Terracotta Ornaments: Regional and Faraway Consumption Patterns from Sisupalgarh, Odisha

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Abstract: The use of various ornaments is significant aspects of human cultural traits because they reveal preferences, personal ideologies, and aesthetic sense of the time and user. Ornaments were frequently created to reflect the personality, ethnicity, and economic standing of individuals within a specific community or cultural mileau. Ornaments that enter the archaeological record may have been lost accidentally, hoarded, stored for distribution, or discarded from manufacturing facilities. The archaeological findings from excavations provide legitimate evidence of ornaments, allowing us to gain a comprehensive understanding of numerous features of the prevalent decorations of a given age. It gives information about site links when similar styles are present in other regions, introduced by merchants and travellers, with styles shared among local producers as well.

Keywords: Preferences, Personal ideologies, Aesthetic sense, Ornaments

Introduction

Ornaments and ornamentation forms an important aspect of human cultural attributes which informs on preferences, personal ideology and aesthetic sense of the period and the user. Ornaments were often designed to suit the personality, ethnicity and economic statusof individuals in a particular society or cultural mileau. Ornaments which enter the archaeological record may be a result of accidental loss, hoarding, storage for distribution or discard from manufacturing centers. The archaeological findings from excavations give the authentic evidence of ornaments that helps us having a clear idea about various aspects of the prevailing ornaments of a particular period. it provides information about links among sites when similar styles are found in different places, brought by merchants and travelers with styles shared among local producers as well. The production and use of terracotta objects provides a rich and diverse corpus of materialthrough which we may analyze economic and social activities. For

archaeologists, terracotta objects provide a durable record of sophisticated strategies of manufacturing, use and discard that reveal both large scale trends of contact and emulation, and everyday choices in the selection of object styles by consumers. In this paper, we examine theuse of terracotta ornamentation from recent excavations at the Early Historic city of Sisupalgarh, Odisha. This is a part of an ongoing comparative study of artefacts that illustrate local and long distance exchange activities in the early centuries BC/AD.

Defining Ornamentation

The word "ornament" is used to signal an object that beautifies different parts of the body. It also used in order to signify the status and the personality of the wearer. Hence it is used as the ornaments as well as for the ornamentation. Although the concept of "ornamentation" appears to be highly intuitive, we might be able to make a productive distinction between the following categories of the human embellishment of the body:

Ornaments are human manufactured items whose sole purpose is to embellish the body (Abhusana). Ornaments cannot be utilized as a tool or for other practical purposes; their function is as a social signifier such as age, marriage status, social status, wealth and beauty. Examples include jewellery of all kinds (bangles, bracelets, beads, earrings and other ear decorations and necklaces).

Decorations are natural objects or used for body modifications that are personally applied or adjusted. They can include flowers placed in the hair or behind the ear, the arrangement of the hair itself into braids and the application of vermillion or mineral pigments to the skin. Like ornaments, the purpose of these acts is to embellish the body. Decorations usually are applied by the individual, although some forms of permanent decorations (such as tattoos) may be applied by individuals specialized in this craft. Special occasion hairdressing or cosmetic application may also be done by other persons upon an individual body. Decorations are not visible in the archeological record except by proxy (such as the recovery of mineral pigments in a grave, or the presence of stone palettes presumed to have been used for grinding cosmetic powders).

Accoutrements are items attached to the body that are used for practical purposes but which have style and decorations. All items created by people have a form and a style that is deliberate and purposeful on the part of the makers. This distinction was identified by the American archeological theorist James Sackett as "Isochrestic style".[1]The primary purpose of accoutrements is functional: clothing, belts, footgear but also swords, sashes, and headgear. Accoutrements may be made by either professionals or by the individual users themselves. They may be idiosyncratically chosen (such as yellow sari or a green one) or they may contain specific insignia that are restricted to particular members of the population (such as a stripe on a military uniform, yellow cloth of krishna as pitambar)& identified on the presence of the item. Specific ornaments or accoutrements also signify a personality of a wearer such as Kaustava, Pitambar, or Sweatambar. Items such as weapons with their attribute caneven identifya specific personality like Parsu-rama and Govinda (held by Arjuna in Mahabharata).

These distinctions are useful because they place ornaments within a context of material culture used on the human body. Researchers tend to divide themselves into groups, with scholars of ornamentation generally concentrating on different group of objects and activities, while scholars of practical objects and tools focus on different objects, particularly their technological and manufacturing aspects. Because of the perishable nature of decorations, there is very little means of studying this component of the archaeological record, except in case of remains in visual art forms as many a time it portrayed day to day component of life in the ancient period as it is today. By contrast, the study of ornamentation in durable form provides opportunities to evaluate economic and social practices in ancient times.

Economic Aspects of Ornamentation

By separating different categories of embellishment, we can see how the concept of manufactured ornaments is just part of a larger realm of style expressed in material goods. The concept of embellishments for the body is in turn a part of a much larger realm of stylistic expression that also includes pottery, tools, architecture, sculpture and the entire range of artifacts that also are representations of the transmission of ideas across large geographic areas. But ornament hasa special role to play in economic understanding. Ornaments may be made by the wearer, but more often they are produced by specialists who make beads from stone, ivory, bone or wood and with whom the wearer would engage in exchange for acquisition. In many cases ornament are made from non – local material, also implying exchange patterns over space as well as exchange between professional crafts makers and the consumers. Ornaments may also involve specialized manufacturing techniques not found in each household, such as moulds (for terracotta and metal items). Trade in stone beads, shell bangles, and ivory are examples of items that had both specialized manufacture and trade over distance.

Excavations at Sisupalgarh

Sisupalgarh is a fortified Early Historic city in eastern Odisha located on the southeastern edge of modern Bhubaneswar (Fig. 1). The site is formally delineated by a rampart and moat enclosing over 1 km² of ancient habitation. It was first excavated by B.B. Lal in the year 1948. On the basis
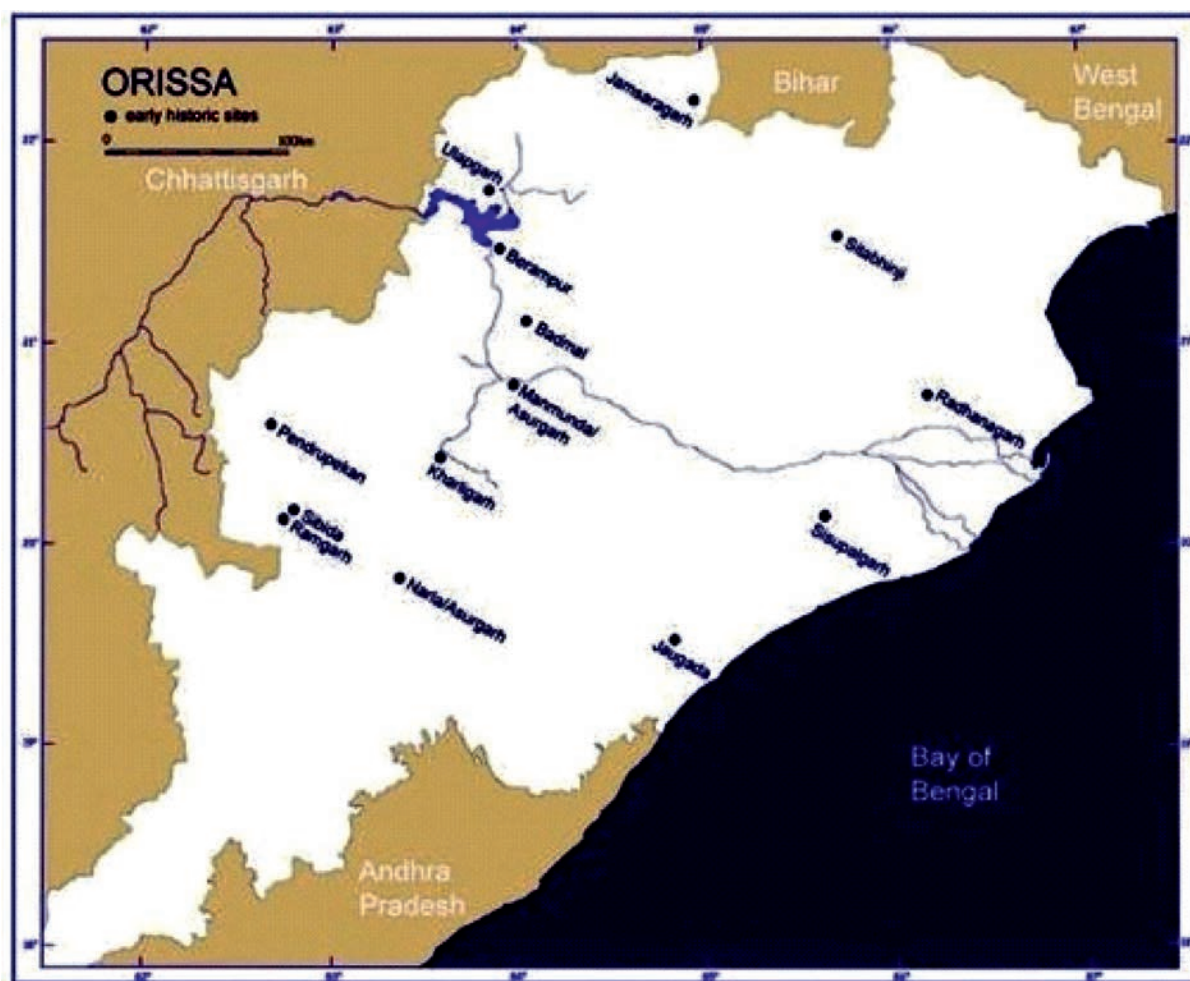

Fig. 1: Map of Odisha showing location of Sisupalgarh

of the material remains he dated the site from 4th century B.C to 3rd century A.D.[2] Again the site was excavated by Mohanty and Smithfrom 2005-2009.[3] Through horizontal excavations and deep soundings, the team investigated different aspects of the site, identifying habitation areas, monumental architecture, gateway and the ramparts. Horizontal excavations explored areas of household activities within houses and also areas around structures which were the locations of high rate of trash disposal. Deep soundings established the chronology of the site and examine without changes over time. Radio carbon dates established the site's earliest occupation to have been in the 7th century BC and the latest occupation extending to the 6th – 7th century AD. Studies established a profound economic change in the course of the site's occupation resulting in changes in the material culture.

Terracotta Artifacts

The context of Sisupalgarh's economic changes can be placed in the picture of trade, exchange and interaction in the Early Historic Period. Contacts among early historic settlements in the Indian subcontinent can be seen in the evidence of historical sources indicating political engagements, the use of Brahmi script, and the material legacy of Buddhism and its associated sculptural and architectural styles.Sisupalgarh has some pottery types, such as knobbed ware and rouletted ware, which are similar those at other sites like Prahaladpur[4]and Jaugadh[5](knobbed ware) and Arikamedu[6] (rouletted ware). Some pottery shapes are similar to the shapes seen elsewhere such as ledge-rim bowls forms recovered at Nagarjunikonda,Yeleswaramand Tripuri.[7] But in contrast to the other sites in the Gangetic plain which have there are terracotta plaques and molded terracotta figurines, Sisupalgarh has virtually no such objects. It is particularly interesting to note that contemporaneous walled sites in Bengal, such as Chandraketugarh, had massive quantities of terracotta plaques. Although terracotta was a widely used material in the Early Historic period, it is clear that there were regional differences in manufacturing and use.Only three fragments were recovered the largest of which measures approximately 6 cm, comprising of a thin plaque with two heraldic birds. On the other hand, Sisupalgarh does have a considerable quantity of terracotta ornaments including bangles, beads, pendants and varieties of ear ornaments. In the near absence of metal ornaments the intricately designed terracotta ornaments incorporating various motifs and figures inform on manufacturing skill and the contemporary economic and cultural value of objects. Many terracotta ornaments found in the excavations at Sisupal garhare highly abraded, indicating long use and re-deposition in trash and fills from construction of later structures made of mud, thus making identification of apparent designs in some cases difficult. Most of the ornaments closely resemble or are identical with those found from a number of other early historic sites of India.

Beads

The bead is one of the oldest ornament types found in archaeological context used by human being to beautify the body. Subsequently it is used both as an ornament and for ornamentation. The common way of use is in the form of necklace, headband, bracelet, and belt. Nowadays, beads of various kinds are often used to make embroidery on cloth and used to make fancy decorative items and may have been so used in the past, although textiles themselves do not survive in the archaeological record. More than 800 beads were found in the 2005-09 excavations at Sisupalgarh, about 90% ofwhich are made of terracotta.Shapes include types foundat almost all historical sites in India and have a long tradition in India, being found as early as Harappantimes.. The terracotta beads are primarily in rounded or arecanut or pear shapes, with occasional examplars of tiny circular, collared shape, gadrooned shape and floral shape..[8]The beads found here have a close resemblance with other excavated early historic

sites in India. Beads from Sisupalgarh have similar to from those other sites like Bhokardhan,[9]Nevasa, [10]Ter, [11]Pauni, [12]Prakash, [13]Brahamapuri. [14] The *amalka* shaped, gadrooned shaped, collared shaped bead with floral design are also noted at Brahmapuri, [15]Pauni[16] and many other sites. (Fig. 2).
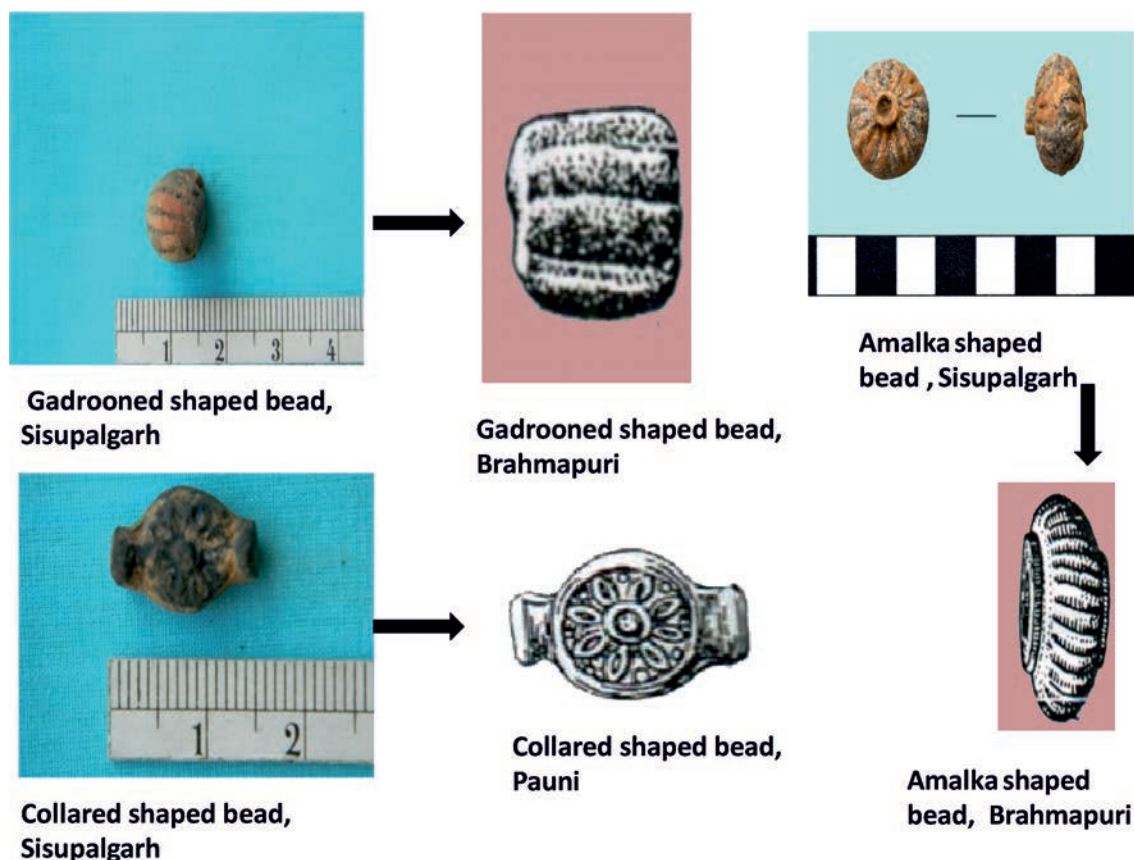

Fig. 2. Similarities of beads found from Sisupalgarh with some other early historic sites of India

Pendant/Spacer/Amulet

Pendants, amulets and spacers are used along with beads in order to make a necklace. A total of 112 pendants/spacers/amulets were recorded from the 2005-09 excavations. Various kinds of pendants are found from Sisupalgarh, closely resembling those seen elsewhere in India as well as a Roman influence. Here, except for a few, almost all are made of terracotta. Shapes includes square, rectangular, cylindrical, floral, and bullae. Bullae are the dominating variety having the designs of Floral design, king/royal person face, human motif, bull figure, elephant figure, triratna and srivatsaand + mark. The designs give an idea about the religious condition of Odisha as well. Bullae are regarded as displaying Roman influence, belonging to theSatavahana and post Satavahana period as evidenced from a number of sites in Maharashtra like Nevasa, [17]Bhokardhan[18] (Fig. 3) .

Bangles

A total of 164 teracotta bangle pieces were found from excavation of Sisupalgarh, of which 37 are plain. Amongst the decorated bangles, the most frequent design is the lentil or eye design (a total of 58). Other includes floral designs, arrow marks, slanting lines, beaded designs, circular designs, eye designs and ropedesigns.The beaded design and rope designed bangles are quite common in other early historic sites in India like Piprahwa[19]and Ter[20] (Fig. 4).

Fig. 3: Similarities between the bullae from Sisupalgarh with other historic sites in India

Ear Ornament

A total of 470 ear ornaments were reported from Sisupalgarh and most of them are made of Terracotta. Almost half of the specimens are the peg shape with a conical mouldedtop. The crescent shaped ear ornaments found resemble exemplars from as far west as Kausambi in the Ganges Valley and as far south as Porunthal in Tamilnadu.[21]These crescent shaped ornament have been also found from Bhokardhan, [22] Ter,[23]Prakash, [24] andBrahmapuri.[25]Other shapes include pulley shape, disc shape, annular shape, pin shape, gamesman shape, having designs of concentric circle, flower motif inside the circle and line designs. Disc shaped and gamesman shaped ear ornaments have also been found from Pauni,[26] Kali pachchhim,[27]Pataliputra, [28] Piprahwa,[29] Vaishali,[30] Trilokpur.[31] (Fig. 5)

Another important type is reel shaped and were found in a large number. It is almost 40 % of the total number. The reel shape is a term given by Postel. [32] This is a typical feature of the Kushana period as is evident from many historic sites during this period like Pataliputra,[33] Rajghat, [34]Atranjikhera[35] and is seen from sculptures from the same period. This has also been seen from the Mauryan period for example the ear of Didarganj Yakshi. (Fig. 6).
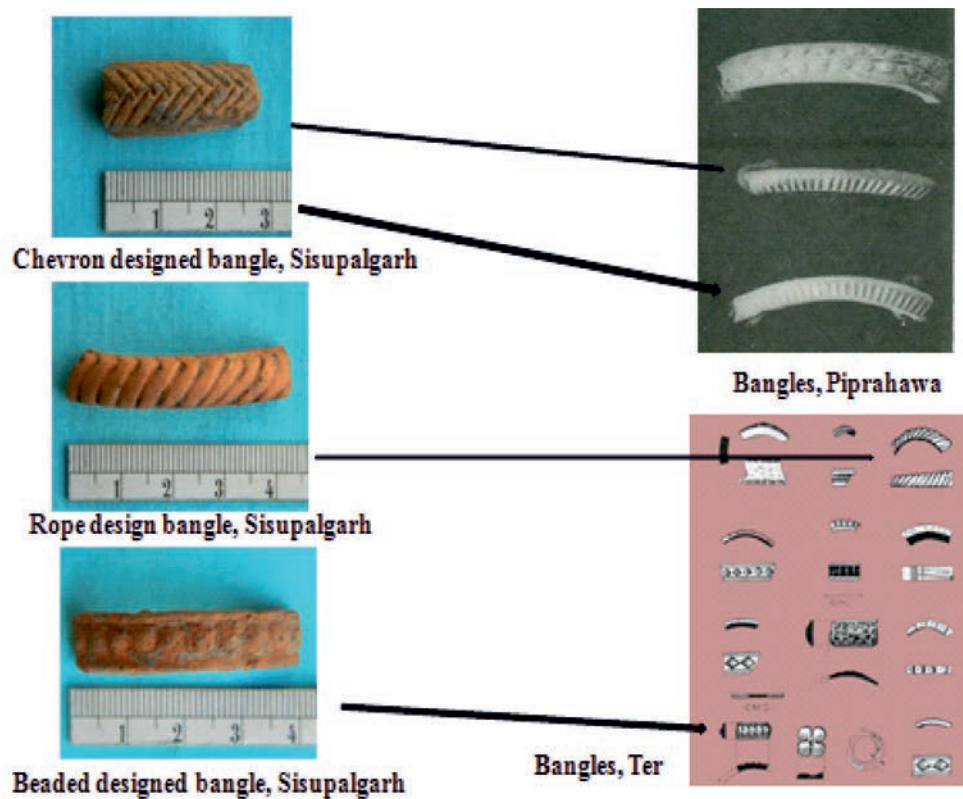
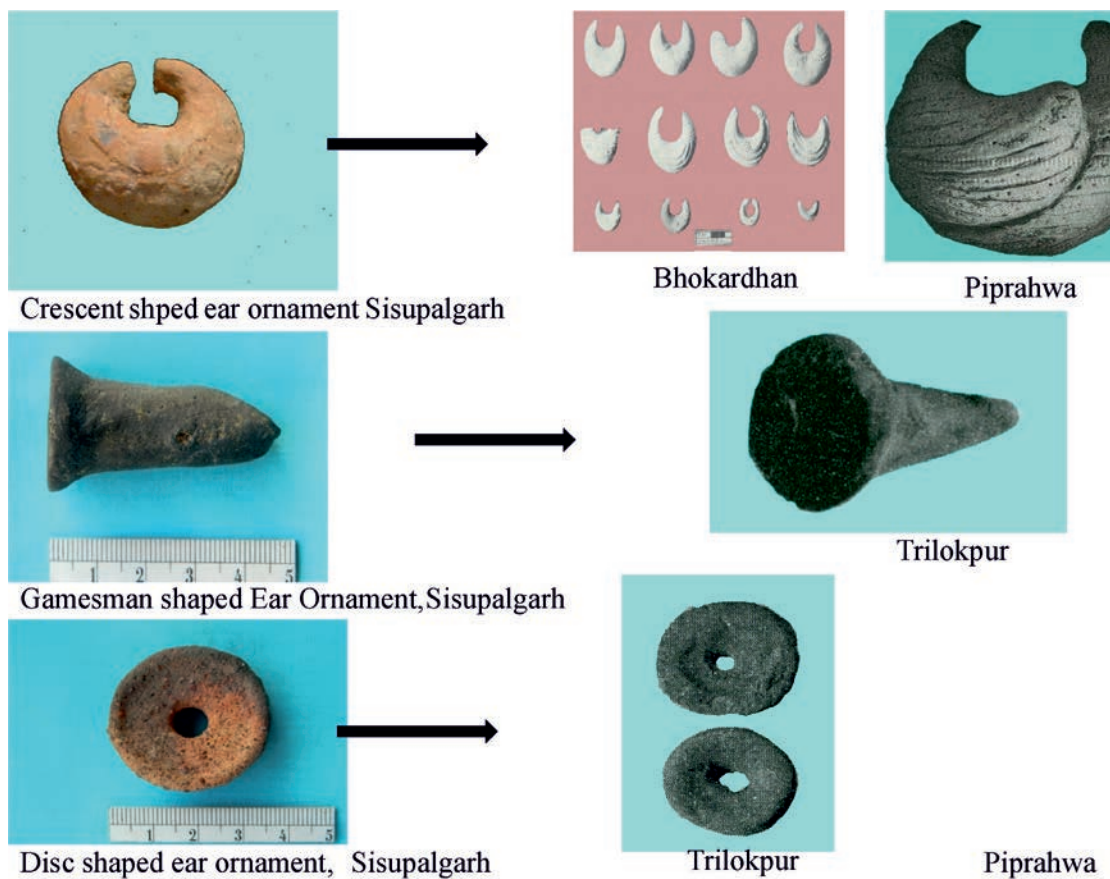**Fig. 4: Similarities of bangle from Sisupalgarh with other sites in India**

Fig. 5: Similarities of ear ornament from Sisupalgarh with other sites in India
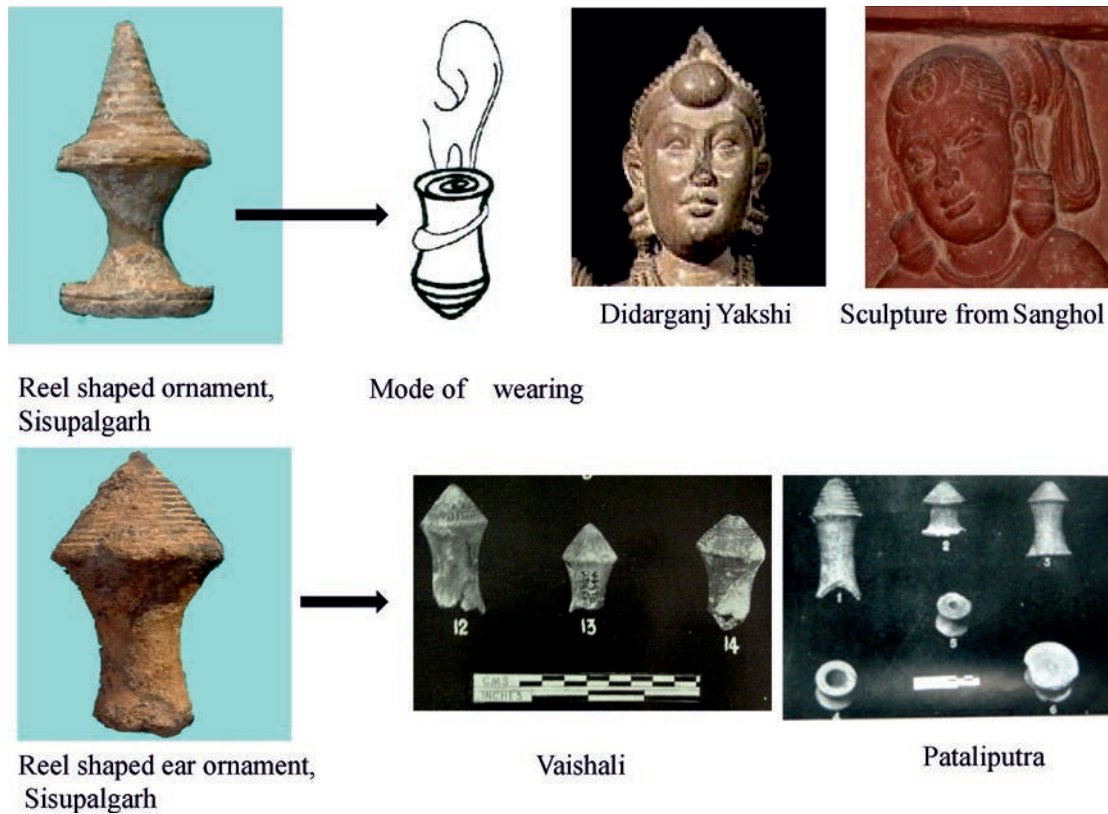
Fig. 6; Ear ornament from Sisupalgarh and similarities with other sites in India

Finger Rings

A total number of 31 finger rings were reported from Sisupalgarh, almost all from terracotta. They are Plano - convex section convex section and round in section containing geometric and anthromorph designs and most are extremely abraded.

Discussion

The above observations shows that the some ornament pattern from Sisupalgarh has strong resemblance with other early historic sites in India, within a time frame especially during Satavahana to Kushana period and very few during the Gupta period . The following table gives an account of the findings and their affiliation.

The following table showing the other site in India having same kind of ornaments as found at Sisupalgarh

NAME OF THE SITE	ORNAMENT	PERIOD	DYNASTY
ATRANJIKHERA	Reel shaped Ear Ring	NBPW	Kushana
BHOKHARDHAN	Crescent shaped ear Ring	2nd c BC – 2nd. c. AD	Satavahana
BRAHMAPURI	Crescent shaped earring.	2nd c BC – 2nd. c. AD	Satavahana
KALI PACHCHHIM	Disc earring	Pd- II (1stc . BC – 4th c. AD)	Kushana
	Segmented Bangle		
PAITHAN	Crescent shaped ear ring	2nd c BC – 2nd. c. AD	Satavahana

PATALIPUTRA	Gadrooned Bead	Pd II (150 BC - 500 A.D)	Kushana
	Reel Shaped Ear Ring		
	Disc Shaped Ear Ring	Pd – I (600 BC – 150 BC)	Kushana
PAUNI	Disc shaped ear ring	2nd c BC – 2nd c. AD	Satavahana
PIPRAHWA	Beaded Bangle	6th c. BC - 1st c AD onwards	Sunga -Kushana
	Arrow designed bangle		
	Crescent shaped ear ring		
	Disc shaped earring		
RAJGHAT	Reel Shaped Ear Ring	Pd – III (Christian Era – 3rd c .AD)	Kushana
SANNATI	Beaded Bangle		
SONKH	Kushana sculpture wearing reel shape ear ring		Kushana
TER	Crescent shaped ear ring	2nd c BC – 2nd c. AD	Satavahana
TRILOKPUR	Disc shaped earring		Gupta
	Gamesman shaped earring		
VAISHALI	Disc shaped ear ring	6th c. BC – 6th c AD	Sunga -Kushana
	Bangle		

Fig. 7: Similar kind of ornaments found from Sisupalgarh used by some tribals in Odisha

Although these above discussed ornaments were very popular during the early historic period as the analysis suggests, in the present day also most of the people especially in the tribal community still use similarornaments frequently to some extent. Looking at the evidence of ornament from archaeological sites and the some of ornaments used in present day society by the tribal people like Saura tribe, it seems that the pattern of ornaments kept on changing, preference shifted and returned back sometimes with some variations and modifications time and again. As Figure 7 shows, individuals often have multiple types of ornaments simultaneously. At Sisupalgarh, the wide variety of designs and ornaments suggests a dynamic and fluid method of individual expression through ornamentation.

Conclusion

The evidence of a large number of terracotta ornament from Sisupalgath in comparison with a relative low number of objects made out of other kindsof material remains an enigma. In the backdrop of impressive structural remains, city layout, it is difficult to comprehend why value added objects such as metallic and stone ornaments are not available in profuse quantity as seen in contemporary early historic sites in the Gangetic plain, Deccan and elsewhere. However, other cultural remains along with pottery and artefacts do not show a very remarkable abrupt development or change through the period. In other words they remains almost in a limited range of change. The terracotta ornaments as has been observed are mostly found from the phase contemporary to $1^{st} – 2^{nd}$ century BC to about 4th.-5th. century AD. It falls within a period of intense decorative art (Satavahana, Kushana, Gupta period) which sees a lot of activity in terracotta production. They may be due to economic conditions of different segment of people, trade, material availability, local–cultural tradition and expertise available. The examination of different categories of trade goods enables us to evaluate how trade networks are diverse even within the same periods. In other words, the transmission of pattern and style are selected by both producers and consumers, responding to local conditions. In the case of Sisupalgarh and surrounding regions, aspects of styles related to secular as well as religious traditions were very strong, with the iconography and architecture of the Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jaina sites belonging to the early historic period and participating in the traditions expressed in the western India, the Ganges valley and South into Andhra Pradesh. Other types of portable material culture were more limited in their distributions with rouletted ware common along the eastern Indian coast,and knobbed ware making an appearance in a number of these sites as well. Trade and contacts related to terracotta objects also wasquite variable. Although the designs and styles of terracotta ornaments were similar to those found elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent in the Early Historic period, the famous tradition of terracotta plaques from the early Historic sites at Chandraketugarh in west Bengal are hardly represented at all in the Sisupalgarh corpus.

Patterns of everyday ornamentation may thus be a way of revealing networks of communications and trade and realms of cultural affiliation along with social, political and economic contacts. Though it is customary in archaeological publications to show only a single map of trade routes the analysis of different types of goods in the early historic period shows that a single representation is likely to be misleading. Particularly in the case of Kalinga, where historical documents indicate the impact of Kalinga war of the Ashokan period reverberated far and wide.We know that there were strong political routes between the Ganges and the Mahanadi region from a very early period. The social links however were likely to have been more fluid and variable responding to regional and local manifestations of style and a considerable independence in consumer preference. Though Sisupalgarh is one of the most well featured early historic settlement which began in 7th c BC to 6th c AD, do not give much specious ornaments that is gold, silver and copper like other early historic sites in India. They are few in number

as compared to the large settlement area. The terracotta findings reveal a kind of the information to see that when the architecture, layout and other cultural materials is so impressive how it gives personal belongingness such as ornaments of low profile. Terracotta ornaments were designed and executed very minutely and elegantly. This reflects achievements and artistic traditions both in depicting motifs in ornament and producing them in a large quantity. When we see contemporary sites, we can see they are using to some extent the same type of ornaments as evidenced from excavations and depicted in sculptures, terracotta art and paintings of contemporary period.It suggests that in ancient timesSisupalgarhmight have been had cultural relations or influence with the west (Bhokhardhan, Ter, Paithan, Nevasa), south (Nagarjunikonada) and north (Piprahwa, Vaishali, Atranjikhera, Pataliputra, Rajghat, Kali Pachchhim) where similar types of ornaments are found.

Acknowledgements

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