

**PROCEEDINGS OF
NORTH EAST INDIA
HISTORY ASSOCIATION**

NINTH SESSION

GUWAHATI ; 1988

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PREFACE

The ninth session of the North East India History Association at the Gauhati University was indeed the fulfilment of a long cherished objective of the Association to hold a session in the premier University of the region. In fact, there had been efforts on the part of the Association ever since it came into existence in 1979 to hold a session at the Gauhati University. We are thankful to the authorities of the Gauhati University for inviting the ninth session and organising it in an excellent manner.

Shri Bhisma Narain Singh, the Governor of Assam, inaugurated the session. Professor D. P. Barooah, Vice-Chancellor, and Professor J. N. Phukan, Head, Department of History, Gauhati University did the Association a great honour as Chairman of the organising committee and Local Secretary respectively for the session. It was presided over by Professor Bhupen Qanungo of the North-Eastern Hill University. More than one hundred and fifty delegates attended the session in which eighty-five research papers were presented and discussed.

The present volume is the proceedings of the ninth session of the North East India History Association held at the Gauhati University on November 3-5, 1988. I am thankful to my colleagues Dr. J. P. Singh, Dr. O. P. Kejariwal, Dr. M. S. Sangma and Dr. D. R. Syiemlieh for the help in selecting and editing the papers and publishing the volume. We are also thankful to the Indian Council of Historical Research for the generous financial assistance extended to the Association.

J. B. Bhattacharjee

General Secretary,

North East India History Association.

Shillong

The 25 August 1989

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Saivism in Tripura

Pratap Choudhury

One of the most noticeable features in the early history of Tipperah is rapid spread of Saivism and the prevalence of the practice of human sacrifice which, as in other parts of India, was associated with the worship of Siva. According to *Rajmala*, the royal family claimed descent from one of the lunar race of kings. The thirtyninth king of the dynasty, was Tripura. "Tripura so harrassed his subjects that they fled in a body to Hiramba (Cachar). After the lapse of five years they returned as votaries of the God Siva, who promised them a ruler by the widow of Tripura named Hirabati". To get rid of Tripura who was an oppressor and anti-Saivaite his subjects started worshipping Lord Siva, who killed Tripura with his Trident of Trishul². 'The promised prince named Trilochana or the 'three eyed' was born in due course. He married the daughter of the Hiramba Raja, who was the Raja of Kamrupa³.

Trilochana, who introduced Saivism in Tripura, was perhaps a contemporary of two great eastern Indian Kings Bhaskarvarmana of Kamrupa and Sasanka of Karnasuvarna of the 7th Century A.D. This legend was taken according to the compilers of *Rajmala-Baneswar* and *Sukreswar* from *Rajmalika*, *Yogini Malika*⁴, *Barunya Kal Nirnaya* and *Hara-Gouri Sambad*⁵. These books could not be traced so far. But their names suggest that there were some literary evidences from which the legendary history of Tripura was written. The names of these books suggest that most of them were Tantrasastras.

According to W.W. Hunter, Tipperah, the last country that yielded to the tide of Musalman invasion, had long been chosen abode of Saivism. The fact that the aboriginal religion was supplanted by Hinduism, is indicated by the myths which describe Siva destroying the Asura Tripura⁵.

The Udaipur Temple is situated at some distance from the former residence of the Rajas and contains a white stone image representing the deity, Mahadeo or Siva⁶.

In the year 1872-73 Mr Chennel, Asstt. Surveyor, visited the country between the Jumpui and Athara-mura ranges, and reported that on the higher positions and summits of mountain ridges he met with many sites of old villages indicated by broken pieces of pottery and rough slates, erect and prostrate. According to Dalton, the most typical cases of erecting mysterious stones on the memorial platform is common amongst the Kuki, Lushai, Khasis and some other austic tribes of the east which have phallic significance⁸.

Moreover, the hill ranges of Tripura from Sylhet in the north and Chittagong in the South is named in old accounts as Raghunandan Parbat⁹.

Coins, Royal seals and Coat of Arms also contain references to the worship of Siva. In the coins of Chhatramanikya (1661-1666) "Srihara-gouri padapadme madhupa, Sri Srijut Chatra-manikya Devashya" is inscribed¹⁰. In the Rajmala it is written that in the gold coins of Govinda Manikya (1667) the kings name was inscribed along with the name Lord Siva. In Devagna seal of Durgamanikya (1809) the words 'Kali Bhaja' were inscribed. In the coins of Kashichandra Manikya (1826) 'Siva Agna' was inscribed. In the coronation memorial coins of Kashimanikya (1826) and Krishnamanikya (1760-1783) 'Siva-Durga-padabje' and 'Durgapade Srilasrijukta Kashichandra Jubaraj' and in the Padma Mohor of Rajdhar Manikya (1586-1599) the royal symbol of lotus were inscribed¹¹.

Iconographic study reveals that all over Tripura from Chattalachal in the South to Srihatta in the north Siva in the phallus form was widely worshipped. Bamjanghpath of Baurvag (Bam + Uru + Bhag) now in Bangladesh Kramadiswar Bhairav or Rupnath is a square shaped Linga and near the pith in a deep cave a trident (Trisula) is inserted in a stone known as Yoganidra¹². In the Gribapith of Srihatta a linga of large size

is worshipped as Bhairav Sarbananda. 2K.M. away from Dhaka Dakshin in a hillock named Kailash Gopeswar Siva Linga is situated, which was visited by Srichaitanya. According to local legend in the Balisira Pargana of Sylhet district (Bangladesh) Nirmai or Baneswar Siva was installed by the two Tripura Princess Nirmai and Harmai who spent all their life there and followed an ascetic life. During Baruni (A Saivite rite) and Ashokastami Mela is organised even till to-day. According to Bayu Purana in the Cachar region near Sri Gauri Sidheswar Siva¹³ was established and worshipped by Kapil Muni. Hatakeswar Siva of Srihatta is also a phallic form of Siva from whom the name of Srihatta originated¹⁴. Tungeswar Mahadeva (of Taraf Pargana) in phallic form is also widely worshipped. This icon is having a height of 4 1/2' and a girth of 7 1/2'. Sivalingathirtha¹⁵ of Badalekha is a hairlock (Jata) form of Siva.

Unakoti tirtha is a pre-historic ruin of 9th to 11th century is also regarded as a Saiva tirtha. According to Rajmala this tirtha was established by Kapil muni who destroyed the Solar dynasty of Sagar¹⁶. According to local legend one Mahatma wanted to make one crores of idols but failed¹⁷. According to sanskrit Rajmala one Tripura king named Kumar or Bimar was a Saivaite, who visited and worshipped Siva in this place¹⁸. According to Rajmala the great Panchamukha Sivalinga was worshipped by Manu¹⁹. In the sanskrit Ramj mala it is mentioned that Lord Siva was living here with a beautiful Kirat woman, in disguise. So Parvati was outrageous to him. Siva in sigh took the form of a linga²⁰. This legend reminds us of the founder mother Hira of Cooch Bihar Dynesty²¹. The main icons of Unakoti are Birupaksha with Sula in his hand and Maha Kal Bhairava or Unakotiswara is most famous²². The stone linga discovered at Unakoti (Tripura State) is of great iconographic interest as it bears four well carved human busts shown up to the waist on the four sides of its Pujabhaga²³. The stone linga discovered at Unakoti is assigned to 8th and 9th century A.D.²⁴ Ekamukha and Trimukha linga

are also found. The colossal Kala Bhairaba and Bhairabi icons represented as the killer of all evils²⁵. Most of the icons of Siva are in Ugra form. Even the Tripura-sundari image (Udaipur) is also in Ugrachanda rupa. Historians are of opinion that the great iconoclast Kalapahar damaged and destroyed the Unokoti idols in the 16th century. Alingana Uma Maheswara Murti and twelve handed Nataraja of the 11th and 12th century are also found in Tripura (Khewai). The icons of Pilakpathar are also of great interest. The Abalokiteswar, Kinnara, Ganesha, 8 handed Durga, 18 handed Chund images and Siva-Parvati images are found.

The idols of Chaturdasha Devata, the family idols of the ruling dynasty, is a peculiar form of icons. It appears from the faces that all the icons are of male-gods. Though Bramhins have given them different names such as Hara, Uma, Hari, Kumara, Ganesa, Bidhi, etc²⁶. Their tribal names are different. Matai Katar (his bahana is buffalo as in Tibet) or Mahadeva is the principal diety. All these icons are having chandrakala on their heads. These may be the chaturdasha Siva rulers of chaturdasha bhubans. One Singhasana, engraved 'Girija' is also worshipped without any idol. Another stone image of Ishana (Surya) is also accommodated with chaturdasha Davas. Tribal chief priest chantai is the main priest of these idols. Idols are only sprinkled with water and sacrifices are made.

In Tripura three sects of Saivites may be traced. They are Aghorapanthi (the Kapalikas), the Sahajias such as Nath Community, and the Pasupatyas with Bramhanical order. Most of the images found in Tripura are of Ugra type, though Soumya type are also not rare. It seems that Aghorapanthis were the first to preach Saivism in Tripura. In the middle ages the Nathpanthis spread Sahajiapantha. A large section of people followed this idea who are also known as Yogis. They bury their dead bodies in sitting positions of a Yogi. They claim also as the descendants of Siva. All of them have Siva Gotra (Clan). Some are also having the title of Siva. Gurubad

is still prevalent amongst them. They have no Bramhin priest. Chadak is widely observed throughout Tripura by the low caste Hindus.

So the theory that saivism originated in Eastern India amongst the Bratyas or outcast may not be a myth. It may have a clue in the Pingalamata, an appendix to Bramha Jamala, which declares that Siva Sadhana is unfit to Kamrupa, Kalinga etc because the Gurus are considered in these places as inferior to the Gurus of Aryabarta. As the name of Matsyendranath is associated with Kamrupa so the name of Meen Nath was associated with Pattikera kingdom who preached Sahajia Dharma to the people of Tripura in the middle ages.

Among the tribals of Tripura Seva in different forms is worshipped. The Chakmas believe that Niranjan created the first woman Kegayia who was married to Lord Siva. Mogs worship Krang, Kukis worship Pathion Pri (Siva), Roangs and Tripuris worship Bura Devta or Motai Katar. The Manipuris worship Siva as Nangshit.

Notes & References

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3. Hunter, p. 464.
4. K.C. Singha, p.38.
5. Hunter, p. 98.
6. *ibid*, p. 498.
7. *ibid*, p.499.
8. Mahadev Chakraborti, **The Concept of Rudra Siva through the ages**, p. 119.
9. Ranjit De, **Tripurar Loka Jiban O Loka Sanskriti** p. 20.
10. K.C. Singha, p.31.
11. *ibid*, pp. 32-33.
12. Ranendranath Deb, **Srihatta Parichay**, p.40.
13. *ibid*, p. 42.
14. *ibid*.
15. *ibid*, p. 44.
16. Kaliprasanna Sen, **Rajmala**, pt.2.
17. Samarendra Chandra Dev Barman, **Tripurar Smriti**, p.20.
18. K.C. Singha, p. 61.

19. *ibid.*, p. 67.
20. *ibid.*
21. *ibid.*
22. *ibid.*
23. R.C. Majumdar, **History of Bengal**, p. 441.
24. J. Gan Choudhury **Tripura : Land and her People**, p. 60.
25. *ibid.*
26. *ibid.*