

Art and Architecture of Visnu Temple at Janjgir

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The Setting

Dakshina Kosala, nearly corresponding to the boundaries of present Chhattisgarh, India, is not only famed for an impressive concentration of forts, but also a host of Vaisnava antiquarian remains as revealed from recent subterranean investigations. Scholarly research in the region brought to light a prolific number of Vaisnava temple sites. Mention may be made of Ratanpur, Sirpur, Maheshpur, Jajgir-Champa, Bastar, Rajim, Kharod, Shabarinarayana etc. Apart from a vast repertoire of imagery, many Vaisnava images also are reported from sculpture sheds of Malhar, Pali, Tumman, Ratanpur, Barsoor etc (see map). The Vishnu temples at Janjgir champa (Manvani 1988:82-85), the main temple at Shabarinarayana, (Manvani, 1988:72-74), the Vishnu temple at Narayanpur (Manvani 1988: 90-93), the Narayan temple, Narainpal (S.N.Manvani, 1988:112-113)are dedicated to Vishnu (Table 1).

Epigraphic Evidences

Few Epigraphic evidences (Table 2) also shed light on the flourishing phase of Vaisnavism in Chhattisgarh i.e. kurud plate of Narendra (Shasri 1995: 8), Amgura plates of Jayaraja (Shasri A.M, 1995: 14), Mallar plates of Maha- Jayaraja (Shasri 1995: 17, Thakurdiya plates of Pravaraaraja (Shasri A.M, 1995: 53), Sirpur Lakshmana temple stone inscription of the time of Shivagupta Balarjuna (Shasri 1995: 141-147), Adhabhara plates of Nannaraja (Shasri A.M, 1995: 118). The inscriptions of Sharabhpuriyas and Panduvamsins provide prolific information about the VaicGavism but in Kalachuri period few inscriptions are noticed in this regard i.e. Ratanpur stone inscription of Jajalladeva I (Mirashi 1955: 410) and Rajim stone inscription of Prithavideva II (Mirashi 1955: 451). The stone inscription of Jajalladeva I mentions that Jajalladeva founded a town named Jajallapura, where he constructed a monastery for ascetics, raised a garden, planted a grove of mango trees and excavated a tank. Deity installed in a temple, apparently Jajallapur. So the relation of this Vishnu temple can be fixed with the information of inscription of Jajalladeva I. Rajim stone inscription gives information about the construction of a Rama temple. Seals of Prithavideva II contain the figure of Gajlakshmi (Jain 2005: 77), it proves his devotion to *Vaisnavism*. In Ratantanpur the present paper assesses the art, architecture and iconography of Visnu temple at Janjgir.

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