



ANCIENT TEMPLES IN JEVARGI TALUKA – A STUDY SHANKARLINGA TEMPLE OF ANKALAGI

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ABSTRACT

Western Chalukya architecture also known as Kalyani Chalukya or Later Chalukya architecture, is the distinctive style of ornamented architecture that evolved during the rule of the Western Chalukya Empire in the Tungabhadra region of modern central Karnataka, India, during the 11th and 12th centuries. Western Chalukyan political influence was at its peak in the Deccan Plateau during this period. The centre of cultural and temple-building activity lay in the Tungabhadra region, where large medieval workshops built numerous monuments (Hardy, Adam 1995).

KEYWORDS : Western Chalukya architecture , modern central Karnataka , pre-existing dravida .

INTRODUCTION

These monuments, regional variants of pre-existing dravida (South Indian) temples, form a climax to the wider regional temple architecture tradition called Vesara or *Karnatadravida*. (Sinha, Ajay J. 1999). Temples of all sizes built by the Chalukyan architects during this era remain today as examples of the architectural style, (Hardy, 1995, pp 6–7). Most notable of the many buildings dating from this period are the Mahadeva Temple at Itagi in the Koppal district, the Kasivisvesvara Temple at Lakkundi in the Gadag district, the Mallikarjuna Temple at Kuruvatti in the Bellary district and the Kallesvara Temple at Bagali in the Davangere district. (Hardy, 1995, p323, p333, p335, p336.) Other monuments notable for their craftsmanship include the Kaitabheshvara Temple in Kubatur and Kedareshvara Temple in Balligavi, both in the Shimoga district, the Siddhesvara Temple at Haveri in the Haveri district, the Amrtesvara Temple at Annigeri in the Dharwad district, the Sarasvati Temple in Gadag, and the Dodda Basappa Temple at Dambal, both in the Gadag district. (Hardy, 1995, p321, p326, p327, p330, p335)

Temples built in and around the Kalyani region (in the Bidar district) were quite different from those built in other regions. Without exception, the articulation was *nagara*, and the temple plan as a rule was either stepped-diamond or stellate. (Foekema, Gerard 2003, p 63)

The elevations corresponding to these two plans were similar because star shapes were produced by rotating the corner projections of a standard stepped plan in increments of 11.25 degrees, resulting in a 32-pointed interrupted plan in which three star points are skipped in the centre of each side of the shrine. (Foekema, Gerard, *ibid*)

Examples of stepped-diamond plans surviving in Karnataka are the Dattatreya Temple at Chattarki, the Someshvara Temple in Kadlewad, and the Mallikarjuna and Siddhesvara at Kalgi in the Gulbarga district. The *nagara* shrine at Chattarki is a stepped diamond of projecting corners with five projections per side. (Foekema, Gerard, *ibid*). Because of the stepped-diamond plan, the wall pillars have two fully exposed sides, with a high base block decorated with a mirrored stalk motif and two large wall images above. The

shapes and decorations on the rest of the wall pillar have a striking resemblance to the actual pillars supporting the ceiling. (Foekema, Gerard, 2003 p 64)

The other type is the square plan with simple projections and recesses but with a possibility of both *sekhari* and *bhumijas* superstructures. The plan does not have any additional elements save those that derive from the ground plan. The recesses are simple and have just one large wall image. The important characteristic of these *nagara* temples in the Kalyani region is that they not only differ from the *dravida* temples in the north Karnataka region but from the *nagara* temples north of the Kalyani region as well. These differences are manifest in the articulation and in the shapes and ornamentation of individual architectural components, giving them a unique place in Chalukyan architecture. Temples that fall in this category are the Mahadeva Temple at Jalsingi and the Suryanarayana Temple at Kalgi in the modern-day Gulbarga district. (Foekema, Gerard, 2003 p 64). The plan and the *nagara* articulation of these temples are the same as found to the north of the Kalyani region, but the details are different, producing a different look. (Foekema, Gerard, 2003 p 65).

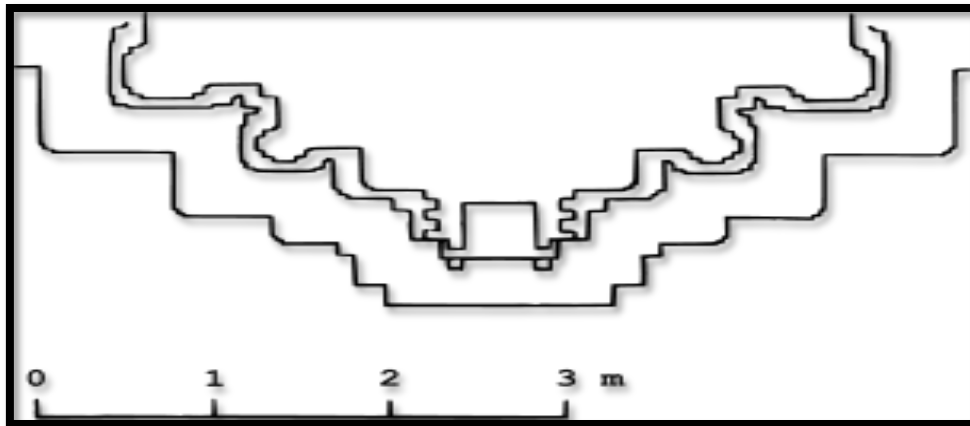
The Shankarlinga Temple Ankalagi.

Ankalagi is a village of historical importance lying on the right bank of the river Bhima. It is located 30 km west of Jevargi (Taluk headquarters) 15 km north of Jeratagi on the Jevargi-Sindagi road in Gulbarga district Karnataka and. The village is also known as “Ankulage” in ancient inscriptions. It was formerly an *agrahara*, and also the headquarters of the *Kampana* (a small administrative division) called Ankulage-50, located in Tardavadi-1000 division. It was a place of political importance. So far five inscriptions have been reported from this place, of which one belongs to the Chalukyas of Kalyana and the remaining four to that of Seunas. Among these, the inscription of 1077 found in the shankarlinga temple records a grant of 200 mattars of agricultural field measured by manikeshvarada- kol, two mattars of garden, four oil mills and tolls on various commodities sold, there in for the purpose of worship of gods in the trimuti temple, which comprised also the god shankaradeva, erected by shankarabhatopadhyaya in *agrahara*ankulage which was obtained by him as a gift, and 100 mattars of land for maintaining a feeding house for the Brahmans. While an inscription dated 1177 informs about the grant given by various merchants for god brahmadeva set up by mallayya the heggade of the senior queen mahadevi of mahamandaleshvaramallidevarasa, a feudatory of yadava king bhillama, another (also of the yadavas) dated 1186, too informs of a grant. The remaining two inscriptions that belong to the 49th year of yadavaramadeva are badly effaced. (H. Chittaranjan 2004)

Shankarlinga Temple

Floor plan of temple

The temple is built on a stepped diamond of projecting corners with five projections on each side. Because of the stepped-diamond plan, the wall pillars have two fully exposed sides, with a high base block decorated with a mirrored stalk motif and two large wall images above. The shapes and decorations on the rest of the wall pillar have a striking resemblance to the actual pillars supporting the ceiling



Floor plan of the Chalukyan temples in 12th century.



Floor plan of Shankarlinga Temple of Ankalagi

The Shankarlinga temple which is mentioned in the inscription has a *mantapa*. The *mantapa* is attached to the temple. The entrance of it is built on a raised plinth (basement) which consists of steps with sculptured elephants (of which only heads are visible) on either side with simple ornamentation. The exterior of the entrance one can see a *chajja (vimana)* supported by two pillars with simple designs on the upper side that appears to be of earlier than the Chalukyas of Kalyana. The door frame of this *mantapa* contains beautifully carved designs with sculpture of Shiva and other celestial figures. The figure of Shiva on both the sides of entrance seems to be confusing with that of other deity since there is a crown on its head and the snake is missing from its neck. On the top of the door frame there are carved figures of goddess *Lakshmi* and two elephants on her either side. The door frame contains fine floral designs and carvings in three panels on the sculpture. (H. Chittaranjan 2004, Survey by researcher)



The Shankarlinga Temple as seen from the front.

The mantapa which is rectangular in shape is supported by twelve pillars of which four pillars are same delicately carved. Pillars are the major part of Western Chalukya architecture and were produced in two main types: pillars with alternate square blocks and a sculptured cylindrical section with a plain square-block base, and bell-shaped lathe-turned pillars. The former type is more vigorous and stronger than the bell-shaped type, which is made of soapstone and has a quality of its own. Inventive craftsmanship was used on soapstone shafts, roughly carved into the required shapes using a lathe. Instead of laboriously rotating a shaft to obtain the final finish, workers added the final touches to an upright shaft by using sharp tools. Some pillars were left unpolished, as evidenced by the presence of fine grooves made by the pointed end of the tool. In other cases, polishing resulted in pillars with fine reflective properties and other eight are of different designs. The four similar pillars are designed with square and the same design as that of the pillars outside. This *mantapa* seems to be built for sitting of the devotees and holding discussions and discourses. This *mantapa* is enclosed with a wall of big stone slab on two sides at the end of the *mantapa* facilitating the devotees for sitting and resting. (Survey by researcher)

Crossing the *mantapa*, there is an inscription carved outside the *mukha mantapa* in Halegannada (old Kannada). This inscription of 1077AD in the Shankaralinga temple records a grant of 200 mattars of agricultural field measured by **Manikeshvarada-kol**, two mattars of garden, four oil mills and tolls on various commodities sold, therein for the purpose of worship of gods in the Trimurti temple, which comprised also the god Shankaradeva, erected by Shankarabhattopadhyaya in *agrahara* Ankulage which was obtained by him as a gift, and 100 mattars of land for the livelihood of the Brahmanas. (H.Chittarajan, Survey by researcher)



Beautifully chiseled and decorated temples in the temple.

The beautiful Shankaralinga temples are placed within a large enclosure; this east-facing temple is a *trikuta* (triple shrine temple) on plan and the three shrines (*garbhagraha*). All the *garbhagrahas* are equal in size (6x6 ft.). These *garbhagrihas* (sanctas) have a Shivalinga of which one is large and which measures roughly 1 foot which has its lustral water chute on its right side. The other two are small ones. The door frame is carved with three shakhas (bands) and its *lalata* (lintel block) depicts *Gajalakshmi*. The *antarala* attached to each *garbhagrihas* are equal in size that of the *garbhagriha*. The door frame of the *garbhagriha* has finely decorated with floral and *yali* designs and *dwarapalaka* figure on either sides. The top of the door is a seated *gajalakshmi* with worshipping elephants on the either sides being arranged on the three sides of a common *navaranga* (hall) there is *nandi* in the *navaranga* facing the main *garbhagriha* of the temple exactly straight to the *subha mantapa* and *antarala*. The *nandi* is carved 3 feet in height and 4 feet in length, it is highly ornamented on the neck and head. The *sabhamandapa* to the east of this *navaranga* and the prakara of the temple has an entrance mantapa. The open *sabhamandapa* has *kakshasana* (back-rest seat) and four pillar types can be seen. The back of this *kakshasana* is carved with octagons and the *adhishtana* (base) part has the carving of a band of diamond design and a band of elephants. (Survey by researcher)

One of the important features of Western Chalukya roof art (carvings) is the use of domical and square ceilings. This temple has multiple square ceilings (ceiling within ceiling) supported by the four beams which are rested upon four pillars. The dome above the four central pillars is delicately carved which attracts the attention of the viewer. The center of the roof is closed by a single stone slab. The rings are not cemented but held in place by the immense weight of the roofing material. The triangular spaces created as if the dome springs from the center of the square and are filled with arabesques. The square ceilings are divided into compartments with images of lotus rosettes and other images from Hindu mythology. (Survey by researcher)

A major development of Kalyana Chalukya period was the appearance of stellate (star-shaped) shrines in a few temples in a 32-pointed interrupted plan in which three star points are skipped in the center of each side of the shrine projecting corners with five projections per side. Because of the stepped-diamond plan, the wall pillars have two fully exposed sides, with a high base block carved with a mirrored stalk motif and two large wall images above. The shapes and decorations on the rest of the wall pillar have a striking resemblance to the actual pillars supporting the ceiling. This can be witnessed in this temple. (Survey by researcher)

CONCLUSIONS.

Thus it may be concluded that the reign of Chalukyas of Kalyana was an important period in the development of Deccan architecture. The dynasty's temple building activity reached its maturity and culmination in the 12th century with over a hundred temples built across the Deccan, more than half of them in present-day central and northern Karnataka. The temple belonging to this period are found in Hyderabad Karnataka region which resemble the architectural features of the Chalukyas of kalyan. In present Gulbarga district in the talukasolikeAzlupur Aland Chincholi, Chitapur, Jevargi and Sedam several temples of historical importance can be found. among these temples the shankaralinga temple found in ankalg is magnificent and beautiful built in chalukayan (kalyana) style on a stepped-diamond plan, the wall pillars have two fully exposed sides

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