

Sculptures of Biswanth Area in Assam

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Abstract

Biswanath is identified as a part of the ‘*Soumarpeetha*’ of ancient Kamarupa kingdom. Present Biswanth area is a former part of Sonitpur district, well known for *Da-Parbatia*, *Agnigarh*, *Bamuni Hills*, *Nagsankar* temple. Biswanath is a centre of cultural development in Assam from the early times. The *Bamgoan* ruins dating back to c 800-900 CE provide evidence of brick fragments depicting birds, floral designs, human and animal figures, bricks used as corner pieces and other terracotta art objects to understand the cultural development of the area. Biswanath is very much important from historical point of view. The temple ruins and findings of the area itself describe the importance of the area. The history of Biswanath and its nearby area is well known after the expansion of Ahom kingdom to central Assam. In this paper an attempt is made to describe the iconographic features of the sculptures which are found in the area.

Keywords : Biswanath, Ratha, Mukhalinga, Pancamukha Shiva, Pancha-dhyan-Buddha

Introduction

Assam is rich from the historical point of view as many different dynasties ruled in Assam. It was under the rule of Varman, Mlechchha Dynasty of Salastambha, Pala, Khen, Chutiyas, Kachari, Ahom, Koch and other regional powers. In this period great development took place in art and iconography. According to R.D. Choudhury, “majority of the extant icons of the valley of Assam belong to the Brahmanic faith. Only a few images of

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Buddhist pantheon and only two Jaina icons have been noticed in Assam, so far” (Choudhury 1985: 57). In Assam different types of sculptures were found which belonged to 6th century CE to the late Medieval period. Assam is famous for sculptural art. Many researchers like R.D. Choudhury, Kamaludin Ahmed, Manoranjan Dutta, N.D. Choudhary, Arun Bhattacharjee, Paromita Das, Deepirekha Kauli and others worked on the development of sculptural art and iconography of the region. In the present paper, the author deals with the sculptures and their iconographic features which are found in the Biswanath region.

In 2015, Biswanath was declared as a district of Assam, which was earlier a part of Sonitpur district. It is an administrative district in the middle region of Assam and is located on the north bank of river Brahmaputra. It is bounded by Arunachal Pradesh on the north, Golaghat district, Brahmaputra on the south, Lakhimpur district on the east and Sonitpur district on the west. The administration headquarter is located at Biswanath Chariali. During the legendary period Biswanath was a part of King *Banas' Kingdom*. From that period Biswanath is also known as '*Gupta Kashi*'. According to '*Hara-Gauri Sambada*', this region was under the '*Soumarpeetha*' of ancient *Kamarupa* kingdom. In ancient time it formed the border between the '*Kamata Kingdom*' and '*Chutia Kingdom*' and in medieval period it formed the border between '*Ahom*' and '*Koch Kingdom*'. Butu Pala, son of Dharma Pala of the Pala dynasty (900 CE-1100 CE) who ruled in Assam in ancient time was the ruler of Biswanath. Moreover, Pratap Chandra, the king of the powerful Jitari Dynasty made Biswanath the capital of his kingdom. To protect his capital from invaders, he constructed '*Pratap Garh*', '*Majuli Garh*', '*Nukhar Garh*' stockades around his capital. During the Ahom rule, Biswanath was very important from religious, cultural and administrative points of view, as many Ahom rulers visited Biswanath at that time.

Through the copper plate inscription, Ahom rulers appointed priest, *paiks* for the maintainance of the temples and also issued land grants to the priest. A great development was taking place in the field of art and sculptures during this whole period. The influence of Pala School of Art to late Medieval art can be seen in the sculpture of Biswanath district. Among them some sculptures are found exhibited on the walls of the temples and others inside the temple.

Major Temples of Biswanath Region

Among the temples of Biswanath Ghat, the oldest and most notable is the Biswanath temple. A stone temple was constructed by the rulers of Salastambha dynasty (650-990 CE) in the name of Biswanath Shiva at *Harupeswae* or present-day Tezpur. The rulers of Pala dynasty patronised the temple. The history of Biswanath temple and its nearby area is well known after the expansion of Ahom kingdom to central Assam. However, it is not known from *Buranjis* whether any Ahom king before Pratap Simha patronised this temple. Between the years 1615-1620, the ancient Biswanath temple was demolished, so Ahom king Pratap Simha rebuilt the temple through Momai Tamuli Barbaruah. Pratap

Simha built the temple at that place, where nowadays, the ruins of ancient Biswanath temple are seen, at that time the place was high and full of stones. King Pramatta Simha also contributed to the Biswanath temple. After the demolition of the Biswanath temple in the days of Pratap Simha, King Pramatta Simha resided in Biswanath for two months in 1750 and rebuilt the famous Biswanath temple which is known as the 'Khapona dol' in history. In the *Buranji* of Changrung Phukan, the description of the temple is recorded. King Shiva Simha and King Rajeshwar Simha also came to worship Lord Biswanath. King Rajeshwar Simha visited Biswanath and presented gold, silver and cloth to his subjects. During the reign of King Rajeshwar Simha, the temple built by of King Pramatta Simha collapsed and the place sank into the Brahmaputra. Thus, during the reign of Lakshmi Simha, in 1774, a new temple was built on the present site, 200 m west from the previous temple. Many of the stones and bricks of the old ruined temple were used in the construction of this new temple. The main feature of the temple is that it is beautifully decorated with some terracotta plaque and it is a four *ratha* temple construction. In Biswanath district it is the only temple in which the researcher noticed four *ratha* or even number *rathas*.

Chandi temple is located on a huge rock boulder on the banks of the River Brahmaputra, 300 m south-west towards the ancient Biswanath temple. The antiquity of this temple is contemporary with the Biswanath temple. It is a Shaktipeetha. According to the legend, after the death of Goddess Sati, daughter of Prajapati Yaksha and wife of Lord Shiva, Shiva took her dead body in his arms and travelled all over the world. It is believed that the right arm and right breast of Goddess Sati fell in the Chandi temple of Biswanath Ghat. In "*Kalika Purana*", goddess Chandi of Biswanath is referred to as '*Vishwadevi Mahadevi*'. In the days of Pratap Simha, this Chandi temple was known as "Chandi Deoghar". After the destruction of the old temple, in 1685, Gadadhar Simha rebuilt the Chandi temple. But at present there is no standing structure, but the ruins of the temple such as bricks, steps on the south and the brick wall are present there.

The Bordol temple is situated 300 feet north-west from Chandi Dol. *Bor* means big and *dol* means temple. As it is bigger compared to the other *dols* in the region, it is called '*Bordol*'. The date of the construction of the temple is uncertain. Some sources mention that the temple was built by the Ahom King Rajesvar Simha (1751-1769 CE). Two noted Assamese scholars, Hiteswar Barbarua and Maheswar Neog (2008) wrote that this temple was built by Ahom king Gadadhar Simha (1681-96 CE) in 1685 CE and Rajesvar Simha in 1790 respectively. According to "Assam Buranji", written by Padmeswar Naobaisa Phukan in the later phase of 19th century, the Ahom king Pratap Singha or Burha Raja built a temple over the Shiva Linga of Biswanath Ghat which already exists on the site. It is believed that the Shiva Linga was installed by the King Bana himself.

In Biswanath, the researcher found total eight sculptures which range from the pre-Ahom to the late medieval period. In those temples the researcher found one image of Uma-Mahesvara, two sculptures of Ganesa where one is from pre-Ahom period and the

other one from medieval period, a broken sculpture, two Chaturbhuj sculptures, a Chaturbhuj Vishnu, a four headed sculpture, a sculpture of peacock.

Uma-Mahesvara

A well sculpted image of Uma-Mahesvara (Fig. 1) (115 × 77 × 34 cm) is present in the Chandi temple at Biswanath Ghat, Biswanath district. This sculpture belongs to the Pala Sena School of Art found in the Brahmaputra valley. In this sculpture, Uma is sitting on the left side of Mahesvara or Shiva, in a *purnavikasita padma* and embracing each other. Here Mahesvara is sitting in *lalitasana* posture while Uma is sitting in his left lap. Presently the right leg of Goddess Uma has broken. Both Uma and Mahesvara wore a



Fig. 1: Sculpture of
Uma-Mahesvara

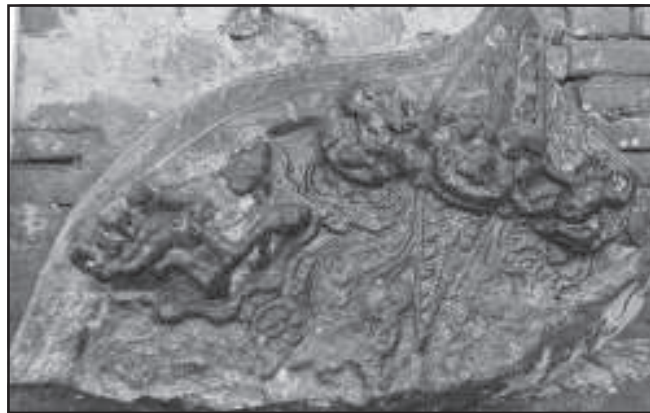


Fig. 2: Upper portion of Stella, Uma-Mahesvara

paduka in their left and right leg. In this image Mahesvara wears a *jatamukta* and Uma wears a *karandamukta* and they both wear a pair of *kundalas*. Here Mahesvara is depicted with four hands and Uma with two hands. Between the two hands on his right side, in one he holds a *damaru* while the other one is broken and in the left side the upper one is holding a trident and with lower one, he touches her breast. On the other hand, the right hand of Uma is on the shoulder of Mahesvara and in her other hand she may be holding either a *utpala* (mirror) or a lotus *buat*. Here goddess has a thin waist and large breasts. In this image, the size of the Uma is more or less equal to Shiva or Mahesvara. The image (Fig. 2) is well decorated with *kirtimukha* sign at the top, a pair of *vidyadharas* and a pair of figures near the *kirtimukha* sign. But the *vidyadharas* present on the left

side are broken. The pedestal is beautifully decorated with *triratha* style and in the middle of the pedestal Bhringi is present. In his right side, Vrishabha, the *vahana* of lord Shiva is depicted and on the left side of him, Dawan or lion, the *vahana* of Uma is depicted. On the left side of *vrishabha*, a female deity is present in kneeling position and folded hands and on the left of the Dawan, a dancing figure is present.

Ganesa

In Biswanath area, two sculptures of Lord Ganesa are found which are unique in style. One was influenced by Pala Sena School of Art and another one is from medieval or Ahom period. The first one (Fig. 3) is reported from Ganesh temple and he is sitting in a *padma pitha* and the posture is *padmasan*. His four hands are in *tarjani mudra*, in his right hands, he holds an *ankusa* in the upper one and a *rudrakesha* mala in the lower one, in his hands on the left side, he holds a *gada* in the upper one and a *pasa* in the lower one. Generally, he was depicted as having only one tooth but, in this sculpture, both teeth are present. With his trunk he is holding a unique attribute which the author has not seen any other places, a roundish object with a stick on it and it might be a *padma* (lotus) or a sweet dish on the trunk and a stick appears to be attached to the dish.



Fig. 3: Sculpture of Ganesh



Fig. 4: Sculpture of Dancing Ganesh

Between his head and left side upper hand, a *sarpa* or snake is present. In this image he wears a sacred thread, a *kativastra* and a *udarbandha*. The vehicle of *Ganesa* is absent in this sculpture.

The second image of Ganesh (Fig. 4) found at the *Bordol* temple, Biswanath Ghat is in the *tri-bhanga* posture and depicted as naked. Here, the vehicle of Ganesa is absent. This sculpture belongs to the medieval period and the height, breadth and thickness of the sculpture is 65 cm, 50 cm and 26 cm respectively. In this image, Ganesa has four hands among which three hands are carrying a *pasa*, *parasu* and the left upper hand holds an *ayudha* which is eroded so it is difficult to identify. And the trunk sharply bends towards the left perhaps to collect *modakas* from his left hand.

Sculpture of Shiva with four heads

A sculpture is observed with four heads and ten hands (Fig. 5) in Biswanath temple. Here, he wears a *jatamukuta* and a *caru* in his every single hand. In his right lower hands, he holds a *sarpa* or snake which is visible in front of his right face, the second and the third hands hold a *sarpa* or snake which is small in size. The fourth hand carries an *ankusa* and in the fifth one he holds a sword type object which is not identifiable. The left lower hand is in *varada mudra*, second one is not clearly visible, third hand holding a *trident*, a sword in the fourth one and in the fifth one the object is not



Fig. 5: Sculpture of Shiva

properly identifiable. He is sitting on a *padma pitha* in *padmasan* posture. He also wears a *rudrakesha mala* and a *kativashtra* (a *dhoti*) to the toe of the leg, which is generally a tiger skin. According to the norms of *Mukhalinga* each of these figures should have only one pair of arms, while in this sculpture there are ten hands which means the sculpture has five heads, hence the iconographical features indicate this sculpture as *Shiva* or *Pancamukha Shiva*. In *Pancamukha Shiva* there are five profiles, from which three are visible, one behind and one on upper side of the head. In this sculpture four profiles are visible, three are in front and one on the upper side, but the other one can't be seen. There is a third eye and crescent moon is present on the forehead of his four faces. The most unique feature of this sculpture- *Pancamukha Shiva* is sitting on a *padma* or lotus, usually *Shiva* is never shown seated on *padma*. Along with that this sculpture is influenced by both *Shaivism* and *Vaishnavism*. In this image, *Nandi*, the vahana or vehicle of Shiva is missing and stylistically the sculpture belongs to late medieval period.

Vishnu

One image of Vishnu (Fig. 6) (55 × 46 cm) is well exhibited on the wall of the *garbhagriha* of the Chandi temple. This sculpture belongs to the late medieval period.

Here Vishnu is depicted beautifully with four hands, *shankha* (conch), *chakra*, *Gada* (mace) and *padma* (lotus) clock wise. Vishnu wears a traditional royal dress, a *zappi* (a traditional ornament of Assamese people), a *caru* in each hand and a *kiritamukuta*.

Except those mentioned above, in Biswanath some other sculptures are also there. In Surya Madhav or Ganesh temple two four handed sculptures engraved on stone are found and both are in standing posture. The first one (Fig. 7) is surrounded by different figures and the height length and thickness of the image are 46 cm, 28 cm and 11 cm respectively. The height, breadth and thickness of the second sculpture (Fig. 8) are 41 cm, 21 cm and 12 cm respectively. Both the sculptures are eroded so it is not possible to identify them. In *Bor Dol* a sculpture (Fig. 9) is found seated in a *padmasana* posture but the



Fig. 6: Sculpture of Vishnu



Fig. 7: Unidentified sculpture



Fig. 8: Unidentified sculpture



Fig. 9: Broken unidentified sculpture



Fig. 10: Sculpture of Peacock

upper part (above chest) of the sculpture is broken. The height, breadth and thickness of the sculpture are 41 cm, 36 cm and 26 cm respectively. At *Chandi* temple a peacock image (Fig. 10) is beautifully exhibited on the walls of the *garbhagriha*. It belongs to the late medieval period and the height and the breadth are 61 cm and 40 cm respectively.

Burhamadhab Devalaya

Burhamadhab Devalaya is situated in the Pratapgarh Tea Estate, Biswanath district. This temple was patronized by the rulers of Jitari Dynasty. Ahom king Siva Simha rebuilt the temple with bricks with the help of Salal Borgohai. A beautiful sculpture of Tara has been found in Burhamadhab Devalaya which is now preserved at the District Museum of Tezpur, Sonitpur. Tara is originally related to Buddhism. The word *Tara* is derived from the word “*Tara*”. It means the goddess, who makes other devout cross the sea or ocean. She is the most popular deity among the Buddhists. In Buddhism, *Tara* is considered as a mother goddess and holds the same place in Buddhism as



Fig. 11: Sculpture of Tara

Durga holds in Hinduism. In Buddhist tantric mythology *Tara* belongs to the family of *Dhyani Buddha Amonhasiddhi*, but she is also related to the Bodhisattva *Avalokitesvara*. According to iconographic forms *Tara* has a number of forms with many hands. Among them two are important, *White Tara* and *Green Tara*. The *White Tara* holds full blown *Padma* and symbolizes the day; while *Green Tara* carries *Utpala* with *petal* closed and symbolises night. The *White Tara* is regarded as the consort of *Avalokitesvara*.

The sculpture of *Tara* is engraved on a Basalt stone. The time period of the image is considered to lie between 10th to 11th century CE. Here, *Tara* is sitting on a double petalled lotus pedestal in *padmasana* posture. In her left hand she holds a *Padma* (lotus) and her right hand may be in *Varada mudra*, but it was broken and not properly identified. She wears *Mukuta*, *Kundala*, *Kanthahara*, *Ekahara*, *Kankana*, *Armllet*, *Katisutra*. She also wears *hikkasutra* fitted with a triangular central locket. The goddess has a thin waist and large breasts. The style of the pedestal is *tri-ratha* and a pointed stella with five figurines, they are *pancha-dhyan-Buddhas*, *Vairocana*, *Amoghasiddhi*, *Ratnasambhava*, *Amitabha* and *Aksobhya*. The grouping of deities is one of the important features of *Buddhist* iconography. Lotus is also engraved on a pedestal. Below the pedestal there are two devotees, one on each side, in kneeled down position and folded hands. On the left side of the deity there is a female devotee and on right side there is a male devotee. Near the lotus there are two attendants, one on each side and serving her (Goddess *Tara*).



Fig. 12: Sculpture of Vishnu



Fig. 13: Pedestal of a broken sculpture with an inscription

Molesor Devaloi, Behali

Molesor Devaloi is situated in Behali, Biswanath district. According to the local people, Ahom King Gaurinath Simha rebuilt the temple. Some stone artifacts are also found near the temple. In 2000, when the local people were re-digging a pond near the temple, they found two sculptures of Vishnu. Both the sculptures were broken but the first one was restored by the people and kept near the temple, while the other one was taken away by someone but the lower portion of the sculpture is still present there. In the first sculpture Vishnu (Fig. 12) is shown in *samapadasthanaka* (upright) posture standing on a *purnavikasitan padma* (fully blown lotus). Both sides of the deity are



Fig. 14: Inscription written in the broken pedestal

stylistically decorated. The Vishnu has four hands. In the left upper hand, he holds a *cakra* (wheel) and the other three are broken. He wears a *kiritamukuta* of a simple style, a *vanamal* (Vaijayanti) is depicted touching his knee, *kundala* (ear-ornaments), *upagriva*, *hikkasutra*, *keyur*, *kati sutra*, *kativastra* (a dhoti). The image is beautifully decorated with *kirtimukha* sign at the top and a pair of *vidyadhara* is also present. In the pedestal two female attendants are depicted in kneeling down position holding a mala. The pedestal is beautifully decorated with four rathas.

Here, Vishnu is accompanied by goddess Saraswati and Lakshimi. Saraswati is standing on his left side holding a vina with her two hands. Lakshimi is standing on his right side holding a flywhisk in his right hand. Both Saraswati and Lakshimi are in *trivangum* posture and both are standing on a *purnavikasitan padma* (fully blown lotus) and wear the *mukata*. Most probably, Lakshimi wears *kati sutra* on the right side of Lakshimi and left side of Saraswati, there are Jay and Vijay, two *dwarapalikas* of lord Vishnu.

The researcher has found the broken pedestal (Fig. 13) of the second sculpture, which is well decorated with floral motifs. On the middle of the pedestal, *Garunda* is present in *Virasan* posture in *namaskara mudra*. On both sides of *Garunda*, a pair of *Vidhyadhara*s are present and both are in *Virasan* posture. Below the pedestal two lines of inscription (Fig. 14) written in Sanskrit language, in Kamrupi script.

Sculpture found at Kalabari

In Kalabari two sculptures of Indra and Shani have been reported, which are now preserved in the District Museum of Tezpur, Sonitpur. Indra considered as a Dikpalakas, the eight guardian deities of the universe that control each side of the universe. The sculpture of Indra (Fig. 15) belongs to late medieval period and is engraved in a basalt rock. Here, Indra is sitting on his elephant, *Airvata* with his consort *Shachi*. Behind *Shachi*, there is an attender holding a *Chhatra* (Umbrella). Indra wears *Kiritimukuta* and *Kundala* and *Shachi* wears a pair of *Kundala*. On the right hand of *Indra* there is a *Pasa* and a *Mace* on his left hand. The middle portion of the sculpture is eroded.

Another sculpture of *Shani* engraved on a sandstone dated back to 20th century is also found in Kalabari. In this sculpture *Shani* (Fig. 16) is sitting in a *padmasan* posture on a *sceptre* held by two of his consorts *Neelima* and *Damini* and they are in *virasan* posture. Here, *Shani* is depicted with two hands, in his right hand he holds a sword and in left a *naga pasa* (snake). He wears a *kiritmsukuta*, a pair of *kundal*, *upagriva*, *hikkasuttra*, *caru* and a *kativastra* (a dhoti). Both the consorts present in the sculpture most probably wear a *dhammula*.



Fig. 15: Sculpture of Indra

Sculpture of Varun

In Borkalika temple, a sculpture of *Varun* (Fig. 17) belonging to late medieval period is found. *Varuna* is the lord of Western Quarter. The *Vishnudharmottara*, the *Brihat-Samhita* and *Agni Purana* etc. give details about the iconography of *Varun*. In the Vedic era he was the supreme deity. In this sculpture *Varuna* wears a *kiritimukuta*, *caru*, *kundala* *upagriva*, *hara sutra*, *baju bandhana* and also wears a cloth. In his left hand he holds a *Kunt* and a *naga-pasa* in the right hand. His *vahana* or vehicle *makara* or crocodile is present and he is depicted with four legs. The whole sculpture is standing on a pedestal.

Daulaguri Dol and its sculptures

Daulaguri dol is situated at Barachuk village of Gohpur, Biswanath. It is situated on the bank of a pond, Dol Pokhuri. This Dol is situated near the Dakshinpat Satra at

Daulaguri in Kolabari. In 1758 during the reign of Ahom king Rajeswar Simha (brother of Khamseng Dolbondha Borgohain) built a Basudev temple with the bricks in this Satra. In the outer wall of the garbhagriha of *Daulaguri Dol* or *Basudev Dol*, thirteen sculptures of different deities are beautifully exhibited. Among them some are incarnations of Lord *Vishnu* and *Loka-palas* or *Dikpalas* and some other deities.



Fig. 16: Sculpture of Shani



Fig. 17: Sculpture of Varuna

The *Varaha* (Fig. 18), (59 × 45 cm) is the composite form of man and boar and is well executed in the outer walls of the *Daulaguri Dol*. Here, he is represented with his four hands. In his two left hands, he is holding a *Sakra* and a *Conch* and in the two hands of right side he holds a *padma* and the other one is not identifiable. As the sculpture is eroded it is not possible to say what he holds in his hands. His *kativastra* (a dhoti) extends up to the leg ankles. The sculpture of *Bamon* (Fig. 19), (57 × 33 cm) is well exhibited in the outer walls of the *garbhagriha* of *Daulaguri Dol*. In one hand he carries an umbrella and the other hand is not properly identified. Generally, he wears ear-ornaments and a deer-skin. He wears a lion-cloth to cover his body. *Parashurama* (Fig. 20) (56 × 38 cm) is the sixth incarnation of lord *Vishnu*. He was born as *Parashurama* for the purpose of exterminating the Kshatriya caste. In his right hand he holds a *Parasu* (Battle-axe) and also wears a *Jata-crown*. He also wears a cloth which looks like a *Dhoti* or it may be a deer-skin. An image is identified as *Ram* (Fig. 21) (56 cm × 37 cm) is in a straight standing posture. In his left hand he holds a *bow* and in his right hand he generally holds an *arrow*. But, the right hand of the sculpture is broken so it is not possible to identify what he was holding in his hand. He wears a *Kiritimukuta*, *Kundala* and in his neck, a *mala*. The sculpture of *Buddha* (Fig. 22) (53 × 38 cm), sitting in

padmasana posture in *namaskara* mudra is found on the outer wall of the temple. *Brahma* (Fig. 23) (59 × 42 cm) is beautifully engraved with his four heads with each of his head representing a sacred script. Here, he is sitting on a *swan* with his four arms, in his lower left hand he is holding a *pasa* and other three hands are eroded. *Brahma*



Fig. 18: Sculpture of Varaha



Fig. 19: Sculpture of Bamon



Fig. 20: Sculpture of Parashurama



Fig. 21: Sculpture of Rama



Fig. 22: Sculpture of Buddha



Fig. 23: Sculpture of Brahma



Fig. 24: Sculpture of Niruti



Fig. 25: Sculpture of Shani



Fig. 26: Sculpture of Kalki



Fig. 27: Unidentified sculpture



Fig. 28: Unidentified sculpture



Fig. 29: Unidentified sculpture



Fig. 30: Unidentified sculpture

wears a *kativastra* (a dhoti), which is generally made of antelope skin. An image of *Niruti* (figure 24) (70 × 35 cm) exhibited on the wall of the temple, seated on the shoulder of a man. He wears *Kiritimukuta* and *Kundala*. He carries *Danda* in his right hand, while his left hand is placed on the head of the man, upon which the deity is riding. Another sculpture of *Shani* (63 × 30 cm), (Fig. 25) sitting on a *crow*, wearing a *kundala* is found on the outer wall of the *Daulaguri Dol*. As the sculpture is eroded, so he is identified through his vehicle. Generally, he has two hands, in the right he holds a *danda* and left hand in *varada mudra*. A sculpture of *Kalki* (Fig. 26) (54 × 34 cm), the last incarnation of lord Vishnu is also present there, sitting on a horse and wearing a *kiritimukuta*. As the sculpture is eroded; it is difficult to describe the iconographic feature of the sculpture. He is identified as *Kalki* through his vehicle. There are also some other sculptures in outer walls of the dol (Fig. 27 (50 × 37 cm), 28 (60 × 40 cm), 29 (63 × 45 cm) 30 (58 × 38 cm) which are eroded and could not be identified.

Conclusion

Biswanath is rich in temple architecture. The ruins that are found in Biswanath area give information about the presence of stone-built temples. But later, during the Ahom period the stone temples were rebuilt by brick and lime mortar. In Biswanath area a broken temple with an octagonal shape, *Pancha ratha*, *Four Ratha* and *Sapta Ratha* structures are found. Among them the octagonal shape, which may represent the eight borders of Ahom empire, *Four Ratha* and *Sapta Ratha* are very much unique by their nature. Ahom temple architecture followed the *Ratha* style and *Rathas* are generally in odd numbers. But the Sibsagar monuments show even numbers of *Rathas*. During the field study the researcher has found a four *Ratha* (even numbers *Rathas*) temple structure in Biswanath.

Biswanath is famous for Shaivism and popularly known as *Gupta Kashi*. But the sculptures found in this region represent that Vaishnavism and Buddhism are also present there. The sculptures represent the development of art from pre-Ahom period to the late medieval period. In "*Buranjie Parasha Biswanath Prantar*" Gogoi describes Fig. no. 7 and 8 as a sculpture of Surya and Vishnu, but as both the figures were eroded so at present it is not possible to identify actually who they are. He also mentions about the presence of Saraswati and *Kubera* on the outer walls of the garbhagriha of *Daulaguri* or *Basudev Dol*. But after the iconographic analysis, the researcher was not able to find both the sculptures on the temple wall. He might consider Fig. no. 23 and 24 as *Saraswati* and *Kubera* but from iconographic point of view they are *Brahma* and *Niruti*. This study analyses the history of the temples and the iconographic feature of the sculptures. Each temple and iconography reflect the art of the contemporary times. But due to lack of conservation some sculptures are eroded and some are not in a good condition.

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