

MEDIEVAL ORISSA: METHOD OF LEGITIMIZATION OF THE KINGDOM OF SAMBALPUR

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Abstract

This paper has an attempt to find out the different method which adopted by the Chauhan ruler of western Orissa in the 16th and 17th centuries in order to legitimize their ruled over the Sambalpur. The political legitimacy of the Chauhan of Western Orissa did not come overnight and they struggled hard to legitimize their political power. Unlike the other medieval rulers of Orissa, the Chauhan did not seek the blessing of any external authority for legitimacy rather; they represented themselves as the sources of legitimacy for their feudatories. They brought their legitimacy through the process of assimilation with the tribal flock, by donating land to Brahman, by associating religion in the state policy and by adopting local tribal god and goddess as their tutelary divinity. They patronized both the tribal and non tribal pantheons to gain military help, economic support and political loyalty from their subject. Among the different methods which the Chauhan of Sambalpur adopted to legitimize their authority over Sambalpur the author of the article has tried to find out the role of fort, capital not in the monetary sense but in the sense of state headquarter and different God and Goddess. To arrive at a definite historical conclusion how the Chauhan legitimize their power over Sambalpur the author of the article consulted the only contemporary as well as authentic document of sixteenth century, 'Kosalananda Kavyam', the eighteen century work 'Jaya Chandrika' written in Lariya by Prahallad Dubey, the court poet of Sarangarh and other vernacular sources which are used adequately.

In the beginning of the 16th century Prataprudra Deva, the Gajapati king of Orissa defeated in the hand of Krishna Deva Raya and hand over the territories of Koshala, approximately present western Orissa along with Bastar to Vijayanagaram empire.¹ Although Koshala came under the direct control of Vijayanagaram Empire, Krishna Deva Raya did not interfere in the internal affairs of the state of Patnagarh and the Chauhan ruler

¹ H. Mahatab, *Odisha Itihasa*, (in Oriya), Cuttack, 1952, p.175.

Hiradhara Deva (1510-1540) acknowledged the supremacy of Vijayanagaram Empire.² Cobden Ramse, the Political Agent, Tributary and Feudatory States of Orissa, 1906 states that “more satisfactory evidence exists to show that a comparatively recent period the Patna state was under the sway of the Rajas of Vizianagram. Tradition among the Khonds asserts that they at one time paid taxes to the Rajas of Kalinga, which is to this day a common term to describe Vizagapatam littoral. Moreover, a copper lease or Tamba Patta granted by former Vizianagram Chief to the ancient holders of the village Bakati in Patna and the discovery of a similar lease relation to a village in the Sonepur state go far to confirm the tradition that the Vizianagram chief power extended to Patna.”³ Krishna Deva Raya died in 1530 and succeeded by Sadashiba Raya who faced the attack of Deccani states confederacy in 1565. In the mean time the Gajapati ruler Prataprudra Deva of Utkala or costal Orissa faced the attack of Husain Shah the sultan of Bengal. Husain Shah sent a large army against Orissa under Ismil Ghazi who advanced as far as the town of Puri. Prataprudra Dev was at that time probably in the far off south.⁴ In the mean while Prataprudra Deva died in 1540 and there was an internal struggle started between his son and his minister for the royal crown of Utkala. Thus the Gajapati of the costal Orissa had now time to interfere in the political affair of the Chauhan of Patnagarh although it was considered as part of their territories. Taking the advantage of that Narasingha Deva(1540-1547) the son of Hiradhara Deva and the ruler of Patnagarh declared independence with the help of his brother Balarama Deva and stopped paying tax to Vijayanagaram empire(*Bidhāya Yupam Narasiṅhamagrajam Suputrapautram Nrupamāṭṭapaṭunam*).⁵

² Ramachandra Mallik *Sankshipta Koshala Itihasa*, (in Oriya), 2nd edition, Bolangir, Koshala Taranga Granthamala, 1985, p .105.

³ Cobden Ramsay, *Feudatory States of Orissa*, Calcutta, Bengal Secretariats Book Depot, 1910, p.283.

⁴ P.K. Pattnaik, *A Forgotten Chapter of Orissan History*, Calcutta, Punit Pustak, 1979, p.4.

⁵ Gangadhara Mishra, *Kosalananda Kavyam*, (in Sanskrit), Canto XX, Verse 2.

“Cakāra Birjyoṇa Jaśaḥsarobarām Mahimahendraḥ Sumanomanoharam”

Also see S .P. Das, *Sambalpur Itihasa*, (in Oriya), Sambalpur, Viswabharati Press, 1962, p.217.

In the middle of the 16th century the kingdom of Sambalpur was established by Balarama Deva the elder brother of King Narasingha Deva of Patnagarh on the bank of the river Mahanadi. There was no central authority which ruled over Sambalpur and it was under the control of some of the tribal people who acknowledged the suzerainty of the Barman of Boudh. There is a legend regarding the establishment of the Sambalpur kingdom by Balarama Deva. During the month of Sravana (rainy season) the chief queen of Narasingha Deva was in labour. The chief maid, who was in charge of the queen's care, was staying on the other side of the river Mayabati and nobody was willing to cross the flooded river to call her for the service of the queen. Under such circumstance her brother-in-law Balarama Deva personally crossed the river and brought the maid back to the service of the queen. The queen gave birth to a son named Hamir Deva. Impressed with the bravery of his younger brother Balarama Deva, King Narasingha Deva offered the Sambalpur province to Balarama Deva as a reward for his service.⁶

The 'Jaya Chandrika' which was written by Prahallad Dubey, the court poet of Sarangarh in 1781, states that, Balarama Deva was fond of hunting and to fulfil his desire he asked his mother for the region of Sambalpur which was situated on the bank of the river Mahanadi and known for diamond mine (*Bujha Jāi Āpa Nija Mātā Hiṃ Rāmadeva Faramai, Humā Deśa Māguṃ Suta Bhāta Hiṃ Paiho Khuba Rajāi, Citrotpalā Bahata Jahiṃ Nadī Hai Kośala Ke Tīrā, Punya Kṣetra Saritā Taṭa Jāme Upaje Kañcana Hīrā*).⁷ Further the Jaya Chandrika, states that, one day Raja Narasingha Deva was pleased at his brother Balarama Deva because of certain services rendered by the latter and he offered him a boon. Balarama Deva asked for the forest clad country Huma which approximately corresponds to the modern district of Sambalpur. The king seemed to be unwilling to part with the extensive territory. As Balarama Deva was the step brother of Narasingha Deva it caused much dissension between the two brothers (*Sapatniko Bāndhaba Duyo Rāmadeva Balarāma, Rāma Lakhana So Abatarau Karau Supurana Kāma,... Hirādhara Bhupati Ke Lālana Rāmadeva Balarāma, Rāje Rāma Lakhana Sama Dou Sabaguṇa Puranadhāmā*).⁸ A compromise however was affected by the queen mother who led them to a village named

⁶ Ramachandra Mallik, *Sankshipta Koshala Itihasa*, pp.106-107.

⁷ Prahallad Dubey, *Jaya Chandrika*. Also see S. P. Dash, *Sambalpur Itihasa*, p.222.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Also see S. P. Dash, *Sambalpur Itihasa*, p.223.

Kalapathar on the bank of the river Ang. She asked the eldest son Narasingha Deva to stand on the right bank and the younger, Balarama Deva on the left bank. She, then, declared that the river would be the demarcation line of their shares and any attempt at crossing it would be tantamount to the crime against their mother (*Nadī Nāki Jo Sīmā Capale Suno Putra Tuma Doi, Mero Haran Doṣa So Paihai Bacana Ḍāgagiyai Joi*).⁹ Balarama Deva got the Huma area which was situated in between the rivers Mahanadi, Anga and Suktel and established his capital at first at Bargarh on the bank of the river Zira and later shifted to Sambalpur which was situated on the bank of the river Mahanadi. In due course of time the kingdom of Sambalpur under Balarama Deva extended from the river Mahanadi in the north to the river Anga in the south and from the river Surangi(Rangin) in Phuljhar in the west to the village Huma on the Mahanadi(or mouth of Kakai) in the east(*Siṃba Bandheṣi Uta Rāṅgani Ita Purba Kakai Muhāna Me*).¹⁰

The studies of state formation and legitimation in medieval India particularly in Chhattisgarh and Orissa states that most of rulers sought to legitimize their kingship with the help of myths and fictitious genealogies.¹¹ The general pattern of the myth is that, “after the Muslim conquest of Northern India a Rajput ruler was killed and his pregnant wife escaped. While she was wandering in the forest or proceeding towards Puri for pilgrimage she gave birth to a child in the deep forest, then some supernatural event occurred, the child was given protection by a snake or a wild beast, and later it was found by some tribal. When this boy

⁹ *Ibid.*, Canto II

“Matā Sahita Āpahi Rājā Pahuñcābata Ko Āye

Nadī Brahmani Se Nṛupamātā Putra Hī Satya Karāye

Bhātramāta Dou Ko Bande Cale Deba Balarāmā

Jaiṣṭabhrāta Mātā Lai Pahute Puni Pura Paṭnā Dhāmā”

Also see S.P. Das, *Sambalpur Itihasa*, p.223.

¹⁰ Prahallad Dubey, *Jaya Chandrika*, (in Lariya), unpublished manuscript, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar. Also see S. P. Das, *Sambalpur Itihasa*, pp.232-233.

¹¹ C.U Wills, “The Territorial System of Rajput Kingdom of Medieval Chhattisgarh”, *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XV, Calcutta, 1919, pp.202-205.

grew up he showed his extra ordinary capacity and carved out his kingdom.”¹² These kinds of stories are also available in the case of the Chauhan of western Orissa of Patnagarh. The Binjhal Zamindar of Borasamber in his literary work *Nrushimha Mahatmya*, states that, “ a Chauhan Rajput chief Humer, after the capture of the Delhi throne by Ala-ud-din, escaped and travelled as far as Gandhagire (Gandhmardan near Paikmal in Bargarh district of western Orissa) and established a fort. After some years he decided to take revenge against Ala-ud-din and marched towards Delhi. At the time of departure he told his seven queens that he was taking Sua and Sari (two birds) with him; and in case the birds returned without him, the queens should know he was no more in this world. He reached Delhi and bravely fought against Ala-ud-din and freed some of the Kings who were in the prisons of Delhi. Unfortunately while drinking water in a pond the birds escaped and returned to Gandhagire fort. Seeing the birds, without the king, six queens committed suicide by jumping into a well and the seventh one decide against it as she was pregnant. She left Gandhagire fort and travelled as far as Ramod village. Humer on his return found his fort deserted and committed suicide. The surviving queen took shelter in the house of the Bariha village headman of Ramod. There she delivered a male child, and the headman brought up the child. The Barihas (the village headman’s relatives) of Ramod installed Ramai as the ruler of Patnagarh to relieve the terror-stricken people of Patnagarh.”¹³

In the process of legitimacy “the dynamics of state expansion and lineage formation in early medieval India . . . processes which often involved the incorporation of outlying, non agricultural groups or the upward mobility of local agrarian elites. The images of the harsh and uncouth forest dweller or the rustic villager gain new social meaning in such contexts. Ostensibly, such images seem to maintain an apparently rigid boundary between noble society and its agrarian and tribal others . . . the process of lineage formation itself suggests that such groups where often incorporated into aristocratic society over long period of time. . . they may have been economic reasons, as such groups were in possession of regions where mineral or forest resources were obtainable. Also, such groups, typically living in the hills

¹² Surajit Sinha, “ State Formation and Rajput Myth in Tribal Central India”, *Man in India*, No 42, New Delhi, Serial Publication, 1962, pp.35-80.

¹³ N. Senapati, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Bolangir*, Cuttack, 1968, p. 48. Also see *Orissa Historical research Journal*, Vol. I, No.2, Bhubaneswar, 1952, Appendix, pp.1-49. Also see Yogadas , *Nrushimha Charita*, Narayan Pruseth, (ed.), (in Oriya), Padampur, Dora Art Press, , 1982, pp. 17-19.

and forests which surrounded agricultural zones.”¹⁴ According to Jaya Chandrika, “ at the time of the birth of Ramai Deva, Patna region was governed by eight Mullicks who exercised their power one day each by turn, placing a golden lemon on the throne as a symbol of sovereignty. Chakradhara Panigrahi, who was the leader of the Mullicks oligarchy sheltered the Chauhan Princes and brought up Ramai as his own son. Ramai Deva, on coming of age, won over the royal army by profusely rewarding the soldier and , with their help, he murdered the seven Mullicks by plot. He spared the life of his adopted father Chakradhara Panigrahi, but took away all the powers from him. He then assumed the title of Raja and became the supreme authority in the state.”¹⁵ For the help to him and his mother during their troubled days, the Bariha family was rewarded by Ramai. One of their family members, Surya Bariha, was made the Zamindar of Borasambar and was given a special role in the kingdom; at the coronation of a new Raja, it was the special duty of the Binjhal chief of Borasambar to take the king in his lap and fold the turban of state over the king’s head.

([Read from here](#)) The bard of western Orissa refers the Chauhan of Patnagarh as the direct descendent of the Chauhan of Northern India.¹⁶ “The emergence of small regional kingdoms, based on a feudalistic pattern of functioning, led to the development of local loyalties and interests and a more strongly defined association of a locality with its history. Together with this, the centre of historical interest had moved from the tribe to the king and his court. The heroic tradition had given way to the court and the focus of the court, the king. The suta receded into the background and the court poet became central historical writing.”¹⁷ The Kosalananda Kavyam which was written in the middle of the 16th century by Gangadhara Mishra, the Chauhan court poet of Sambalpur, seeks to validate the Kshatriya status of the Chauhan of western Orissa and has formed their tradition and genealogy down to

¹⁴ Daud Ali, “ violence, Courtly Manners and Lineage Formation in Early Medieval India”, *Social Scientist*, Volume 35, Number 9-10, September- October 2007, pp. 15-16.

¹⁵ J.K. Sahu, “Historical Value of the Jaya Chandrika”, *Orissa Historical Research Journal*, Vol. XV, No.3&4,Bhubaneswar,1967, p.39.

¹⁶ Gangadhara Mishra, the court poet of Chauhan ruler Baliaradeva(1617-1657) in his literary work Kosalananda Kavyam , Canto II has claimed the Chauhan as the direct descendent of Chauhan of Northern India. Gangadhara Mishra, *Kosalananda Kavyam*, (in Sanskrit) J. K Sahu and D. Chopdar (eds.), *Kosalananda Kavyam* , (in Oriya), Canto II, P.G. Department of History Sambalpur University,2000.pp.10-19.

¹⁷ R. Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: some interpretations*, Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 1978, p.274.

40 to 50 generations of Chauhan rulers of northern India, particularly Prithviraj Chauhan. The author of the Kavyam claimed that Ramai Deva was the son of Bisala Deva and Isala Kumari of the family Chauhan ruler of north India (*Tatra Bisāladebasya Nānmesala Kumārikā, Patnī Pabitratā Rāmo Jātasasyāyām Yaśodhanaḥ*) while roaming here and there came to Patnagarh.¹⁸ The child later became adopted by Chakradhara Paninrahi a Brahman of the village Ramod. Ramai Deva captured power with his own strength by killing a tiger (*Sadaiba Baśamāpanno Bīta Byabasanaḥ Punaḥ, Dhṛta Carmāsinā Tena Bhinna Marmā Prāṅkapaḥ*) who created chaos in Patnagarh (*Atho Pathi Niśāruḍho Nagarīmati Bīrjyabān, Dudrāba Dabanīrbhedu Śārduloḥṭi Madahśritān*).¹⁹ Furthermore the same work describes the Chauhan to be of lunar origin and purified by sacrificial fire (*Homenāgnno Sanskṛtā Ye Prabīrāḥ, Cohāṇoḥso Somabanśyohi Teṣu*).²⁰ Similarly the Jaya Chandrika which was written in the latter part of the 17th century describes the first Chauhan as “a quadric form hero who was a solar Kshatriya and a Vatsa Gotri”.²¹

The Chauhan followed the principle of internal or ‘vertical’ process of legitimation. “In the Hindu tribal frontier area, legitimacy of political power had a twofold aspect- internal (or vertical) and external (or horizontal). The impact of the new kingship, which led to social change and class-oriented stratification in a previously egalitarian society, the appropriation of the surplus by the king and his retinue and kings divine affiliation, ascribed to him by foreign Brahmanical norms rather than by tribal consensus, required special means of legitimation to win and maintain the loyalty and compliance of social groups within the territory. Remote Hindu court depended upon the loyalty of surrounding tribes for their survival. At the Hindu tribal frontier, which often crisscrossed the territory of the great Hindu kingdoms, political power was based largely on the establishment of an internal or vertical legitimation vis a vis the tribes.”²² Geographically the kingdom of Chauhan of

¹⁸ Gangadhara Mishra, *Kosalananda Kavyam*, ed. J. K Sahu and D. Chopdar, *Kosalananda Kavyam*, Canto II, Verse 28, p. 12.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Canto II, Verses 58, 32, pp.12-14.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Canto II, Verse 18. Also see S. P. Das, *Sambalpur Itihasa*, p.175.

²¹ J.K. Sahu, “Historical Value of the Jaya Chandrika”, *Orissa Historical Research Journal*, Vol. XV, No.3&4, p.45.

²² Hermann Kulkey, *Kings and Cults State Formation and Legitimation in India and South Asia*, New Delhi, Manohar Publisher & Distributors, 1993, p.94.

Sambalpur situated in the upland of Orissa and ethnically it represented by different tribal groups such as the Binjhal, Gond, Sahara, Kond etc. To legitimize their power over the vast tribal frontier area, the Chauhan followed a policy of adoption of tribal goddess in their ritual practise and appointed tribal community in their state craft. Ramai Deva, the first Chauhan ruler of Patnagarh accepted the tribal goddess Patamaswari as the state deity for his newly establish kingdom of Patnagarh. His followers adopted Lingo and Bhurha Deo, the tutelary deity of the Gond in their religious practise. Similarly they had also adopted Pitabali the goddess of the Kond as the subsidiary deity of Samalaiswari. In Kalahandi, which was carved out form the Patnagarh in the 17th century, the Kond Chief played a vital role. Like the raja of Patnagarh, the feudatory Raja of Kalahandi, too, when inheriting the throne, had to sit in the lap of a Kondh Chief, Patnajhi and prior to succeeding to the throne the king had to marry a Kond girl.²³ In Khariar, which carved out in the beginning of the 17th century from Patnagarh as a subordinate state, the tribal Gond chief of Boden enjoyed a special position. His presence in all the ceremonies and especially on the Dasera with two arrows was essential for completing the function.²⁴ Furthermore they encouraged different tribal group to settle down in their territories. It was the queen of Raising Deo (1673-1709) of Sonpur, the princess of Khemedi who brought the Khambeswari idol to Sonpur along with the Dumal community, who served as the chief priest for the goddess. Raising Deo built a temple for Khambeswari to honour the goddess. Sometimes the Chauhan encouraged some of the local tribal group by granting them high title like Singh, Sai, Barihas. The Binjhal Zamindar of Bora Sambar always acted as the chief officer of Patna-Sambalpur state at the time of royal consecration up to 1803.²⁵ Baliar Singh (1617-1657) donated the Zamindari of Kharshel to a Gond chief, Udayam Singh. The Gonda Zamindar of Raigarh and Sarangarh helped Baliar Singh in carving out the vast domination of eighteen garh, which were different political unite under the suzerainty of Chauhan of Sambalpur.²⁶ Chhatra Sai (1657-1695) bestowed the title of king to Durjaya Sing, the Gond feudatory chief of Raigarh.²⁷

²³ N. Sanapati, *Orissa District Gazetteer, Kalahandi*, Cuttack, 1980, p.97.

²⁴ D.P. Tripathy, *Proposed Gazetteer of Nawapara Subdivision*, Manuscript, Sambalpur University Achieves, Acc no 44,p.4.

²⁵ B. C. Majundar, *The Chohan Rulers of Sonapur*, Calcutta, 1925,p.14.

²⁶ A. Das, *Veera Surendra Sai*,(in Oriya),Cuttack, 1963,p.153.

²⁷ S. P. Das, *Sambalpur Itihasa*,p.268.

The location of capital, “particularly in a traditional society, played a vital role for the legitimacy of political power, being the major, or even the only stage where political legitimation was continuously displayed. Although a capital in a traditional society had mainly fortificatory and to a limited extent administrative and economic functions, legitimation of political power through ritual means also played an important role both in modelling the town plan and in its non-material function within the society.”²⁸ Balarama Deva first established his capital at Bargarh on the bank of river Zira by over throwing the Sabara and Sahara tribes. He distributed land to Brahman in the surrounding areas of the capital like Ambapali, Dumerpali and Brahmachari. He later shifted his capital to Naugarh which was surrounded by twelve mountains and constructed a fort and a temple. Subsequently he shifted his capital to the village Chaurmpur on the right bank of the river Mahanadi near Huma which was known for its fertile land and different agricultural productions which were transported in boats from Sambalpur to Cuttack through Binka, Suvarnapura and Boudh. According to the local traditions, the worship of lord Siva at Huma was started by one cow herd that lived near the village Chaurmpur. Each day he took his cows to the nearby forest for grazing. One day he had noticed that at a particular time one of his black cows was missing. He followed the cow next day and found that the cow was cursing the river Mahanadi and spraying her milk over a stone. When he reported the episode to his village they started to worship lord Siva. Balarama Deva built a Siva temple and appointed some non Brahman as the chief priest of that temple.²⁹ To gain the support and good will of the people he assigned some villages namely Huma, Bulpunga, Dhatukpali, Gangadharapali and Mahle for the maintenance, regular worship and religious ceremonies of Lord Bimaleswara Siva.³⁰

According to Jaya Chandrika, while Balarama Deva was hunting across the river Mahanadi at Chaurmpur a beautiful hare appeared before him on the bank of the river Mahanadi(*Ita Balarāmā Deba Laisenā Caṃbarapur Pagutāre, . . . Nadīkudame Eka Byādhā Rahe Ju, Nitya*

²⁸ Hermann Kulke, *Kings and Cults State Formation and Legitimation in India and South Asia*, pp.93-94.

²⁹ C. Pasayat, *Tribal and Non-Tribal Divide Myth and Reality*, Bhubaneswar, 2007,p.45.

³⁰ N. Sanapati and B. Mohanty(eds.), *Sambalpur District Gazetteer*, Cuttack, 1971,p.526.

Māri Mirigādi Bheṭe Tahemju).³¹ He set his hounds at the innocent creature. Contrary to his expectation the king found that his hounds had been repulsed by the hare. That night the tribal goddess Samalaiswari appear in a dream to Balarama Deva (*Dekho Swapna Me Bhup Ko Bīr Doye*) and said, son I am Samalaiswari, staying in Gomadaha, take me to the other bank of the river Mahanadi and build a temple beneath of the Simuli tree(Bomax Malabaricum) (*Somalā Me Mohiṇyā Mahī Bhābahi, Nāme Ye Sambalpura Kahāṃ Bahi, Thāna Mero Gomadāha Ke Andar, Semar Pās Race Aba Mandar*).³² Balarama Deva built the temple for Samalaiswari at Sambalpur. He constructed a fort and established his capital at Sambalpur. It was Balabhadra Deva (1568-1591) who gave a final shape to the fort of Sambalpur (*Bidhāya Drugaṃ Nṛpabārya Sundaraṃ, Bitatye Bhuyoḥnusat Susaṅgaram*).³³ He built the Jharumahal inside the fort and Chhatra Singh (1657-1695) excavated a pond inside the fort. The fort of Sambalpur had been serving as the State headquarters of the Chauhan monarchy. In due course of time the Chauhan invited different person from outside to settle down in Sambalpur. Balabhadra Deva (1568-1591) brought Laria Brahman and oil man from Chhattisgarh and settled them in Sambalpur. Slowly and gradually Sambalpur became the epic centre of learning under Chattra Sai (1657-1695). Jaya Chandrika gives a vivid description of Sambalpur; every men of Sambalpur well verse in the Sastra and for it learning activities it compare with Kasi (*Śāstra Saśāstra Purana Purabāsī, Bidyā Me Mana Luhamre Kāśī*) and in the town there are thirty six cast who living with perfect harmony (*Baseṃ Sahara Chatiśo Jāti, Mahā Ramya Soṃbhābahuṃ Bhāti*).³⁴ The twofold function of the fort, “to provide easy access to the villages in the plain and their production as well as defence for the court and, in times of war, a refuge for the villagers and their cattle” was not noticed in the Chauhan fort of Sambalpur.³⁵ It served as a detention centre for the feudatory chiefs who did not acknowledge the Chauhan ascendancy and became the bone of contention in the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteen centuries between the Chauhan monarch and the Diwan of Sambalpur. Baliar Singh (1617-1657) captured the Bamanda

³¹ Prahallad .Dubey, *Jaya Chandrika*,. Also see S. P. Das, *Sambalpur Itihasa*, pp.225-226.

³² *Ibid.*, Also see S. P. Das, *Sambalpur Itihasa*,p.226.

³³ Gangadhara Mishra ,*Kosalananda Kavyam*, ed. J. K Sahu and D. Chopdar, Canto XVII, Verse 15, p.202.

³⁴ Prahallad .Dubey, *Jaya Chandrika*, Also see S. P. Das, *Sambalpur Itihasa*, p. 266.

³⁵ Hermann Kulke, *Kings and Cults State Formation and Legitimation in India and South Asia*, p.101.

chief and made him as a captive in the fort of Sambalpur.³⁶ When Ajita Singh died in the beginning of May 1766, Akbar the Diwan was rebelled for the throne of Sambalpur. He created a region of terror over Sambalpur and became the unquestionable authority. According to T. Motte, “the town became daily more confused by mobs and riots, insomuch that I forbade any of my servants to go out of my quarters in the night; but my poor cook, disobeying that order, was next morning found murdered in the street. On the 17th June at night, when Akbar having collected his people, marched from his own house to the place secured the person of the rajah, and murdered everyone who offered to oppose him. A massacre followed in the town, where three hundred of the dependents of Kissun Bau Mullic were put to death.”³⁷

Tribal deity had always been played an important role in the process of legitimation in Orissa. Patronage to a specific tribal deity for the purpose of royal legitimation was a common phenomenon in Orissa which had been continuing throughout the medieval period. Whether “the Hindunized chiefs or Hindu king had ascended from the local tribes or whether they had entered the respective areas as roaming freebooters, most of them accepted the dominant autochthonous deities for their territories as family and tutelary deities of their principalities.”³⁸ Similarly “ritual space and legitimation of the new power was linked to the extension of political power. During its spread into the higher mountainous hinterland or lower valleys, the self styled rajas often came across already existing and more important indigenous goddesses which commanded a strong influence over the population of a larger area. Whether these goddesses were already accorded sub regional status or whether the future patronage of the rajas was essential in finally establishing this position, the rajas accepted them as the new *istadevatas*. They donated land for the maintenance of their priests and rituals and in all cases they either built, or considerably enlarged, temples for the new tutelary deities. In course of time, they always became the most important Hindu temples of their respective sub-regional, even when older and more impressive structures existed in their

³⁶ Ramachandra Mallik, *Sankshipta Koshala Itihasa*, p.164.

³⁷ T. Motte, “A Narrative of a journey to the Diamond Mines at Sambalpur in the Province of Orissa” *Asiatic Annual Register*, London, 1799. Reprint in, L. S.S. O Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteer of Sambalpur*, Calcutta, 1909, p.44.

³⁸ Hermann Kulke, *Kings and Cults State Formation and Legitimation in India and South Asia*, p.6.

neighbourhood.”³⁹ Though the upland of the Mahanadi delta of Orissa had been influenced by the Saivaite culture yet the Chauhan followed the principle of adopting local tribal gods for the purpose of legitimating. It was due to two things; firstly the Chauhan of Sambalpur controlled a vast area which was dominated by different tribal groups who had not been associated with the Hindu mode of worship. Secondly, they had already been accepted Damei Thakurani, the principal deity of Damei Gond, in Patnagarh as the state deity for legitimation. Balarama Deva first accepted Samalaiswari the deity of the Sahara and the Jhara community as the royal deity who were living on the bank of the river Mahanadi in Sambalpur. To gain the support of that particular community he built a temple for the goddess in Sambalpur.⁴⁰ He appointed the Sahara as the chief priest and Jhara as the holder of canopy of the goddess.⁴¹ Chhatra Sai (1657-1695) gave the final shape of the temple of Samalaiswari and donated forty villages for the regular worship of the goddesses. In course of time the goddesses Samalaiswari come to be regarded as the royal insignia of the Chauhan and her temples were constructed in each and every village and another non Brahman caste the Jhankar was associated to worship the goddess and were granted rent free land for their service.⁴² In the middle of seventeenth century the cult of Samalaiswari expanded to their subordinate feudatory state in order to gain the emotion of the people. When Vikaram Singh’s son Baliar Singh (1617-1657) established a new feudatory state of Barpali, he built a temple for the goddess Samalaiswari.

In course of time the goddess Samalaiswari identified with the goddess of the Hindu pantheon. According to an oral tradition, “Daksa arranged a sacrifice and called all the deities to attain the function but he did not appeal to his own daughter Sati and son in law Siva. Sati came to the sacrifices and complained after her father for not to inviting Siva. Daksa got angry and he cursed Siva. Sati could not tolerate the insult and killed herself in the sacrifices altar. Siva became furious and started his destructive dance bearing the corpse of Sati on his back. Vishnu came and instructed his Sudrasena Chakra to cut the dead body of Sati into

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.101-102.

⁴⁰ S. P. Das, *Sambalpur Itihas*, p.227.

⁴¹ L .R. Sai Deo, “Samaleswari Mandira Pratisthara Kimbadanti O Samkshipta Itihasa” (in Oriya), *Basanta Miliana Smaranika*, Sambalpur, 1985, pp.7-8.

⁴² S. P .Das, *Sambalpur Itihasa*, p.227.

pieces. The body of Sati hewn into a number of pieces and it is believed that the head of the Sati is enshrined in the temple of Samalaiswari.”⁴³ Furthermore to hinduize the goddess, the Chauhan of Sambalpur abolished the practice of human sacrifices in the temple of Samalaiswari. According to another oral tradition, during the time of king Madhukara Deva (1591-1617) some people caught a Vaishnava pilgrim at Redhakhol who was on his way to Puri and presented in the court of Madhukar Deva to sacrifice him in the temple of Samalaiswari. The pilgrim told to the king, do not kill me for the sake of goddess, leave me in front of the goddess for one night, if she really want my blood then she may kill me (*Mote Hāni Bali Debe Nāhiṃ . . . Debīnka Sambukhare Mote Rakhi Deula Kabāta Kilideuntu, Debī Jadi Manuṣya Bali Grahana Karuthānti Mote Swayang Bakṣaṇa Karibe*).⁴⁴ The king respected the word of the pilgrim and acted accordingly. The next morning the pilgrim came out from the temple alive and unhurt. From that day onwards the practise of human sacrifice was abolished in the temple of Samalaiswari. The association of the Vaisnaiva sect with the cult of Samalaiswari brought the tribal and non tribal interaction in the arena of religion which led towards consolidation of the Chauhan supremacy all over the western Orissa. In order to more Hindunized the tribal goddess Samalaiswari was intended in the eight mother goddesses who were directly linked with Jagannatha.⁴⁵ According to Jaya Chandrika it was goddess Samalaiswari who helped Balabhadra Deva when he faced the invasion of Kalapahara the general of Sulaiman Karrani of Bengal(*Jaya Jagadambā Rājerājeśwarī Bhakti Baśya Bhababhayaharanī, Citrotpalā Gomadabāhini Kalāpāhāḍa Bidranakaranī*).⁴⁶ It states that, when Kalapahara invaded Orissa, the priest of Puri brought the idol of Jagannatha to Sambalpur and buried it somewhere on the bank of Mahanadi near the south of Sambalpur. Kalapahara attacked Sambalpur and encamped near the fort of Sambalpur. He invaded the fort several times but he could not seize it. One day goddess Samalai in disguise of a vender of milk entered the camp of Kalapahara and sold milk and

⁴³ C. Pasayat, *Tribal and Non-Tribal Divide Myth and Reality*, p.61.

⁴⁴ S.P. Das, *Sambalpur Itihas*, p.253

⁴⁵ “Bhagabati in Banpur, Maninageswari in Ranpur, Charcika in Banki, Bhattarika in Baramba, Hingulai in Talcher, Sarala in Jhankada, Viraja in Jajpur and Samalai in Sambalpur”, Hermann Kulke, *Kings and Cults State Formation and Legitimation in India and South Asia*, p.96.

⁴⁶ Prahallad Dubey, *Jaya Chandrika*, Canto-I. Also See S.P. Das, *Sambalpur Itihas*, p.249.

milk products. After eating that the soldiers of Suleiman Karrani felt unconscious and the army of Sambalpur invaded the camp and killed Kalapahara. The assimilation of sub regional deity, Samalaiswari with the regional God of India, Jagannatha brought a two way legitimation to the Chauhan of Sambalpur. On the one hand the Chauhan of Sambalpur identified them as a regional power in the hinterland of western Orissa, and on the other, the tribal populace of the Sambalpur were assimilated with the mainstream of the Chauhan rule through their tutelary deity Samalaiswari.

In contrast to the tribal god, the non tribal god played a lesser role in the process of political legitimacy of the Chauhan, but their importance was no less than their counterpart, the tribal. Before the advent of the Chauhan into the western Orissa, the region was dominated by three religious cults, the Saktism, Saivism, and Vaisnavism. It was Ramai Deva, the founder of Chauhan rule in western Orissa, who at first constructed a Shiva temple in his capital at Patnagarh. Starting from the first ruler of Sambalpur, Balarama Deva and all his successors up to Ajita Singh tried their best to patronize the non tribal God for the following reasons; Firstly, the territory of Sambalpur throughout in history was known for its Saivite and Vaisnavite shrines and the predecessor of the Chauhan had been patronizing both the cults in letter and spirit. Secondly, their own predecessor religious attachment to non tribal gods. Thirdly, to gain the support of the local communities who were in majority worshipped non tribal cults. Baijala Deva (1478- 1510) the grandfather of Balarama Deva builds a Vaisnava temple at Narasinghanath and his queen one Saiva temple at Harishankar. He donated the village of Loisingha for the maintenance of the temple.⁴⁷ In their state capital they patronized tribal god and goddesses whereas in their subordinate's state they openly put forwards their Vaisnavite and Saivist religion over their subject. It is to be noted here that when the subordinate kingdom of Sonpur came in to being, "the Sonpur Chief worship Sakti, the mighty consort of Mahadeva, as the family goddess, and worship regularly on all Mondays the god Mahadeva who is enshrined in the temple of Suvarnameru, though they become initiated by the Mohanta of the Ramji Math at Puri with Vasishnava mantra. It is the Vaishnava emblem which has ever since been maintained as the family insignia by all the branches of the Chohan Chiefs. This emblem is a Chakra or discus,

⁴⁷ S.P. Das, *Sambalpur Itihas*, p.212.

which is the mighty weapon of Vishnu.”⁴⁸ Similarly Hrdaya Singh (1720-1760) the Chauhan ruler of Barpali, who was a devotee of Jagannatha built a temple for Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra close to the temple of Samalai and employed a family of Aranayaka Brahmins for the worship of the deities.⁴⁹

In order to keep the loyalty of the non tribal populace the Chauhan Kings constructed many Hindu temples in their territories. It only served, “as symbol of a new Hindu kingship, was still the main source of external or horizontal legitimation rather than of any great significance for the political status of the rajas within the society.”⁵⁰ They build Siva temples in different parts of their kingdom and made extensive donation of villages and land grants for regular and elaborate performance of these temples. Geographically most of these Siva temple situated in the surrounding of Sambalpur and Bargarh which served as the capital of Chauhan. They were, namely Bimaleswara at Huma, Kedarnatha at Ambabhona, Biswanath at Deogarh, Balunkeswara at Gaisama, Maneswara at Maneswar, Swapneswara at Sorna, Bisweswara at Saranda and Nilakantheswara at Niljee. To gain the support of the tribal flock the Chauhan had appointed a member of a tribal community, known as Thanapati as the principal priest to worship of all these Saivaite temples. As far as the construction of the Vaisnava temple is concerned it was only limited to the state capital and the subordinate states headquarter. Balabhadra Deva (1561-15910) built a Jagannatha temple at Sambalpur. Vansi Gopala, the son of Madhukar Deva (1630-1660) built one Gopalji temple at Sambalpur and another at Sonpur and installed the images of Krishna and Radha in both the places. He renovated the Vishnu temple at Sambalpur and the Ananta Sayai image which was brought by Balarama Deva from Surguja as a trophy of victory. He also established the Gopalji monastery at Sambalpur. These temples did not have any political signification but it was only represented as the centre for the congregation of a few non tribal subjects and the religious satisfaction of the Chauhan kings.

⁴⁸ B. C. Majumdar, *Sonepur in the Sambalpur Tract*, Calcutta, 1911, pp.52-53.

⁴⁹ N. Senapati, *Sambalpur District Gazetteer*, Cuttack, 1971, p.210.

⁵⁰ Hermann Kulke, *Kings and Cults State Formation and Legitimation in India and South Asia*, p.104.

At length, it could be easily stated that the Chauhan of Sambalpur had followed three different methods to legitimize their power over Sambalpur. However they faced difficulties to achieve their objective, in due course of time they overcame the predicament. Unlike the other medieval rulers of Orissa, the Chauhan did not seek the blessing of any external authority for legitimacy rather; they represented themselves as the sources of legitimacy for their feudatories. They brought their legitimacy through the process of assimilation with the tribal flock, by donating land to Brahman, by associating religion in the state policy and by adopting local tribal god and goddess as their tutelary divinity. They patronized both the tribal and non tribal pantheons to gain military help, economic support and political loyalty from their subjects. In the same time they had also established a fortified capital to represent themselves as a strong regional power which was a common phenomenon among the medieval Orissa kingdom.