



Journal of Archaeological Studies in India

Vol. 2, No. 1, 2022, pp. 1-25
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URL: <http://arfjournals.com/jasi>

<https://doi.org/10.47509/JASI.2022.v02i01.01>

Vestiges of the Thoban Matha and Temples

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Abstract: A large number of sculptures and temples' remains are scattered, in varied stages of preservation, round the village of Thoban. They are distributed in different localities and categorised in different groups, such as the temples of the Jaina group, Kuti group, temples of the village area, Mahadevaghata group, Sita-ki-madhia group, and Hanumanagarhi. Apart from the controversies regarding their builders, epigraphic evidence settles the great role that was played by the later-Pratihara rulers of Chanderi in their constructions. With the characteristic features of art and architecture the remains also provide a glimpse of the rich cultural heritage of the region and time to which they belonged (ninth to eleventh centuries). Recently, Archaeological Survey of India begins the conservation and renovation work of the Thoban temples and first took up the Kuti group.

Keywords: Mahadevaghata, Matha, Sculpture, Sita-ki-madhia, Temple, Thoban, Vestiges.

Received : 05 January 2022

Revised : 09 February 2022

Accepted : 11 February 2022

Published : 29 June 2022

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Singh, A.K. 2022. Vestiges of the Thoban Matha and Temples. *Journal of Archaeological Studies in India*, 2: 1, pp. 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.47509/JASI.2022.v02i01.01>

Introduction

Thoban (also called Thobon, Thobaun, Thubon, and Thubaun) is a small village situated on the left bank of the river Orr (Urvashi), 25 kilometre to the east of Chanderi in Ashoknagar District of Madhya Pradesh. Presently, the place is famous for a number of Jaina temples within a compound. These temples have been renovated heavily though the old *adhishtana* of a Shantinatha temple exists with some sculptures and architectural fragments that are fixed in its newly constructed walls. Apart from the Jaina temples, there are numerous Vaishnava and Shaiva temples in the low valley of the nearby jungle. It is not easy to discuss all the temples and other artefacts of Thoban here, so the present paper talk over the matha and temples of Sita-ki-madhia or Sitamarhi and remains of Mahadevaghata sites along with a few sculptures of Hanumanagarhi. They are generally in a ruined condition, may be dated between ninth to eleventh centuries.



Figure 1: Google map showing temples sites at Thoban, Ashoknagar

In contradiction to the general belief that the matha and temples of Thoban, along with of the neighbouring area like Kadwaha, were built under the patronage of Kachchhapaghatas, in reality these were constructed by the support of later Pratihara rulers. The findings of the later Pratihara inscriptions from Siyadoni (Jhansi District), Chanderi, Thoban, Kadwaha (Ashoknagar District) and Pacharai (Shivpuri District) confirms their rule over the entire region from the ninth to the thirteenth century CE (Singh 2010:69-81). The fragmentary Kadwaha inscription (Mirashi and Shastri 1968:117-124; Singh 2010:71-73) mentions a *bhupa* (prince) named Gobhata of the later Pratihara family who raided Kadwaha with his army of elephants sometimes in the last quarter of the ninth century in which possibly the local ruler (Chalukya) suddenly died in the counteraction. The demised king was a beloved of the Shaivacharya Dharmashiva of Kadwaha matha. Knowing the death of the ruler of the place, the Shaivacharya was so furious that he took up arms, joined battle and fought as if he indeed was Shiva-Tripurantaka on earth. He conquered the whole army of Gobhata by means of a bow and arrows acquired by his own miraculous power, but eventually lost his life in the encounter (Mirashi and Shastri 1968:123, verses 15-18; Singh 2010:71-72). This is an indicative of the expansion of the later Pratihara domains in the region. Possibly, to maintain the peace and harmony in the region later on Harirajadeva, entitled as *nripachakravartin*, travelled to Kadwaha and received *diksha* (initiation) from a Shaivacharya (successor of Dharmashiva, name lost). The king offered a gift of elephants to him in return, however, the acharya preferred to settle for a gift of villages instead (Mirashi and Shastri 1968:124, verses 22-32). One of the inscriptions of Harirajadeva is known from Thoban village dated VS 1055 (998 CE). It was discovered in 1970 CE by C.B. Trivedi, who found inscribed slab built into the outer wall of the house of Ram Ratana Kirar, which originally belonged to the ruins of an old temple, and might be of the Mahadevaghata area. The inscription opens with homage to the deity Keshava, praises lord Vishnu, and record the construction of a temple of Janardana-Vasudeva by Keshava of the brahmana Garga family, in VS 1055 when the famous Pratihara king Hariraja was ruling over the earth. The supremacy of the powerful ruler Hariraja refers in the inscription as ‘to have beheld kings equally Shri Harsha and Dhanga as his *karada* (subordinates) (Jain and Trivedi 1986:105-108; Singh 2010:70-71).

The epigraphical evidences and remains of the matha, temples, water-bodies along with other constructions in the territory of the later Pratiharas compliments them as a great patroniser of art, architecture, religious believes, and so on. Constructions of Shaiva, Vaishnava and Jaina temples side by side characterises the co-ordination and harmony in the communities of Thoban during the medieval period.

Shaivite Matha at Sita-ki-Madhia

The site (24° 64' N, 77° 99' E) of Sita-ki-Madhia has group of temples, a nearby matha, and water-bodies, all in highly decayed state, located about two kilometres south of the village Thoban, and approachable by a dirt road. It appears the site was a centre of Shaivite religious practices in the ninth-eleventh centuries. The roofless rectangular structure near the temples known as Sita-ki-Madhia could have represented a stone-built but unpretentious Shaivite *vasati* (dwelling) or matha.

The epigraphic record tells the construction of a matha at Budhi Chanderi and theorise about a matha at Thoban. The Budhi Chanderi inscription mentions ascetic Dharmashambu and his three successors, of whom name of the first ascetic is unknown who was succeeded by Prabodhashiva (different from Chandrehe's homonymous ascetic) and Vinamuni. The ascetic Dharmashambu of the Budhi Chanderi inscription (Misra 2018:48-49, Singh 2010:73-74) and Dharmashiva, the warrior monk, of the Kadwaha inscription might be the same person. Prabodhashiva (alias Sampannakama) of the Budhi Chanderi inscription seems to have descended from Dharmashambhu (same as Dharmashiva) of Kadwaha. He had two other *munis* preceding him, but the names of both the ascetics are not find mentions in the epigraphs of Kadwaha and Budhi Chanderi. Significantly, the Budhi Chanderi inscription speaks about Prabodhashiva retreat, who built a vast lofty *ashrama* in 1042 CE (Singh 2010:73-74, verse 10). This *ashrama* was built close to a river named Girija-sapatnya which may denote the river Orr (Urvashi) that flows close to Budhi Chanderi (Misra 2018:124). Thus, Prabodhashiva, the second one of these three *munis*, settled in an *ashrama* that he got built near Budhi Chanderi on the bank of river Orr. The matha of Thoban, though not recorded in the inscription, but existent nevertheless at the Sita-ki-Madhia with a number of *mandapika* shrines and temples. In view of R.N. Misra (2018:124) the *munis* of the Budhi Chanderi record perhaps occupied a *vasasthana* or *vasati* (dwelling) in Thoban matha.

The ruins of *vasati* or matha (8.40 x 4.93 m) is now roofless and contains only the walls and renovated entrance of 1.50 m wide (**Plate 1**). The heavy walls of the structure are constructed with massive stone boulders and the width of the entrance wall is 1.28 m. Its rooftop and other portions are now missing. The existing portion of the doorway contains *ratna-shakha* and *rupa-shakha*, with other plain *shakhas*. The matha at Thoban replicates some of the features of the larger mathas of Kadwaha, Surwaya and Ranod, such as its walls made of huge stone blocks like those on the external wall of other mathas; simple and austere form without decoration; and an accompanying Shiva temple that is now ruined in Thoban. Architecturally, matha or *vasati* is a low rectangular structure with a sculpted doorway which is a later addition. The inner side floor on one end comprises an evenly made square depression, may be an altar. It also has slabs ubiquitously abutted to its inner walls on all the sides, which could have been used for sitting or for holding the belongings of peripatetic ascetics (Misra 2018:125). In sum, this rectangular structure seems to be a part of Sita-ki-Madhia temples complex, which was used as a *vasati* (dwelling place or one for overnight dwelling), *siddha-sthana* or *tapa-sthana* (abode of *siddhas* that for penance). It also appears that the establishments at Thoban and Chanderi grew up as offshoots of the Kadwaha-matha.

General Features of the Thoban Temples

The temples of Thoban, though in highly decayed state, represents the varied features of art and architecture. They are generally smaller in size, except two (THB 1 A and THB 5 D) which are bigger and have *garbhagriha*, *antarala*, *sabha-mandapa* and *mukha-mandapa*. On plan, the majority of the temples of Thoban are of *pancharatha* type, consists of a *garbhagriha*, an *antarala* and a *mukha-mandapa* supported on two front pillars. In addition to this some temples developed new features in the *mandapa* that rests on four pillars and having lateral transepts with *kakshasana*-balconies. In case of the new addition generally half-pillars are used that stand on the *kakshasana* top. The pillars are mostly capped by *khura-chhadya* that supports a few plain or adorned beams on which ceiling rest. In most of the cases, the ceiling is *samatala* formed with a single flat block of stone, and occasionally carved with a *padma* medallion. The *adhishtana* ordinarily consists of *khura*, *kumbha*, *kalasha* and *kapotika* mouldings while in due course of time with decorative carvings the pilastered and pedimented niches with the images of deities take place on it, as in the Shiva temple (THB 1 A) at Sita-ki-Madhia. In a few temples some more mouldings added in *adhishtana* portion like the *gajathara* in a ruined temple of Mahadevaghata built on a high *jagati*. The *adhishtana* supports *jangha* or wall of a temple which is surmounted by the *varandika* portion. The *varandika* portion above the *jangha* consists of a set of mouldings, usually having *kapotika*, *grasa-pattika* and *tula-pitha* to serve as the base of the *shikhara*. In general, the *shikhara* of all the temples are fallen down and where continues have only inner core deprived of face stones. The *jangha* consists of a central *bhadra*, two *pratirathas* and two *karnas* on each facade and sometimes divided in two registers by a decorative *pattika*. The upper end of the *jangha* sometimes carved with *pushpa-mala* motif in which the whole space of each loop is filled by a floral design. The *jangha* carry the images of divinities and Dikpalas. The Ashta-dikpalas, namely Indra, Agni, Yama, Nirriti, Varuna, Vayu, Kubera and Ishana, are shown on some of the temples for whom a particular direction or angle of the temple is allotted. Of them, Indra is the guardian of east, Yama of south, Varuna of west and Kubera of north direction while Agni of south-east, Nirriti of south-west, Vayu of north-west, and Ishana of north-east angular direction. They are generally represented in *tribhanga* and four-armed forms with their mount and respective attributes.

The *garbhagriha* is mostly plain and now empty, entered through a doorway that consists of various architectural members like *udumbara*, *shakhas* above the panels of the river goddesses, lintels, etc. *Udumbara* contains *mandaraka* at the centre flanked on each side by *Udadhikumara* holding *purna-kumbha* in hand and *simhokranta-gaja*. Alternatively, *mandaraka* is replaced by a goddess figure flanked by other human figures. The doorjambs are decorated with multiple *dwara-shakhas*, generally numbering four or five over the panels of the river-goddesses. The first in the inner side is the *patra-shakha* carved with a foliage pattern or *ratna-shakha*; the next is the *naga-shakha* which lower part terminates into a prominent bust of Naga in *namaskara-mudra* over the river-goddess on each side. The third *shakha* is either *mithuna* or *rupa-shakha*. In case of *chatuh-shakha* doorjamb fourth is *bahya-shakha* carved with *padma-lata* or *padma-patra* motif but in the case of *pancha-shakha* fourth is *stambha-shakha* and fifth *bahya-shakha* as in the case of temple THB 1 A. In some temples *bahya-shakha* extended on the sides of the doorway to encompass the lintel. Some of the doorway of the *mandapika* shrines of Sita-ki-Madhia are carved with only the image of Ganesha on the *lalata* of lintel and in a few cases partial *naga-shakha* is also engraved. Mostly the lintel carry four-armed Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva in *lalitasana* or *tribhanga* along with Navagrahas and from time to time with Saptamatrikas in the recess. In most of the cases their *vahanas* (mounts) are depicted in the lower portion. The *lalata-bimba* on a number of temples depicts four-armed Vishnu holding *varada*, *shankha*, *chakra* and *gada*, mostly seated on his mount

Garuda. The *lalitasana* or *tribhanga* four-armed Shiva displays on the *lalata* as well on the terminal, holds *varada*, *trishula*, *sarpa* and *kamandalu*. The four-armed Brahma represents only on terminal, holds *varada*, *shruka*, *pustaka* and *kamandalu*. In a few examples, they are displayed with their consorts. The Navagrahas take place in the recess of the lintel, of them Surya holding *sanala-kamala* in both hands placed near the Brahma and occupying first position in the planets of the Navagrahas and follows by Soma, Bhauma or Mangala, Budha, Brihaspati, Shukra, Shani, Rahu and Ketu. Of these, Rahu could be identified with his hands in *anjali* or *tarpana-mudra*. Sapta-matrikas or seven mother-goddesses, mostly carved in upper panel of the lintel recess, are the female counterparts of seven major gods, representing Brahmani, Maheshvari, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Aindri, and Chamunda. They are usually accompanied by Virabhadra (form of Shiva) and Ganesha displayed on either end.

Sita-ki-Madhia Temples Complex

There are vestiges of fourteen temples within a complex and one standing separately, about 500 m away from the matha. The complex incorporates a big temple dedicated to lord Shiva at the centre surrounded by thirteen smaller size temples and *mandapika* shrines or Kutis generally dedicated to Shiva and a few to Vishnu. The *mandapa* of the temples have *kakshasana* adorned with decorated pilasters designs and figures of the deities, Dikpalas and Apsaras in varied forms. The smaller shrines have generally plain *shakhas* with Ganesha on the *lalata*. The sculptures, especially of the females, represents them in slender, emaciated form. The *garbhagrihas* are mostly empty so the dedication of the temple to a particular deity is conjectured purely on the basis of the figure on *lalatabimba*.

Shiva Temple (THB 1 A)

This *pancharatha* type of temple faces to west is the largest temple (12.40 x 7.40 m) of the group (**Plate 2**). On plan, it comprises *garbhagriha* (1.72 x 2.00 m), *antarala* (1.40 x 1.04 m), *sabha-mandapa* (4.20 x 7.22 m) and *mukha-mandapa* (3.22 x 2.42 m). Of the *sikhara*, the face-stones have fallen down and only its skeleton exist. Its *adhishtana* is covered under the fragmented sculptures and architectural pieces. The *garbhagriha* of the temple is installed with a Shivalinga. The ceiling is decked with full blown *padma* medallion in relief. The doorway (1.44 x 0.68 m) contains *udumbara*, doorjamb and lintel. *Udumbara* have *lalitasana* four-armed goddess at the centre flanked by *Udadhikumara* carrying *purna-kumbha* seated on *Makara* and *Simhakranta-gaja* on each side. The *pedya* carry river goddesses *Ganga* and *Yamuna* with *parikara-devi*, *Shaiva Dwarapala*, *Chamaradharini*, *Naga* in *namaskara-mudra* and others. The *pancha-shakha* doorjamb includes *patra-shakha*, *padma-shakha*, *naga-shakha*, *stambha-shakha* and *bahya-shakha* carved with *padma* motif. The lintel depicts *lalitasana* four-armed Shiva on the *lalata*, Brahma and Vishnu on the terminals. The Navagrahas are shown in the recess and the architrave above the lintel displays *Parvati* at the centre flanked by *Brahmani* and *Vaishnavi* with other *Matrikas* in between (**Plate 3**). The ceiling of the *antarala* is carved with *padma* medallions that rests on six pillars. The pillars carry *Ganesha* and *Shaiva-ganas* on lower portions. The *sabha-mandapa* has *kakshasana* with *chhadya* on two sides and is preceded by *mukha-mandapa* that contains a gigantic image of *Nandi* (1.12 x 0.47 m) facing to the *garbhagriha* and adorned with designed *udarabandha* knotted on the back. On its front a male figure is shown in *pratyaldha* bearing *modakas* in a basket on his head. The *mandapa* of the temple rests on adorned beams placed over four decorated *mishraka* pillars and sixteen pilasters. On the inner wall of *mandapa* niched Brahma and Brahmani are displayed adorned with beautiful dress and jewellery. The four-armed Brahma is shown in *tribhanga* and holds *varada-mudra*, *shruka*, *pustaka* and *kamandalu* in hands. The *tribhanga*

four-armed Brahmani carry *varada-mudra*, *shruka*, *pustaka* and *kamandalu* in hands. The ascetics are engaged in discourse (**Plate 4**). The outer portion of the temple is mostly damaged however the images of Brahma, Shiva, Surya, along with Dikpalas and Apsaras are depicted in different poses on the outer wall of the temple. The four-armed Varuna is shown on the west with mount *makara* but his hands and head are mutilated. The north-west *jangha* bears four-armed Vayu with mount stag and holds *varada*, staff, banner, and *kamandalu* in hands. On its east four-armed Brahma is represented with *varada*, *shruka*, *pustaka* and *kamandalu*. The walls of the *kakshasana* carry *tribhanga* Apsaras with one *katyavalambita* and other lifted hand that holds pot, *padma* or other objects, besides a moustache naked male carry a scull-cup in lifted left hand and a dagger in the right; a male playing music on flute; and a dancing female figure. The *adhishtana* niche bears *lalitasana* Parvati on lion holding *varada*, *trishula*, *sanala-kamala* and *kamandalu*. The north-east *jangha* depicts *tribhanga* Brahma holding *varada*, *shruka*, *pustaka* and *kamandalu*. The niched Surya on the east *adhishtana* is shown in *utkutikasana*, holds *sanala-kamala* in both lifted hands. The bhadra niche on the south depicts four-armed Nataraja with Nandi, holds *trishula* and *khatvanga* in two hands while others in *nritya-mudra*. The niche on *adhishtana* bears four-armed *lalitasana* Ganesha. On south-east a *tribhanga* bearded male holds a *danda* and to its side a *tribhanga* Chamunda holds scull-cup in the lifted left hand and dagger in the right. The *tribhanga* Apsaras on the south *kakshasana* wall represents in varied form, such as holding pot, *pustaka*, *darpana*, *padma* while a Sadyojata squeezing her wet hairs by right hand. The south-west portion bears *tribhanga* Nrityangana with right hand over the head and next *tribhanga* figure holds an object in left hand.

Vishnu Temple

The *garbhagriha* of the west facing temple of Vishnu is damaged but *mandapa* (2.72 x 2.70 m) with *garbhagriha* doorway is survived. The *samatala* plain ceiling of the *mandapa* rests on decorated beams placed over two pillars and two pilasters. Three sides of the *mandapa* is surrounded by 86 cm high *kakshasana* wall encompassed by *ratna* and *padma-pattika*. The outer wall of the *kakshasana* portrays pilasters decked with *ghata-palava* and the figures of *tribhanga* Apsaras bearing *kalasha* or other objects in one hand and other *katyavalambita*, female dancers (**Plate 5**), as well as the figures of four-armed Dikpalas with respective attributes, such as Nirriti is shown with *katri*, *khadga*, *khetaka* and *ari-mastaka* on the south-west. The *garbhagriha* is damaged but its doorway (1.50 x 0.73 m) survives. Udumbara contains *mandaraka* at the centre flanked by *kirtimukha* and *simhakranta-gaja* on either side. The *pedya* depicts on each side four-arm Vaishnava Dwarapala in niches. The figures on the left holds *gada* in lower right, *chakra* in upper right, *shankha* in upper left, *padma* in lower left hands and flanked by Chamaradharini, a male figure with cross-legs and Naga in *namaskara-mudra*. The Vaishnava Dwarapala on the right carry *gada* in lower right, *padma* in upper right, *chakra* in upper left and *shankha* in lower left hands and on the outer portion a female figure is shown with left *katyavalambita* and carrying *kalasha* in right lifted hand. Chatuh-shakha door-jamb comprises *ratna-shakha*, *naga-shakha*, *mithuna-shakha* and plain *bahya-shakha*. On the *lalata* of lintel *tribhanga* four-armed Vishnu is shown with mount Garuda standing in *namaskara-mudra*. The terminals display four-armed *tribhanga* Brahma with mount Hamsa and Shiva with mount Nandi. In the recess Navagrahas are shown in *tribhanga*.

Another Vishnu Temple

On the side of the bigger Shiva temple there is a remains of Vishnu temple. On plan it consists *garbhagriha* and *mandapa*, of which *garbhagriha* (2.43 x 2.06 m) is now damaged but its doorway

(1.49 x 0.72 m) survive. The *mandapa* stands on usual *adhishtana*, comprises *kakshasana*, two pillars and two pilasters topped by decorated beams to support the ceiling. Its outer size measures 5.70 x 2.65 m. The *samatala* ceiling of the *mandapa* (2.00 x 2.60 m) is plain rests on beams carved with *padma*, *ratna* and other motifs. Between the two pillars and pilasters of the *mandapa* there is a provision of *kakshasana* on both the sides. The portion of *adhishtana* is now buried under the fragments of temples. Udumbara is hidden with the debris that possibly depicts *mandaraka* at the centre flanked by *kirtimukha* and Simhkranta-gaja on each side. *Pedya* has on left *tribhanga* Vaishnava Dwarapala with *varada*, *shankha*, *chakra* and *gada* along with Chamaradharini, Naga in *namaskara-mudra*, a male attendant with cross-legs while that on the right holds *gada*, *chakra*, *padma* and *shankha* with Chamaradharini, and a the female figure on the corner holds pot in lifted right hand. The *doorjamb* is of *pancha-shakha* type carved with *ratna*, *naga*, *rupa*, plain and *ratna-shakha* (**Plate 6**). The lintel of the doorway depicts *tribhanga* four-armed Vishnu on *lalata*, Brahma, Shiva on terminals, and Navagrahas in the recess.

Shiva Temple

The east facing damaged Shiva temple measures 5.90 x 2.52 m, comprises *garbhagriha* (2.58 x 2.00), *mandapa* (2.30 x 2.00), and doorway (1.51 x 0.71). On usual *adhishtana* the wall of the temple stands that is divided in two portions by *ratna-pattika*. Both portions of the wall are carved with pilasters motifs engraved with *ghata-pallava* designs along with niched sculpture on the lower and *udgama* on the upper registers. The *mandapa* niche on the south has *lalitasana* Ganesha. Udumbara bears *mandaraka* flanked by *kirtimukha* and Simhkranta-gaja. The *pedya* on the left contains Shaiva Dwarapala holding *varada*, *trishula*, *sarpa* and *kamandalu* flanked by attendants and Naga in *namaskara-mudra* while Dwarapala on the right holds *akshamala*, *damaru*, scull-cup and *kamandalu*. The lintel of the doorway carry four-armed Nataraja on *lalata* with *trishula* and *khatvanga* in two hands while others in *nritya-mudra*; *tribhanga* and four-armed Brahma and Vishnu are shown on terminals with Navagrahas in the recess (**Plate 7**). The *chatuh-shakha* doorjamb has *ratna*, Naga, *rupa-shakha* having deities and *mithuna*, and plain *bahya-shakha*.

Shiva Temple (THB 1 D)

The temple is damaged and only its two walls and some portions of the *garbhagriha* (2.30 x 1.28 m) doorway survives. Two-arm *lalitasana* Ganesha is shown on *lalata*, whose trunk turns to left on *modaka-patra* holds in left hand. Its doorjamb contains *naga-shakha* and *ratna-shakha* between plain *shakhas*. The *pedya* and *udumbara* left uncarved (**Plate 8**).

Shaivite Temples and Mandapika shrines or Kutis

There are some more ruined Shiva temples on the site. One such temple faces east and located on the south of the main Shiva temple. It stands on usual *adhishtana* (4.05 x 2.43 m) have *garbhagriha* (1.90 x 1.85 m) and *mandapa* with a doorway (1.39 x 0.71). The walls of the temple stands on low *adhishtana*. The *jangha* portion is carved with pilasters motif and topped by *varandika* having mouldings decked with *pushpa-mala*, plain and *ratna* designs. The *garbhagriha* is empty and current doorway is plain but Shaiva Dwarapala on the side of pilaster offers a possibility of its being a temple of Shiva (**Plate 9**). Some of the *mandapika* shrines (2.15 x 1.21 m) or Kutis on the south and south-east of the main Shiva temple are in damaged condition, of which only a few walls and ceiling stones survive. In most of the cases they bear *lalitasana* four-armed Ganesha on the *lalata* of lintel holding tooth, *parashu*, and *modaka-patra* in three hands while fourth one in *varada-mudra*.

Ruins of Shiva Temples

By the side of the matha there are architectural fragments lying loose on the *adhishtana*. The remains of the plinths indicate a possibility of at least three temples in a row. The presence of Nandi in the *mandapa* of a ruined temple (5.50 x 2.70 m) adjoining to the matha and faces east points out a possibility of the association of the concerned Shiva temple with the matha or *vasati* in the beginning. The Nandi seated in the *mandapa* looking towards *garbhagriha*.

Vishnu Temple (THB 1 J)

About half a kilometre away from the matha stands a temple, constructed on usual *adhishtana*. The supporting walls are engraved with *bhadra* pillar designs and having a niched sculptures. Only the doorway (1.14 x 0.57 m), left wall, *bhadra* portion of back wall and plain flat ceiling of the *garbhagriha* (1.64 x 1.55 m) are partially survive. The flat ceiling of the *mandapa* is lying down in front of the doorway. The *varandika* on the walls have *ratna-pattika*, *grasa-pattika* and *tula-pitha* along with other mouldings. Udumbara comprises *mandaraka* at the centre flanked by Udadhikumara holding *purna-kumbha* seated on Makara, and Simhakranta-gaja. The first *shakha* of the *chatuh-shakha* doorjamb became obliterated seems to be *ratna-shakha* and others are *naga-shakha*, *mithuna-shakha* and *bahya-shakha* engraved with *padma* motif. The *pedya* carry *tribhanga* river goddesses with *paricharikas* and Nagas. The lintel bears Garudasana Vishnu on the *lalata*, Brahma and Shiva on the terminals, and Vidyadharas in the recess. The decorated *chandrashila* in front of the *garbhagriha* is engraved with *kirtimukha* encircled by *ratna-pattika*. The *bhadra* niched sculpture on the back contains Surya holding *sanala-kamala* and shown seated on chariot pulled out by seven horses. The *bhadra* niche on the left carry *lalitasana* four-armed Ganesha with consort. Riddhi is shown seated on the left bend leg of Ganesha (Plate 10). The *jangha* of the right portion of temple is missing.

Hanumanagarhi Sculptures

The ruins of the *adhishtana* and other architectural fragments at Hanumanagarhi (24° 65' N, 77° 99' E) designates a possibility of the existence of more than two temples at the site of which one is dedicated to Vishnu and other possibly to Shiva. A fragmentary lintel carry Garudasana Vishnu on the *lalata* and *tribhanga* Shiva on the right terminal. Of the recess in two registers, lower one contains Navagrahas while upper bears Parvati and Saraswati with devotees. The left portion of the stone containing the figure of Brahma is now damaged. A niched sculpture lying loose comprises *lalitasana* Shiva holding *varada*, *trishula*, *sarpa*, and *kamandalu* in hands. Another fragmentary sculpture depicts a beautiful *tribhanga* female figure with a female attendant. Of the two damaged sculptures, one represents *samapada* four-armed Vaishnavi holds *gada* and *chakra* in upper hands while other hands are mutilated. The other headless figure in *samapada* is shown in *namaskara-mudra*. Shivalinga on *jaladhari* is now put on a high platform. Another sculpture of *tribhanga* four-armed Parvati represents her with mount lion and holding *padma* and *kamandalu*. A *pithika* of image comprises the figure of Garuda on front. A fragmentary torso may be of Ganesha, identified on the basis of *sarpa-yanjopavita* and pot-bellied. Other two sculptures are of Shiva-Parvati and *tribhanga* four-armed *lambodara* Ganesha (Plate 11). Shiva and Parvati are shown playing *chausara* or dice game. In accordance to the mythology Narada witnessed the game, in which Parvati lost the first game, became angry and furious with laughing of Shiva and Narada, play another game and won it. After winning the game Parvati tease him by laughing and also refused to play another game. The sculpture of Hanumanagarhi represents the first game in which Shiva won and laughing on Parvati with Narada. Narada is shown behind Shiva with laughing face. Parvati seated on the left bend leg of Shiva and looking him with her

tilted angry and uncompromising face. The dice board rests on the hands of a Gana and horns of the Nandi while lion, the mount of Parvati, excitedly looking to the faces of Shiva and Parvati.

Mahadevaghata Temples Complex

The site (24°66' N, 77°99 E) contains a large number of temples, mostly in ruined condition (**Plate 12**), documented here from east to west. Like the Sita-ki-Madhia group, here also one temple is bigger in size having *garbhagriha*, *antarala*, *sabha-mandapa* and *mukha-mandapa*. Other temples consists of *garbhagriha*, *antarala* and *mandapa*, of which mostly either *garbhagriha* or *mandapa* with *garbhagriha* doorway stands in diverse state of preservation. The *garbhagriha* are mostly empty or planted later on with one or two *pithikas* of images, so the dedication of the temple to a particular deity is conjectured purely on the basis of the figure on *lalatabimba*.

Ruins of a Vishnu Temple

The ruins of the first temple indicates its grandness that stands on a high *jagati*. The peculiarity of the temple is its *adhishtana* adorned with floral, *grasa-pattika* and other decorated *pattika*, especially the provision of *gajathara*. At present, two carved stones put on the *gajathara* are associated with Vashnavism. One of the stone depicts a Varahi while other represents various incarnations of Vishnu, as Matsya, *pratyaldha* four-armed Bhu-Varaha, *tribhanga chhatradhari* Vamana, Nrisimha along with others (**Plate 13**). Another stone on the *adhishtana* depicts *lalitasana* Shiva with mount Nandi holding *trishula* and *sarpa* in upper both hands. Plausibly, it was the temple of Janardana-Vasudeva referred in the Thoban inscription of the time of later Pratihara ruler Hariraja and was constructed by a brahmana of Garga family, named Keshava in VS 1055 (998 CE) and from this site the ancestor of Ram Ratan Kirar carry out the inscribed stone slab and fixed it on the outer wall of his house in the village. The inscription begins with homage to the deity Keshava and in the opening four verses admire Vishnu (Jain and Trivedi 1986: 105-108).

Temple (THB 4 E)

The east facing temple stands on a very high *jagati* supporting an *adhishtana* (3.60 x 1.76 m) that is surrounded by the fragments of temple, including the *shikhara* portions (Plate 14). Only the *garbhagriha* and *antarala* (2.96 x 1.25 m) of the temple preserves with a highly ornamented *chandrashila*. The *garbhagriha* has an image *pithika* of 1.47 m long, 76 cm width and 50 cm high that contains Garuda figures on the front. The decorated beams are carved with *tala-patra*, *ardha-ratna*, foliage and other motifs supports the flat plain ceiling and rests on ornamented *bhadra* pilasters. The pilasters of *bhadra* type is decorated with *ghata-pallava*, *kirtimukha*, and floral motifs.

Vishnu Temple (THB 5 A)

The partially survived *garbhagriha* (4.12 x 4.66 m) of a west facing temple rests on usual *adhishtana*, topped by a floral *pattika* and another stone *pattika* decorated with *ghata-pallava* and *padma* motifs, which supports *jangha*. The *jangha* portions of the temple are separated in two registers by a stone *pattika*. The survived lower portion of the *jangha* is designed in the form of pilasters and *salilantar*as decked with *ghata-pallava*, *padma*, *kirtimukha*, and floral motifs. The doorway (1.60 x 0.76 m) of the *garbhagriha* remains incomplete. Its lintel bears *tribhanga* Vishnu on the *lalata*, Brahma and Shiva on terminals with their consorts (Plate 15). Of the *chatuh-shakha* doorjamb only *naga-shakha* is engraved while others left plain. Here, by mistake the artisan carved the *shakhas* on northern doorjamb in the opposite side. *Pedy*a and *udumbara* also remains uncarved. On its side, only the *adhishtana* portion (5.10 x 2.35 m) of a temple exists.

Vishnu Temple (THB 5 B)

The north facing *pancharatha* temple has comparatively better survived *garbhagriha* (1.76 x 1.36 m) but of the square *mandapa* (1.95 m) only ceiling exists. The *jangha* is topped by *pushpa-mala*, *kapotika*, *grasa-pattika* and *tula-pitha*. *Garbhagriha* contains *pithika* of an image. The *lalitasana* four-armed Vishnu is shown on the *lalata* of the lintel that suggests a possibility of the dedication of the temple to Vishnu. The terminals of the lintel carry *lalitasana* four-armed Brahma and Shiva while recess has Navagrahas. The four-*shakha* doorjamb contains Naga and *rupa-shakhas* between two plain *shakhas*. The *pedya* carry river goddess with attendants and Naga in *namaskara-mudra* on either side. Udumbara contains *mandaraka* at the centre flanked by *padma* and Simhakranta-gaja. The walls of the temple is divided in two registers by a floral *pattika*, of which lower *bhadra* and *kapili* display the images of the deity in niches while upper portion holds *udgama* (Plate 16). The *bhadra* niche carry *samapada* two-armed Vamana on the east, four-armed Gajasurasamghara Shiva on the west, and *lalitasana* four-armed Ganesh with *abhaya*, *parashu*, *padma*, and *modaka-patra* on the south. The *kapili* on the east shows *tribhanga* four-armed Vishnu and on the west *tribhanga* two-armed Karttikeya with mount Mayura. The stone on ceiling, above the doorway, depicts *lalitasana* four-armed Shiva with *abhaya-mudra*, *trishula*, *sarpa* and *kamandalu* in hands.

Ruins of a Temple

The remnants of a large *adhishtana* (4.40 x 3.20 m) covered with architectural fragments, including the parts of a *kshipta-vitana*, suggests a possibility of magnificent temple that was standing on the site. The *kshipta-vitana* is arranged in multiple tiers and carved with different decorative motifs. The fragments contain a loose stone of the *jangha* portion depicting in lower register *tribhanga* four-armed Nirriti with mount man holding shield and *ari-mastaka* in left hands. The right hands are broken that bears *varada* and sword. The upper portion displays a *lalitasana* four-armed male figure holding *varada*, *padma*, *kumbha* in hands.

Vishnu Temple (THB 5 C)

The temple faces east, has a *garbhagriha* (1.60 x 1.32 m), and *mandapa* (1.20 x 1.56 m). The doorway (88 x 36 cm) has *udumbara*, doorjamb and lintel. Udumbara contains *mandaraka* at the centre flanked by Udadhikumara with *purna-kumbha* riding on Makara, and Simhakranta-gaja. The front of the *garbhagriha* has a decorated *chandrashila*. The *chatuh-shakha* doorjamb contains Naga and *rupa-shakhas* between two plain *shakhas*, and *pedya* depicts river-goddess, attendant, Vaishnava Dwarapala, Naga, devotee and a sage on either side. The lintel carry *lalitasana* four-armed Vishnu holding *abhaya*, *gada*, *chakra* and *shankha* on the *lalata*, bearded Brahma with *abhaya*, *shruka*, *pustaka* and *kamandalu*, and Shiva with *abhaya*, *trishula*, *sarpa* and *kamandalu* on the terminals, and Navagrahas in the recess. The extended *udgama* of niches touches the upper carvings of *pushpa-mala*. The wall supports *varandika* having *kapotika*, *grasa-pattika* and other mouldings. The walls of the *garbhagriha* contain niched images of the deity. Two-armed *sthanaka* Ganesha is represented with hands as *katyavalambita* and *abhaya-mudra* on the south *bhadra* niche. The figure on *kapili* is defaced that represents a male deity with *abhaya* and *katyavalambita*. The *bhadra* niche on the west comprises *tribhanga* Vamana with *chhatra* in left hand and right in the *abhaya-mudra* (Plate 17). On the north *bhadra samapada panchagnitaparata* Parvati is shown with mount lion and an attendant, holds *agni-kundas* in upper hands, lower right one in *varada* and left carries *kamandalu*. *Kapili* offers a male deity in *tribhanga* with a devotee.

Vishnu Temple (THB 5 D)

It is the largest temple (9.80 x 8.50 m) of the group, faces east and have *garbhagriha*, *sabha-mandapa* and *mukha-mandapa* that rests on a high *adhishtana* comprising *jadyakumbha*, *khura*, *kalasha*, and *kapota* (Plate 18). The *garbhagriha* wall is elongated (2.20 x 3.50 m) on the back. Two *pithikas* of images with Garuda figure kept in the square *garbhagriha* measures 1.93 m, of which south portion of the ceiling is now broken. There are two doorways in the temple (Plate 19), one at the entrance of *sabha-mandapa* (1.53 x 0.82 m) and other at the *garbhagriha* (1.46 x 0.78 m). The door of the *garbhagriha* is somewhat plain but attractive. Its *udumbara* bears evolved *mandaraka* flanked by Udadhikumara and *simhakranta-gaja*, *pedya* carry *tribhanga* river goddess with attendants, Vaishnava Dwarapala, Naga figures and two ascetics over the Dwarapala on the north while the doorjamb has Naga and *rupa-shakhas* between two plain *shakhas*. The lintel is engraved with Garudasana Vishnu on the *lalata*, *lalitasana* Brahma and Shiva with mount on the terminals as well Navagrahas in the recess. The *chandrashila* in front is now damaged. The *garbhagriha* opens in a wider *sabha-mandapa* and in front of it stands a *mukha-mandapa*. Both *mandapas* rest on pillars and pilasters carved with *ghata-pallava* motif. *Sabhamandapa* doorjamb contains plain, Naga, *ratna* and *bahya-shakha* decked with *padma* motif. The lintel bears *padmasanastha* Vishnu on *lalata* having *varada*, *gada*, *chakra* and *shankha*. On terminals, bearded *tribhanga* four-armed Brahma with mount Hamsa and Shiva with Nandi and respective attributes are shown. The recess of the lintel is carved with Navagrahas figures. *Pedya* contains river goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna, with mount Makara and Kurma, attendants and Naga in *namaskara-mudra*. The portion representing Dwarapala left blank. *Udumbara* has usual *mandaraka*, Udadhikumara, and *Simhakranta-gaja*. The *sabha-mandapa* inner wall on the north displays ten-armed Nrisimha in a square niche (55 cm) with open mouth and pushed out tongue (Plate 20). In this presentation demon Hiranyakashyapu holds a dagger in right hand on back, a devotee and pot-bearer shown on the lower portion. The *samapada* four-armed Vishnu on the south wall is shown in a niche (57 x 56 cm) with attendants and pot-bearers in *tribhanga* and mala-vidyadharas in the upper portion. Vishnu holds *varada*, *gada*, *chakra* and *shankha*. The *jangha* is made by erecting stone slabs carved with *bhadra* type pilasters having *ghata-pallava* on both ends and niched sculptures. The south *bhadra* bears four-armed dancing Ganesha with mount Mushaka and holding *parashu*, *padma* and *modaka-patra*. The *samapada* four-armed Vamana displays on the west *bhadra* niche flanked by *tribhanga* attendants and holds *varada*, *gada*, *chakra* and *shankha* in hands. The niche on the north contains *samapada* four-armed Parvati with *tribhanga* attendants on each side, and mala-Vidyadhara in upper field. She holds *padma* in two lifted hands while lower one in *varada-mudra* and other holds *kamandalu*. The *udgama* contains a male figure at the centre. Another niched image on the north displays *alidha* four-armed Bhu-Varaha whose left bend leg rests on the jewelled hood of mythical serpent Adishesha. The lower right hand of Varaha is *katyavalambita*, upper holds *gada*, upper bend left arm carry seated Bhudevi that holds *chakra* and lower left holds *shankha*.

Temple

Of the other east facing temple (2.14 x 2.73 m), on the north of the above temple, *mandapa* is fallen and merely the skeleton of the *garbhagriha* survives without figural or decorative motifs, except a niched deity on the west *bhadra*. The *lalitasana* two-armed Karttikeya is shown with mount Mayura, holds *shakti*, and his hairs are arranged in *tri-shikha* form. On the north-east of this temple there is architectural and sculptural fragments lying on the *adhishtana* of at least three temples.

Vishnu Temple (THB 5 G)

Of the another east facing temple (4.20 x 3.65 m), on the north-west of above group, the *garbhagriha* (2.65 x 1.45 m) remains comparatively in better preserved while the architectural members of the *mandapa*, and a wall of the *garbhagriha* have fallen. However, this *pancharatha* temple represents developed features and its walls carry figural sculptures in two rows (Plate 21). The doorway (1.36 x 0.69 m) contains on the *lalata* of lintel Garudasana four-armed Vishnu, *tribhanga* Brahma and Shiva with attendants and respective mounts on the terminals. In between *trideva*, upper recess contains sapta-matrikas with Ganesha and Virabhadra and Navagrahas in the lower. Mala-Vidyadharas are depicted on both sides of the Garuda. Doorjamb is carved with *ratna*, Naga, *rupa* and *bahya-shakha* ornate with *padma*. *Pedya* depicts *tribhanga* river goddess with attendants, Dwarapala Naga and ascetics. Udumbara contains Saraswati at the centre flanked by human figures and Simhakranta-gaja. Chandrashila is decorated with *padma* and *ratna* motifs. The ceiling of the *garbhagriha* is carved with full blown *padma* in relief and an inner wall has the figure of a mother seated in *lalitasana* with her child. The *jangha* of the temple divided in two registers by a *grasa-pattika* and contains the images of deities, Dikpalas, Sura-sundaris on the lower and *lalitasana* four-armed male figure with warriors and others on the upper register. The images of *bhadra* niches are now missing. The *kapili* niche on the south is crowned with a beautiful *torana* flanked by *shikhara* design that contains four-armed dancing Ganesha with mount Mushaka and holding *parashu*, *pustaka* and *modaka-patra*. Of the Dikpalas, four-armed *tribhanga* Indra represents with mount Airavata on the east face; bearded Agni with mount ram on the south-east; Yama with mount buffalo holding *varada*, *khatvanga*, noose and *ghata* on the south; Nirriti on the south-west possibly holds sword in the mutilated right and *ari-munda* in damaged lower left hands; Kubera holding *varada*, *gada*, mangroves-*nidhipatra* on the north, and Ishana with usual attributes shown on the north-east face of the temple. The *adhishtana* niche carry *sthanaka* two-armed Ganesh while *kapili* on the north displays *samapada* Parvati holding *padmasanastha* Karttikeya and Ganesha in upper two hands.

Vishnu Temple (THB 5 H)

The ceiling of the *mandapa* (1.60 x 2.44 m) along with *garbhagriha* (1.58 x 1.85 m) of the west facing temple (3.75 x 2.65 m) partially survives. The *varandika* comprises the mouldings of *pushpa-mala*, *kapotika*, *grasa-pattika* and *jalaka*. The lintel of the doorway (1.19 x 0.62 m) depicts Garudasana Vishnu on the *lalata*, *tribhanga* Brahma and Shiva with mount and mala-Vidyadharas on the terminals, Navagrahas in the lower and Sapta-matrikas with Ganesha and Virabhadra in the upper recesses. The richly carved *chatuh-shakha* doorjamb comprises *ratna*, *naga*, *mithuna*, and festooned *bahya-shakha* that is extended to encompass the upper portion of lintel (Plate 22). *Pedya* contains river goddess, attendants, Naga and ascetics on each side while *udumbara* has *mandaraka* flanked by Udadhikumara carrying *purna-kumbha* seated on Makara and Simhakranta-gaja. The *chandrashila* is decorated with *padma* motif. Walls of the *garbhagriha* contains niched sculptures on the *bhadra* flanked by *bhitti* carved with decorated pilasters and *salilantara* is engraved with *jalaka* motif. The *bhadra* niche carry *lalitasana* four-armed Ganesh and Riddhi with mount Mushaka on the south, *samapada* Surya with Dandi and Pingala on the east while those on the north is missing.

Shiva Temple

The doorways, *chandrashila* carved with *ardha-padma* motif, partial *garbhagriha* wall, and ceiling of a west facing temple (1.90 x 1.50 m) survives (Plate 22). Comparatively narrow doorway (92 x 40 cm)

bears *chatuh-shakha* doorjamb that comprises Naga and *rupa-shakhas* between two plain *shakhas*. *Pedya* bears river goddess, attendants, Dwarapala, devotee and Naga on either side. The lintel displays *lalitasana* four-armed Shiva on the *lalata*, Brahma and Vishnu on terminals while Navagrahas and Sapta-matrikas with Ganesh in the recesses. Udumbara contains *mandaraka* flanked by Udadhikumara holding *purna-kumbha* seated on Makara and Simhakranta-gaja. Chandrashila is ornately carved with *padma*, *ratna* and other motifs. The portion of a standing north wall of the *garbhagriha* carry niched images of *tribhanga* Saraswati and Nataraja. There are the remains of some more *adhishtana* of the ruined temples.

Shiva Temple (THB 5 I)

Outside of the new boundary made with piling the stone blocks, there is the remnants of two temples, of which only the *adhishtana* of a temple persist while of the other temple, which faces east, only three walls (2.25 x 2.20 m) with flat plain ceiling survives (Plate 23). The *mandapa* (3.00 x 2.15 m) of the temple is damaged but its ceiling lying on the ground. The *bhadra* niche on the south depicts *tribhanga* two-armed Ganesha holding *parashu* and *modaka-patra*. A niched *tribhanga* male deity with *abhaya-mudra* and *kamandalu* is shown on the west. The defaced *tribhanga* figure in the north niche appears to be of the Karttikeya holding *shakti* in left hand and his mount Mayura persists behind him.

Most of the sculptures of the temples under discussion are either lying in the debris or shifted to other places like site museum, Chanderi museum, etc. B.L. Nagarch (1996: 276-280) reported some of the sculptures lying in the temple complex. The notable of them are the Vishnu, Shiva, Ardhanarishvara, Bhairava, Ashtavasus, Mahishasuramardini, Shitala, dancing male, Sura-sundari. A niched sculpture comprises eight-armed Ardhanarishvara holding *trishula*, *abhaya-mudra*, *darpana*, *pustaka*, *kamandalu* and *varada-mudra*. An image of *tribhanga* four-armed Bhairava represents him ferocious with bulgy eyes and protrude teeth, carry *sura-patra*, *damaru*, *khatvanga* in preserved hands. The bull-headed Ashtavasus is shown in *lalitasana* and carry in his four hands *varada-mudra*, *padma* in upper two and *kamandalu* in lower left flanked on the either side by a *tribhanga* female attendant. A niched sculpture represents four-armed Mahishamardini Durga in *alidha-mudra* and killing the demon Mahisha. Her mount lion is also shown. The furious goddess holds *khadga* and *khetaka* in upper hands while piercing *trishula* in the body of Mahisha taken in lower right hand, and pulling the mouth of buffalo by lower left one and pushing the back of Mahisha by right foot. Other sculpture depicts four-armed Shitala riding on the mount donkey, but her hands are broken. In all, the figural representation are wide-ranging and attractive. The female figures, especially of Apsaras and Sura-sundaris, are slender and emaciated. Ascetics of Thoban, alike of other places, is shown clad in *kaupina* and head is covered in a mass of matted locks and band, sometimes with three stringed sacred thread dropping down across the left shoulder that could serve as a *yogapatta* too. It appropriately present their thrifty life of renunciation and self-discipline. In some instances the ascetics are shown sitting audaciously above the deity on the pediment of a *deva-koshtha*.

The entire material-milieu signifies the glorious past of Thoban as a religious centre and a developed city, which was possible due to the patronage of the later Pratiharas, as well as efforts of pontiffs, contributions of the religious communities, natural resources of the locality, especially forest produce, water resources, etc. The place was in the midst of woodland and well connected with other nearby religious centres through pathways and river Orr.

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PLATES



Singh, Pl. 1: Matha or *vasati*, Sita-ki-Madhia, Thoban, Ashoknagar



Singh, Pl. 2: Shiva temple THB 1 A, Sita-ki-Madhia



Singh, Pl. 3: Garbhagriha of Shiva temple THB 1 A



Singh, Pl. 4: Ascetics engaged in discourse, Shiva temple THB 1 A



Singh, Pl. 5: Vishnu temple, Sita-ki-Madhia



Singh, Pl. 6: Doorway and ruined garbhagriha, Vishnu temple



Singh, Pl. 7: Lintel of Shiva temple having Nataraja on lalata



Singh, Pl. 8: Shiva temple THB 1 D



Singh, Pl. 9: Shiva temple and Mandapika shrines or Kutis



Singh, Pl. 10: Vishnu temple



Singh, Pl. 11: Sculptures of Ganesha and Shiva-Parvati, Hanumanagarhi



Singh, Pl. 12: Vestiges of the temples, Mahadevaghata



Singh, Pl. 13: Adhishthana of a ruined temple and incarnations of Vishnu



Singh, Pl. 14: Temple THB 4 E stands on high plinth



Singh, Pl. 15: Relics of Vishnu temple THB 5 A



Singh, Pl. 16: Vishnu temple THB 5 B



Singh, Pl. 17: Vishnu temple THB 5 C



Singh, Pl. 18: Northern view of Vishnu temple THB 5 D



Singh, Pl. 19: Doorways of Vishnu temple THB 5 D



Singh, Pl. 20: Nrisimha, Mandapa, Vishnu temple THB 5 D



Singh, Pl. 21: Vishnu temple THB 5 G



Singh, Pl. 22: Vishnu temple THB 5 H, and Shiva temple



Singh, Pl. 23: Relics of Shiva temple THB 5 I