



CACHARI MONUMENTS

(In connection with the world heritage week from 19th-25th Nov, 2003)



Monolith, Dimapur (c. 15 century)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA
GUWAHATI CIRCLE



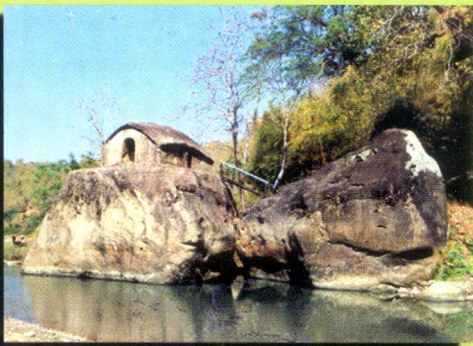
*Baradwari, Khaspur
(18th century)*

India possesses magnificent monuments of great architectural merit. Preservation of cultural heritage is utmost important for the mankind. The World Heritage Committee under the aegis of UNESCO has been

protecting natural and cultural heritage since 1972 which have exceptional value and preservation of those are concern for the mankind. India has listed seventeen cultural and six natural sites in the list of World Heritage. Celebration of the world heritage week is an attempt to create an awareness among the masses about preservation and protection of our heritage.

The northeast region of India is a land of various ethnic races living in the region since time immemorial. It is a region represented by the beauties, greeneries, myths, legends and mysticism. Various dynasties had ruled in the historical period since the time of Varmanas of Kamrupa. In the late medieval period, however, the Cacharis (Kacharis), a Tibeto-Burman group had ruled in some parts of the valleys of Barak and Brahmaputra. Archaeological remains spread in the region attest towards that. The Cacharis had played an important role in the medieval history of Assam. They had constructed several temples, forts and megalithic monuments which reflects some architectural significance in the cultural history of the land.

Historical records state that during the fifteen century, the Cacharis settled their capital on the bank of the Dhansiri river at Dimapur in Nagaland. The archaeological remains at the site shows that the Kacharies attained the



*Monolithic hut, Maibong
(17th century)*



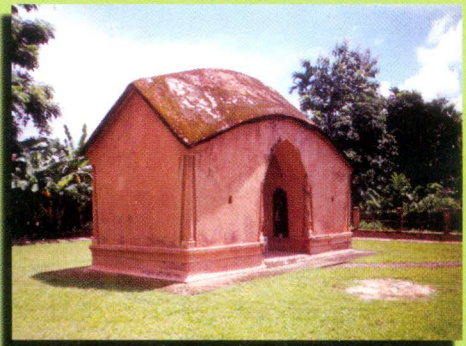
*Snan Mandir, Khaspur
(18th century)*

skill in sculptural works and in town planning of the fortified complex. The remains exhibit a gateway of the fortified city with pointed arches, carved battlements, octagonal turrets etc. can be assigned to fifteenth century AD. Among other remains are the monolithic carved

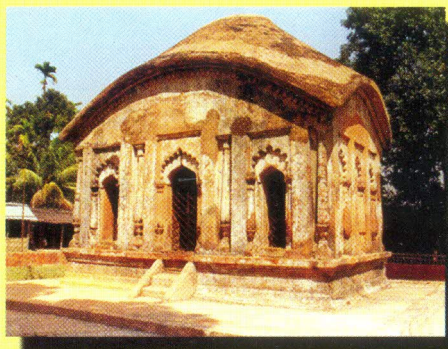
pillars lying within the complex. One group of carved pillars are ornamented in the pattern of the chessman columns and the others are arranged in 'V' shaped columns. The pillars are beautifully carved with animal motifs, rosette designs including geometrical and floral carvings. Similar group of monolithic pillars can also be seen in the locality of Kasomari Pathar in the Golaghat district of Assam. The carved pillars are raised in two rows and consist of thirty five columns. The tradition for raising these monolithic columns might be in vogue since long among the ethnic tribes of the region which were erected as memorial pillars or to mark any important occasion.

In 1526, when the Ahoms driven of the Cacharis from Dimapur, they entered into the hilly region of the North Cachar Hills district of Assam and settled the capital at Maibong. The fortified complex is mostly obliterated now except a monolithic hut hewn out in a big boulder on the Mahur river is survived against the odd vagaries of nature. Inscriptions inscribed in wall stones suggest that the temple was dedicated to the Goddess 'Ranachandi' by the Cachari king Haris Chandra in 1721 AD. The notable structural features of the monolithic temple is the *do-chala* roof with curvilinear eaves shows the influence of Bengal's architecture.

It is believed that in the middle of the second half of the eighteenth



*Singha dwar, Khaspur
(18th century)*



*Ranachandi temple, Khaspur
(18th century)*

century, the Cacharis had established their capital at Khaspur in the Barak valley. The fertile plains of the Barak had attracted many habitations since time immemorial. The earliest known epigraphical record shows that the Rajas of Tripura had granted land grants to

Brahmanas in *Panchakhanda* area. The valley was referred to 'Chandrapuri Visaya' in the Nidhanpur copper plate grant of Bhaskar Varman of Kamarupa in 7th century AD. It throws light on the cultural activities of the people and narrated about the existence of temples but none of such structures are exist now. However, in the valley some temples of brick masonry of the Cachari dynasty of late medieval period can be seen. It is believed that the king Haris Chandra Narayan had built a Siva temple at Khaspur in *saka* 1683 corresponding to AD 1771 and built also a palace at the locality. The monuments standing at the site are a gateway popularly known as Singha dwar, Baradwari, Snan Mandir and temples of Ranachandi. Made of brick masonry, the structures are alike in external decorations and the influence of *chala* architecture of Bengal can be clearly noticed. Most of the temples are smaller structures with *chala* roofs are having tapered pilasters at the corners. The door openings are arch shaped. The temple walls are provided with depressions. The use of lattice patterns are also visible in some of the structures. 'Baradwari' is a work of brick masonry, built in double storyed and possesses twelve openings. Another notable structure is the Snan Mandir, probably used for sacred bathing of the deity. The small structure is unique in appearance and style. The structure is square on plan (2.90 x 2.90)m



*Carved Monoliths, Kasomari Pathar
(c. 15th century)*

have four openings on four directions and topped by a domical finial. Several such temple structures with *chala* coverings are found in the Bihara-Brahmangaon and Sonai localities in the valley.

The temple architecture of the Cacharis does not appear innovative in style. The temple remains of Maibong, Khaspur, Bihara localities show the similar pattern with *chala* roofs, curvilinear eaves and pilasters at the corners with single small cell consisting the sanctum. The architectural features do not reflect any evolutionary trend. It may be all probable that the Cachari rulers might had brought the skilled artisans who possessed the mastery over the work on brick masonry with *chala* shaped huts and most probably the artisans might had brought from Bengal. However, an attempt had been made to evolve a new style in later period. The evidences can be noticed in the Siva Mandir and Nandi Mandir at Sonai in the Cachar district of Assam. The temples are said to be built during the reign of Krishna Chandra (AD 1780 – 1813). The shrines are square on plan contain some elongated *devokosthas* and attached with rectangular insets in composite ground plans. The *sikharas* of the temples are pyramidal in shape. The structures are neither similar with those found in the Maibong and Khaspur locality nor with the temple architecture of the Brahmaputra valley. The architectural style which appeared in the later period of the Cachari rulers, however, could not survived for longer time.



‘The Archaeological monuments in India are for variety, extent, completeness and beauty unsurpassed, perhaps unequalled in the world’.

(Alexander Cunningham 1861)

MAP SHOWING THE CENTRALLY PROTECTED SITES OF CACHARI RUINS



● Archaeological sites

Not to scale

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