# Coastal Shrines of Odisha and Maritime Networks in the Bay of Bengal: 2ⁿᵈ Century BCE-12ᵗʰ Century CE

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***Abstract:*** *Sea travel was fraught with peril and danger in early historical and medieval times, and not surprisingly, from an early period, a saviour or saviouress from sea danger was part of the Indic cultural tradition. First, in Buddhism in the form of Avalokiteśvara and Tārā, but later in Hinduism, the protective saviour deities emerged in the Indian Subcontinent, including in the eastern seaboard region of Odisha. The coastal shrines in the Indian Ocean World provided the cultural basis for the maritime transactions among the various regions of the Indian Ocean. The paper is an attempt to construct various coastal shrines in Odisha by analysing the historical-cultural context of their origin and growth. The paper uses archaeological, historical evidence, temple legend and local tradition to construct the maritime economic landscape of Odisha in the early historical and early medieval period, which includes accounting for the locations of ports on the riverine mouths. The location of these ports in the estuarine mouths or on the river banks is dependent on their hinterlands, and the paper analyses the role the goods and traders of Odisha played in the Indian Ocean trade. Given the dangers of sea voyages and belief in protective deities, the coastal establishments saw the emergence of coastal shrines in early historical and early medieval Odisha.*

***Keywords****: Coastal shrines, Transnational networks, Tārā as Saviouress, Siddha Yātrā, Mangalā*

## Introduction

In a significant departure from the earlier colonial or nationalist perspectives on maritime trade of India, which emphasised the centrality of the Roman trade, the recent scholarship, following the broader Indian

Ocean perspective, has changed gaze towards the unity of the Indian Ocean, including that of the Bay of Bengal (Basa, 1994-95, 1999). This unity is derived not only from a shared aqua space surrounded by continents, archipelagos, peninsulas and islands but also from the rhythm of monsoon (Amrith, 2013). The new perspective puts a salience on the centrality of sailing communities, fishermen and others who developed smaller networks of exchange who played a key role in constituting the broader Indian Ocean networks (Ray, 2003: 96; Chattopadhyay, 2018). As part of the smaller coastal as well as the transoceanic contact, Odisha's maritime contacts in antiquity have been discussed by scholars (Basa, 1997; Basa & Behera, 2000; Tripati, 2000; Patnaik, 2003). Numerous literary texts, right from the Buddhist Jātakas to vernacular Odia literary and oral traditions, represent the other side of the Bay of Bengal as engendering desires as well as fear. The desire for gold and spices (*Suvarṇadvīpa*) is equally resonated with the fear of being devoured by sea demons, piracy and other vagaries of the sea. The latter aspect is an important dimension of the maritime heritage of India, as it led to the development of coastal shrines in the Indian Ocean. Although art historians and folktales researchers have discussed such shrines in isolation, a comprehensive account of such coastal shrines from Odisha has not received much attention, and hence the paper focuses on coastal shrines by historicizing their location, emergence and nature. These shrines provided the cultural basis for the maritime transactions among the various regions of the Indian Ocean. Keeping the above perspective in view, the first part of the paper focuses on the evidence of the use of sea in the Proto-historic period, followed by the emergence of coastal and transoceanic networks in the period of Early Historical Urbanism in Odisha. This section also locates numerous evidence of early medieval trade and ports in the context of a textile trade boom in the Javanese water in the medieval period, in which Odisha was an active participant. The growth of trading networks of various kinds engendered the notion of protection and saviour, and the paper argues that the Buddhist site of Ratnagiri developed the first notion of saviouress in the form Aṣṭamahābhaya Tārā. The last part of the paper deals with important coastal shrines of Odisha and their locations in the estuarine ports of ancient and Early Medieval Odisha by focusing on the fact that these ports–shrines overlap was largely due to the goods available in the hinterlands of these estuarine tidal rivers, which were transacted as trade goods in the Indian Ocean.

## Evidence of Use of Sea in the Proto-historic Period

The state of Odisha is situated on the east coast of India, with the northwest shore of the Bay of Bengal forming its eastern boundary. Bounded by the Medinipur district to its north-east, the Chotanagpur plateau in the north, Srikakulam district on its south, Raipur on its west and the sea-board of the Bay of Bengal as its eastern limit, the present cartographic administrative boundary was not the same as the cultural region of the historical period. Regions such as Odisha, like other cultural regions, were constituted by the conjunction of a multiplicity of historical forces over time. The gradual coming together of localities and sub-regions at different stages of cultural attainments, the consequent overlaps and intersections, and the wider network of trans-regional cultural transactions with the contemporary societies went into the shaping of the region today known as Odisha. Odisha, as a distinct cultural region, emerged as a result of the interplay of several forces, such as material cultural developments, geographical locations, interactions with the outside region, and religious and cultural developments. One of the factors that influenced the making of Odisha as a cultural region was the culture of sailing in the sea and material and cultural transactions associated with it right from the early historical period. There were fishing communities on the coast that took to sea quite early. The archaeological excavations from the coastal inland Chalcolithic site of Golabai in Khurda district and Bharati Huda in Cuttack districts have yielded shark teeth used as pendant indicating that the people of coastal

Odisha took to sea quite early, and exploited its resources from the days of early farming cultures in 2nd millennium BC (Sinha, 2000; Garnayak, 2020; Mishra & Bihari, 2023). Similarly, the excavation from Kankeikuda on the Chilika lake revealed temporary settlement sites on the estuary of Chilika in the middle of the 2nd millennium BC. Excavation of a single trench at Operation-2, located at the top of the slightly elevated western mound near the mouth of an old paleo channel, showed the occupation of the site in the Chalcolithic age with distinct burnished pottery from the lowest deposit, but showed that the settlement was abandoned after the occupation of the Chalcolithic phase. The other Operational area showed the early medieval or modern occupation without any trace of earlier occupation, indicating that different operational areas were occupied in different cultural periods (Vaidya *et al*., 2023). The ethnographic data show the presence of differentiated occupational groups associated with sea travel. Some of these groups who are associated with sea sailing include *mājhi*(sailor), *mālijahan* (sailman), *dāndel* (protector of boat) (Senapati, 1915/2010: 43-45). Later during the Medieval Period, Shaista Khan, the Subedar of Bengal, used the shipbuilding expertise in Balasore to build big ships of 600-800 tons so that they could survive rough weather. Such ships were used to suppress the Magas and the Portuguese (Mohapatra, 1984: 121).

## Early Historical Urbanism in Odisha, Consuming Cities and Emergence of Coastal Networks

Material cultural developments in Odisha from the Iron Age, around 800 BC onwards, show a greater degree of social complexity as reflected in the fortification of sites and the introduction of *janapada* coins. This was further accelerated in the Mauryan and Post-Mauryan Phase. In the coastal and interior Odisha, the cultural developments are demonstrated by large sites such as Sisupalgarh (Lal, 1949; Mohanty & Smith, 2008: 47 – 56), Jaugarh *(IAR*, 1956-7), Radhanagar (Patnaik, 2017: 42–51), Talapada (Mohanty et.al. 2014), Lathi, Narla Asurgarh, Badmal Asurgarh (Behera *et al*., 2019), Barpalli Asurgarh, Tārāporegarh, etc.
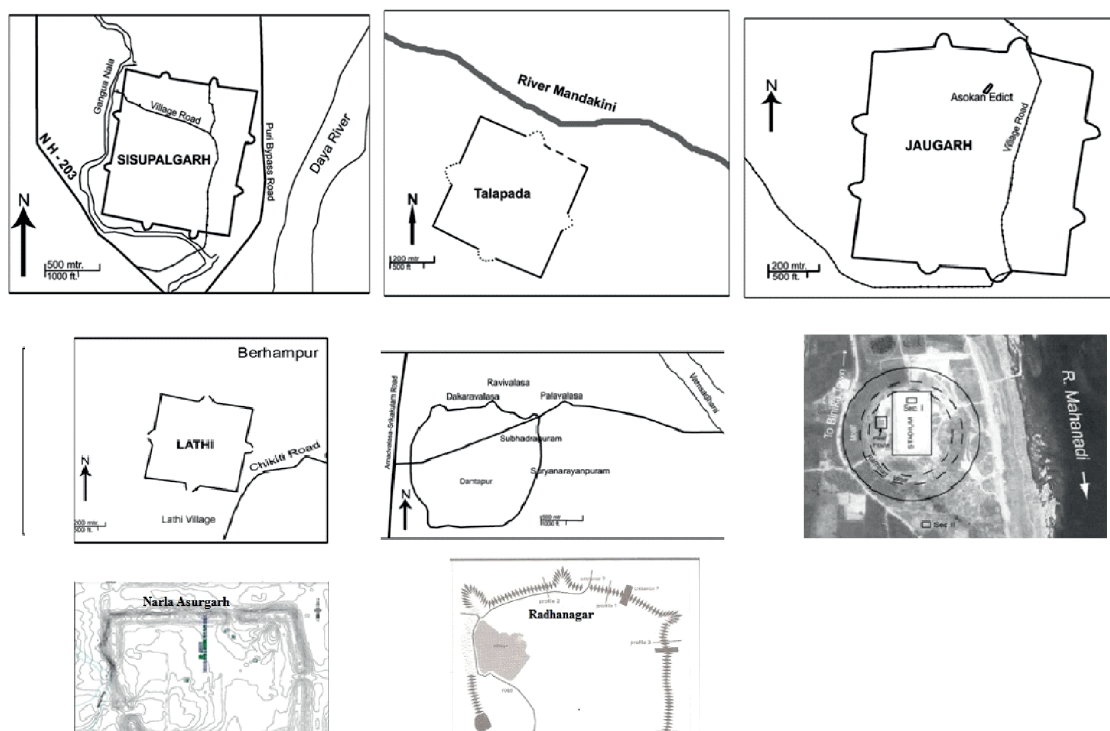


**Fig. 1: Fortified Urban Centres of Early Historical Odisha.**

Urban centres were connected in a network of regional interaction with shared cultural tradition marked by pottery styles, architectural types, and foodways as seen through the recovery of animal bones and botanical remains. Around the third century BCE, there was a significant shift in manufactured goods with the appearance of low-fired pottery in medium red fabric as well as the first appearance of bricks, tiles, and terracotta ornaments. Massive fortification of the existing settlements began to appear throughout coastal and interior Odisha. The size of the settlement increased in the period as well. Monumental architecture began to appear within the settlement. At Sisupalgarh, the monumental architecture at the site consists of the encircling perimeter wall, the eight formal gateways, the pillar structures and stone-lined reservoirs (tanks) in the centre of the site (Mohanty *et. al.* 2013: 55-65). The textual prescriptive description of the city layout, as in the *Arthaśāstra* and its material expression converged in the settlement of Sisupalgarh. Sisupalgarh is not the only instance of this convergence. At many places in coastal Odisha, in the upland plain of the middle Mahanadi valley, forested upland, highland of Bolangir and Kalahandi districts, one finds fortified settlements at regular distance. Secondly, more permanent materials such as stone and burnt bricks were used in the construction. Thirdly, there is clear evidence of more intensive exploitation of various natural resources. Fourthly, there is increasing evidence of clustering of sites around an important settlement. Many coastal settlements called *paṭṭana* and the Ghat river-ford sites in the middle Mahanadi valley, like Manamunda, Badamal, as well as the presence of NBPW, Rouletted ware, Punch-marked coins, and the emergence of the Buddhist establishments, indicate the wider network of exchange and circulation of ideas, goods, people, and religions. Fifthly, the idea of kingship and state as a political institution with concomitant characteristics, such as taxation, war, bureaucracy, and welfare activities, etc, for the first time, reveals a qualitative shift in the culture.

The development of urban centres in the early historical period created consuming and producing cities. Excavations of Sisupalgarh, identified as the provincial capital of Kalinga during the period of the Mauryas and Khāravela, have not yet yielded any evidence of craft activities. This indicates that the populations of this settlement were elites who depended on the steady supply of goods and services from other sites. Thus, the urban centres created conditions for exchange for networks with other regions and centres, including the development of coastal networks.

## Growth of Coastal Networks in the Indian Ocean: Evidence from Early Historical Odisha

The expansion of Early Historical urbanism between the 3rd century BC and 3rd century CE in different geographies of India accelerated various exchange networks, including inland and maritime networks in the Bay of Bengal region. The distribution of various cultural indicators, such as Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) from the early historical sites of Odisha, such as from Sisupalgarh, Radhanagar, Narla Asurgarh, the punch-marked coins from many sites of Odisha and the Roman coins from Bamanghati in Mayurbhanj and the undivided Koraput districts reveals such networks. There were also material developments on the other side of the Bay of Bengal. Archaeological excavations in both inland and maritime Southeast Asia reveal Bronze Age pre-state cultures in the latter half of the 1st millennium BC, around the 3rd-2nd century BC. Archaeological discoveries at Sembiran and Pacung indicate that contact between India and Bali had already occurred in the late second century BC. Indian potteries, glass and stone beads, and gold foil eye covers were found as burial goods at several sites in Bali. Indian artefacts seem to have functioned as a status symbol in the Balinese society. The Rouletted ware has been a clear marker of the maritime trade connecting regions of the Indian Ocean from Berenike in Egypt to various sites of Southeast Asia, such as Pacung, Sembiran in Bali, Bon-Don Ta Phet in Thailand and Tissa Maharama in Sri Lanka (Basa, 1999; Ardika, 1991:101-09, Bellina and Glover, 2012; Falk, 2014: 45– 94; Tripati, 2002, 2006, 2009).
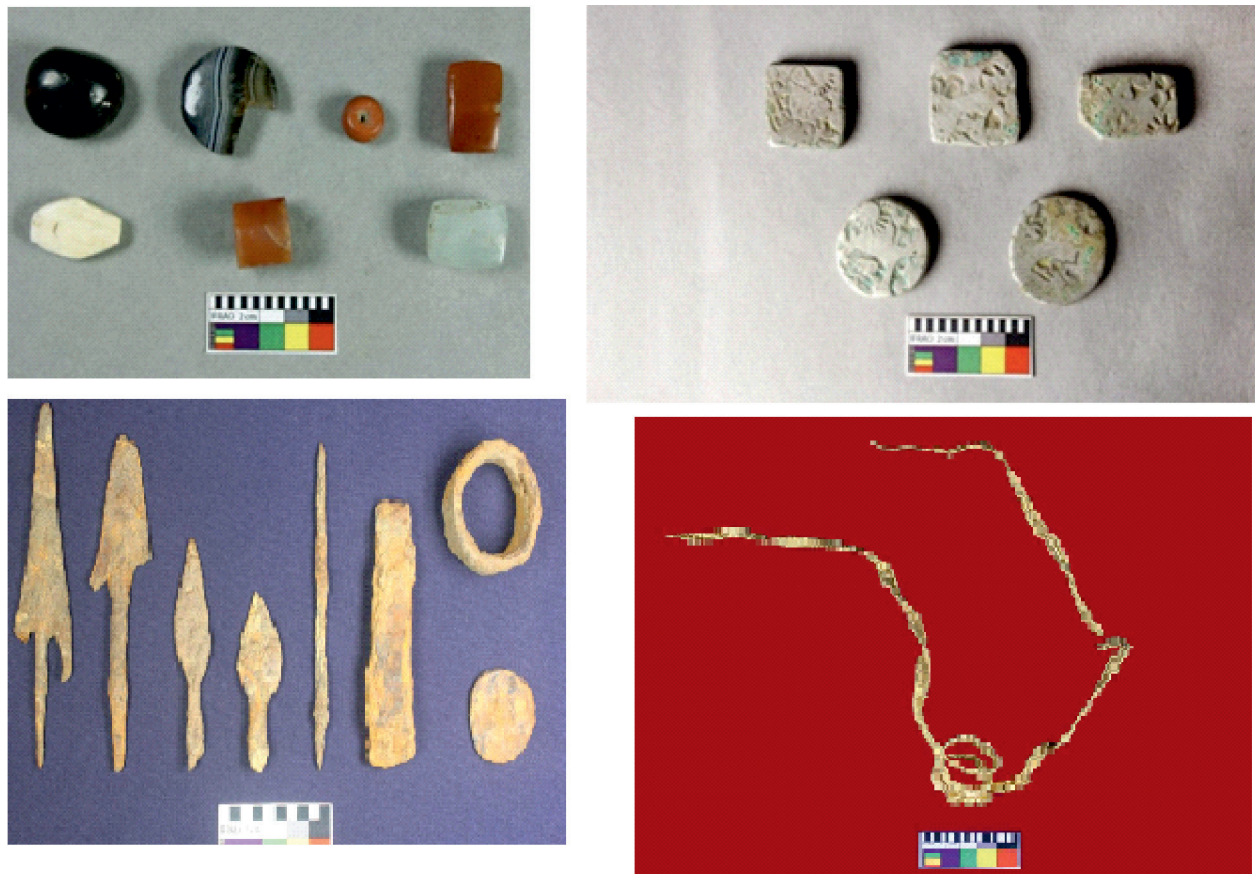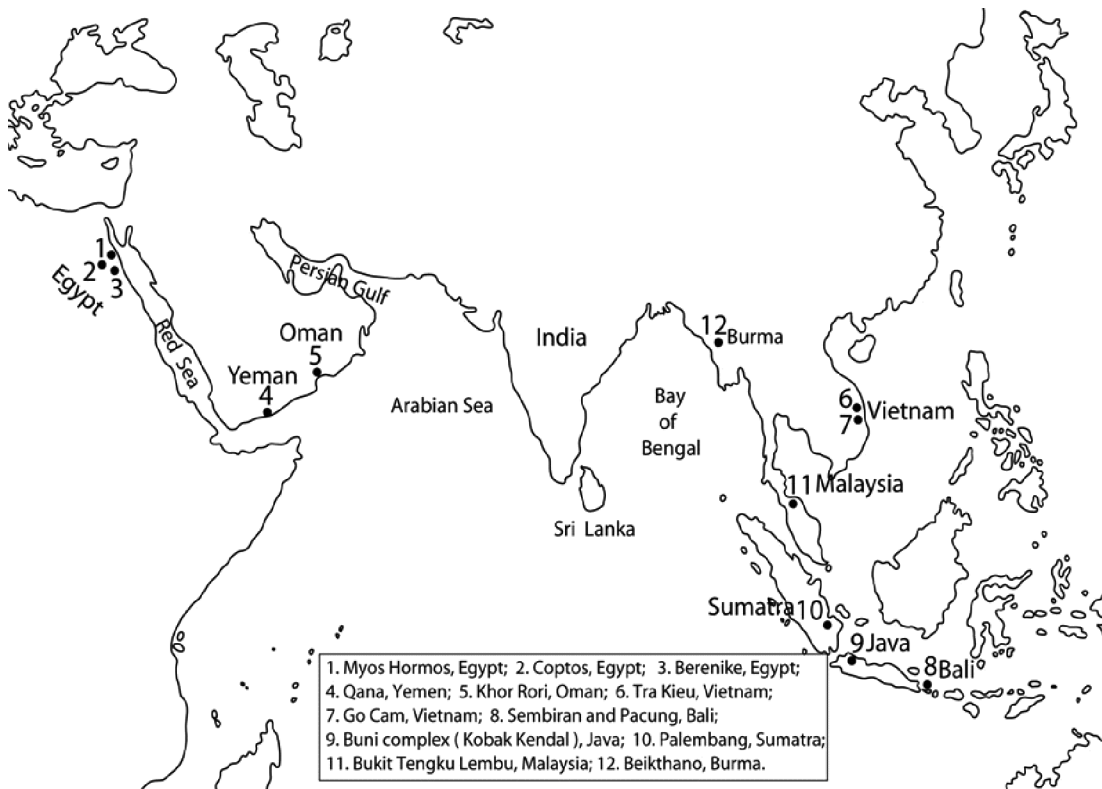
**Fig. 2: Some Archaeological Antiquities from the excavation of Narla Asurgarh, Kalahandi, indicating Cross-Regional Exchange.**

In South Asia, it has been found from 124 places, including from Manikpatna, Sisupalgarh and Radhanagar in Odisha (Ray, 2021:32). The X-Ray Differentiation Analysis (XRD) analysis of Rouletted ware from Pacung indicates that all samples have essentially the same mineral: mainly quartz with traces of mica, muscovite, potassium feldspar, and plagioclase feldspar. The XRD result conclusively supports an Indian origin. The Neutron Activation Analysis (NAA) for twenty rare elements indicates that all the rouletted wares are so close in composition to that of a single manufacturing source, which has been identified as Arikamedu-10 Type from Sembiran, Bali. Rouletted Ware has also been found from Andhra Pradesh, Pondicherry, West Bengal and also on the banks of the rivers Godavari, Kaveri and Krishna. The recent excavations at Pattanam on the coast of Kerala have also yielded RW (Cherian, 2015; Selvakumar et al. 2009: 29–41; Shajan et al. 2004: 312–320). Other evidence, which is found all along the coastal settlements in the eastern seaboard from Mahasthangarh to Anuradhapur, includes NBPW, monochrome glass beads and carnelian beads. It is pertinent to mention that perishable items, such as salt, textiles, have not been recovered from archaeological excavation so far, were most likely exchanged. The growth of the coastal and transoceanic networks in the early historical period in the Indian Ocean region is evident from the archaeological remains from numerous other coastal establishments all along the east coast of India, from Wari, Bateshwar and Mahasthangarh to Anuradhapur and Mantai in Sri Lanka. While a larger coastal network, as is evident from the Tamil Brāhmī Script on the pottery, developed in the deep south extending upto Sri Lanka by the 4th century BCE (Rajan, 2002: 83-98), several Brāhmī and Khāroṣṭhī inscriptions (1st–5th century CE) have been discovered on the pots, seals and plaques in Ataghara, Bengarh, Chandraketugarh, Deulpos, Hadipur

and Tamralipti region of West Bengal indicating that Bengal had trade contacts with northwest region of India (Mukherjee, 1996: 181–192). In coastal Andhra Pradesh, Kottapattinam, Kalinganagaram, and other sites yielded rouletted ware, indicating their integration in the larger trade networks.



**Map 1: Distribution of Rouletted Ware from Various Archaeological Sites of the Indian Ocean: Courtesy: Sila Tripati.**



**Fig. 3: Rouletted Ware from Various Sites of the Indian Ocean**

## Maritime Sailing in Early Medieval India

Unlike the Feudal hypothesis, which argues for the decline of trade and commerce in the post-Gupta period, the new evidence suggests a shift in the urban centres, trade and traders in early medieval

India (Chattopadhyaya, 1994; Champakalakshmi, 1996; Abraham, 1988; Wink, 1990). Apart from the emergence of the temple-centric urban centres in many parts of early medieval India, merchant guilds like Ayyavole, Manigrama emerged in the early medieval south India, doing trade as far as China (Christie, 1988a, 1988 b). In the early medieval inscriptions from Odisha, there were numerous references to *nagara*, *hāṭṭa* and *paṭṭinam*, indicating the exchange of goods in various kinds of settlements. The inscriptions indicate the emergence of merchant groups, such as *vanika*, *ghoḍā vanika*, *śreṣṭhi* and *puraśreṣṭhi* in the context of the agrarian growth, availability of a marketable surplus, the rise of different types of exchange centres and political enterprises (Tripathy, 2010: 706, 855). *Angulaka-paṭṭana* has been described in an inscription of the Bhaumakaras as a charming town, which looked like a garden. It was densely populated by learned Brāhmanas, scholars, wealthy persons and supplicants coming from different countries and was made prosperous by the merchant community who traded in various commodities (Sahu, 2019). Kaylakan of the early Arabic classical accounts has been identified with Kalingapaṭṭinam on the eastern coast of India. Similarly, Urishin has been identified with a place in the neighbourhood of Puri or to the north of the river Mahanadi. The island or peninsula was rich in mountains, plants and elephants. But Samundar, now identified with Sonargaon in modern Bangladesh, has been described as being located only at a distance of twelve *farsakh* or about 58 km from Urshin, problematising the identification of Urshin with Odisha (Ahmad, 1989: 24–25). The Persian glazed turquoise ware and the Chinese celadon from the excavations of Manikpatna and Khalakatapatkna reveal an extensive connection of Odisha with the Persian and Arab world in the early medieval period. (Glover, 2002).

## Emergence of Coastal *Pattinam* on Riverine Mouths/Estuary of Odisha and on Lake Chilika

To transport materials across different regions of the Indian Ocean littoral, numerous ports developed on the riverine mouths in the early historical period. Ancient Odisha, known as Kalinga, possessed several significant ports that facilitated maritime trade and travel. Some of the most prominent ports included Tamralipti, Che-li-ta-lo, Dosarene, Palur, Barua, Sonapuram and Kalingapattinam, etc. Kalingapattinam, located on the mouth of the river Vamsadhara, was an important port in the historical period. Not far off from this was the Buddhist site of Salihundam and the urban centre of Dantapuram. The Vamsadhara was navigable during the rains over some 100 km, and its mouth, which constituted a kind of dock with a depth of four meters, was easily reached because the bar was submerged beneath a maximum water depth of 4.5 meters. During the rain, a large number of ships sought shelter here. At the entrance to the river, the roadstead is protected by a rocky point projecting 800 meters into the sea, permitting transhipment of cargo throughout the year (Maltby, 1882: 42-43). Sonnapuram, situated on the mouth of the river Bahuda, was the main port of the Icchapura province of Ganjam in Odisha. The depth of the river at its opening was five meters, which provided easy access to country crafts. The onshore exploration of Sonnapuram revealed a terracotta ring well, glazed ceramic of the medieval period (Tripati, 1995: 65). Chilika lake, with greater depth in the past must have been an excellent recess site in the entire east coast of India. Chilika (also Chilika) lake is the largest brackish lagoon that emerged as a result of the formation of a sand bar over time (Ahmed, 1972). The lagoon and spurs of the Eastern Ghats in the southern part of the lagoon provided natural protection to sea vessels in the eastern seaboard of India. Chilika had greater depth in the past than it does at present, allowing the development of ports. Thus, the archaeological evidence attests to the emergence of the Chilika region as a favoured coastal establishment linking the coastal hinterland with the regions of the Bay of Bengal. Sites such as Manikpatana, Palur and Gourangapatna emerged as ports in Early

Historical times. Ptolemy (150 CE), the Greek geographer, referred to Palur port as Paloura, the point of departure for ships bound for Southeast Asian countries. (McCrindle, 1985).

Manikapatna (19°41'23.78"N; 85°31'29.9"E) is located in the Brahmagiri tehsil on the mouth of Chilika lake to the sea. A series of mounds with heaps of sand is encountered from the west. The settlement of Manikapatna in the north-eastern tip of Chilika was a famous salt manufacturing centre in medieval times. Archaeological excavation in 1994 by OIMASEAS, Bhubaneswar and subsequent excavations by Deccan College in 2010 had yielded Rouletted ware at the lower strata, while the upper strata revealed Chinese celadon of the Song Period (Mishra, 2002). The excavations – two trenches in 1993 – revealed a cultural deposit of two periods. Period I belonged to the 2nd century BCE to the 5th -6th century CE. Period II belonged to the medieval period from about the 9th to the 19th century CE. Period I yielded a sherd of NBPW, Rouletted ware, a sherd with kharosti script of 2nd-3rd century CE, stamped ware and knobbed ware. Period II yielded sherds of the Persian turquoise-glazed ware, Chinese celadon, kaolin, Chinese porcelain of the Yuan and Ming periods (14th -17th century) and Ceylonese coins with the legend Srimad Sahasasamalla. The exact area of the settlement is not known, as the entire mound is covered with sand (Pradhan *et. al* 2000). Recent geochemical analysis of a stone anchor found from Manikpatna has revealed its possible Arabic origin (Tripati *et. al.* 2022).

Another site on the Chilka lake is Gourangapatna (19°29 50" N; 85°07'36" E). The exploration has brought to light two massive natural boulder alignments, which served as breakwaters. Two stone alignments on the foothills of Ghantasila and Nandighar near Rambha on the bank of Chilika were noticed, which might have served as breakwaters. Chilika separates these stone alignments from each other through a narrow land mass for about 700–800 m (Tripati and Vora, 2005: 1178). Gourangapatna is located 30km south of Kankeikuda near Rambha, again in the mouth of Chilika Lake. Subsequent excavation of the site has yielded red slipped ware and dull red ware. The Turquoise-glazed glassware was also recovered from Gourangapatna, which is believed to be imported from the Mediterranean–Persian Gulf region (Basa & Behera, 2000; Mohanty *et al.,* 2018). Pottery assemblage includes a dish
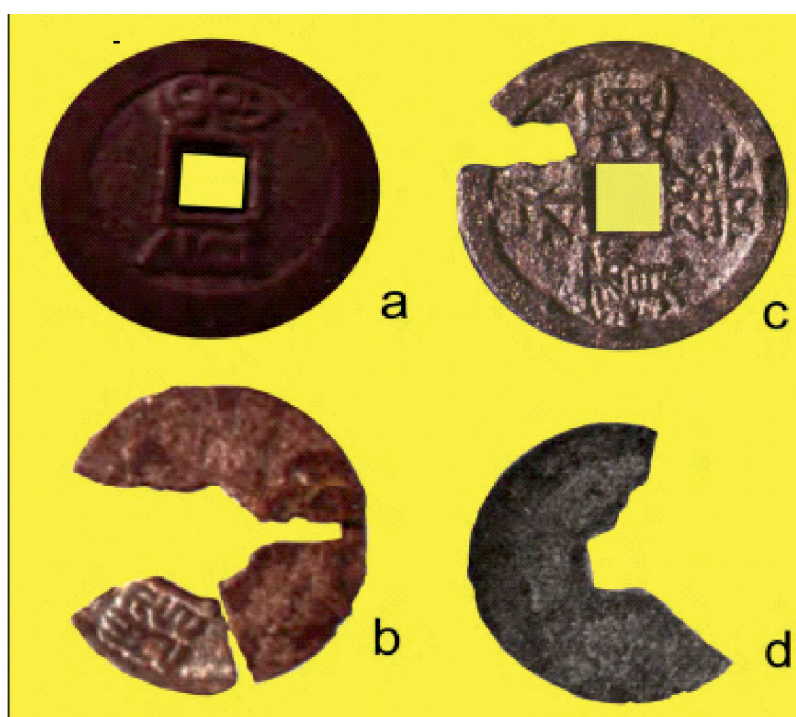


**Fig. 4: 14th Century Chinese coin from Khalakattapatna, Puri District,**

in Black slipped ware, a carinated flat dish in Black slipped ware. "A stamped boat motif" during initial survey work by Jitu Mishra from Gourangapatna (Mohanty *et al*. 1999) and systematic excavations by Basa & Mohanty in 2016-17 provide evidence of cross-oceanic contact (Mishra, 2002: 576; Mohanty *et al*. 2018). The turquoise glazed pottery, knobbed ware, cowrie and seashell found from the excavation and exploration indicate contact with the larger maritime world of the Indian Ocean.

The port site of Khalakattapatna is located further north on the mount of Kushabhadra, where Ramacandi temple is located. Khalakattapatna, the archaeological excavation by ASI in 1984, has revealed a coastal establishment. The excavation at Khalakattapatna has revealed the existence of a brick jelly floor ceramic assemblage consisting of Chinese celadon ware, Chinese porcelain with blue floral design on white background, egg white glazed ware and glazed chocolate ware of Arab or Persian origin, and two Chinese copper coins one complete and the other fragmentary, datable to c. 14th century CE (Behera, 2016: 806-15).

Further north along the Prācī valley developed numerous riverine ports during the medieval period. Places like Chahata, Kakatpur carry place names like *Boitakuda* (Ship mound), *Jāhāja-pariya* (Ship field) (Ray, 1975: 43-45). Further north on the mouth of Devi, numerous ports such as Harishpur, Machagaon and Hariharpur developed in the late Medieval period. The East India Company initially anchored in these ports and travelled inland to the town of Cuttack. On the mouth of the river Patua, a distributary of the Devi river, is located Maricipur, which was known in the East India Company record as Naresepur-Hariharpur (20°02′69″ N; 86°34′23″), an early East India Company factory site. The deity in the Maricai temple of Maricipur is the Buddhist goddess Sankṣipta Māricī, indicating the Buddhist antiquity of the place and association of Buddhism with maritime trade and commerce. The deity is enshrined in the local Maricai-Kutamcandi temple.

The Greek historian Ptolemy refers to many ports of Odisha, which are located on riverine mouths. The list of ports on the coastal section as provided by Ptolemy (*Geography*, Book VII, Ch 1, P. 16),is in fact quite extensive: Nanigaina (Jagannath-Puri), Kati-kardama (Cuttack), Kannagara (Konark), mouths of river Manada (Mahanadi), Tyndis (Brahmani), Dosaren (Vaitarani), Adamas (Surbarnarekha), Kosamb (Pipli in Balasore) (McCrindle, 1985: 69-72). On either side of the Palmyra point, two large estuaries open into the sea, channelling the waters of numerous arms of the rivers Vaitarani and Brahmani. The most prominent of which is Dhamra, where the shrine of goddess Dhamarai is located. Between the Palmyra Point and the mouth of the Hugli River, numerous estuarine ports developed in the Mughal and early Maratha period. Because the coast is very low, the bed rises so slowly in this bay that the depth of ten to twelve fathoms is at least twelve leagues distant from the entrance to the river (Degrandpre, 1801: 247). Similarly, Tamralipti has been described in the Buddhist literature as a port of Kalinga from which Mahinda and Sanghamitra went to Sri Lanka. Fa-xian also returned to China via maritime Southeast Asia from the port of Tamralipti. The excavation carried out by the ASI discovered rammed floor levels and ring wells. Coins and terracotta figurines dating back to the Sunga period have been discovered during the excavations.

In connection with the seashore of Kalinga, the *Raghuvamsa* (6: 57) mentions *dvīpāntārā* (Indonesian Archipelago) from which breezes, filled with the scent of cloves, blew. The 3rd-century Buddhist text *Āryamanjuśrīmulakalp*a narrates to 'all islands of the Kalinga sea' (*Kalingodresu*) from which it appears that in the past, the present Bay of Bengal was known as the Kalinga Sea, being dominated by the ships of Kalinga (Sastri, 1920-25).

A comparison of the pattern of trade and location of ports in the early historical and early medieval Odisha reveals several continuities and changes. In the early historical period, coastal establishments largely developed in the Chilka lagoon and the historical geographical region of Kalinga in southern

Odisha and northern Andhra Pradesh. Palur, Gourangapatna, Manikpatna, Kalingapattinam and other coastal establishments emerged in the Chilika region. Some of these coastal establishments, like Manikpatna, continued well into the early medieval period. Ceramics like Rouletted ware, NBPW, monochrome glass beads, carnelian and agate beads, and ivory were the important trade goods. However, the perishable goods such as silk and textiles, everyday items, most likely were traded. The *Arthaśāstra* speaks of Kalinga silk. On the other hand, in the early medieval period, many of the ports developed on the estuarine rivers. Moreover, Odisha participated in the textile trade boom of the Indian Ocean from 10th-13th centuries CE.

## Geographical Factors in the Location of Ports on the Estuarine or River Mouths

As the last section shows, numerous ports emerged on the riverine or estuarine mouths of various rivers of Odisha in the historical period. Unlike the modern notion of ports, which are located deep offshore with sufficient draught, the ancient ports were generally located on the river mouth. The Buddhist texts refer to ports such as Bhrugakacha (Barygaza) located on the mouth of the river Narmada, Tamralipti on the mouth of the river Rupnarayan, Kaveripattinam on the mouth of the river Kaveri, etc. This was because of the fact that ancient ports were connected with their rich hinterland through the riverine tracts (Deloche 1994; Ray 1996). The mouths of these rivers provided shelter to ships and boats from the surfs of the sea. They acted as entreports, mobilising and transporting goods to and from their hinterlands. These mouths, which in the past used to be animated centres of commerce, are now silted, thus almost disconnecting the sea from inland. The beads of Kalahandi district, diamond of Sambalpur, ivory of the hinterland, copper of Chotanagpur and textile and silk of Kalinga were some of the precious commodities that the rivers brought from the hinterland to the port. The gradual slope towards the sea makes the rivers that originate in the highland and their distributaries, having their origin at the deltaic head, flow towards the sea. The river acted as the artery of communication between the coast and the coastal plains. Whereas in the rainy season, the rivers of coastal plains are navigable throughout their entire lengths, in coastal plains in the hot weather, they are navigable along the tidal section of the river. The tidal section of different rivers in the coastal plains is given in Table 1.

**Table 1: Tidal Section of Different Rivers of Coastal Odisha (Panda 1988)**

| River | Tidal limit in KM |
|---|---|
| Brahmani | 90 |
| Vaitarani | 50 |
| Salandi | 30 |
| Budhabalanga | 35 |
| Panchapara | 22.5 |
| Subarnarekha | 45 |
| Chitrotpala | 45 |
| Mahanadi | 35 |
| Paika | 40 |
| Badanai | 25 |
| Alaka | 20 |
| Devi | 45 |
| Rushikulya | 45 |

The small country-crafts carrying subsistence items are still found plying on the banks of these rivers. Apart from the stand/push technique, rowing and towing of boats by manpower is a usual sight along the banks of these rivers.

## Textile Boom in the Indian Ocean in Early Medieval India and Role of Kalingan Traders

Using estuarine mouths or tidal limits of the above-mentioned rivers, the maritime communities of Early Medieval Odisha engaged in economic and cultural transactions with the broader Indian Ocean regions. These transactions ranged from economic goods to cultural domains. One of the major episodes in the economic transaction was the textile boom in Early Medieval period in which the evidence suggests the active participation of traders of Kalinga in the Indian Ocean water. A number of epigraphic and other evidence indicates a trade boom in the Indian Ocean between 7th-12th centuries CE. The lists of *wargga kilalan* (tax farmer) groups appear in nine inscriptions from Java ranging in date from 840 to 1305 CE. All of these inscriptions are charters connected with communities located away from the coast. These nine inscriptions stand apart as they provide evidence of the changing pattern of Asian trade. They refer to various regional participants from South Asia in Java, such as Kalinga, Cola, Dramila, etc. This list is to be distinguished from the large number of inscriptions that merely contain vague references in tax collecting lists to *juru kling* (head of the Indian/foreign community)-and later occasionally also the *juru barata* and, *juru cina* (heads of the Indian Ocean/and Chinese communities).

The earliest original inscription to contain such a list is that of Kalirungan from the Yogyakarta region in central Java, dated 883 CE. The list of foreign members of the *wargga kilalan* (tax-farmer group) of that time included mainland Southeast Asians from Campā in Vietnam, Remman (Ramanya desa in Mon lower Burma) and Kmira (Cambodia), while the listed South Asians came from Kling (Kalinga)and Paṇḍikira (in Karnataka) in eastern India and southern India, from Aryya (Aryapura/ Ayyavole) near Goa on the west coast and Singhala (Sri Lanka). The Palebuhan inscription of 927 CE, which concerns a community on the banks of the Solo river near Madiun refers to names such as Singhala (Sri Lanka), Paṇḍikira, and Rammana (Burma). Other names are not visible. The Cane inscription of 1021 CE from the Brantas delta region, belonging to the period of king Airalinga lists foreigners from Kling (Kalinga), Āryya (Ayavole), Singhala (Sri Lanka), Paṇḍikira (Karnataka), Drāwida (south), Campā (Vietnam), Remen (Lower Burma), and Kmir (Cambodia) (Brandes, 1913: Inscription lviii). The inscription of Patakan from the same district contains an identical list. It is important to notice that the Cholas had replaced the Pallavas and had been inflecting their maritime arc with the maritime expedition against Sri Lanka and Sri Vijaya by Rajaraja and Rajendra Chola. The Cane inscription therefore refers to the arrival of the Drāvidas in it. By the mid-11th century, when the Turun Hyang and Garaman inscriptions were written, two changes had occurred in the lists: Drawida had been replaced by Colika (Cola),and Pandikira by Karnataka. The Garaman inscription of 1053 CE adds to the list the name Malayala (the Malaya-speaking region of the southwestern Malabar coast (Brandes, 1913: lxiv; Boechari u.d: Christie, 1998a. 1998 b). The evidence clearly indicates active participation and involvement of the Kalingan traders in bringing about a sartorial shift in Java by introducing the Ikkat (*bāndha)* textile tradition to the region. Even though the names of the other tax-paying foreign merchants changed over time, for example, Dramila was replaced by Colika, the continuous appearance of the Kalinga merchants in the list of foreign tax merchants indicates the substantive role of the Kalingan merchants in this textile boom in the Javanese water from 9th century CE onwards.

## Rise of Aṣṭamahabhaya Tārā as a Saviourness and Siddhayātrā Stele

The sea voyages and maritime trade across the Ocean very often involved known and unknown dangers. Right from the early sculptural representation of sea animals as a threat in the sculptures of Bharhut in 2nd century BC, the dangers of sea voyages engendered the notion of a saviour. On the

western coast, Sukotarmata emerged as a major cult protecting traders from sea danger. In Odisha, especially in Buddhism, the cult of Tārā became popular in the Buddhist site of Ratnagiri. Numerous forms of Tārā are found in Odisha. The literary and epigraphic sources associate goddess Tārā with traders and trading. This identification of Tārā with maritime activity and consequent popularity of the Tārā cult in maritime Asia is attested by epigraphic and sculptural remains. The Dambal inscription of the time of Western Chalukyas, dated to 1095 CE, records an invocation of Tārā as a protector by the *śresthis* (Fleet 1881: 185-90). In fact, one of the names of Tārā is *Sarthavāha krpādriṣṭi*, according to the *Ārya-Tārā-bhaṭṭarikā-nāmasottārāśataka-stotra* (Bloany, 1895: 49). The Kalasan inscription in 778 CE in central Java attests to the popularity of Tārā worship in central Java (Sarkar, 1971 I: 35-40). The folklore of Odisha also associates traders with the worship of Tārā. For instance, the folklore associated with the origin of Kakatpur refers to how goddess Mangalā was worshipped in Sri Lanka as Tārā; a maritime trader brought her to the present site and worshipped her as Mangalā (Mishra, 1980). On close examination, Kakatpur Mangalā is revealed to be the Buddhist goddess Pārvatī or Tārā. She is four-armed; holds a rosary in her right; her left hand is missing. Her uplifted right hand holds a disc or full moon and a flower (Mohapatra 1987 I: 120). One of the important forms of Tārā is *Aṣṭamahābhaya*, i.e. Tārā who protects traders from eight great perils. The emergence of *Aṣṭamahābhaya* Tārā reflects the close relationship between Buddhism and seafaring activities.

All the eight great perils are associated with trade. *Jalārnava bhaya* represents Tārā saving the devotees from a sinking ship. The Tārā image of Ratnagiri is surrounded by eight perils and four on each side. The left side four perils from bottom to top are as follows: (i) a man standing in front of flames (*Agni bhaya*); (ii) confronted by a goblin (*pisāca bhaya*); (iii) a cuffed man in the clutch of a person who is brandishing his sword (*nigala bhaya*) and (iv) elephant fear (*hastī bhaya*). The other four dexter (right side) perils from top to bottom are as follows: (i) a standing man menaced by a snake (*sarpa bhaya*); (ii) a standing man attacked by a lion (*simha bhaya*); (iii) a standing man attacked by a brigand with an arrow (*taṣkara bhaya*); (iv) and a sinking boat (*jalārṇava bhaya*) (Mitra, 1981). The bottom panel of the dexter side is the last peril, which depicts distress at sea where a sinking boat is shown. The prow of the boat is shown as on the verge of sinking and rear portion is shown upwards, wavesclearly depicted, three persons are shown onboard, among them one is controlling the steer, centre person with headgear is praying with raised hands to goddess Tārā, the third person is either adjusting the cables of the mast or holding the cable firmly because of rough sea, and trying to save them from the impending peril. The mast of the boat (a rectangular sail) has been shown
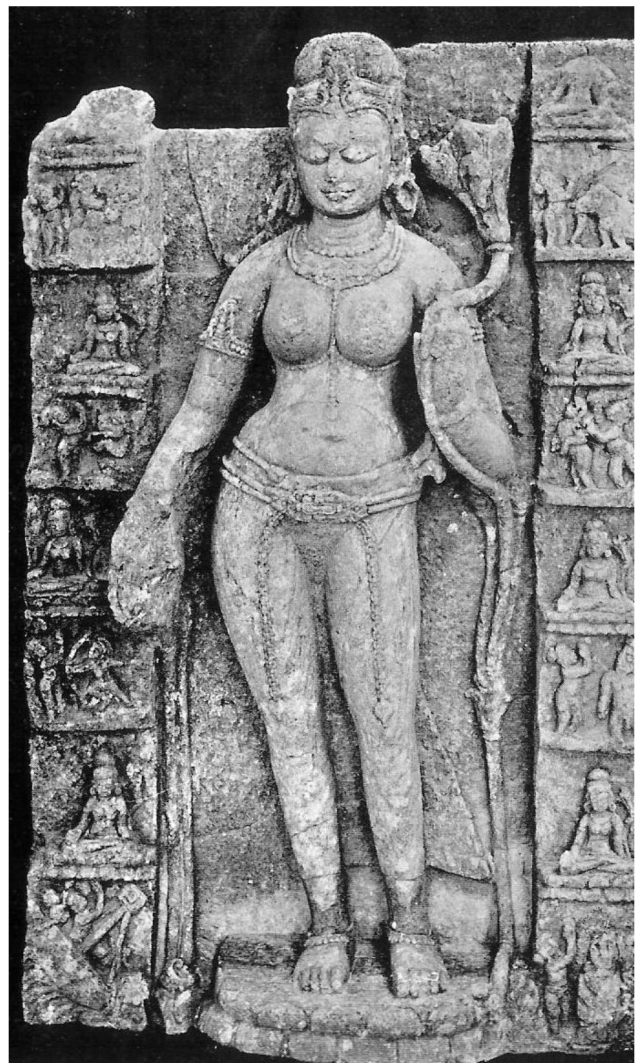


**Fig. 5:Aṣṭamahābhaya Tārā, Ratnagiri, 8<sup>th</sup> century CE)**

prominently along with masthead cables. However, the sail is not shown. The prow of the boat is designed with a human face, and round beads are shown on the neck. In Odisha, this is the first boat where the mast is shown (Tripati *et. al* 2020: 39 – 45). It is pertinent to note that in addition to the rise of Avalokiteśvara and Tārā as saviours from sea peril, the historical evidence reveals dedication of *Siddhayātrā* (prosperous journey) stone stele after successful completion of a naval maritime journey or war. For instance, Mahānāvika Buddhagupta's inscription from Kedah, now in Negara Museum, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, refers to the completion of *siddhayātrā* from Raktambikā Mahāvihāra to Kedah. Similarly, the Kedukan Bukit Inscription, Sumatra, dated to Śaka year 605, refers to the *Siddhayātrā* of Sri Baginda (Skilling, 2015: 18-79).

## Coastal Shrines in Odisha and Their Association with Maritime Trade

The maritime landscape of coastal Odisha is dotted wit numerous shrines. These coastal shrines are built to honor sea gods and goddesses who offer protection to the sailors. This section deals with coastal shrines, which dot the cultural landscape of coastal Odisha from Kalijai to the north in Balasore district. The authors have not yet surveyed the area south of Chilika lake.

## Goddess Kalijai and Bhavakundeleśvara temple, Manikpatna on Lake Chilika (19°71′08″N; 85°57′66″)

Temple of Kalijai, located on an island spur of an eastern Ghat in the Chilika lake, is the revered deity associated with protection, navigation, and seafaring — especially in the Chilika Lake region. The legend says that Kalijai was a young girl, Jaai, travelling by boat to her husband's house. Tragically, a sudden storm capsized the boat, and she drowned. Afterwards, the locals believed her spirit became divine and began worshipping her as Kalijai — a guardian goddess for fishermen, boatmen, and travellers. Today, sailors and fishermen crossing the Chilika Lake seek Kalijai's blessings for safe passage and protection from storms. Chilika lake was a major port establishment throughout the historical period. The deity is offered fish, dried fish as *bhoga,* suggesting her autochthonous origin. The iconographic details reveal her to be a form of Kali. Another old shrine near the ancient port of Manikpatna on the Chilika is the 12th-century Bhavakundaleśvara temple. The temple, along with a medieval dargah, is in proximity to the archaeological site of Manikpatna. (Das, 1999: 211)

## Rāmacaṇḍī near Konark with Khalakattapatna as a Port 19°89′19″ N; 86°08′85″ E)

A few kilometres away from the famous Konark temple, the *pīṭha* of Goddess Rāmacaṇḍī is enshrined at the mouth of the river Kushabhadra. The temple is located near the Medieval Port site of Khalakattapatna. The goddess is known for protecting the seafarer. Her iconographic details suggest that the goddess is an eight-armed Mahiṣāmardinī Durgā. Among the *parśvadevatā* that adorn the main temple are images of Sankṣipta Mārīcī, a Buddha image and an unidentified image. This indicates that there was a Buddhist site in the nearby area. In Jagannath Puri, the shrine of the goddess known as Bānki-muhāna Rāmacaṇḍī, located at the site where the river Banki anciently merged into the sea, testifies to the glory of the place as the harbour suburb of the city of Jagannàtha. The shrine, having as its presiding deity an image of Mahiṣāmardinī, was installed by a Bhauma ruler in the 9th century CE (Das 1999:91-92)**.**

## Mangalā of Kakatpur on river Prācī, Puri district (19°99′59.7″N; 86°19′47″E)

The temple of Goddess Mangalā of Kakatpur is situated fifty-five kilometres away from Puri town, and sixty-nine kilometres from the state capital Bhubaneswar, respectively. The temple is situated on the eastern bank of the holy river Prāci, which is described in the *Pracī Mahātmya* as eastern Sarasvatī.

It is considered one of the Aṣṭa caṇḍī of Odisha and believed to have been worshipped since the 14th century CE. Goddess Mangalā is traditionally revered as a protector deity by fishermen and sailors. Coastal communities often pray to her for safe voyages and successful fishing expeditions. Local folklore includes stories where sailors and boatmen invoke the blessings of goddess Mangalā before embarking on sea journeys. Offerings are often made in her name to ensure calm seas and protection from storms. The local legends have it that the goddess was worshipped as the Buddhist Goddess Tārā in Sri Lanka and brought to Odisha by a maritime merchant named Dhaneswar Sahu. The deity was brought from Sri Lanka to the coast and then inland through the river Prācī. There were many place-names all along the Prācī bearing the names Boita-kuda (Boat mound), Jāhāja-Pariya (Ship field). However, the Buddhist goddess drowned in the river due to inclement weather. The goddess kept herself hidden in the river Prācī and made a boatman dream of recovering her from the water and establishing her in the nearby Mangalapur village under the name Mangalā.

Goddess Mangalā is also important for her intimate association with the Cult of Jagannath, Puri. Goddesses of various levels were ritually



Fig. 6: Sankṣipta Mārīcī in Ramacandi Temple, Puri District 9th century CE

integrated with the regional Cult of Jagannath thus creating a geo-cultural arc of *Oḍiśā rājya* by the Gajapati period in the 15th century CE. One instance of such ritual integration with important sub-regional cults of Odisha is Jagannatha's association with Mangalā of Kakatpur. It is a customary tradition that during the *Navakalevara* (new Embodiment ceremony) of Jagannātha, Balabhadra and Subhadrā, Goddess Mangalā plays a vital role. Usually, the priests (*daitās*) come here and take asylum in her feet praying her to instruct them where the *neem (Azadirachta indica)* trees are located for making the new idols. Such association of Mangalā with the ritual of the *rāṣṭra devatā* makes the cult integrated with the Cult of Jagannatha. Vertical integration refers to a topological classification of deities from village to imperial level, the network of relationships among them and the process through which such networks were established (Preston, 1992). The *brata* literature of late medieval Odisha, namely the *Khudurukuṇī Oṣā*, centring around sea traders (*Sādhavas*) and the fortunes of their lonely sister Tapoi, invokes Mangalā as the presiding deity during the festival month of *Bhādra* (August-September).

## Buddhist Goddess Māricai at Marichipur-Hariharpur, Balikuda Block Jagatsinghpur (20.02′78″ N; 86.34′24″ E)

The Marichi Temple is located at the mouth of the river Patua in the Balikuda block of Jagatsinghpur district. The presiding deity of the temple is an eight-armed Sankispta Mārīcī. Exploration revealed the

existence of an archaeological mound bearing Medieval pottery. The image can be dated to the 9th-10th century CE. The coastal settlement of Marichipur developed as Hariharpur in the late medieval where the East India Company established their factory in 1633. Hariharpur was a major centre of textile trade in early medieval India, and the East India Company purchased 400 pieces of cloth in 1633 and *sannoes* and *cassas* in 1642 (Fosters, 1936: 307-08).

### Goddess Dhāmarai of Port Dhamra (20°47′44″N; 86.89′81″ E)

Dhāmarai (also spelt Dhamaraee or Dhamrai) is a highly revered goddess in coastal Odisha, the Bhadrak district, near the Dhamara Port. She is traditionally worshipped as a protective maritime deity, particularly by fishermen, boatmen, and navigators. Her role is deeply embedded in the folk maritime traditions of Odisha. Dhāmarai is considered the guardian deity of the Bay of Bengal's coastal region. Sailors and navigators would pray to her before setting out on voyages to ensure safe travel, protection from storms, and safe return. Not long ago, fishermen from far-off Bangladesh thronged to the temple on the day of Makar Sankranti, indicating the importance of the shrine in the Bay of Bengal region. The priests of the temple are women from the fisherman caste. The goddess is an anionic one, suggestive of her local autochthonous origin. The local literature on the Paṭṭana Mangalā and Dhāmarai reveals that goddess Dhāmarai is believed to be a form of goddess Mangalā who had been brought from Sri Lanka by the merchant Dhaneswar, whose symbolic form is established, whereas the principal iconic form was established at Patana Mangalā, Narendrapur. There is also another folktale prevalent in the local region telling the story that Goddess Dhāmarai, with her five sisters, were worshipped in the place called Satabhaya. Goddess Dhamarai preferred to take vegetarian food, whereas her five sisters were carnivorous and who out of anger, pushed her deep into the sea. She was caught in the fishing net of two fishermen called Sanatan Dalei and Bulei Behera near Chandinipala, and both of them brought her into their house. In the very night, the king of Kanika Raja Sailendra Narayan Bhanjadeo was instructed in his dream by Goddess Dhāmarai to build a temple for her. Around 1593, he constructed a temple for her. Another local legend states that Dhāmarai protected sailors from a deadly sea-storm when they invoked her name. This led to her being established as the patroness of seafarers. In other tales, she is seen calming the waters or guiding ships through turbulent weather. Such stories helped solidify her importance among the maritime communities. Dhāmarai was once a flourishing medieval port, and the goddess Dhāmarai's temple is a reminder of this vibrant maritime past. The temple's location near the old port underscores the integration of religious and maritime life. Even today, fishermen in the region consider Dhāmarai their guardian and observe special festivals and rituals in her honour, particularly before the start of the fishing season or sea expedition. Goddess Dhāmarai stands as an embodiment of Odisha's deep maritime heritage. As a protective deity of navigators, she reflects the fusion of local folk belief and the seafaring culture that once made Odisha a prominent coastal power. Her worship underscores the religious dimension of navigation and trade in ancient and medieval Odisha.

### Goddess Dākesvarī of Ora Sahi of Chandabali Port (20°77′39″ N; 86°74′36″ E)

The shrine of Goddess Dākesvarī is situated on the northern bank of the river Vaitarani at the port of Chandbali. Most probably, the goddess is enshrined during the Somavaṁsi period, who gradually swayed over the Utkala region, establishing their capital at Jajpur. The icon of the Goddess is made of black chlorite; the iconographic details reveal that the goddess is a twelve-armed Mahiṣāmardinī Durgā with a typical Somavaṁśī smile and lithe image. Other story narrates the recovery of the image of Goddess Dākesvarī by the boatman from the river Vaitārāni, and she was installed there as the

presiding deity of the boatman. It became a custom and tradition for all the boatman to pray for her before rowing their boat on the river or sea.

Two hero stones were discovered from Suvadia village near the port of Chandbali, with one representing a hero on a boat. The hero most likely lost his life in a naval battle. Hero stones of naval battles were quite common on the Konkan coast, and numerous hero stones are now in the Goa Museum. The Suvadia hero stone shows the hero standing with his upraised hand holding a spear on a boat rowed by multiple oars. A parasol bearer holds the parasol over the hero's head, suggesting his royal hero status. A defeated man bows down before the hero (Tripati *et al*. 2018).



**Fig. 7: Herostone from Suvadia village, near Chandbali, Bhadrak District, 10th century CE**

Both Dhamra and Chandbali were under the rule of the Kanika Raja. The Kania Rajas maintained a strong naval force to safeguard maritime activities from attacks by the Moghuls, Marathas and the British. The strong naval force of the Kanika Raja was most likely a deterrent against the naval pushover to Odisha by the Mughals and Marathas. Alexander Walter Hamilton's report (1820 (2): 46-47) describes the naval strategy of the Kanika Raja in his *Report on Hindoostan of 1790:*

The Raja of Kunka (Kanika), who possessed the inundated and unhealthy tract of the country, had long baffled Maharatta generals in their attempts to subdue him. The Maharattas had been accustomed to troops and artillery on large unwieldy flat-bottomed boats unmanageable in large streams or near the sea, in consequence of which their ill-constructed fleets always fell a prey to the rajas' light armed vessels, which were long, narrow and with barricades to cover the main, and some of them having a hundred paddles or oars. When these squadrons met, the Orias (Oriyas) boats moved quickly round the heavy Maharatta armada and picked up the men with their matchlocks, until the remaining were compelled to surrender. When they were carried into captivity, from whence they seldom return. The pernicious atmosphere of these morasses permits none to live but the aborigines.

## Paṭṭana Mangalā, Narendrapur Village, Tihidi Block, Bhadrak District (20°9080 N, 86.7791° E)

Paṭṭana Mangalā Temple is located in Chhatrapada village of Narendrapur in the Tihidi block of Bhadrak district. Exploration of the village revealed hundreds of lingam, remains of old temples, inscribed door lintels, a huge Varahi and Ganesa image, old bricks, betel nuts and Pattana Mangalā at the entrance of the village, indicating the existence of a big settlement in the early medieval period (Mohapatra, 1986; Mishra & Acharya, 2016: 23-35). The presiding deity of the Paṭṭana Mangalā temple, goddess Lankeśvarī, tells a fascinating tale of a perilous voyage that links ancient Odisha or Kalinga to Sri Lanka. Although not linked to a river or the sea today, Narendrapur was probably an important centre of maritime trade. Locals say that Siva lingams, a hundred in number, were exported to Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia through the port of Dhamra. Paṭṭana Mangalā is widely regarded as a guardian deity who blesses her devotees with prosperity, safe journeys, and protection from natural calamities. These qualities made her particularly important to merchants, sailors, and navigators involved in long sea voyages. Local traditions indicate that traders and boatmen used to visit the Paṭṭana Mangalā temple to offer coconuts, incense, and symbolic boats made of banana stems or wood. These offerings were believed to secure divine blessings for profitable and safe journeys. In folklore, Paṭṭana Mangalā is sometimes depicted as a goddess who guides sailors, ensuring their ships find safe passage across the Bay of Bengal. Her divine presence was said to calm turbulent seas and help sailors avoid misfortune.
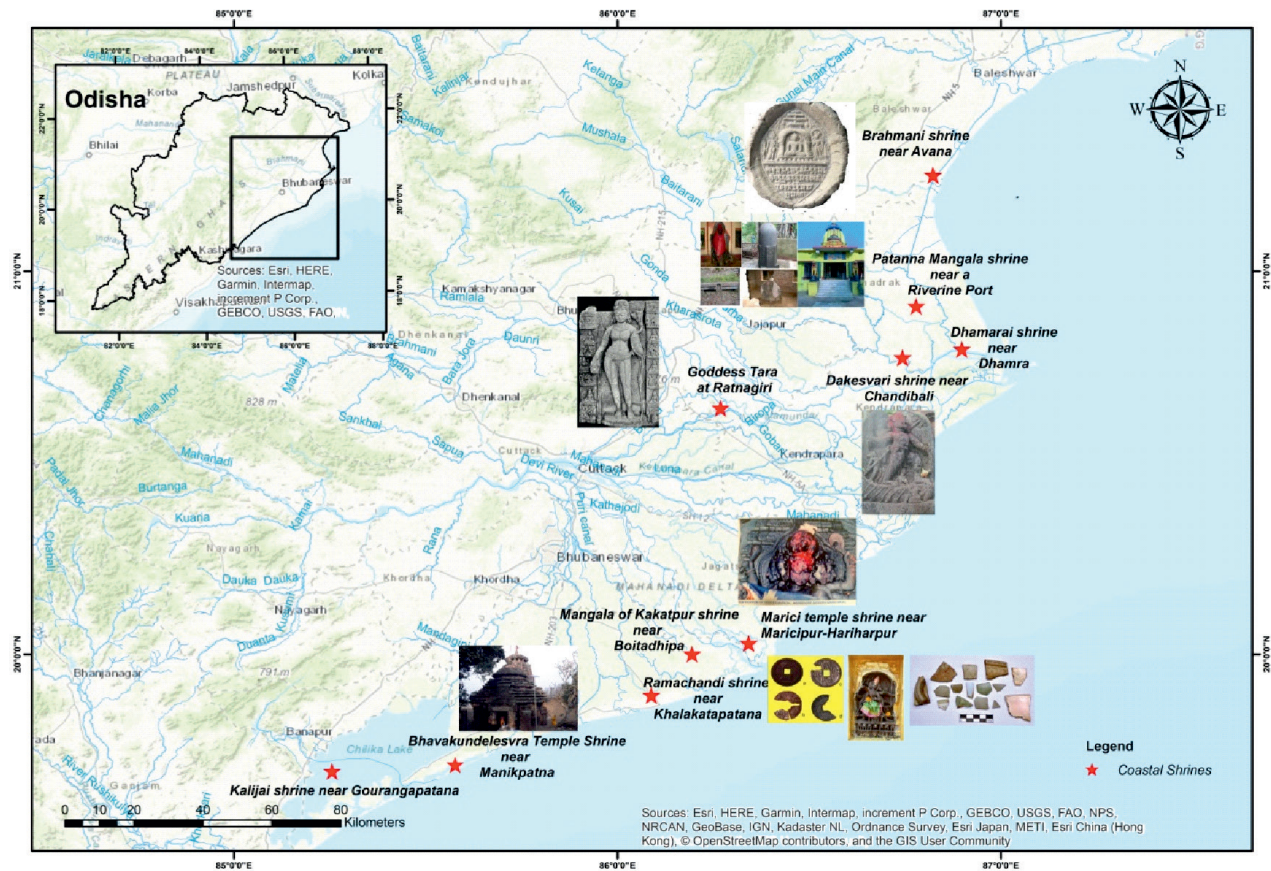


**Fig. 8: Few Images (Varāhī, Inscribed door lintel) and Lingam from Narendrapur, Bhadrak District, 8th–10th Century CE**

## Buddhist –Brahmanical establishment of Avana (21°14′59″ N, 86°49′23.59″ E), Bahanaga Block, Balasore District and Bhìmà or Kàlikà of Bhimpur near Balasore

Another very fine image of Càmuṇḍā dating from the Bhauma period, having three faces and eight arms, is presently worshipped as Brahmāṇī at Avana (in Balasore district), a village that, in bygone days, was probably situated on the seacoast (Acharya & Halder 2020: 809-820). The exploration of the site revealed Buddhist clay sealings with the Buddhist formula written in Proto-Nāgari character of the 9th century, an image of Avalokiteśvara, an image of Rṣabha and Neminātha, two Mahisāmardinī Durgā, in addition to the Brahmanical presiding deity, a Cāmuṇḍā image, which is being worshipped as Brahmāṇī by the villagers. Explorations by the authors also brought to light a huge number of seashells. Most probably, the site was an old salt manufacturing site. A local tradition runs that merchants and sailors used to propitiate the Cāmuṇḍā image for a safe passage across the sea and safe return after a successful business. The clay sealing with Buddha in *Bhumīsparsamudrā* is flanked by two Bodhisattvas- most likely Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi constitute the three *kula* system- Padmakula, Tathāgata kula and Vajra Kula. Such representation is also found on the clay sealings found from Thailand, Pyu site, Srikshetra in Burma and from many other places (Thien 2018; Ghosh 2011). Such an alignment of Buddha and Bodhisattvas is found in the monastery I, Ratnagiri and Candi Mendut temple in Central Java as well (Mishra, 2022). These votive objects were most likely ritually sacralised before being taken by the pilgrims as objects of worship. A Medieval eight-armed cult image of Càmuṇḍā in black chlorite is worshipped as Bhīmā or Kāḷīkā, is found on the seashore of Bhimpur near Balasore. This deity was propitiated by the local seamen in order to secure the goddess blessing on their maritime activities. In Balasore town, sailors and merchants used to offer their *Pujā* to goddess Nìmàkalì before setting out for sea trade.



**Fig. 9: Terracotta Plaque with Trikula System, Avana, Balasore District, 9ᵗʰ-10ᵗʰ century CE**

**Map 2: Coastal Shrines and Estuarine Ports along the Odisha Coast**

## Conclusion

The paper made an attempt to locate the emergence of coastal shrines on the Odisha coast from Lake Chilika in south Odisha to Balasore in north Odisha on the estuarine or riverine mouths. The rivers acted as the artery of communication, bringing goods of the hinterland to the coastal establishments, and depending on the richness hinterland, the coastal establishments' fortune swung. The coastal shrines emerged near the *Paṭṭinam,* which are believed to have protected the seatraders. Right from the emergence of Avalokiteśvara at Kanheri in 5th-6th century CE and Tārā as a saviour at Ratnagiri in the 8th century, the cultural landscape of Odisha and India was marked by coastal shrines. These shrines provided the cultural basis of the transnational networks. Socotarmai, the protective goddess of Socotra near Yemen, is found as a coastal shrine at Dholavira, Somanath and at many other places of the Gujarat coast. Similarly, the goddess Mangalā as protector of sailors emerged in the eastern littoral of Odisha and Bengal. The coastal shrines, like Sukotormai and Mangalā, provided the basis for cultural and maritime interconnection among different regions of the Indian Ocean.

*End note:* The views expressed here are personal and not those of the National Monuments Authority.

*Conflict of Interests:* The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest in this paper.

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