of the prevailing culture in this state from the Paleolithic Age. This is seen from the archaeological investigation and discovery of the Stone Age tools on fossils as well as tools from the Neolithic Age. Other artifacts like coins, inscriptions, architectures, manuscripts, etc. also carry the imprints of the ancient history of Tripura. The important archaeological sites of Tripura are Boxanagar, Pilak, Unakoti, Devtamura, and Udaipur. The site Pilak has an important connection with the Samatata and Harikela. A maximum of a half portion of present Tripura was under Samatata and Harikela up to the thirteenth century (Acharjee, 2006). There are lots of views regarding the origin of the name Samatata and Harikela. The name Samatata originated from the name of the port 'Samandar' which was near to the Chittagong of

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Bangladesh. During the middle of the 7th century, Huen-en-sang described the *Samatata* as 'It is next to a large sea'. *Samatata* was an ancient state and Tripura is related to it but the history of this state is yet to be explored. (Acharjee, 2012)

Harikela was also an ancient state. Dr. Mukherjee states that the name *Harikela* came from a place near the seashore of Chittagong named as *Harkhonda*. Acharjee has a different view on it. He thinks that *Hari+Khela* = *Harikela*. *Hari* is the name of God and *Kela* signifies a place. Therefore, *Harikela* symbolises the place of God.

Dr. Sarma in his article 'Tripura in the Pre-Manikya period' has written that "...*Samatata* is a region roughly corresponding to the present districts of Sylhet, Noakhali, and Chittagong..." (Sarma, 1985). From this statement, we can identify the location of the *Samatata* state which is now in the districts of Bangladesh.

The above areas were connected with Faridpur, Mymensingh, Kushtia etc. The '*Harikel state*' was located in the eastern part of India. Majumder has stated that he has found the mention of the Harikel state in the book of the 9th century named 'Kopuri Manjuri'. In that century, King Trilochan who was the king of the Lunar dynasty used to rule in the Harikel state. The northern and southern region of Tripura was under his rule. The Kings ruling the southern part of Tripura in the 7th century were Buddhist. This was known from the copper plate inscription of *Samatata's* ruler King Loknath. This copper plate inscription was found in the Mainamati region of Comilla. Another copper plate inscription found from Comilla gives evidence of the existence of Brahmanism in the royal family. There was also the rule of Hindu Kings like King Purnachandra and King Subarnachandra on the Lalmai hill during the 7th and 8th centuries. The archaeological site Pilak was believed to be patronized by all these Buddhist and Hindu royal families (Majumdar, 1943).

The northern regions of Tripura especially the Atharamura, and Langtarai were covered with huge hills and dense forests. So, the *Samatata* and *Harikela* kingdoms couldn't spread in those areas. There the Kuki, Halam, and Lushai were the supreme people and the place was known as *Kirata Bhumi*. The other regions near Cachar and Dimasa Srihatta (Sri Bhumi) were under the Kamrup Kings. A new history was discovered after the excavation of the Mainamati region. The ancient history of Pilak and Boxanagar automatically comes out if we discuss the Mainamati Civilization. In Boxanagar, the Buddhist civilization dates to 6th-12th c A.D. and in Pilak the Buddhist Civilization dates to about 9th-10th c. In Pilak there was Vajrayana Buddhism. Pilak's excavation has led to the discovery of many artifacts, among them the Vajra symbol and the statue of Hariti were the most significant ones. Hinduism came in a later period in Pilak and continued till the 11th century. During the age of Buddhism in Pilak, the Mog people started following this religion widely.

The name 'Pilak' itself is believed to have originated from the Mog language which means 'hidden wealth or treasure'. During the prevailing of Hinduism in Pilak, the art, and culture were developed more.

The special feature of Boxanagar was that it has proof of the existence of the Buddhist School of Philosophy. Such a type of religious centre is not seen in Pilak. The

archaeological site of Pilak consists of a Buddhist Matha structure. Like the Boxanagar, such kind of Buddhist educational centre was also traced in Mainamati Bangladesh. In the case of the terracottas of Pilak, we can find similar characteristics with the Mainamati Civilization.

A large number of sculptures found in Pilak point towards the proof of the influences of Hinduism prevailing after the Buddhist age. As discussed earlier, the Hindu civilization of that region came after the age of Buddhism. From there, Hinduism has spread and has influenced the history, culture, religion, politics, etc. of the Samatata- Harikela region. According to the archaeologists, the Buddhist Civilization of Boxanagar was formed during the *Kharga* rule of the Samatata. Therefore, it is seen that Boxanagar is the most ancient Buddhist archaeological site in Tripura. According to Acharjee, the Pilak and Boxanagar region accompanied by the major half portion of Tripura was under the Samatata- Harikela.

Unakoti of Tripura is a Saiva civilization. The time period of Unakoti can be assumed as 8th-11th century. Most probably that may be Natha-Yogi's creation and has been patronized by the Hindu 'Deb' generation of Sri Bhumi. Devtamura consists of rock-cut sculptures. But this site dates to a later period. In Tripura apart from the excavated sites and rock-cut sculptures, there are some ancient temples with unique features not much highlighted. But they represent a significant role in the history and culture of this state. They are the temples of the medieval period which can be seen in Udaipur. The paper represents an analytical study of these sites.

Literature Review

The paper is based on the architectures of Tripura which have been built under various dynasties. Therefore, a wide collection of books were studied and some of the essential books were reviewed.

The author of the book 'Tripura A Living Museum of Art, Architecture & Culture', (Bhattacharjee, 2011) states that the art and architecture of Tripura were influenced by the art of mainstream India during the early period and by the typical local idioms and beliefs mixed with the previous forms of art and architecture of the land in the later period. The Islamic style of architecture has also influenced the temple styles in Tripura to a large extent. It is an interesting fact that the combination of Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Islamic idioms in the sphere of religious temples of Tripura reveals a new and different style.

Tripura's unique topography lands distinctive traits to the genius of its people. They are traditionally endowed with rare artistic gifts, which they have so aptly demonstrated throughout the ages in all the fields of arts- plastic and visual. It is very difficult to ascertain exactly the antiquities of architecture in ancient Tripura. A few numbers of icons provide the existence of temples during the early centuries of the Christian era approximately 7th to 8th century A.D. A good number of bricks and a few molded terracotta plaques found scattered in Pilak- jolaibadi region, Unakoti, and Boxanagar proves the existence of brick temples at those places. This book carries the above

information and says that like the Shyamsundar Tilla of Pilak, the other archaeological sites also bear traces of the structures of temples on the surface of the ground.

The book named ‘Tripurar Pratnatatwik Sampad’ (Palit, 2016) consists of eight historical essays. The first essay is written by Das about the archaeological components of ancient Tripura. They are Pilak, Unakoti, Udaipur etc.

The second essay is written by Bhattacharya who has visualized the temple architectures of the ancient capital of Tripura, Udaipur and has tried to prove his analysis with proper evidence.

The third essay is about Unakoti written by Debbarman.

The fourth chapter is about the history of Pilak written by Bhattacharya. He has narrated about the sculptures of Pilak.

The sculptures of Devatamura and the archaeological site of Boxanagar were described by Dr. Baidya in the next chapter.

Sengupta’s article about the royal capital of Agartala and the art of architecture is an asset in itself.

The other chapter of Acharjee about the coins of the Manikyas of Tripura is the result of his serious investigations and his numismatics study.

Dr. Palit, also the editor of this book has made an analysis of the Stupa- Sirsha Minar-Chala temple of Tripura.

All these eight articles carry important features about each and every archaeological site of Tripura. And they are compiled in the short essay type, so could be easily accessible by the researchers.

In Chapter IV of the book “Art and Architecture of Tripura”, (Das, 1997) highlighted the temples of Tripura exhibiting three distinct features. They are:

1. Indian ‘Chala’ type of roof, Indo- Saracenic minarets and the Indo-Burmese type stupa crowning.
2. The Gunavati temple of Udaipur consists of the Indian Chala type of roof. It is built up of bricks with a *Torana* and a single-porched main sanctum. This was termed the Char-chala stupa-sirsha temples by the author. The porch of this temple has no crowning. The unique feature of this temple is that it has an amalakadisc over the *anda* on which stands a solid spherical cube with angular ridges all around. Such features are not seen in the other Char-chala temples of Udaipur. The temple has a circular sanctum and rectangular porch.
3. In the Tripura Sundari temple, the Indo- Saracenic minarets are much more distinct. Each of the four corners of the sanctum of this temple meets with the tapering pilasters which have a *kalasa* finial from which rises the carved cornice. These buttresses are imitations of Muslim minarets which have synchronized themselves in a Hindu

monument. Only the temples of this place have such features and it is not found even in Assam, Bengal, or Orissan temples.

Das has written a minimized chapter about the architecture of the Manikya period in which the temples of Udaipur and a single palace of Amarpur have been described. But if we consider the whole time period of the Manikya dynasty, there are several other temples, palaces, and secular architectures left which she has not described.

Analysis of the Archaeological Sites of Tripura

Boxanagar

Boxanagar is located nearly 40 km south- west of Agartala. It lies near the Comilla district of Bangladesh. Archaeologically Boxanagar is an important site of Tripura. Their excavation was conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India and many architectural remains were discovered. This site consists of a structure shaped like a Buddhist stupa which is identified as a Chaityagriha (Figure 1). Then a monastery and other brick structures with its substructures were also excavated. The site consists of approximately more than three acres of land which is situated in a hilly area.

According to R.D.Singh and Bimal Sinha, "...the excavation of the south- western portion of the mound has revealed a massive brick built stupa of square plan with triratha projections measured (15.40 x 15.40) m at the base. The extant height of the stupa is found more than eight meters from its foundation level. The basement of the structure consists of eight brick mouldings. The burnt bricks have sizes (30 x 23 x 6) cm to (34 x 24 x 5) cm ..." (Acharjee, (Ed.) 2006)



Figure 1, Brick-built Stupa of Boxanagar

On the southern side of the stupa, the *harmika* was found collapsed. It is believed to be originally set over the central chamber of a square plan 2.30 m and 1.50m deep. After removing the mud from the central chamber of the stupa, a large number of clay votive stupas and sealings inscribed with legends of religious creeds in *Kutila lipi* were found.



Figure 2, The brick-built *Chaityagriha* of Boxanagar

The next structure is the brick-built *Chaityagriha* (Figure 2) which is rectangular in shape and measures 18.50 m x 11.90m externally. This plinth-level structure consists of 19 courses of burnt bricks. This *Chaityagriha* also has a staircase on its eastern side.



Figure 3, Excavated Surface of the Buddhist Monastery in Boxanagar

On the right side of the *Chaityagriha* discussed above, another structure of the monastery was also excavated (Figure 3). Like the other structures, it is also built on raised land. This is also rectangular which measures (31.80 x 17.80) m and is aligned in the east-west direction. The monastery consists of one central corridor (26.10 x 3.80) m and it consists of ten cells which measure (2.60 x 4.10) m. Three stages of construction have been undergone to build this monastery. At first, the floor of the cells in the

interior surface is made up of brick at a depth of 2.88m from the upper surface of the remaining extant. In the next stage, the structure of the chamber was constructed on the original plan in which the level of the floor has been raised accompanied by the height of the walls. The burnt brick was used for constructing a monastery of the same size. Three seated bronze figures of Buddha on padmasana are found there. Some of the sealings are also found which are paleographically assigned to circa sixth century A.D. and the inscriptions on these seals couldn't be read till now.

Pilak

The archaeological site of Pilak is situated at a distance of about 80 km far from the capital Agartala (Tripura). This site is renowned for the assimilated cultures of both Hinduism and Buddhism. Pilak consists of some important mounds such as Shyamsunder Tilla, Pujakhol Tilla, Thakurani Tilla, Bathanbari, Debdarur Purnandogiri Ashram, Club Tilla, Bolir Pathar, Raj Rajeswari temple of Muhuripur, Takkatulshi etc.

Among the above sites, Shyamsunder Tilla (Figure 4) as excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India is the highest hemispherical mound that holds a Buddhist *vihara*. During its excavation in 1998-99, a cruciform Sarbhato Bhadra Temple (Figure 5) was found.

The outer walls of this temple are decorated with terracotta plaques on the lower part of the side walls (Figure 6).



Figure 4, Exposed view of the Shyamsunder Tilla, Pilak

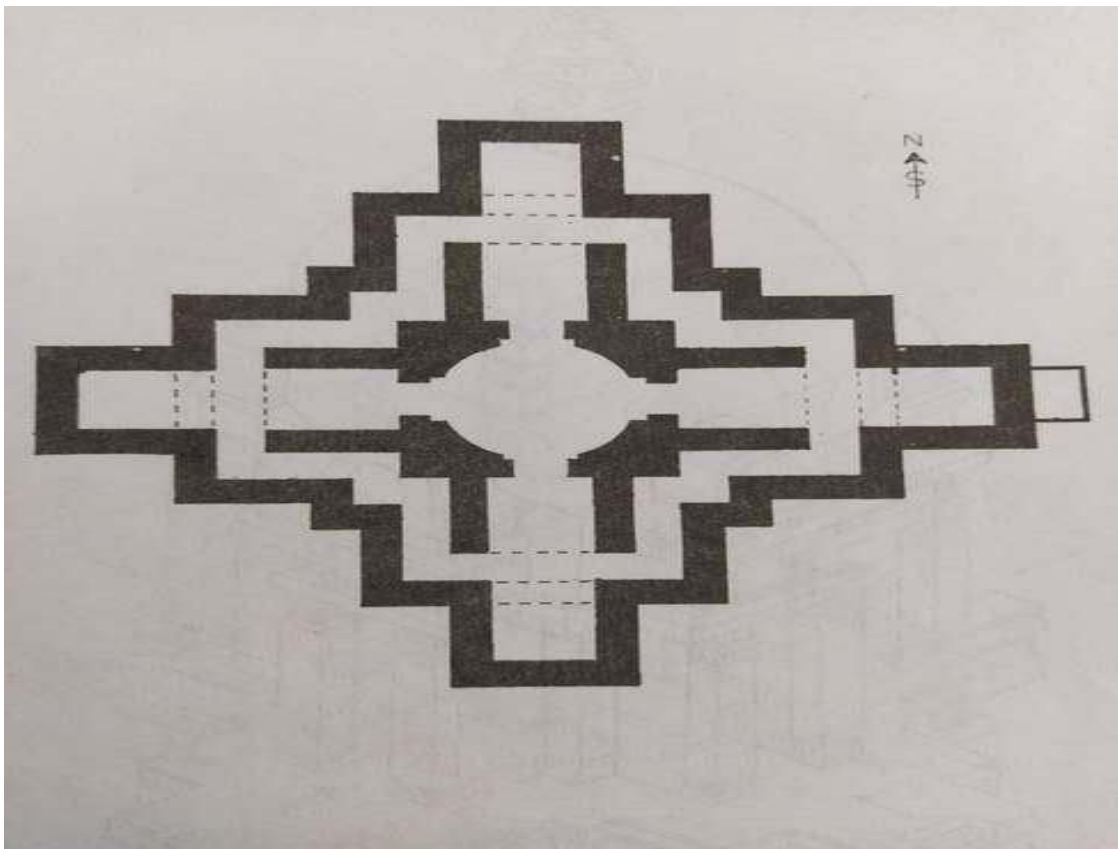


Figure 5, Cruciform Structural view of the Temple of Shyamsundar Tilla, Pilak



Figure 6, Terracotta Plaques on the lower part of the side walls of Shyamsundar Tilla, Pilak

The terracotta plaques are of outstanding nature covering religious and secular subjects and scenes and are stylistically datable to circa 9-10th century A.D. These plaques have the essence of highly artistic and naturalistic compositions of various scenes of Puranas, Ramayana, Buddhist themes, auspicious symbols, semi-divine beings, dancers, drummers, etc. (Figure 7a, 7b). The outer wall of those Buddhist shrines was decorated artistically which portrays the co-relation of art and social culture.



Figure 7a, Drummer, one of the terracotta plaques of Pilak



Figure 7b, Terracotta plaques of the Temple of Shyamsunder Tilla, Pilak



Figure 8a, Shyamsunder Tilla mound, Central view
Image Courtesy: Maji, N



Figure 8b, Side View of Shyamsunder Tilla, Pilak.
Image Courtesy: Maji, N



Figure 8c, Corner view of the excavated area of Shyamsundar Tilla, Pilak
Image Courtesy: Maji, N



Figure 8d, Middle area of the Shyamsundar Tilla, Pilak
Image Courtesy: Maji, N

The exposed Stupa's dimension measures 34.50 m long. Across the *medhi*, it survived up to a height of 1.70m only. The 1st terrace *pradakshina patha* is 1.75 m wide. The stupa is cruciform in plan and provided with one staircase in the eastern direction

consisting of five steps. The width of the staircase is 4.70 m. There are 4 entrances in cardinal directions around the central shaft approachable from 1st terrace. The entrances lead towards central areas of the stupa speak that each side was provided with an antechamber or sanctum having an image of Buddha or Bodhisattvas (Figure 8a,8b,8c,8d). Four small porches are also discovered attached to the central stupa or temple in all four cardinal directions. Square stone blocks (pillar bases) exposed three each on either side of the porch or *antarala*. The side walls of the porches are survived with 1.50m to 2 m only. The *pradakshina patha* around the sanctum measured 1.60 m and 25 to 30 layers of burnt- bricks super structure ⁹(Acharjee, 2006).



Figure 9, Thakurani Tilla, Pilak
Image Courtesy: Maji, N

The other important site is the Thakurani Tilla (Figure 9) in West Pilak. The site is well preserved and consists of brick- built basement of nine small shrines which comprise of *garbhagriha* and a *pradakshina patha*. After the excavation in one of them, a quartz Shivalinga fixed in a sandstone *yonipitha* was found. This indicates that the temple was dedicated to lord Shiva. The other fragmented icons present there indicate that there were shrines dedicated to other deities like Surya, Ganesha, Shakti and Vishnu.

There is also a colossal image of Surya in a standing posture holding a lotus (Figure 10). This monumental sculpture can be considered one of the tallest icons and on stylistic analysis, it can be dated to the fifteenth century C.E. According to the Archaeological Survey of India, the excavated remains are assumed to be between the time span of the tenth century and thirteenth-century C.E.



Figure 10, Surya

Pilak is believed to have similar features as the Somapura Mahavihara (Figure 11) in Paharpur (Naogaon District, Bangladesh). After the excavation of this site by the A.S.I Guwahati Circle many facts came out about the flourishing of Buddhism throughout North East India. These influences were assumed to come from several Buddhist pilgrimages of Bangladesh (Paharpur and Mainamati), Bihar (Bikramshila, Nalanda, and Bodhgaya) and West Bengal (Jagjivanpur in Malda District).



Figure 11, Somapura Mahavira in Paharpur (Naogaon District Bangladesh)
Image Courtesy: Momin, A

Unakoti

Unakoti is another important archaeological site of Tripura. Situated in north Tripura, it is at a distance of 180 km far from Agartala. The name 'Unakoti' means 'one less than a crore'. This is an abode of the Lord Shiva nesting numerous bas-reliefs of rock-cut sculptures of the Gods and the Goddesses (Figure 12). History says that the reliefs are made during the 11th century.

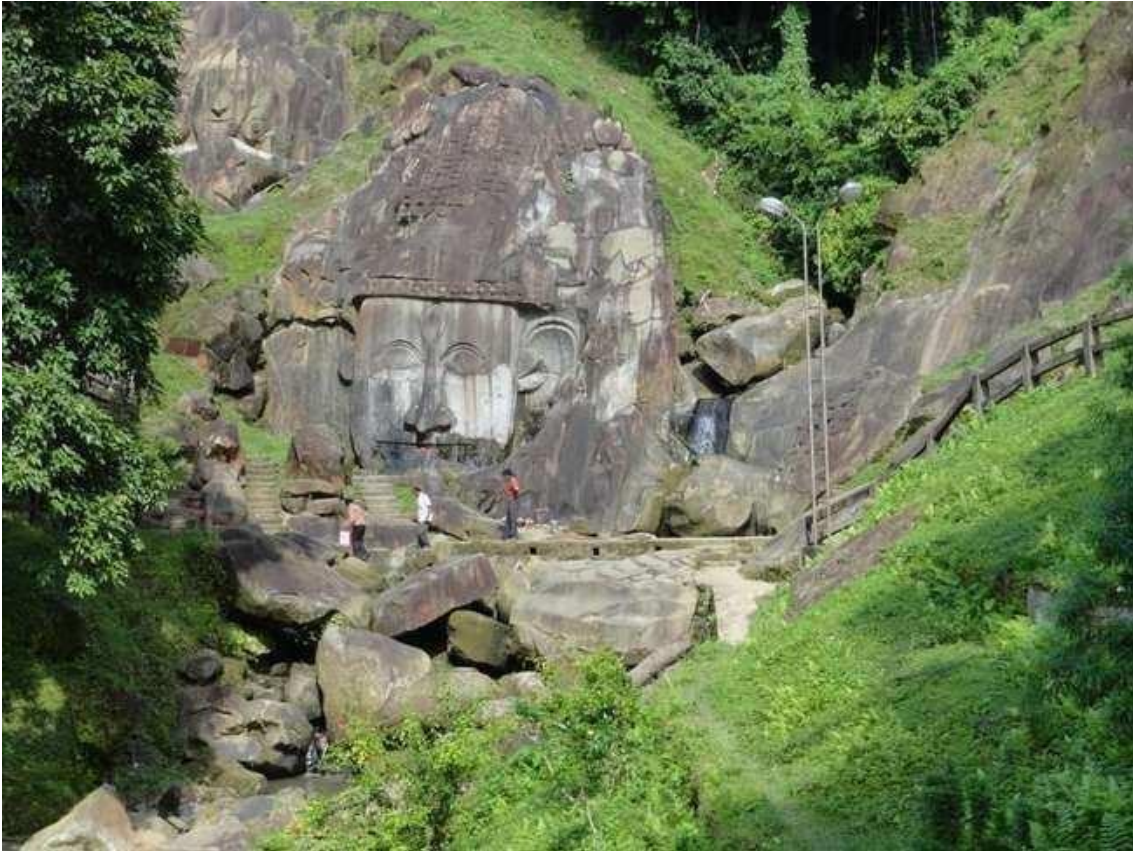


Figure 12, Wide view of Unakoti Central Area.

The Siva head is the most unique creation (Figure 13). It is a composition of only the head of the Lord Shiva with two female deities riding their *Vahanas*. The symmetrical female deities were sculpted on both sides of the head itself. Such symmetry was seen in the sculptures of the 11th century. The design of the eyes and ornamental features have influences of the local tribes.



Figure 13, Siva head, Unakoti



Figure 14, Panel of Lord Ganesha, Unakoti

Apart from the Siva head, there is a panel of Lord Ganesha (Figure 14) which rather shows a composition with multiple features. There are other detached sculptures such as *Chaturmukha lingas* (Figure 15), Uma-Mahesvara, Ganesha, Vishnu, Vrsabha etc. kept in the upper portion of the hill. These Hindu sculptures show the influence of Hinduism in Unakoti (Figure 16).



Figure 15, Chaturmukha Linga in Unakoti (view from two sides)



Figure 16, Sculptures found in Unakoti

Scholars also describe the influences of Buddhism in this region. This place is surrounded by various sculptures with the motifs of Buddhism. There is an emblem of a peacock in the central Siva which is symbolized in Buddhist Iconography 'as a protector from the serpents.' The peacock is an enemy of the snakes. Therefore, it is symbolically sculpted here. The Siva is also known as Unakotiswar Kalbhairab and its exaggerated facial feature (ferocious features) has similarities with the images of the Mahakal found in Nepal (Nandi 2008). This head representation of Shiva is unseen in Hindu art. In the Fourteen Gods and Goddesses temple of Khayarpur of Agartala, there are only head images but those are modeled in a well-defined manner than the Unakoti sculptures. This multiple-hand feature is seen in Tantric Buddhism. The Ganesha panel of Unakoti is also unique with three Ganesha reliefs each with four, six, and eight arms

respectively. The Ganesha sculptures also have three to four tusks which also confirms the influences of Tantric Buddhism.

According to Dr. Nandi ‘...There is an influence of 11th-12th century Bengal art on Unakoti, though Unakoti relief does not follow the Pala-Sena school of art. Just taking some stylistic features from Pala- Sena art Unakoti style of carving has been formed in a different way. Also, influences of Tibetan art, the art of Thailand, and other south-east Asian countries are seen in Unakoti...’

Devtamura

Devtamura is situated in the southern part of Tripura about 8 km far from Amarpur town. The place is also known as ‘Chabimura’. This site is famous for a colossal rock-cut image of ‘Mahishasurmardini’ carved in the sloping surface of the Kalajhari hill adjacent to which the natural Gomti River flows. Many scholars named the deity ‘Chakrakma’ (Figure 17). This ten-armed mother Goddess image is 13 Mts. High (45ft). This image is carved on a flat surface with limited modeling of the face having rounded volume with broad shoulders standing in Pratyaldha pose. The carving style has similarities with that of the Unakoti rock-cut reliefs but the gestures of Devtamura reliefs are different. The expression of the Goddess is more sanctified than the *Raudra* head of Shiba at Unakoti. The features might have been adopted from the Islamic arts. Some multifoiled arches are also found in Devtamura which shows influences of the pre- Ahom period.



Figure 17, Chakrakma Deity of Devtamura

Image Courtesy: <https://www.tripuntold.com/tripura/gomati/chabimura/photos/10029/>



Figure 18, The panel of Five Deities as well as the panel of 37 figures in Devtamura
Image Courtesy: Kamei, P

On the other side of the hill, there are some rock-cut images of Ganesha, Kartikeya, Durga, etc. Among them, the important panels are the panel of five deities and a panel of 37 figures (Figure 18). One of the deities in the five panels is assumed to be of Lord Vishnu and the other four images are carved on the four sides of the central image. According to Dr. Nandi "...Above all, there is the image of Siva probably (2.20mt). On the right side, there is an image of Kartikeya (1.35 mt) probably. On the left, there is Ganesha (2.40 mt) with his *vahana*. Just below the central image, four- armed Goddess is there. Vaishnavite faith can be seen as the panel shows Vishnu as the central deity. Each figure is carved within the engraved squarish boundary. The whole composition is bordered with an engraved formation which has a multifoiled arch at the top. Other panels show thirty-seven figures perhaps pilgrims taking part in a religious procession. All these are carved in low relief..." The composition of the panel of the five deities is also compared by Dr. Nandi with the basic composition of Umalinga murti ASM 1432 collected from Ujan bazaar, Guwahati which belongs to the pre- Ahom period.

Udaipur

Udaipur is situated in the Gomati district of Tripura and is 51 km far from the capital Agartala. This was initially known as Rangamati. Udaipur is famous for its ancient temples constructed during the Manikya Dynasty. The rulers from the Royal Manikya families patronized numerous temples and palaces in Tripura and most of the important temples are situated in the Udaipur city which was the ancient capital of Tripura. Some

of the aesthetically rich architecture of Udaipur glorifies the history of the temples of Tripura built during the middle of the 15th century and continued till the middle of the 18th century A.D. Among them, the Tripura Sundari temple (Figure 19) is the most famous and is also regarded as one among the 51 Shakti *peethas* of India. The other temples are Hari temple, Mahadevbadi group of temples, Gunavati group of temples, Bhubaneswari temple (Figure 20), Dol of Jagannath (Figure 21) etc.



Figure 19, Tripura Sundari Temple



Figure 20, Bhubaneswari Temple



Figure 21, Dol of Jagannath

The Manikya rulers were the follower of Hinduism and therefore their temples were of their tutelary deities. Those temples also have elements of Brahmanism and Buddhism. This is due to the arrival of other religions as well as the acceptance of those philosophies by the royal house. A new style of temple architecture was constructed in that era. They are conserved by the Archaeological Survey of India but these temples need to be highlighted in the mainstream history of Indian architecture. The temples of Tripura are *char chala* roofs (4-sided hut-like roofs) type with a stupa *shirsha*. Such type of characteristics of blending the Hindu and Buddhist design of architecture is unique in India. This also has a combination of the Muslim designs such as the corner buttresses of the Tripura Sundari temple are joined by four pillars which are shaped as minarets. The Dol of Jagannath has the characteristics of the later Muslim period. The roof of this temple has a dome and vaulted roof. This temple is a combination of the Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic styles of architecture (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The temples of Udaipur have other interesting features like the sanctum of most of the temples are +round inside and square outside. The entrances are minimal in order to stop the wild elephants and other enemies from trespassing into it. Some have a porch and *torana* which leads the pilgrims to enter the temple. In some of the temples, we can see that both the porch and the sanctum bear a votive stupa-like structure over the *charchala*.

Methods

The paper is based on qualitative and descriptive research on the excavated sites of Pilak, Boxanagar, Unakoti, Devtamura, and the temples of Udaipur. Materials for the research were collected from various sources, including documentaries, literature surveys, etc. The data collection was made using several tools and techniques of interviews, literary sources, questionnaires, libraries, field visits, etc. A qualitative analysis was made of each of the palaces and described in accordance with the paper.

Results

The paper describes the archaeological sites of Pilak and Boxanagar. These were the most ancient sites of Tripura which highlights the styles and designs used in the early days. The sites of Unakoti and Devtamura comprise huge- relief sculptures that need to be studied and analyzed by researchers. On the other hand, the temple architectures have a different structure and composition far away from the ancient sites. The temple exists today and is unique in the whole country.

Discussion

The structural remains of Boxanagar symbolize Buddhist architecture from the fifth century A.D. to the end of the twelfth century A.D. The other contemporary Buddhist architectures were also developed in the same era in Bangladesh. One of the important centers was the 'Somapura Mahavira' of Paharpur in the Rajshahi district of Bangladesh. This was founded by King Dharmapala (AD 770-810) who was the second Pala king of Bengal. This was the centre of Mahayana Buddhism which has spread its ideas in the south of the Eastern Himalayas region. It is considered rich and thematic terracotta plaques which can be seen both in Mainamati in Comilla as well as in the Shyam Sundar Tilla in Pilak. Such type of architectural tradition can also be seen in Myanmar and Indonesia which shows the connection with the Southeast Asian region. Mainamati and Boxanagar are nearer to each other but there are no traces of terracotta plaques in Boxanagar like that found in Mainamati. A similar difference lies in the stone figures of Buddha and Bodhisattva.

The style of architecture and the inscription rather indicates that Boxanagar was constructed earlier than Mainamati and Paharpur. The inscribed sealing consists of the *Brahmi* characters with the motifs of the *triratna* symbol and can be considered to be circa fifth century A.D. The site needs to be researched more since lots of information is not yet discovered.

Conclusion

The site of Pilak is nearer to Mainamati and the terracotta plaques of this place are artistically enriched. This might also be due to the influence of the Pala tradition. The terracotta plaque of the Pilak resemblance to the terracotta plaques of Paharpur, Mainamati, Vikramshila, and also the terracottas of Jagjivanpur in Malda District (ninth- tenth century A.D.).

In Unakoti, there are rock-cut sculptures on either side of the hill. There are also many sandstone sculptures, stone pavements, debris of bricks and stones, a brick basement of a temple, etc. When we have a birds-eye view, we can see the hill and the vast area which was once full of visitors and pilgrims. The place has faced earthquakes and was not restored in due time which resulted in the ruin of the sculptures and the site. Unakoti is an important archaeological site in Eastern India. The huge massive rock-cut Shiva heads dissimilar to the other Indian style of sculpture are exotic in their own way.

The other site Devtamura, also known as ‘the peak of Gods’ is a place that attracts visitors with panels of rock-cut sculptures carved out of high rocky walls facing the river Gomati. This sculpture belongs to the post-fourteenth century. They also depict the regional style marked by ethnic elements of the local region.

The temple-building activity in Tripura started in the early sixteenth century or towards the end of the fifteenth century under the patronage of the Manikya Dynasty. Most of the temples are situated in Udaipur. These temples are made up of bricks and are known as *Char- Chala- Stupa-Sirsha* temples. This style is also named the *tribeg* style. The sanctum of these temples is round inside and square outside. The walls were highly thick. No pillars or pilasters were used inside the construction. At the four corners of the sanctum, there are tapering pilasters with a *kalasa* finial. The buttresses are inspired by the Muslim minarets which are utilized in these Hindu monuments. Such innovative style of temple architecture is not found even in the neighbouring states of Assam, Bengal, or Orissa. There are other architectures apart from these in Tripura like the Neer-Mahal Palace, Ujjayanta Palace, Buddhist and Hindu temples, mosques etc. This paper projects only the selected and most important archaeological sites among them.

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Conflicts of Interest

“The authors declare no conflict of interest”.

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Image References

- Figure 8a: Maji, N. 2017. *Go Down to the Ancient Era*. [Online]. [Accessed 18 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.tripadvisor.in/ShowUserReviews-g12435856-d3179310-r606639208-Pilak-Jolaibari_South_Tripura_District_Tripura.html#photos;aggregationId=101&albumid=101&filter=7&ff=267789942
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- The rest of the images are taken by the author itself.