

beautiful brick flooring was laid but in the front portion, laterite blocks were super imposed over the brick flooring.

Further east of the *Kund*, there is another Shiva temple made of laterite block, having a Shivalinga in the garbhagriha with a circular *yonipeetha* oriented towards north.



A number of small shrines of lord Shiva having Shivalinga in the garbhagriha is located towards west side of the north-western sub-shrines of above described *Panchayatana* temple.

Series of Temples:

About 50 meters east of *Panchayatana* temples, there is a series of seven temples having square shape garbhagriha, five of them have Shivalinga in garbhagriha, and sixth temple has a circular Yonipeetha made of brick and seventh temple devoid of any evidence of Shivalinga or image. The Shivalingas in these temples are made of grey colour sand stone, cylindrical in upper part and octagonal in lower portion.



Secular Structure:

Several residential cells of square and rectangular shape with verandah and drainage system made of bricks are located at the southern side of *Panchayatana* temple and adjacent to the southern boundary wall.

Sculptures and Architectural repertoire:

Besides temples and other architectural remains, large number of sculptural remains, architectural members and terracotta objects can also be seen in Benisagar. Architectural member represent a frieze of two erotic scenes, door jambs, lintels and stone slab with relief sculpture of dancing Shiva of 9th to 12th century C.E. Among some of the noteworthy



Lakulisha



Bhairav

sculptures are a broken idol of Bhairav depicted holding sword in his right hand and a *narmada* of Brahma in left hand & a broken idol of Lakulisha is shown in a sitting posture with a lotus on the right side.



Sun



Mahisasurmardini

Representation of Sun god is shown in standing posture having lotus in both hands. Pingal and Dandi are also depicted. In the lower portion seven horses are shown along with *Sarathi* Arun. Several sculptures of Agni, Ganesha, Mahisasurmardini, Hanuman and

Yamuna are also kept at Sculpture shed and attest to the worship of the *panchopasana* cult in the region. Terracotta objects represents, sealing, depicting lion in sitting posture, miniature figures of bird and other animals, religious figures made on single mould, etc.

Inscription:

A circular seal with a linear border, bearing letters in nail headed Brahmi script.



It is horizontally bifurcated and motifs depicted on the upper half represent rosary beads, *Kamandalu* and Danda. The legend below comprising nine letters which are read: "*priyangudheyamchaturvidya*". This means a person called Priyangu is well versed in the four vedas. The seal has Brahmi characters from 5th CE and Sanskrit language



Monument is open from sunrise to sunset

Entry Fee: Free

Photography permitted (without tripod)

Videography charges Rs-25/-

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Benisagar



प्रान्तकोशिकापारम्पर्य

Archaeological Survey of India

Ranchi Circle, Ranchi

Benisagar or *Benusagar* (Long. 85° 53'39" E, Lat. 21° 59' 01" N) is located at the border of Odisha in Majgaon block, West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand, about 85 km. south of district headquarter, Chaibasa. The site was declared protected vide Gazette notification no F-4-34/38F dated 02/11/1938. Based on local traditions, it is named after the tank excavated by a local ruler Benu Raja, son of the Raja of Kesgarh. The tank Benisagar covers an area of about 500x500 meters. Small elevated landmass is located at the centre of the tank, which can be approached from southern direction. Few mounds with brick bats can also be seen towards eastern and south-eastern side of the tank. Even some structural remains of bricks, laterite and Khondalites blocks are exposed towards south-eastern side of the tank.



The archaeological remains of Benisagar were first reported by Col. Tickell in year 1840, who documented the legend of Raja Benu, who ruled over 200 years before. Tickell has mentioned about the carved stones and sculptures kept alongside stone embankments, which might belong to ruined temples arranged around the tank, and remains of a temple at the central elevated land mass.

Col. Tickell further described the remains of fortress or *gadhi* towards southeast of the tank, existing with massive walls supported with bastions and towers at all corners, with evidence of few mutilated sculptures located at the centre of the fort. About 300 yards further south to the fort, he noticed another brick mound called as *Kacheri* of Raja by the local people.

Later, in year 1875 J.D. Beglar inspected the site and mentioned the presence of sculptures of Ganesha, Kali, Mahisasurmardini, along with exquisite carved stone pieces at the site and ascribed them a date of 7th century C.E. He also referred to few Jain images at the site, which later proved to be Brahmanical in nature. Beglar also mentioned about carved stones and sculptures near the south-east corner of the tank embankment, as earlier reported by Tickell.

Archaeological remains

The site of Benisagar has various archaeological remains representing seven different temples and subsidiary shrines, most of them devoted to Shiva. Besides this, residential structures, sculpture of Ganesha, Bhairava, Lakulisha, Surya, Mahisasurmardini, Yamuna and many other minor god and goddesses of Brahmanical religion have been unearthed.

There are number of temple remains dedicated to Lord Shiva and probably belong to the concept of Ashtashambhu, which was a popular cult during the early medieval and medieval period in eastern India.

Temple at Island :



At the centrally elevated 'Island', remains of a brick temple is noticed in the form of a square platform, enclosed within an enclosure wall facing the east direction. A platform was exposed upto 12

courses of bricks with a height of 72 cm. The flights of three steps were provided to the platform from east. The platform is enclosed with a 67 cm wide enclosure wall. The space between the platform and enclosure wall served the purpose of circumambulation. A brick structure is attached from the middle or centre of the eastern enclosure wall. The longer axis of this structure is oriented in east-west direction, whereas its extreme eastern portion is in the shape of semi-circular or *Chandrashila* type. On both sides of the entrance, cistern were constructed to store water and internally connected with the tank.

Temples at Eastern bank:



A Shiva temple made of brick is located at the centre of eastern bank of the tank. The temple has a 42 cm long phallus shaped Shivalinga, raised at the centre of a rectangular Yonipectha made of bricks in the garbhagriha. It has two parts; *Bramhabhaga* (an octagonal lower portion) and *Rudrabhaga* (upper portion). A bathing *ghat* is also attached at the edge with flights of brick steps leading towards the tank. The temple at the centre of the tank and both these structures are aligned with each other. Both these temples belong to Gupta and Post Gupta period (5th to 6th century C.E.).

Another brick temple is located on the eastern bank of the tank, with a small square sanctum, facing east with 1.22 meters wide opening to a rectangular *mandapa*. There is a antaraia constructed between both structures. A brick structure, probably made for installation of

Shivalinga was constructed in the centre of *garbhagriha*, made of three mouldings with offset and inset designs. North to this temple, an oblong shaped brick remains built possibly for ritualistic purpose is also noticed. Floor of the structure slopes towards all four sides. Further north a rectangular brick structure with verandah, probably used for the residential and store purpose was exposed.

Temples at Devasthan (south-eastern area) :

Towards south-east of the tank, another small size temple of dressed laterite stone is located, planned in *trirathastyle*. This temple can be assigned to 9th to 10th century C.E.

A *Panchayatan* temple made of stone and bricks are located towards south-east embankment of the tank, also known as *Devsthan*. Its *garbhagriha* is *triratha* in plan. It has *antara* and *mandapa* as well.

Two doorjambes are also there with a standing Shiva as door guardian, holding a trident in left hand. The temple has rectangular porch made of bricks. It also has four subsidiary shrines having *Shivalinga* with rectangular *Yonipectha*.



About 04 meters further south of this Panchayatan temple, there are remains of a *kund* with a projected entrance from east, dug up to 1.67 meters and have 30 courses of bricks. It also has four steps to reach the *kund*. It is *triratha* in plan, similar to those found in the temple architecture. All around the *Kund*, very