

Archaeological Exploration of Sites, Monuments and Art-relics of Anuppur Tehsil of District Anuppur, Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract: Anuppur district of Madhya Pradesh is famous for the origin of the Narmada River and Amarkantak, the holy place of religious importance. The extensive exploration of sites, monuments and art-relics of Anuppur district of Madhya Pradesh was conducted by the authors after due approval of Archaeological Survey of India and documented variegated material pertaining to archaeological importance. Various sites and monuments of the Anuppur district were covered during the survey. Besides some known archaeological sites, exploration brought to light a series of new ancient sites. The district has four administrative tehsils, viz, Anuppur, Jaithari, Pushparajgarh and Kotma. A brief report of the archaeological exploration conducted in Anuppur tehsil of this district is discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Exploration, Remains Sites, Monuments, Temple, Sculpture, Inscriptions, Coins, Beads, Pottery, Stone tools.

Introduction:

Anuppur district lies between North latitude 22° 7' and 23°25' and East longitude 81°10' and 82° , falling in Survey of India toposh-eet nos. 64E, 64F and 64 I. Situated in the eastern corner of Madhya Pradesh, this district is a relatively new district, which was formed in 2003 after the re-organization of Shahdol district. The famous religious and holy place Amarkantak is situated in this district. Three rivers, viz. Narmada, Sone and Juhila originated from Maikal mountain, the junction of Vindhya and Satpura mountains. District Anuppur touches the boundaries of Shahdol, Umariya and Dindori districts of Madhya Pradesh. Bilaspur and Korea districts of Chhattisgarh are located in its southern and eastern sides. Historical and archaeological remains are found in abundance in Madhya Pradesh

which is regarded as the central part of the country. Due to natural compatibility, position of trade routes and political activities from north to south in ancient times, the area is rich in terms of archaeological remains. The potential of the district in terms of archaeological richness, has been evinced by previous archaeological findings. Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic Tools along with some fossils have been recovered from the district Anuppur and adjacent areas in various archaeological investigations (IAR). *Vaishnava, Shaiva, Shakta* sculptures as well as temples of Kalchuri period have also been reported in this area. Finding of Khairha inscription of Yashah Karna from Shahdol and the image inscription of *Lekhanadhyaksh Madhavaksh* from Amarkantak are also noteworthy. The Discovery of Kushana and

Magha Coins from the adjacent area is also significant (*JNSI* and *INC*). State Archaeology Department of Madhya Pradesh has also undertaken the survey work of the Anuppur district and published its report (Malpani 2009). But after carrying out the village-to-village survey of the district, the authors have found a series of new sites of archaeological importance along with fresh findings from previously reported sites.

As Anuppur has 46.41 % tribal population of the total population of the district, it is an ideal locus for ethnoarchaeological research too. Several tribal groups, viz.-the Baiga, the Gonds, the Khariya, the Panikas etc. prevail in this region and practice their traditional way of life for livelihood. The lifestyle observed and information collected from these living communities provide insight into interpreting the archaeological data.

The extensive exploration of sites, monuments and art-relics of Anuppur district of Madhya Pradesh was conducted under the direction of the first author of the present paper and assisted by the other authors after due approval of the Archaeological Survey of India and documented variegated material pertaining to archaeological importance.

Objectives of the Exploration:

The principal objectives of this investigation were as follows:

1. To cover systematically the Narmada, Son and Johila basin and the surrounding mountainous flanks in search of prehistoric, protohistoric and historical material remains.
2. To explore the prehistoric settlement pattern (covering Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic) of the river basins as it is evident from the different parts of the Narmada and Son basins.

3. To study the ethno-archaeology of this region.
4. To find, study and document the historical settlements and findings, viz-temple, sculptures, rock-cut caves, ceramics and other antiquities in discussed area.
5. To impart training to the students of the Department of AIHC and Archaeology and Anthropology as part of their academic curriculum.

The methodology used and the techniques employed:

The exploration work has been carried out in three phases described below-

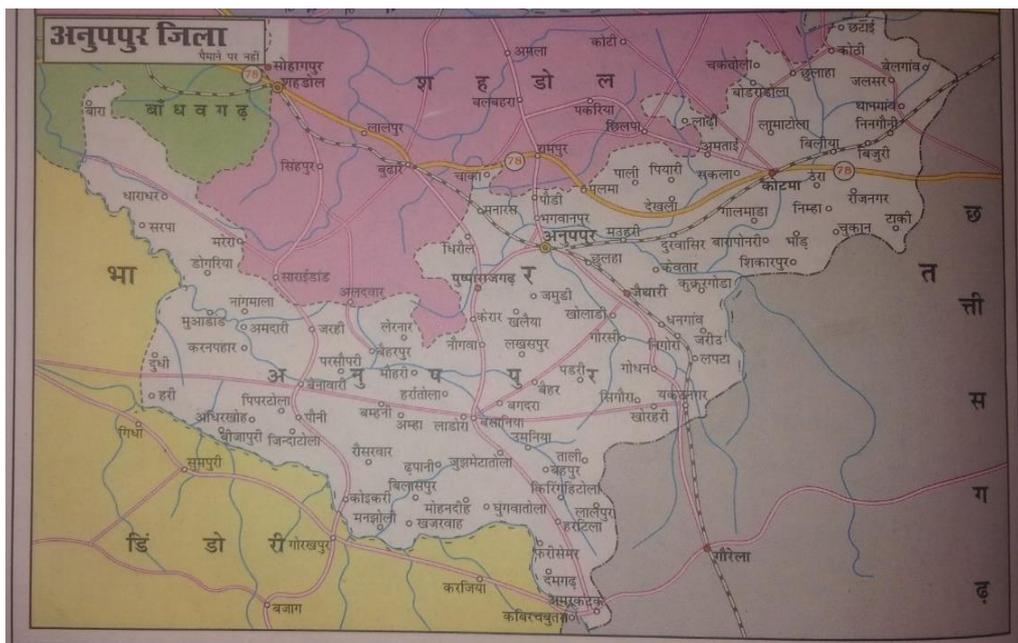
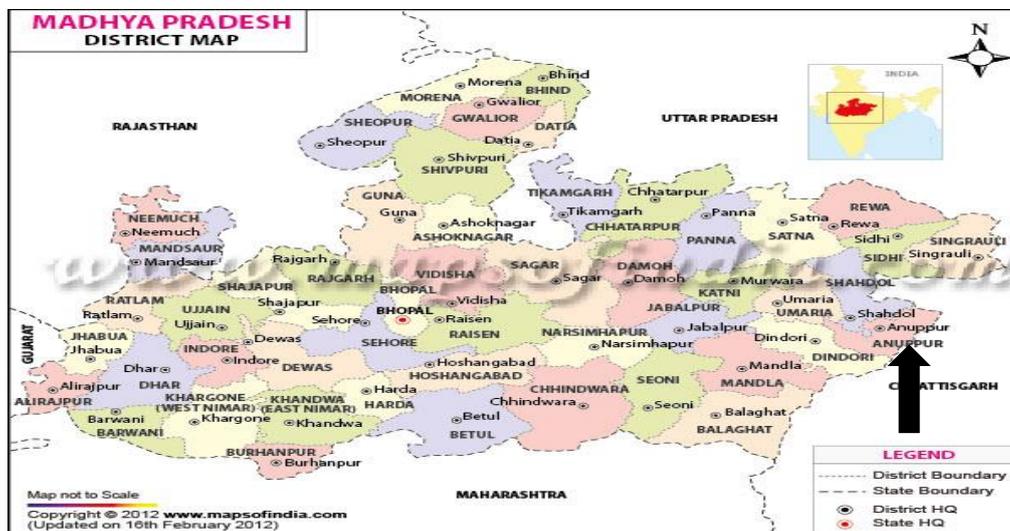
Phase I: During the first phase of the research, literature and oral sources pertaining to the area were consulted thoroughly. This has addressed two items; the presence of known historical resources and the potential for further research in the proposed area. Information useful in locating and identifying any historic resources has been retained. General secondary histories of the area have also been perused for background data useful in interpreting cultural significance. secondary histories of the area have also been perused for background data useful in interpreting cultural significance.

The second item addressed during phase 1 was the determination of the nature of the sites. After the examination of sites, artefacts and landscapes pertaining to these sites have been perused and recorded.

Phase II: This phase was divided into two tasks. Task A comprised a total vehicular and pedestrian village-to-village survey of the Anuppur district. All areas of the exposed surface have been closely examined. Field visibility conditions were recorded on project maps. All artefacts recovered during

the pedestrian survey have been retained and properly labelled and located on the project maps. Task B was the trial ditching and scraping of sections of tests in areas which may contain subsurface cultural deposits or that could not be adequately examined on the surface due to heavy vegetation or other factors. Tests have been made at intervals to determine by specific site conditions. Graphic and Photographic documentation of antiquities was made during the survey and preliminary analysis has also be

done at the field camp. Topo-sheets, regional maps and Google maps were used to locate the sites and explore the region. Several place-names have been identified to assume the potential of the area. Keen and minute reflections have also been observed to recognize the scattered remains, crop marks and shadow marks. Survey of India toposhet Nos. 64E, 64F and 64 I, regional maps, Google maps, Google earth images and GPS information have been used to locate the sites and explore the region.



Map Showing the Area of study

Table 1: Details of equipment (for survey, documentation etc.) used in the expedition

Tools	Recording apparatus	Documentation equipment
1. Pickaxe 2. Mattock 3. Trowel 4. Forks 5. Knives 6. Binocular 7. GPS 8. Open spooled measuring tapes (100 meters long) 9. Survey levels 10. Compass 11. A horde of buckets 12. Magnifying glasses	1. High-resolution still cameras 2. Video cameras 3. Sturdy tripods 4. Adequate auxiliary lighting 5. Calibrated measurement board 6. Scales 7. Plastic bags 8. Envelopes 9. Labels 10. Permanent markers.	1. Computers 2. Printers 3. Scanners 4. Drawing tools.

Sites, Monuments and Art-relics:

The district has four administrative tehsils, viz, Anuppur, Jaithari, Pushpa-rajgarh and Kotma.

Exploration carried out in the different tehsils of Anuppur district brought to light a good number of sites, monuments and art-relics. The details of archaeological remains noticed in this archaeological expedition conducted in Anuppur tehsil of this district are only presented below:

Archaeological Remains from Anuppur Tehsil Anuppur (23° 06'53''N; 81°41'42''E):

The site is located on the Rewa-Amarkantak route. It is 56 km south-east of Shahdol. This place is the headquarters of the district and tehsil with the same name. The Paleolithic and Mesolithic tools have been recovered from the site during earlier explorations. (IAR-1962-63, p. 11) Two coins of Chandra Gupta II have already been reported from the place. These are

kept in the Raipur Museum (Sharma 2010, p. 566). Rewa Rajya Darpan mentions that this place comprises the *Chatri* of Anup Shah and an ancient cave near Chandra Hath River. Burhi Mai Temple, Hanuman Temple and Jain Temple are included in the monuments of the town. (Malpani 2009, p. 52). Shiv Maruti temple is located in the town and has a mandapa and a cella. This temple is datable to 15th-16th Century. Lintel, doorjamb, depictions of Lashmi-Narayan and Uma-Maheshwar on southern *jangha* are remarkable finds in the temple premises. (Bajpai 1997. p. 109).

Barbaspur (23° 10'12''N; 81°42'14''E):

The site is located 6 km north-east of Anuppur. This place is famous for its *Durga* temple and *Śiva* temple which are situated on the roadside of the village. Some broken sculptures belonging to Jainism dated C. 1100 C.E. have been kept here. These sculptures were made with red sandstone. Sculptures of *Ādinātha*,

Tirthankara images in *Karyotsarg mudra* and an image of *Yakshi Ambikā* are noteworthy fragments (Malpani 2009. p.52).



Figure 1: Vishnu, Barbaspur

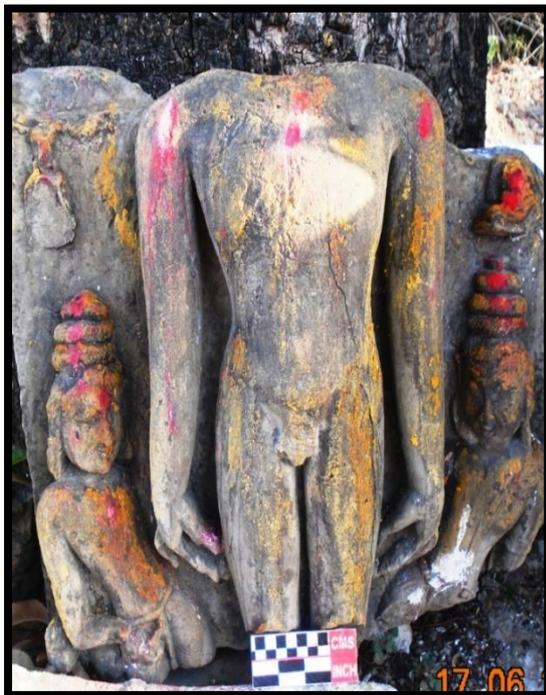


Figure 2: Mahavira, Barbaspur

Bamhani (23° 13'N; 81°47'E):

The site is situated 16 km north-east of Anuppur. It can be reached via village Funga. A Copper-plate of king *Bharatbal* of the Pāndav dynasty of *Mekala* has already been reported from this place. (*EI* Vol. 27, p. 132-145) The Copper-plate is presently kept in the Raja Chhatrasal Museum, Dhubela. A temple structure of 18th-19th century C.E. has been erected here in which an ancient image of *Śeshshayi Vishnu* has been placed inside the temple. *Umā-Māheśwarā*, *Śiva*, and other ruined sculptures have been found at this place.



Figure 3: Śiva, Bamhani

Bijaudi (23° 08'03''N; 81°47'09''E):

This village lies on the route from Anuppur to Barabaspur. It is situated 18 km north-east from Anuppur and can be reached via Sitapur and Bholgarh. A temple belongs to C. 14th-15th century C.E. is found here. Images of *Śiva*, *Garudasin Vishnu*, *Umā-maheśwarā*, *Vishnu*, *Bramha*, and other ruined sculptures were found.



Figure 4: Umā-Maheśvara, Bijaudi

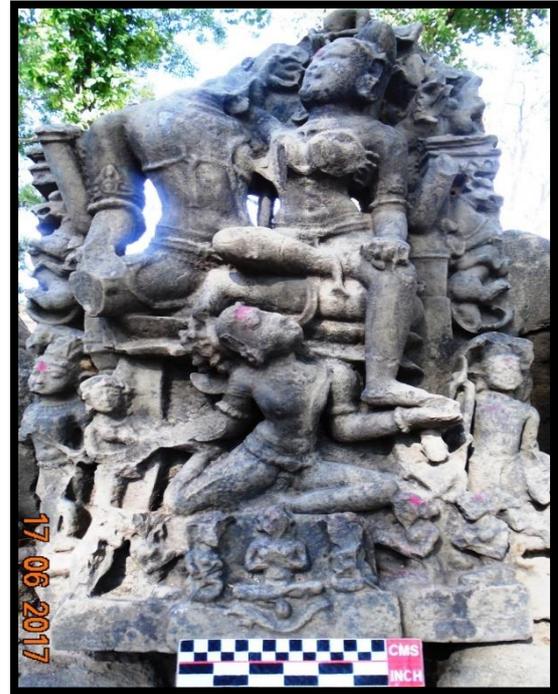


Figure 6: Garudasin Vishnu, Bijaudi

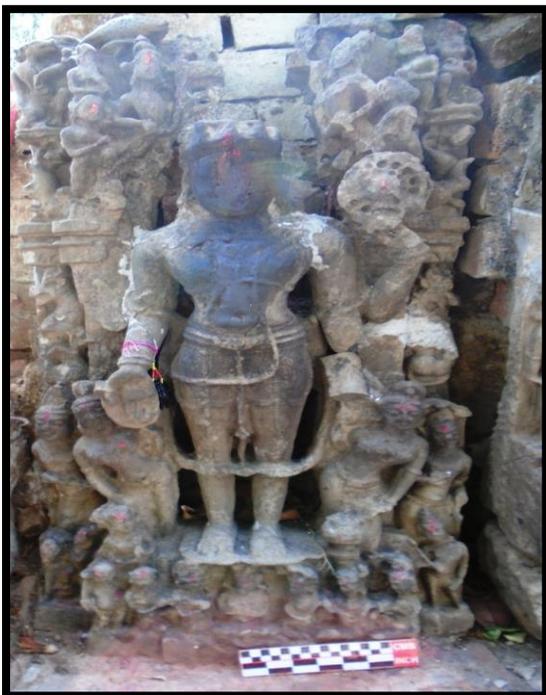


Figure 5: Vishnu, Bijaudi



Figure 7: Sculptural Remains, Bijaudi



Figure 8: Temple Remains, Bijaudi



Figure 9: Ganesha, Chhulkari

Chhulkari (23° 08'N; 81° 47'E):

The site is situated 3.5 km east of the village Bijoudi. A Śiva temple of 19th century C.E. is a religious place in the village. The Temple style of Maratha period is reflected in the structure. Śivlinga is enshrined in the cella and Nandi is placed in front of it. Viśnu, Ganeśa and Pārvati images are also found in the vicinity. Mandapa and Garbhgriha both existed in the temple structure. Amalak and Kalash are visible in the Shikhar.

Chachai (23°09'10'' N; 81°40'10'' E):

The old Chachai has been ruined now and it is known as *Chachai Viran*. The new Chachai has a temple consisting the *Ram Darbar, Jai Veer Hanuman, Kali Mandir* and *Ganesh Mandir* in a single place. The Hanuman image is found in *pratyalidh* mudra and dated around 12th -13th Century C.E. Other images seem to be of 18th- 19th Century C.E.



Figure 10: Vishnu, Chhulkar

Chhilpa (23° 15' 07'' N; 81°49' 21''E):

The *Chhilpa* village is situated 06 km east of the village *Bamhani* which has already been discussed before. *Śeshashayi Vishnu*, *Umā-Maheśwar*, *Hanuman* and scattered temple remains have been found here. Sculptural remains can be placed around 12th- 13th century C.E.

Dhumma (23°12'25'' N; 81°54' 19''E):

The site is situated 2.5 km north from Govt. ITI, Badra. It is 35 km north-east of Anuppur. The site can be reached from Kadam Tola via a *kachcha* route. Temple remains comprising pillars, door-jamb, lintel have been seen in the open space near a tree. The temple remains appear to be of 12th century C.E.

Dhurwasin (23°07' 6''N; 81°51'10''E):

This place is situated at a distance of 26 km from Anuppur on the raw road.. It is quite possible that this place would have called

Dhurwasini earlier and later on become famous as *Dhurwasin* because of its settlement at the mouth of Son river. Local people call the ancient temple as *Dudhiya*. There are 10 *Shivlinga* enshrined at this place, whose *Jalahari* appears to be of 13th-14th century C.E. but *Shivlingas* are of later date. Only cella is preserved currently and *jagati*, *jangha*, *shikhar*, *amalak* and *kalash* can be seen in the elevation (Malpani 2009, p. 57).

Dulahra (23°05'11' N 81°41'25'' E):

The site is situated 4 km south-west of Anuppur. A modern temple of Shiv, Hanuman and Ram-Janki has been constructed here. In front of the temple, some pieces of ancient sculptures have been placed on a platform. Sculpture can be said to be of 11th century C.E.

Harri (23°09' N; 81°42' E):



Figure 11: Tirthankar, Harri

The site is situated 4 km north-east of Anuppur. Two *Umā-Maheśwar* images, one *Nrāsimhā image* and two *Viśnu* images have been noticed under a banyan tree near the

southern bank of river Sone. Sculptures have been made of red sandstone. Traces of a dilapidated temple can be seen here. Sculptures of *Surya*, *Nayak-Nayika* and one *Tirthankar* panel depicting two *Tirthankara* are found scattered near the river bank along with architectural fragments viz. door-jamb, *amalak* and parts of *shikhar*. The architectural remains of the temple appear to be of the 11th century.

Koda (23°05' N; 81°45' E):

The site is situated 8 km south-east of Anuppur. Sculptures of *Umā-maheśwar*, *Lakshmi-Nārayanā*, *Durga*, *Ganeśā*, *Kartikeya*, *Brahma*, *Surya*, *Nayak* and *Nayika* have been found in this village. These sculptures belong to Kalachuri period.



Figure 12: Temple Remains, Koda

Kotmi (23°07' N; 81°52' E):

The Kotmi village is situated 1.5 km from the village Dhurwasin already discussed earlier. This site lies in the east of Anuppur at a distance of 17 km.



Figure 13: Umā-Maheśvara, Koda

Kotmi village is situated on the northern bank of Sone River. Looking at the ruins, it seems that there must have been a huge temple at this site, which would have included the features of the Kalachuri period. Currently, the temple's architectural and sculptural remains are found in the outskirts of the village Kotmi on the bank of the river Sone. Presently the fragments of architectural pieces and sculptural relics are placed on a platform. Sculptures are made of red sandstone and can be considered to have been placed in the 11th Century C.E. Images of *Brahmā*, *Nrivarah*, *Vishnu* and stone fragment depicting *maladhari vidyadhari* are noteworthy remains at the site.

Kelhauri (23°11' N; 81° 39' E):

The site is situated 12 km north-west of Anuppur. Several sculptures of *Kalachuri* period made on sandstone and fragments of temple structure have been noticed on a platform at this place. *Uma-maheshwar* playing *chaupada*, *Nandi*, *Vishnu*, river goddesses are noticeable. (Bajpai 1997, p. 109)

Kadamtola (23°12'01''N; 81°53' 37''E):

The *Kadamtola* village is situated 30 km north-east of Anuppur. Scattered remains in the 200 Sq. feet area reveals that there must have been a temple in Kadam Tola in 11th century C.E. The remains of the temple can be seen on the side of the village road. Fragments of a temple like door-jamb, lintel, pillars and traces of *Shikhar* are distributed in the field. Images of *Śiva-Pārvati*, *Jalahari*, *Hanuman* and *Viśnu* have been found at this place.

Latar (23°08'N; 81°55'E):

The village Latar is situated about 22 km east of Anuppur. A Jain temple of 18th-19th century is known from this site, which is built within the walls. The *shikhara* of the temple is ornate with *Amlak and Kalash* and a metallic trident has been placed at the top. Door-jamb, pillars and figures of *Umā-Maheśwar*, *Parvati*, *Nayaka-Nayika* are worth mentioning.

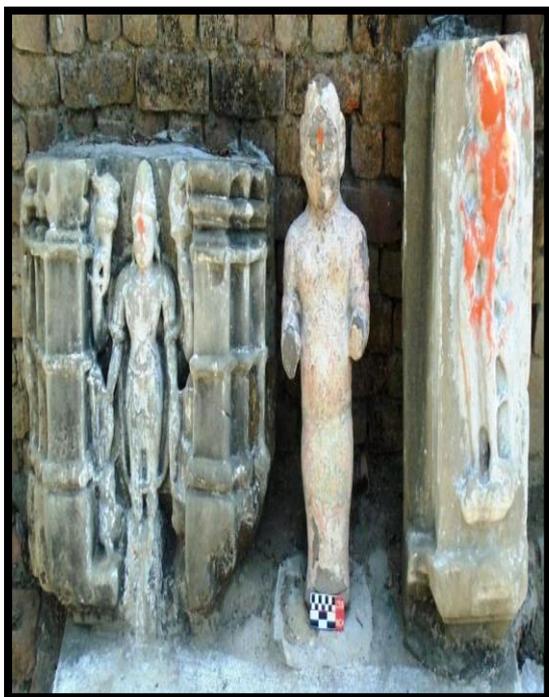


Figure 14: Temple Remains and Platform, Latar

Paraswar (23°07' N; 81°40'E):

The place is 3 km north-west of Anuppur. Remnants of a dilapidated temple of *Kalachuri* period can be seen here. An exquisite image of six armed *Durga*, *Nayak-Nayika* figures and traces of temple *shikhar* are of relics of historical and religious importance.

Padaur (23°10'N; 81° 53'E):

This site lies 21 km east of Anuppur. The *Umā-Maheśwar* sculpture and temple remains have been noticed in this village.

Pipariya (23°05' N; 81°42' E):

The *Pipariya* village is situated 4.5 km south of Anuppur. *Śiva* temple and broken sculptures were found scattered at this place.

Payari (23° 11'N; 81° 53'E):

The site is situated 20 km south-east of Anuppur. A Hanuman temple of about 18th century is erected at this place. The figure of Hanuman is installed in the sanctum.

Sinduri (23°07' N; 81°45'E):

About 5km east of Anuppur, the village Sinduri is located on the south bank of river Sone. Images of *Viśnu*, *Varah* and *Upasak* are noteworthy from this site. Broken architectural members, viz, Door-jamb and pillars also found.

Samatpur (23°08'N; 81°42'E):

The site is situated 30 km west of Anuppur. Ruins of an ancient temple are mentioned at this place in Rewa Rajya Darpan and Shahdol District Gazetteer (Malpani 2009, p. 57).



Figure 15: Temple Remains, Sendur

Even at present a temple exists with a vestibule and cella. A new *mandapa* has been made in front of the cella now. *Garudasina Lakshmi Narayan* in the lower niche and

Uma Maheshwar in the upper niche were depicted on the outer backside wall (*janga*). The temple belongs to the Kalachuri period.



Figure 16: Shiva Temple, Samantpur



Figure 17: Shiva Temple, Samantpur

Sitapur (23°09'N; 81°43'E):

The Sitapur village is situated on the northern bank of river Sone at a distance of 5 km from Anuppur. There is a Ganesh temple and a Shiva temple on the road side at this place. The important thing is that a Vishnu image of 11th century C.E. is enshrined in the temple which is still worshipped by the villagers.

Sakra (23°05' N; 81°38'E):

The site is situated 15 km east of Anuppur. There are Śiva temple remains, Door jump, Pillars found in this place. It is belonging to 18th century C.E. A relatively later Shiva temple found here on the bank of the river Bakan. Currently, the sanctum is visible in the ground plan. Amalak kalash and flag are combined in the formation of shikhara.

Results and analysis:

After exploration acquired artefacts, pottery, ecofacts and other antiquities have been analysed and stored systematically. Photographs and drawings have been made for the report. Topographic features and relief, nearby water sources, vegetation, soil

type(s) and modern land use have also been taken into account in the archaeological context. Information of sculptures and architectural members has been recorded and documented appropriately.

Conclusion:

Looking at the sporadic investigations and previous findings much potential lies in the area of the Anuppur district for archaeological research. A good number of new sites have been noticed during this exploration. Sites found in previous and present investigations encompass much potential for future research. From the Sculptural remains, it is clear that the Anuppur district holds a number of glorious art remains in the form of sculptures. Images of Brahmanism and Jainism have been noticed in the discussed area. There are some sites that pose all three iconographic sculptures from the prominent regions. Unfortunately, the date of the images cannot go beyond Kalachuri period. From Kalachuri period sculptures found from every successive period of 12th century A.D.

The exploration Report of Jaitahari, Kotma and Pushprajagarh Tehsils of Anuppur district have been presented separately. An intensive study of the sites, monuments and art-relics of Anuppur tehsil has yielded profound information about the area and provide a good number of potential sites for scientific excavation. Finding these sites and associated antiquities will not only shed light on the history of this Baghelkhand region but also will pave the way for further research and excavations.

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