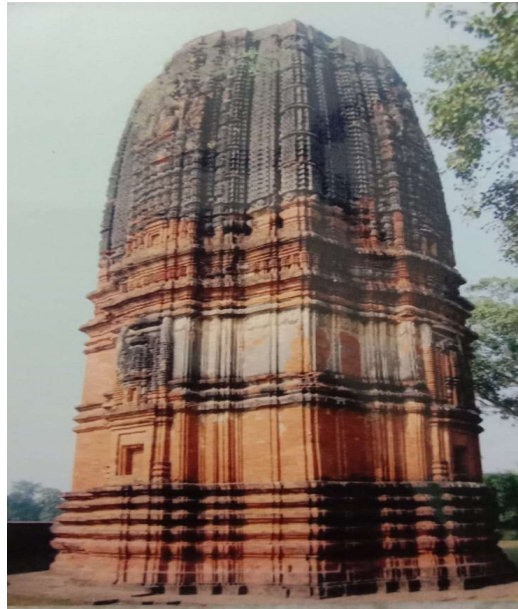


## Glimpses of Terracotta Temples in Bankura

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Bankura is famous for terracotta. This word is known to the scholarly people. The people of Bankura used to know by the word 'Terracotta' some 50 – 100 years ago as 'Pothulya'. Pothulya (Puttali>Putul>Pothul) temple means terracotta decorated temple. The temples we want to discuss are—

- a. Siddhesvara Siva temple of Bahulara—this is the Rekha temple based on the art of Orissa—approximately 10-11 century.
- b. Sridhara temple of Medinipur --pancaratna—18<sup>th</sup> century.
- c. Sridhara Temple of Sonamukhi—Pancisaratna—19<sup>th</sup> century.
- d. Sridhara temple of Rajagrama—dasaratna—19<sup>th</sup> century



**Pic 1: Siddhesvara Temple of Bahulara Village**

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(a) The Siddhesvara temple of Bolara or Bahulara village of Onda PS is a beautiful example of archaeological art of Bengal. J. D. Beglar has said, it is the best example of a bricked temple of Bengal. In the language of Beglar— the temple is of brick, plastered; the ornamentations carefully cut in the brick,’ the temple is 12 mile from Bankura in the east direction and from the Onda Rail station 3 mile in the south. After Patrahati village the temple comes to view on the road to Bolara and Hadra villages. Omally has written, it is said that the kings of Visnupur had built this temple—it contains a temple dedicated to Mahadeo Siddheswar, said to have been built by the raja of Bishnupur. for a distance it looks like the Jata Deul of Sundarban.

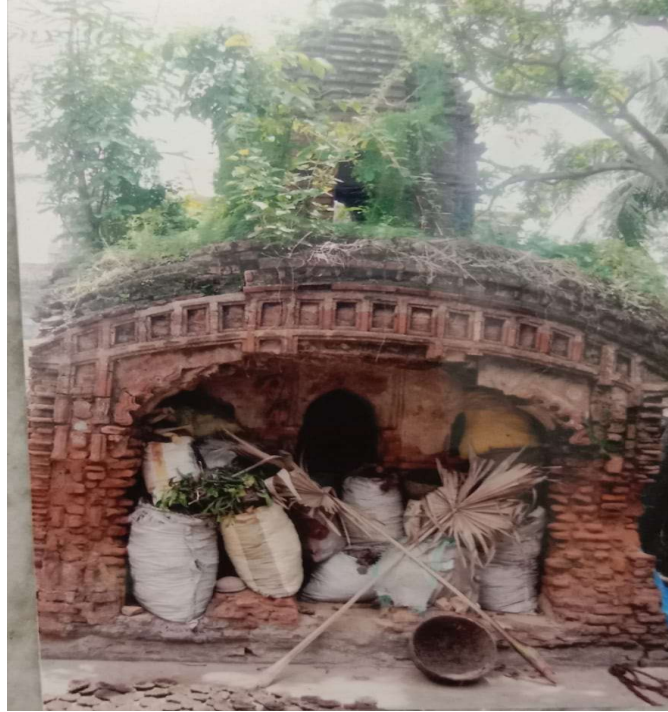
1. This temple attracted the attention of the archaeologists of India in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The temple is built of brick but plastered. According to the temple specialist Mccutchion, it is the Rekha temple of the pre-Muslim times. ‘it is customary to associate these with the Imposing orissan tradition of which so much still remains, but it seems likely that the Pre Muslim Rekha Deuls of Bengal were in a tradition coming down through Magadha, which was part of the same empire.’ The making of this Rekha temple based on the Orissan art is 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century. The temple is standing facing the west. The description of Beglar—These are, however, ornaments on the plaster alone, but none inconsistent with the brick ornamentation below. I conclude, therefore, that the plaster formed a part of the original design. The mouldings of the basement exist, a close approximation can be made to what it was; some portions are, however, not recoverable.’ On the top of the entrance of the temple there is the ornamentation of carving. Around the temple there are the art of terracotta. Like the square box on the parts the pictures are clear. Such as on the north wall there is the image of Narasimhi. The south plate has fallen, only the frame is there. This plastered art is also seen in other Jain temples. But with the ornamentations on the wall of Bagulara temple there is the similarities with the Jain temple existing in the area of the Qutub Minar of Delhi.

In the yard of the temple, 4-5 Siva Lingas are remaining dug in the ground. Inside the temple, there is one not so long Siva Linga without Gauripatta who is Siddhesvara is noticed. His gajana is performed, the devotees come riding on the iron Pata which remains in the temple. Three more images are there—Ganesa, Parsvanatha and Dasabhuja Mahisasuramardini Durga. By the side of Ganesa there is another mutilated Devi image which has also been found from the pond. Around the temple there are profuse number of Cannon stones lying.

Apart from this, many pillars of Makra stone are seen. It is understood that there were many temples more ancient than this bricked temple. The temple is standing on the green grass bed surrounded by ponds. The east sided pond is called Dustina, west sided pond is called Salukgadya and in the north is Hatpukur. The meaning of old ‘Hat’ or Hatta is merchant. So, it

was a pond of the Jain merchants. On the south of the west facing temple some Chaityas are seen. This type of Buddhist Stupa can be seen in Mogolmari. These stupas and from Ekatesvara to Bahulara 15-20 km distance from the Darakeswar river on both sides there are many relics of the Jain temples which proves that in the ancient times in this place there was one Jain Vihar where studies on the University level used to be in practice. Here totally 29 stupas are seen—square, rectangular, round and one stupa is like the lower part of a foot. In the temple, there is Ganesa under whose feet is a mouse. On the south side of the mouse two small images are seen, on the left two Mangala Kalsas or A Ghata with coconut with one tiny image. In one hand of Ganesa is counting beads, in another hand is holding the front part of the trunk, in another hand there is the weapon and the other hand is in the posture of a fist. With the ornaments on the body of Ganesa there is a metal snake remaining as the sacred thread. The ten handed Durga is killing the buffalo demon and the lion is under her right leg. The Tirthankara image is naked and he is Parsvanatha surrounded by seven snakes. On his both sides two middle size human images are standing and the Lanchana sign is two snake women and a Mangala Kalasa surrounded by a snake. The height of the three images is approximately 28 inches to 35 inches; the type of the stone is Ramkhadi brought from Orissa which will look black if oil and ghee are smeared on it.

This temple of Bahulada belonged to the Jains. There was no Gauripatta on the Shiva Linga but the present one is newly installed. The same Shiva Linga is seen in Budhpur, Mantamuda, Molbana and Daser Bandhe of Bankura city. The length is 30x1 inches and breadth is 26x9 inches and height is 64 feet. Amiya Kumar Bandopadhyay has said that this Rekha temple has no touch of Khichin style and is influenced by the style of Orissa. In the Chait –Alinda, Geometrical lay out, flower-leaf creepers etc. and the dancing figures in the hanging garland all the minute ornamentations are covered with fine Pankha layer and are built with bricks.



**Pic 2: Terracota Pancaratna Sridhara Temple, Medinipur, Onda, Bankura**

(b) In Medinipur of Onda PS, there is one broken Terracota Pancaratna Sridhara temple. Its height is 14 feet and this bricked temple had been installed under the sponsorship of Zamindar Dhallababu around the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. The front portion of this beautiful temple is now destroyed and the deities have been transferred to elsewhere. One Vishnu temple by its side is more or less intact. By the effort of the villagers, the Pancaratna Shiva temple was built in about 400 years ago, has been protected from dilapidation. But Terracotta has vanished due to cement coating. The Abalgajana festival of this Shiva is held in the month of Jyaistha. Gajana is continued for 8-10 days. Aguna Sannyasa and Jhulana Seva are also performed. Bhakatyia rises from the Nandipukur. Banphoda is performed. In the afternoon, 'Sang Saja' is performed. Now the Gajana sang has shifted to other place but among the villages where it is performed, Medinipur is one of them. Bipattan Sutradhar, Madhusudn Sutradhar are the 'Sang' artists. This Shiva is called Kalinjaya Natha. This temple also was established by Dhallababu. The present priests of Kalinjaya Shiva are the Bagisa and Chakravartis.

In the villages like Krishnanagar, Andhak, Harinabaid, Medinipur etc of old Mallabhum many temples were established by the Malla kings. at the fall of the Malla kings the temples became the properties of the Zamindars., such as the pretty high Madanmohan temple of Krishnanagar village. For this temple 189 Bighas of land and 4 big ponds were allotted for the deities. In the south wall of the temple there is the stone plate engraving the time of its installment. The old Madanmohan image is stolen but Gopala image is there. The entrance of the temple is very

beautiful, almost 10-12 feet high wooden doors are bearing the example of fine wooden art. On the outside of the temple there is a Rasa Mancha with 10 pinnacles which was built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



**Pic 3: Sridhar Temple at Sonamukhi**





**Pic 4: Temple Script at Sonamukhi Temple**

(c) Inside the Mahadanigali of the Ward no. 10 of Sonamukhi there exists the 25 gemmed Sridhar temple. It is 27 feet high and was built in BS 1252 by Hari Sutradhar. Financially, it was sponsored by Kanai Rudradasa Tantubaya. The later had no child and donated this temple to a Brahmin. In Bankura, this is the only 25 gemmed temple. Surrounding of this temple, beautiful works of terracotta of scorched bricks are noticed.

On the south wall on the scorched brick slab there is the image of ten handed Mahisasuramardini Durga, by her side the story of Kapila mangala has been engraved. Inside the temple there exists Sridhara in the form of Salagrama who is daily worshipped by Bhuvan Ganguli. The slab of the ten durga is beautiful. But due to the want of repairing the temple is going to be destroyed day by day. The priest informed that none has noticed this temple. The Government should take care of it immediately. In Bengal there are only 4/5 25 gemmed temples. In kalna there are 3 temples—

1. Lalji Temple—in 1739 C.E
2. Krshnacandra temple—1751 C.E
3. Gopal Bari—1766 C.E

4. Sukhariya-Balagarh—Ananda Bhairavi Temple—1813 C.E.

Mr. Mccutchion has said about this small Double storied Pancha Vimsati Ratna.



**Pic 5: Temple at Rajgram, Bankura**

(d) In Datta Para of Rajgram, there exists the 10 gemmed Terracotta Sridhara Temple built in BS 1285. On the entrance of the temple there is the picture of Devi Durga with family on the scorched brick slab.

This temple was also built by the weavers having the title of Datta. In Rajgram, now more than 10 thousand weavers live. There are also potters. The grandfather of potter Satish Kumbhakar had built this terracotta temple. The temple is covered with lime and Surki on three sides and in the front, there are the scenes of scorched brick. In the front of the temple there are three entrance gates ornamented beautifully. On the three panels on the three entrance gates there are the scenes of mythological stories. In the middle there is the Seva of Lakshminarayana. On the left side the sitting of Rama Sita, on the right Devi Durga with full family. Like the garland on all sides are Dasavatara and other gods and goddesses. The temple is ten gemmed double storied, means the first five pinnacles, then the middle pinnacle and then five more pinnacles. Though there are Siva-Durga-Ganesa-Kartika-Lakshmi-Sarasvati, there are no Asura and the lion. At the feet of Siva and Durga there are one Dhyani and after him Vidyadhara and Vidyadhari.

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