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Atru

Tale of a Forgotten Temple Town



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Introduction: Context, Sources and Significance

The town Atru (25°21' N, 76°42' E), located in the District Baran of Rajasthan, remains a prominent yet understudied place to understand the history of the early medieval temple architecture of India. The town belonged to the larger Hadoti region, which served for decades as the cultural frontier for the artistic influence from Central India and Rajasthan. The history of the grand temple construction dates from the eighth century and probably lasted till the thirteenth century, flourishing under the Pratihara, Paramara and probably Chahamanas patronage. The remains of the temples at Atru serve as the sole testimony to its glory as a prominent temple town of that era.

Much of the history of this region in southeastern Rajasthan remains unknown before its consolidation into the non-formal province of Hadoti. The region was explored during the tours of Sir Alexander Cunningham (1884) and was later followed by James Tod (1829-32). Much of Sir Cunningham's work focussed on Buddhist sites, and James Tod was more interested in the oral, bardic, as well as genealogical scale of Hadoti and HadaChauhanas that kept Atru away from their mention.

The place came to be documented first during the tours of Dr. Bhandarkar (1905: 48-49), who toured the entire territory of Atru and listed all the temple remains present there. Relying mostly on local traditions, he identified the largest temple at Atru, which then was in a state of ruin, as Gadhgach and attributed its construction to the grandson of Bhagavana Krishna, Aniruddha. In total, Bhandarkar identified eight temples and suggested that much of the remains of the Gadhgach temple were used up in the construction of some of those remaining eight temples, although this theory remains contested. The extent of knowledge about the site and its temples did not change much after the survey, as there was still a massive literacy deficit to structure its origin and development.

The nature of all the temples at Atru remains distinct from each other, while most of the temples are living, their present condition is far from ideal. Most of these temples, especially those dedicated to Bhagavana Siva, only have their sanctum sanctorum surviving, and the rest, barring two, have collapsed. These two temples are locally revered as the Sardev Mata Temple and the Gadhi/Gadhiya, or as the Shyama-Sundara Temple. Besides these, there is also a colossal image of a Jain *tirthankara* affixed in the debris at the Nagadeva ruins. The foundation and remains of these temples establish the town of Atru to be a centre of importance for the Sanatana and Jain faiths both that prospered here till the middle of medieval period before meeting an unfortunate end at the hands of invading forces.

Geographical Landscape

Atru lies in the southeastern part of the Baran district, formerly forming part of the Kota district, within the Hadoti region. The town is located along the Parvan (Parban) River, with the Kali Sindh and Parbati rivers nearby, and flanked by the Mukundara Hills, providing fertile lands and natural strategic advantages. The region forms the northeastern fringe of the Malwa plateau, linking the Malwa cultural zone with the riverine corridors of Hadoti.

The district of Baran is situated in the southeastern part of Rajasthan in a way that it is bordered by the State of Madhya Pradesh in the east, north, south, and south-east. In the north-west, it is bounded

by the Kota district and in the south-west by the Jhalawar district. The area forms an extension of the uplands, which is part of the Malwa plateau; therefore, the area broadly consists of low hills and undulating plains.

The majority of the region of the district remains a flat plain with an average elevation of 250 meters above the sea level, except for the Mukandara hill ranges that trend north-west to south-west with an average elevation of 492 meters. Due to the ranges, the southeastern and eastern parts of the district form a prominent geomorphologic feature.

The hills belong to the Vindhyan ranges, a semicircular form that comes from Madhya Pradesh, passes through the lower middle part of Chhipabarod tehsil to its south and goes towards the north-west corner, joining the ranges of adjoining areas of Jhalawar district and goes up to Dara and right down to the Chambal. These ranges also pass through the Chhabra and Atru areas.

The district is the sub-basin of the Chambal and its tributary rivers Kali Sindh, Parvati, Parwan and Kuno. Parwan river originates from the Vindhyan ranges and enters the district near Harnawada Shahji and flows through the central parts of the Atru tehsil to join Kali Sindh. The Andheri River enters Chhipabarod tehsil from Madhya Pradesh and joins Parvati six kilometres east of Atru (Government of Rajasthan 1982).

Historical Background

Before the Mauryan age, the region was probably occupied by republican tribes. After the invasion of Alexander in the late fourth century BCE, the Malavas or Malloi moved southwards, establishing themselves in Rajasthan. Their earliest capital was likely Nagara (Karkotanagara), and the territory came to be known as Malavanagara. Although they were temporarily subdued by the Western Kshatrapas, the Malavas reasserted themselves in the third century CE, continuing until the Gupta period. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta mentions his campaign in this region, recording the submission of local rulers. The Badwa inscription (238 CE) also refers to a Maukhari General Bala ruling in Kota as a vassal of the Malava republic, suggesting continuing Malava influence into the mid-fourth century CE. Even after incorporation into the Gupta orbit, Malava elements survived locally, reflected in coinage issued until c. 400 CE (Bajpai 1976).

While the subsequent incursions of the Huns destabilised the region, in the sixth century, Yasodharman of Malwa rose as a strong ruler and consolidated territories from the Pariyatra Mountains to the Narmada. His authority is attested to in inscriptions, with probable references in Mandasor and Chittor. An inscription from Jhalrapatan (690 CE) refers to a Mauryan scion, Raja Durggana, indicating that members of the Maurya lineage lingered in the region after the main dynasty's fall. Later, a Naga family possibly dominated, as suggested by references in early medieval epigraphy. These transitional centuries marked the rise of new polities while older lineages adapted to local conditions (Sharma 1970).

By the eighth to ninth centuries CE, the Paramaras of Dhar extended their influence. The Shergarh inscription of 790 CE records Samanta Devadatta, a feudatory who established a Buddhist temple and monastery at Shergarh (Koshavardhana). This evidences the coexistence of political consolidation and

Buddhist patronage. Later Paramara rulers, such as Udayaditya and Naravarman, maintained authority in the region. Inscriptions from Shergarh, including one of 713 CE, record connections between Rajput lineages and earlier Mori (Maurya?) rulers. The disintegration of Paramara authority by the twelfth century, however, opened the way for Bhils, Minas, and Chauhans to establish control, ultimately integrating the area into Hadoti (Sharma 1975).

By the twelfth century, Rajputs were advancing into the region, contesting territory with Minas and Bhils. Around 1143 CE, the Chauhans, Kachhawahas, and Khichis encircled Mina domains. In the thirteenth century, Rao Deva (or Devi Singh), a Hada Chauhan, annexed these areas, establishing control. A legend associates the clan's name, Hada, with their ancestor Ashtipala, who was killed in a battle but miraculously revived by his family deity from his bones (*hadh*). This gave rise to the term Hara or Hada. His descendants, notably Banga Deo and Deva Singh, consolidated power in Bundi, although political fortunes fluctuated with conflicts against Bhils and rival Rajput factions.

Samar Singh, son of Deva Singh, entrenched the principality on the Chambal's banks. His successors, including Jait Singh and Napuji, fought recurrent battles with the Bhils and attempted to dominate Kota. Kota eventually became an appanage of Bundi, reflecting the shifting balance of Rajput authority. Hammir Singh of Ranthambhor further extended control toward the end of the thirteenth century. By the sixteenth century, both Bundi and Kota intermittently slipped into the hands of Pathan freebooters, caught between Rajput ambitions and Malwa Sultanate incursions.

The later medieval centuries saw turbulence as Bundi and Kota alternated between Rajput, Sultanate, and Afghan control. By the Mughal period, Bundi and Kota had crystallised into semi-autonomous Rajput states, continuing the legacies established centuries earlier. There are no temples which go beyond this timeline, and therefore, the history is not elaborated further (Government of Rajasthan 1982).

Sacred and Religious Sites

The Hadoti corridor, centred around Atru and extending into Kota, Jhalawar, and Baran, has been a seat of continuous religious activity since at least the Gupta period (fifth century CE). Over time, it became a dense clustering of multi-religious sacred sites, today largely protected by state or central authorities. The important temple sites are described below:

Kota District

This region has been home to religious centres for Brahminical, Jain as well as Buddhist faiths since the Gupta age, with temples and monasteries asserting its sacred landscape.

- **Dara (Bhimchauri):** About forty-five kilometres from Kota, at Dara, a Gupta-period temple called Bhimachuri is situated. The temple is the oldest among the temples in Rajasthan and is dedicated to Bhagavana Siva. The site is a Centrally Protected Monument under ASI.
- **Charchauma:** Another Gupta-period Siva temple, twenty-five kilometres from Kota. An inscription in Gupta Brahmi on the temple walls proves its existence from about the fifth century. The site is a Centrally Protected Monument under ASI.

- **Kansua:** The eighth-century Siva temple built by a vassal of the Mauryan dynasty is considered as a masterpiece of the period by Meister and Dhaky (1991). The temple contains an inscription datable to 738 CE. An image of Lakulisa stands before the *mandapa*, and outside the temple is a three-feet-tall Sahasra Sivalinga and a six-feet-tall life-size statue of BatukaBhairava. The site is a Centrally Protected Monument under ASI.
- **Aavan (Sangod tehsil):** A group of temples dated to the ninth–twelfth century, belonging to the Pratihara period. The prominent temple appears to be dedicated to Bhagavana Siva due to the presence of Uma-Mahesvara, Karttikeya, Andhakasuravadha, Kalyanasundara, and Saivite monks carved on the walls. The site is a State Protected Monument under the Rajasthan Department of Archaeology.
- **Chandresal (Sangod tehsil):** On the same tract as Charchauma, Atru, and Chandrabhanga, near the Parvati River, a ninth-tenth century Saivite monastery of the Giri sect is located here, associated with Tantric worship. The site is a State Protected Monument under the Rajasthan Department of Archaeology.

Jhalawar District

This region, from the early fifth century, flourished as a major centre of Siva, Sakti, Vaishnava, and Jain worship.

- **Chandrabhanga Group of Temples (Chandravati):** Located on the banks of the Chandrabhanga River. A seventh-century inscription records the construction of a Siva temple during the reign of Durgagana. The complex consists of three Siva temples (the most prominent being Sitalesvara), a Vishnu Temple, a Mahishasuramardini/Navadurga Temple, and a four-pillared Ganesa *mandapa*. The site is a Centrally Protected Monument under ASI.
- **Sat Saheli Temple:** Originally a Siva temple, later converted into a Vaishnava shrine.
- **Nava Durga Temple (Gangdhar):** Mentioned in an inscription of 423 CE, this site was a centre of Sakti worship and Tantric rituals.
- **Jhalrapatan (Shah Pipa):** Santinatha Digambara octagonal Jain temple, built in 1046 CE.
- **Keshorayapatan:** A pedestal of a *Tirthankara* idol dated 607 CE (664 V.S.), identified as the earliest Jain idol and epigraphic evidence of Rajasthan. The site houses a complex of medieval temples. The town comes under the Bundi District.
- **Baroli Complex:** The tenth-century Ghateshwar Mahadev Temple lies on the Malwa–Hadoti–Mewar trade route. At present it comes under Chittorgarh District. In the sanctum, five *Lingas* are carved on the *Yoni-patta*. The group comprises nine shrines: Ghateshwar Mahadev, Trimurti Temple, Mahishasuramardini Temple, Vamana Temple, a *Matrika* shrine, and smaller Siva shrines. Temple No. 2 contained a Seshasayi Vishnu idol (now in the State Museum, Kota). Temple No. 6 is dedicated to Mahishasuramardini. The site is a Centrally Protected Monument under AS (Sharma 1940; Gautam 2005; Singh 2002).

Baran District

From the tenth century onwards, Baran became a prominent seat of Saivism as well as Jainism, enriched by Pratihara, Paramara, and later dynastic patronage.

- **Ramgarh (Bhandevra):** The temple is dedicated to Siva. Due to the abundance of sculptural richness, the temple site is locally called 'Mini Khajuraho'. An inscription records its construction by a Nagavamsi King Malaya Varma of Malwa, dedicated to Siva to commemorate victory over his enemy. It was renovated in 1162 CE by the Medavamsi King Trisasavarma.
- **Kakoni Group of Temples (ChhipaBarod tehsil):** Situated on the Parvan River near Sarathal, these ninth–twelfth century temples reflect patronage under the Parmaras, Pratiharas, and Chauhans. A three-and-a-half-feet-tall Sahasra Sivalinga of six feet circumference is installed here.
- **Krishna Vilas (Bilasgarh):** Located on a tributary of the Parvati River, this temple town has a number of temples dedicated to various deities of Hindu and Jain faith. The site is a Centrally Protected Monument under ASI.
- **Bichhalas:** A twelfth-century roadside Siva temple, restored except for the sanctum sanctorum (Sharma 1940; Gautam 2005; Singh 2002).

Religious Landscape

The region was politically extremely dynamic and turbulent in nature, which complicated its history, but even the continuous dynastical shift could not halt the religious traditions which persisted. The temple construction flourished under diverse patronages, and the presence of temples, shrines, and monasteries suggests a varied cultural web. The religious plurality, which is the essence of Indian society, is reflected here by the coexistence of Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanical traditions. To confirm the most popular faith in this region would be difficult due to its vast history and the ever-changing nature of the population.

Buddhism and Jainism

The Hadoti region, especially the Baran-Kota-Jhalawar tract, was an important Buddhist and Jain centre from the early medieval period or even earlier. The presence of Buddhism is known from the inscriptions attesting the presence of a Buddhist monastery commissioned in the eighth century under Samanata Devadatta at Shergarh. The traces of the faith are preserved in the Buddhist caves of Jhalawar, which suggests that the extent of the monastic activity was widespread in this region during that era, so much so that it was recognised by royal patrons as well. The Buddhist visibility declined with the passage of time, while the prominence of Jainism and Hinduism increased in the region.

The ascendancy of Jainism particularly left a strong and enduring imprint on Hadoti. At Koshavardhana (Shergarh), numerous Jain temples and images were commissioned between the tenth and twelfth centuries. The inscriptions record a great community festival which was attended by pilgrims. In 1105 CE, the installation of *Tirthankara* images was celebrated, while in 1134 CE, a certain Devapala consecrated the idols of the triad of Santinatha, Kunthunatha, and Aranatha. Jain caves dating from the ninth to tenth centuries survive at Ramgarh, near Baran, suggesting the monastic presence in the region (Singh 2002). Krishna Vilas (Bilasgarh) preserves further ruins of Jain establishments.

Vaishnavism and Saivism

With the rise of the Rajput political domination, the stronghold of Saivism was almost a parallel development, as well as that of Vaishnavism. The earliest presence is of Saivism, which comes from the fifth-century temple of Charchoma. The temple is dated to the Gupta period and is associated with the exiled queen of Kannauj. After that, the eighth-century temple at Kansua was commissioned by Om Sivagana. The patronage continued till the tenth century at Ramgarh, where the Bhandevra Temple was built by the Nagavamsi King Malayavarmana (the temple was also restored in 1162 CE). This temple, due to its star-shaped Dravida shrine and intricate sculptural program, was also termed “mini Khajurao.” The Bhandevra temple also becomes important as in its premises, it has subsidiary shrines probably dedicated to Vishnu, Ganapati, and Sakti. The Somanatha Temple at Shergarh served as an important pilgrimage centre in the tenth-eleventh centuries. The temple was built on the orders of the Paramara ruler Udayaditya. Although the temple was later destroyed, its Sivalinga is believed to have been transferred to the Lakshminarayana Temple, which still preserves the name Somanatha.

Vaishnava worship saw its epoch during the Pratihara times, though the Paramaras and other dynasties also patronised temples dedicated to Vishnu. The oldest mention of Vaishnava worship comes from an inscription dated to 423 CE from Gangdhar (Jhalawar), now preserved in the State Museum. It records that Mayuraksha, minister of Visvavarman and the vassal of Kumaragupta, commissioned a Vishnu temple at the site. There is additional evidence of Vaishnava worship in the region from Bhingarh near Sarthal, where a ninth-century Narasimha shrine has been identified, as well as from Aavan/Awan, where Vishnu images were recovered. From the Baroli Temple complex, a tenth-century Seshasayi Vishnu image was found, which is now in the Kota State Museum. An inscription from Shergarh records the construction of a Lakshmi-Narayana temple in 1028 CE, built under the Paramara King Udayaditya. At Krishna Vilas (Bilasarh), Vaishnavism became prominent, which gave the site its present name. Further evidence of eighth–ninth century Vaishnava temples is also recorded from Dhamnar (Singh 2002).

Sakta Traditions

The prevalence of Sakta and Tantric worship in Hadoti is confirmed by an inscription from Gangdhar (Jhalawar), dated to 423 CE, which refers to a temple of *Dakinis* on the banks of the river. The Sakta worship in the later centuries made its continuous presence known by often integrating with Siva temples (Gautam 2005). Entire Rajasthan has a strong tradition of Goddess worship, with almost every temple having a panel of *matrikas* or a separate shrine for the local goddess or deity, and this region is no exception to the phenomenon.

The Hadoti corridor was a passageway for the interaction of the central and western parts of northern India, which led to a spur of changing political, social and religious landscape. From the fifth century onwards, the temple activity flourished here, and to assert their dominance, the rulers continued to provide patronage to all sects. This network contributed to making many distinct traditions in the art and architecture of India. This ever-changing and versatile nature of temple art and architecture is felt at Atru the same way it was in the rest of Hadoti, and therefore, this town can be used as a medium to understand this broader development of traditions of the region.

Background of Atru

Located within the Baran district, which in itself is at a nascent stage, Atru, a town, is contesting for a position in the archaeological and historical landscape of the early medieval northwestern India. Despite more than a century old knowledge about this town that came about in the form of dilapidated temples and fragmented inscriptions, it has been severely neglected in the discourse of Indian temple art and architecture.

The limited literary sources that are emphasised a lot are the two epigraphical studies of three inscriptions. The first discovered inscription was found by Dr. Bhandarkar (1905: 48) on the pillar of the Gadhgach Temple. It records a grant given to a poet Narayana by the Maharajadhiraja Jayasimha in his fourteenth regnal year. Bhandarkar identified the date to be 1128 CE on the basis of the Chalukyan ruler's reign. This inscription was not only a grant record but also a *Ghadegal* or Ass curse stone inscription, which suggests its sacral function. The other sources are published by Somani (1982: 151), and both are tenth-century inscriptions. One dated to 1108 CE notes the installation of a *ChaturvimsatiPatta* by the merchant Sahadeva under the guidance of Subhankara, a pupil of the Saint Lokanandi. The other inscription records the installation of a Parsvanatha image by Yamadeva, son of Jinapala, and names saints such as "Sri Sarvanandyacharya" and the "Sarvakanandivihara." On this basis, scholars have inferred the existence of a Parsvanatha shrine at Atru, although no material evidence of such a temple survives. Both of these inscriptions were found on the sculptures housed in the Kota Museum.

A particularly significant episode in the resurfacing and rediscovery of Atru was due to the interception of the so-called 'contraband cargo' at Bombay port in the 1970s, which included two sculptural pieces illicitly removed from Atru. These were high-quality sculptural niches depicting an amorous couple; the carving style and details attracted the attention of the scholar Kirit Mankodi (2013: 371-379). These pieces were retrieved, and with that, the lost heritage of the city also returned. These panels were from the base moulding of the Gadhgach Temple.

The architectural fragments at Atru are scattered around its area and are affiliated to various faiths and are likely built over several centuries. The presence of Saivite, Jain, Vaishnava and standalone *Matrika* temple suggests a diverse religious environment much like the rest of Hadoti. The complementary sects are occupying overlapping spaces; the awareness of the locals about the temples is reflected as the members of one temple are reused in constructing the other temples or structures, including village walls, newer temples, and step wells. The sculptural assemblage of the site is also spread across these temples and structures, and it becomes necessary to assign them their original space. The temple remains suggest Atru to be a flourishing temple town with prominent temple construction activities from the eighth to the twelfth centuries, followed by an unfortunate destruction, perhaps in the course of either the Delhi Sultanate or during the subsequent Islamic campaigns, leading to its present-day ruinous state.

Architecture

The architectural remains present at Atru were first sighted and documented by Dr. Bhandarkar during his fieldwork in 1904–05. In his report, he recorded a total of nine temples, of which eight belonged to the early medieval period and exhibited Vaishnava and Saiva affiliations, while a later-period Ganesa temple

was also noted. Dr. Bhandarkar specifically ascribed the construction of the Gadhgach Temple to King Aniruddha, grandson of Krishna, based on prevalent local traditions. He was also the first to assign the date of 1128 CE to the temple, deriving this from an inscription he reported at the site, and further associated the place with the Chalukyan ruler Jayasimha, although the inscription itself does not explicitly present such a connection.

Another important temple, the Shyam-Sundar Temple, was also documented by Dr. Bhandarkar, who dated its construction to the mid-fourteenth to fifteenth century, attributing it to a Rani of Bundi based on local oral traditions. However, Dr. Mankodi argued that the temple exhibits structural features typical of a Pratihara layout, suggesting that it may have originally been constructed in an earlier period and subsequently restored in later centuries, which could explain Bhandarkar's later date attribution influenced by local legends.

Beyond these major temple structures, remains of a *kunda* located outside the present-day town limits were also mentioned, which he suggested dates to the ninth century based on the presence of a Nandi idol found nearby. In addition to the *kunda*, this work recorded the remains of a step well and a partially broken structure composed of architectural members evidently sourced from earlier temples. A Hanuman Temple and Natho ka Math near the Gadhiya temple, as well as the Neelkantha Math, were also noted. Two Siva temples in the vicinity incorporate architectural fragments from earlier Hindu and Jaina shrines, either affixed into their walls or preserved within their premises. Additionally, an abandoned platform was found near the Gadhgach Temple with dilapidated sculptures present on it.

Architectural Plans

Gadhgach Temple

The Gadhgach Temple at Atru is the prime architecture example of the site. The temple is in a ruinous state that is reflected in its name which mean a “disorderly heap.” The plan of the temple suggests that the temple was once a massive construction of about thirty meters. According to scholars like Dr. Mankodi, it reflects a two-phase construction history. The first phase, dated to the ninth century CE falls within the Pratihara period.

The temple is built on a broad *jagati* and follows a *pancharatha* plan with *fiverathas* or vertical offsets on each side of the temple wall, clearly visible in the layout of the *garbhagriha* and *antarala*. The temple plan includes a *garbhagriha*, *antarala*, and a *sabhamandapa* supported by sixteen pillars preceded by a *mukhamandapa* to the east. The *vedibandha* is made of well-dressed sandstone and decorated with floral bands, *padma* medallions, and figural panels. The use of *bharavahaka* figures further ornate the craft scheme.

In the second phase several architectural changes were made. These include the addition of a semi-circular *chandrasila* facing east, an *ardhamandapa*, a south-facing *vedika*, and *piṭha* mouldings enhancing the base. This later construction is credited to Paramaras by Dr. Mankodi.

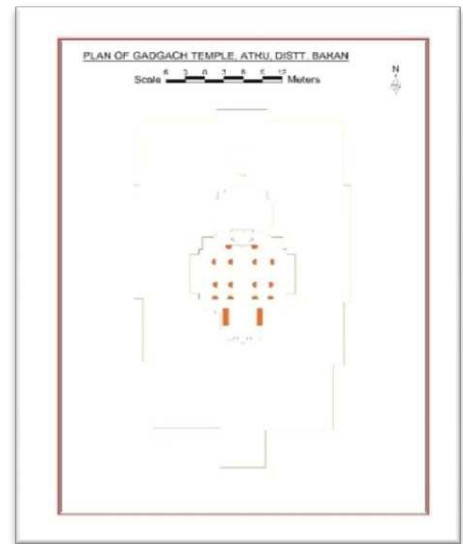
Scattered around the site are stacks of architectural members which include broken *amalakas*, *kalasa* fragments, *sikhara* pieces, ceiling slabs, and brackets, as well as pillars belonging to the

rangamandapa and possibly a northern *mandapa*. The plan also shows axial and lateral symmetry consistent with temples of this period.

Dr. Bhandarkar and Dr. Mankodi both identified this temple to be dedicated to Bhagavana Vishnu and to the Pancharatra sect. While existence of Krishna-*lila* depictions on the panels and *jagati* of the temple supports the claim, there are certain doubts. The iconography of the temple also includes depiction of sages, skeletons and number of Saiva depictions. A sculptural panel of the *Matrikas* is depicted on the *mandaraka* of the *garbhagriha* which is again uncommon in the Vaishnava temples. However, the doorjamb and various Vrishni episodes confirm it as a Pancharatra temple which has sufficient impact of Saivism too. In all probability, the temple was constructed in a single phase during the tenth century CE. Overall, the temple's structure and sculptural details mark it as a significant example of late Pratihara temple architecture.



Plate 1: Gadhgach Temple *jagati*.



Plan 1: Gadhgach Temple lay-out



Archival Image 1: Gadhgach temple mound and ruins taken in 1904-05.

Gadhia Temple

The Gadhia Temple or Shyamsundar Temple at Atru is constructed in an early medieval Nagara style architecture. The temple follows a *pancha-ratha* plan and the architecture of the temple aligns with the later Pratihara and early Paramara period constructions which dates to the tenth - eleventh century CE in the Hadoti region of Rajasthan.

The temple is oriented towards the west which is a common directional alignment. It is seated on a low but modest *jagati* and follows the tri-partite plan of *mandapa*, *antarala*, and *garbhagriha*. The main entrance aligns on the western axis and is approached by a short flight of steps commencing with a simple *chandrasila*. There are two other entrances to the north and south which flank the *garbhagriha*, both are designed akin to the frontal entrance. The tri-direction access suggests a probable ritual circumambulation or a localised pattern of multi-directional entrance.

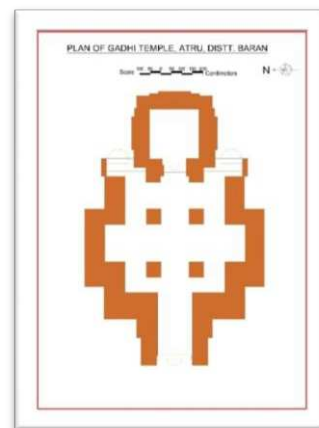
The *garbhagriha* is square-shaped and serves as the sanctum for Bhagavana Vishnu. It is preceded by a narrow *antarala* that serves as a transitional space between the *garbhagriha* and the *mandapa*. The *mandapa* is open on three sides and is supported by four central pillars. The pillars depict heavy capitals with square *abaci*. The *kakshasana* is present with low parapet walls indicating a space for gathering.

The *adhishtana* and the *vedibandha* of the temple is composed of classical Nagara style mouldings with a shallow *upana*, a rounded *kumuda*, a *kantha* and a *pattika* with a well-defined *kapota*. The mouldings are modestly ornate. The *jangha* is divided into *bhadra* and *karna* which encompasses of pilasters and niches. The sculptural profile includes divinities placed within niches which are capped by miniature *sikharas*.

The *sikhara* over the *garbhagriha* is of a *rekha nagara* style marked by a rising curvilinear form. The *sikhara* culminates into a two-tiered *amalaka* and is capped by a *kalasa* with a conical top. In contrast the *mandapa* of the temple is surmounted by a *phamsana* like structure. The roof consists of pyramidal and stepped profile made of flat stone slabs. Rather than the vertical alignment of the *garbhagriha*, the *mandapa* is covered by a horizontal spread. In the centre of it is a domical disc with a finial. The lower tiers depict a *kapota* and a *chhajja* projected outwards.



Plate 2: Gadhiya Temple



Plan 2: Gadhiya Temple lay-out



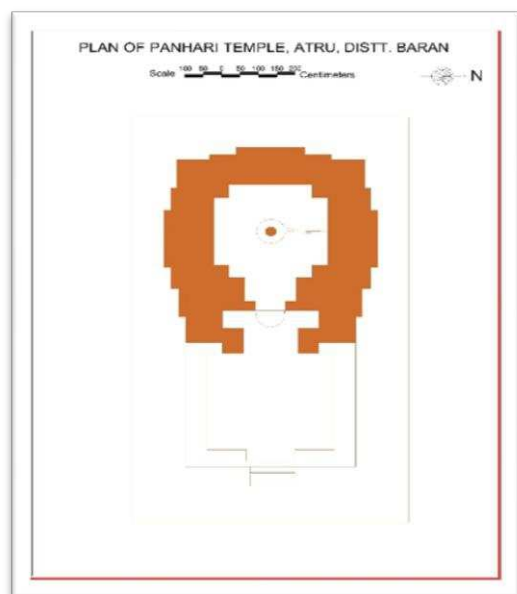
Archival image 3-4, depicts the outer and inner view of the Gadhiya temple taken in 1904-05.



Plate 3: Panihari Temple

Panihari Temple

The Panihari Temple at Atru is an east-facing shrine datable to the tenth century CE. Architecturally, it adheres to the *pancharatha* plan, wherein the *garbhagriha* exhibits five distinct projections (*rathas*) on its exterior plan. The temple is elevated on a modest, plain *jagati* which is approached by a short flight of steps on the frontal axis.



Plan 3: Panihari Temple lay-out

The *antarala* is structurally defined by two quadrilateral pillars surmounted by capitals with square *abaci*, exhibiting a simplistic transitional space between the *garbhagriha* and the (now absent) *mandapa*. The *garbhagriha* houses a Sivalinga representing Bhagavana Siva, installed atop a circular *yonipitha*.

The *vedibandha* is composed of unornamented horizontal mouldings, and the *jangha* similarly remains devoid of sculptural embellishment. The original *sikhara* above the *garbhagriha* is no longer extant and has been substituted with a flat roof during later restorative interventions. There is no surviving *mandapa*, nor is there architectural evidence of attendant or subsidiary shrines in the immediate vicinity. Minor modern restorations are evident particularly on the upper courses and portions of the wall masonry.

Sardev Mata Temple

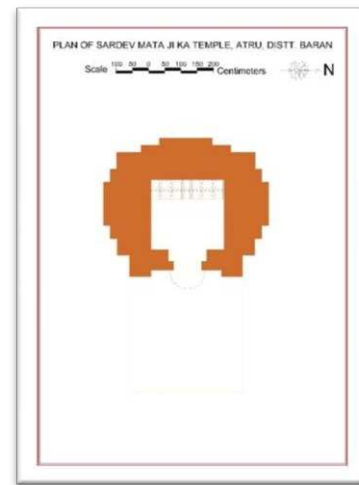
The Sardev Mata Temple at Atru is an east facing shrine which can be dated between tenth and eleventh century CE. The temple is made in Nagara style which a *pancharatha* layout. The *garbhagriha* stands on a moulded *jagati* with massive *upana* and *kapota* mouldings. The *jangha* is divided into five distinct parts or offsets with minimal ornamentation.

The *garbhagriha* entrance is elaborately decorated with intricately crafted door jamb and lintel. The *mandaraka* features *kirttimukhas* and is followed by a relatively plain *chandrasila*. The *lalatabimba* reinforces the Sakta affiliations of the temple.

The *sikhara* of the temple is dilapidated although the partially visible section of it suggests that it was crafted in a *rekha nagara* style.



Plate 4: Sardev Mata Temple



Plan 4: Sardev Mata Temple lay-out

Chhinhari Temple

The Chhinhari Temple at Atru is an east facing shrine. The temple is of Nagara style and follows a *tri-ratha* plan layout. The temple has a simple square *garbhagriha* with *bhadra* projection on three sides. The construction at present is in stone masonry. The doorway of the *garbhagriha* is ornate with a minimally carved *lalatabimba* depicting a Saiva image housed in an elaborate niche situated at the centre of the member. The doorjambs similarly are minimally ornate with intricately crafted *dvarapalas* and river goddesses carved on them. A modest *mandaraka* serves as the entrance.

The *garbhagriha* is dedicated to Bhagavana Siva in the form of a Sivalinga based on a square-shaped *yonipitha*. The superstructure atop the *garbhagriha* has collapsed and the *sikhara* of the temple has been replaced with flat roofed surface as a fallout of later repairs.

The *garbhagriha* is devoid of a *mandapa* or an *antarala* and there is no evidence or remains of *jagati* to understand the original nature of the temple. The temple currently stands as a compact shrine.

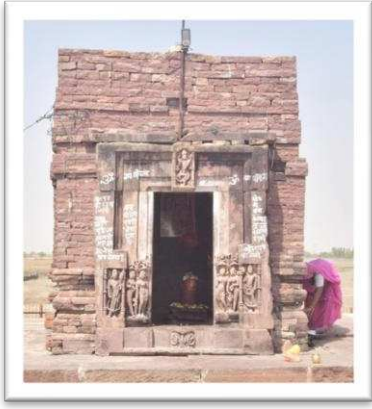
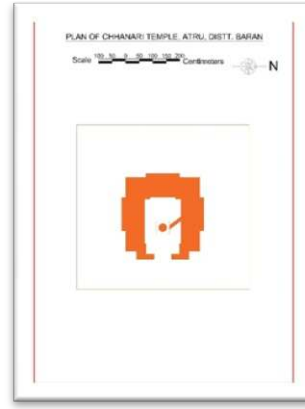


Plate 5: Chhinhari Temple



Plan 5: Chhinhari Temple lay-out

Phool Devra Temple

The Phool Devra Temple at Atru is a west facing temple constructed in Nagara style. The temple is partially ruined with a preserved *garbhagriha*, *antarala* and remains of a *mandapa*. The *garbhagriha* has two entrances, facing the east and west. The object of worship housed in the *garbhagriha* is a Sivalinga.

The *garbhagriha* is situated atop a low *jagati* and is preceded by an open *mandapa* with fallen walls. Only the base and four-pillared arrangement of the *mandapa* survives. The door jambs, lintel and *mandaraka* of the temple are intricately carved with a *panchasakha* door jamb; the *lalatabimba* depicts Lakulisa form of Bhagavana Siva as the central deity. It also depicts *navagraha* panel as well as two more panels of divine affiliations. A panel depicting *Sapta-matrikas* is placed above the lintel. An elaborate *mandaraka* accompanied by a *chandrasila* marks the prime entrance of the *garbhagriha*. The nature of the crafting of the temple suggests that it is an eighth – ninth century temple dedicated to Bhagavana Siva.

The *sikhara* over the *mandapa* is replaced with a flat roof. The *sikhara* of the *garbhagriha* has partially collapsed and an orderly heap of stone slabs is arranged in a linear vertical pattern which now serves as the superstructure. The *adhishtana* of the temple features the typical fivefold arrangement of *khura*, *kumbha*, *kalasa*, *kapota* and *pattika*. The *jangha* of the temple is minimally carved and houses deities. The *bhadra* projections reveals the temple to be of a *pancharatha* layout. The pillars of the temple reflect an eighth century construction.

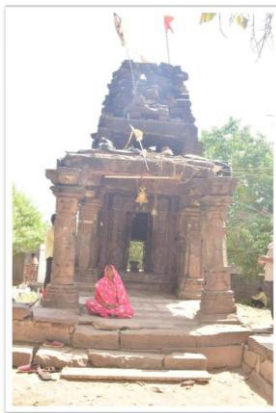
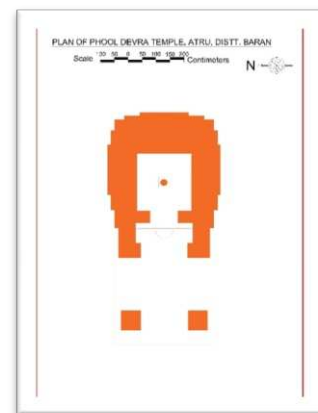


Plate 6: Phool Devra Temple



Plan 6: Phool Devra Temple lay-out

Lal Bihari Temple

The Lal Bihari temple at Atru is a west facing temple made in the Nagara style of architecture and it follows a *pancharatha* layout. The temple comprises a *garbhagriha* and an *antarala* which are intact, the reminiscent of a *mandapa* and a probable entrance which is present in form of pilasters and wall remains, now altered or restored and looks relatively modern.

The *vedibandha* of the temple consists of *kumbha* mouldings which rises to form an ornamented *jangha* with *devakosthas*. The *verandah* is formed with successive *chhadyabanda*(projected horizontal moulding) which develops into the *sikhara*.

The *garbhagriha* of the temple is square in shape and retains its *sikhara* which is developed in a latina type. The *sikhara* is crowned with an *amalaka* which is topped by a *kalasa*. The *sikhara* suggests that the temple is constructed in a Pratihara art style. The entrance of the *garbhagriha* depicts a plain *mandaraka* with a *chandrasila*.

The lintel of the temple depicts the *tridevas* with Bhagavana Vishnu occupying the central space suggesting that the temple enshrined him as the main deity. Contrary to this the door jamb of the temple are certainly not in pair as their pattern is completely different from each other. While the *dvarapala* on the right door jamb is missing its attributes, the one on the left evidently depicts Bhagavana Siva which counters the argument made on the basis of the placement of deities on the lintel. In that case the temple was either a Hari-Hara temple or the now fixed elements of the temple do not belong to this temple.

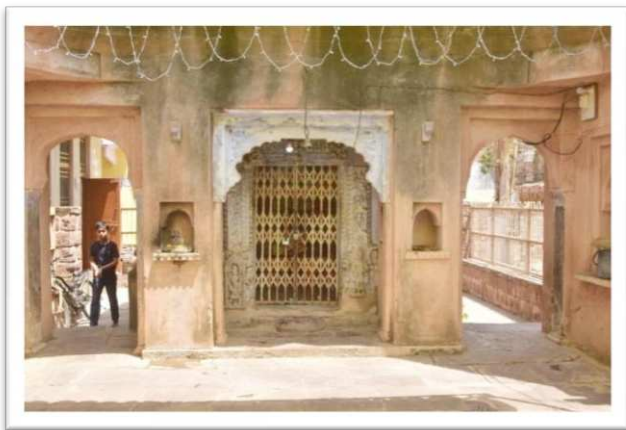
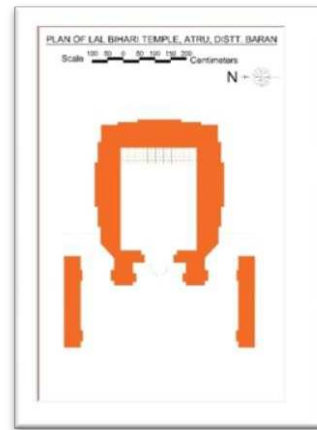


Plate 7: Lal Vihari Temple



Plan 7: Lal Vihari Temple lay-out

Siva Temple

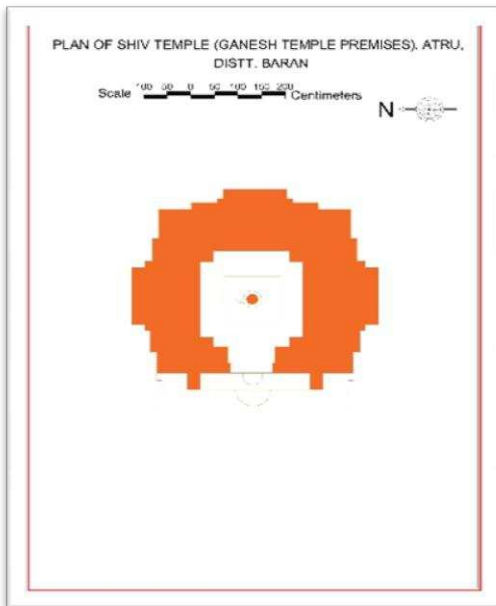
The Siva temple is situated within the premises of the modern Ganesa Temple. The temple is reconstructed and consists of a *garbhagriha* with a simple entrance and no surviving *antarala* or *mandapa*. The *jagati* is plain which develops into a *vedibandha* consisting of *padma*, *kurma* and *kalasa*.



Archival image 5, entrance of Siva Temple, 1904-05

The *adhishthana* and *jangha* of the temple are relatively plain. The temple is constructed in a *saptaratha* layout and is facing west. Above the temple a *sikhara* with domical top is reset which is likely a reconstruction.

The *garbhagriha* of the temple enshrines a prominent Sivalinga as the central deity. The *maṇḍaraka* is intricately carved, featuring motifs of *gaja* (elephants) and *vyala* (mythical beasts), and is surmounted by a *chandrasila*. The lintel above the doorway prominently depicts *Trideva*, with Bhagavana Siva, occupying the central position, indicating his reverence in the temple.

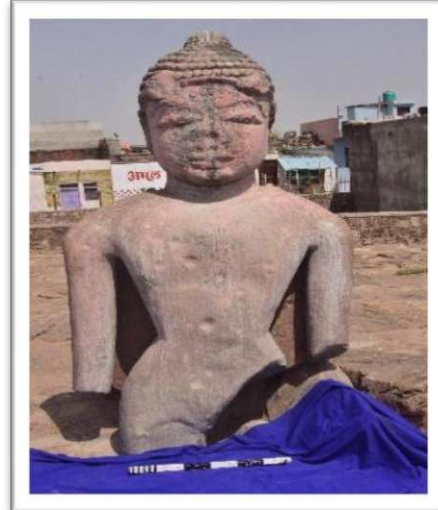
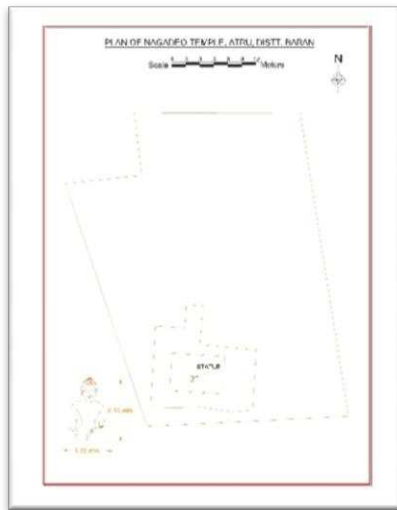


Plan 8: Siva Temple lay-out

The temple's door jambs are notably asymmetrical. The right door jamb includes a triangular arched niche and is stylistically coherent with the rest of the temple, suggesting its original placement. This niche contains a rare depiction of Bhagavana Brahma as a *dvarapala*, an iconographic element seldom encountered. In contrast, the left door jamb houses an image of Bhagavana Siva, yet its design and execution differ significantly from the architectural and sculpture grammar of the temple, implying that it may be a later replacement or restoration.

Nagadeo Temple

The standing sculpture from this site represents a Jina figure shown standing in *kayotsargamudra*. The remains of long matted hair falling over the shoulder of the figure suggests that the figure is of Jaina Tirthankara Adinatha. The sculpture is carved in the Digambara style and is left unadorned. The figure is partially buried in the ground and seems to be a taller sculpture, about four meters in height, which suggests that the temple complex which housed the idol would have been a grand one.



Plan 9: Nagadeo Temple lay-out

Ganesa Temple

Out of all the temples at Atru, Ganesa Temple has the largest area which is under possession of the ASI. The Ganesa Temple complex had a number of temples in the past as is observed from the ancient temple remains in the fenced area. However, only the Ganesa Temple and a small Siva Temple survive. The Ganesa Temple seems to be a medieval period temple from the perusal of an archival image, though, at present it is completely renovated. The small Siva Temple in the same complex has some of the surviving members of the tenth century CE temple. In its vicinity is an old sculptural store of ASI which is being upgraded to some extent because cracks had developed in its wall due to weak foundations and the ceiling had also started falling. A new bigger sculpture store is being constructed in its back to properly house the invaluable heritage of Atru.



Archival image 6, Ganesa Temple with important Atru sculptures kept in the front along with the Varaha image which has since been stolen.

Stylistic Affiliations

The dynastic and regional history of this specific region remains unknown, although on the basis of the architecture, a brief overview of the various architectural styles that must have been followed while constructing the temple, assists in determining the period of construction of these temples.

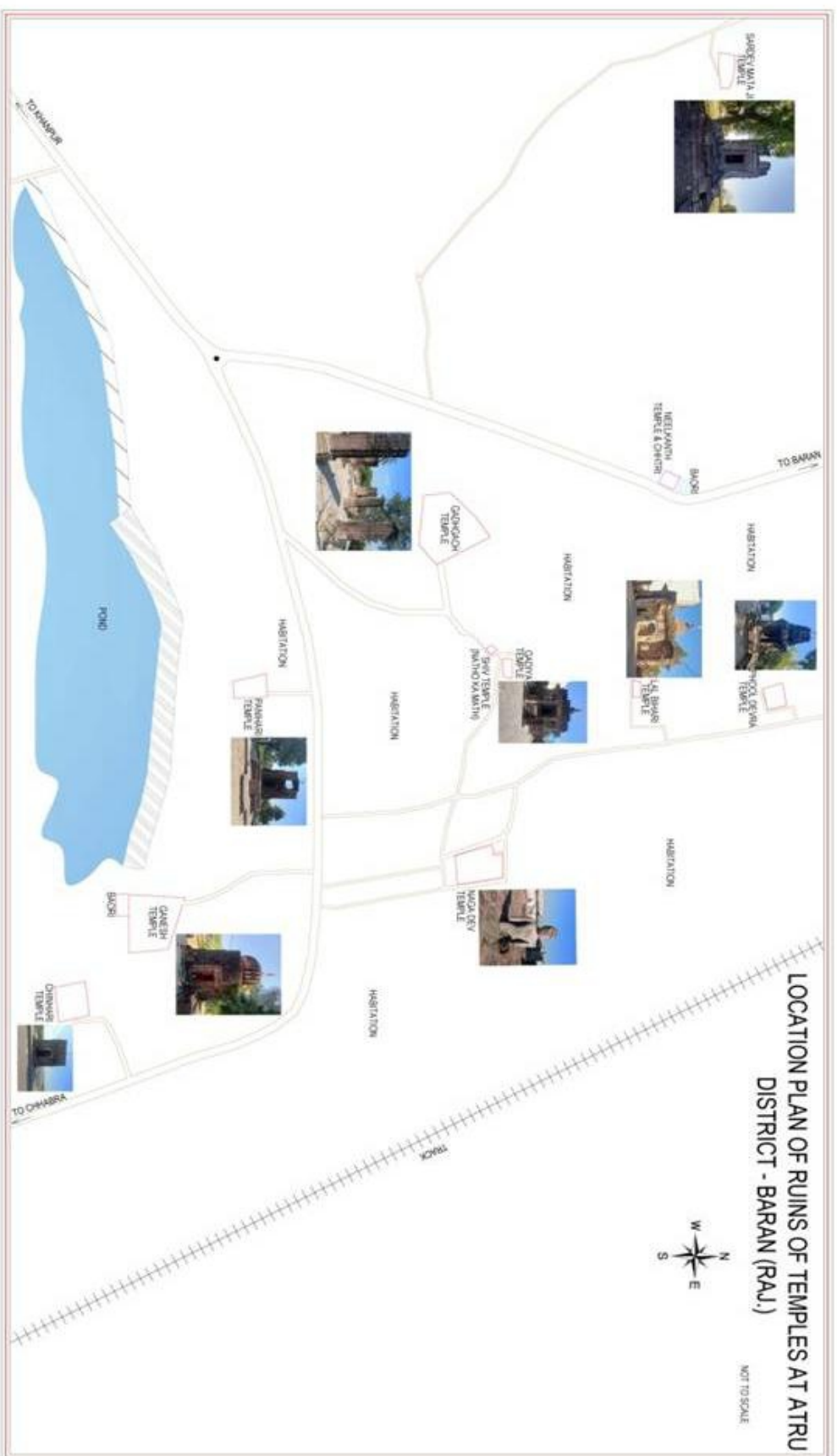
The temple construction culture at Atru broadly falls under the Pratihara (eighth to tenth century) and Paramara (tenth to twelfth centuries) reigns in the Hadoti region. The styles are almost similar and related to each other; there are distinctions in their structural, sculptural and aesthetic characteristics (Sharma 1987; Shah 1954; Trivedi 1991). Although most of the temples at Atru are dilapidated, their remains and foundation can help gauge their affiliations.

The Pratihara style of architecture typically presents its layout in a compact plan with *pancharatha* design, comprising a modest *garbhagriha*, *antarala* and a *mandapa*. The jagati of the temples is usually broad and low. The mouldings of the temple (*vedibandha*, including *upana*, *kumuda*, *kantha*, *pattika* and *kapota*) have minimal decorations. The sculptural depictions on the temple walls depict linear narratives; the presence of *bharavahakas*, river goddesses, *navagrahas*, and *dvarapalas* is eminent. The employment of *sakhas* is present, which are prominent but limited. The *sikhara* of the structure is Latina styled with minimal *urusringas* and a single *amalaka* (Meister and Dhaky 1988; Michell 1988; Hardy 1995).

The Paramara style of architecture presents a large-scale temple often including *ardhamandapa*, *rangamandapa* and *pradakshina patha*. The temples are usually made in either *triratha* or *saptaratha* variations. The *jagati* of the temples is higher and elaborately decorated with medallions and scroll works. The sculptures are more rounded and fuller as compared to Pratihara style. The door frames are heavily ornamented with scroll work, *kirttimukhas*, *kinnaras* and *chandrasilas*. The presence of *Matrikas* is frequent even in Vaishnava shrines. The *sikhara* of the temple is more articulate with Latina tower and clusters of *urusringas*. The superstructure is crowned by multiple *amalakas* (Shah 1954; Trivedi 1991; Deva 1990).

On the basis of the criteria mentioned above a tentative chronology of the temples at Atru is presented. The earliest temple at the site seems to be the Phool Devra Temple with restrained moulding, compact *pancharatha* layout and pillars with *ghata-pallavas*, which are a classical early Pratihara style motif of the eighth and ninth centuries (Somani 1971; Sharma 1987). The colossal standing Adinatha in *kayotsarga* suggests a large Jain temple contemporary to early Pratihara phase. The Nagadeo Temple can be dated to the ninth–tenth century based on inscriptions found on pedestals of the sculptures, and seems to be part of the same temple due to its religious affiliations (Meister and Dhaky 1988). The Lal Bihari Temple, Panihari Temple, Chhinhari Temple, Siva Temple and Sardeva Mata Temple seem to follow the late Pratihara style (tenth to eleventh century) layout with minimally ornamented mouldings, plain Latina superstructure and modest imagery (Dhaky 1998; Mankodi 1985).

The Gadhiya Temple can be taken as the prime example of the transitional period between Pratihara and Paramara styles as the temple is built in a *pancharatha* layout but has tri-directional entrances and richly ornamented doorjambs and temple walls, which are suggestive of Paramara influence, especially in the sculptural art of the temple (Shah 1954; Mankodi 1985). According to Dr. Bhandarkar this temple was also called the Shyam Sundar Temple and was extensively restored by a queen of Bundi, which would be around the fourteenth century (Bhandarkar 1905).



Map 1. Site plan of Atru, showcasing all the temples present at the site

The main temple of Atru, namely the Gadhgach Temple, was constructed by the Pratiharas initially and was developed by the Paramaras later. The Paramara influence on the temple is evident in its *saptaratha* layout, octagonal or sixteen-shafted pillars, and the heavy scroll work on entrances with multiple *sakhas* on the doorjambs. The presence of *ardhamandapa*, *chandrasila*, elaborate mouldings and the depiction of *Matrikas* in a Vaishnava temple all indicate a strong Paramara influence (Trivedi 1991; Mankodi 1985). The Pratihara impact on the temple is relatively seen only in the lower plan, which seems to be *pancharatha*, and in the moulded depictions of Krishna-*lila* in narrative panels (Sharma 1987).

The site map of Atru presents a cluster of temples, some hidden in residential areas and some existing as debris. The chronological profile of Atru is parallel to that of other temples in eastern Rajasthan, such as Menal and Chandravati, where a fruitful Rajput patronage ended with the onset of the invading powers. Unlike the other temples towns, at Atru the modern habitation encapsulated the temple structures, which hid them from the attention of scholars.

The architectural composition of the site Atru suggests that it once housed at least nine to ten temples, or possibly more, of varied religious affiliations during the early medieval era. The principal temple, locally known as the Gadhgach Temple and regarded as the most prominent of the group, has been interpreted in multiple ways by scholars. Dr. Bhandarkar (1905: 48), drawing on local tradition, attributed its foundation to Aniruddha, the grandson of Krishna. This line of thought was later developed further by Dr. Kirit Mankodi (2022: 371–379), who also classified the shrine as a Vaishnava temple with *Pancharatra* affiliation. However, the Archaeological Survey of India, under whose protection the monument presently stands, has officially designated it as a Saiva temple, most likely due to the repeated presence of Saivite motifs, sages, and the evident prominence of Siva worship at the site. Contrastingly, Somani went a step further and identified it as a Jaina temple, demonstrating the complex interpretative debates surrounding its affiliation (Somani 1996). The name for the town can be said is derived from the Sage Atri, as he is depicted in a prominent niche with Soma. It seems that the ancient name of the town was Atripura which changed into modern name 'Atru'.

Despite this range of opinions, evidence points towards a Vaishnava dedication. This is substantiated by the discovery of two elaborately carved door jambs and a possible lintel, now affixed to the structure of Natho ka Math (Pl. 10), which display iconographic features consistent with Vishnu worship. While the provenance of the lintel may be debated, the door jambs are certainly indicative of a Vishnu temple. The mouldings of the temple further strengthen this attribution, as they include niches depicting divine couples, many of which have been identified as Krishna accompanied by his two wives, Rukmini and Satyabhama. Moreover, within the debris of the site, panels illustrating episodes of Krishna-*lila* which are spanning from his infancy to adulthood, have been recovered. Such a narrative cycle is a rare find in the region and underscores the strong Vaishnava association of the temple.

While most Krishna-*lila* episodes emphasise childhood or heroic deeds, temple reliefs also show Krishna with his consort Rukmini, primarily in the narrative of her abduction and marriage. Like the other significant examples, the site of Gadhgach also conveys a rich narrative program centring on the life of Krishna. Episodes represented include his miraculous birth, the killing of Putana, the subjugation of Kaliya (Kaliya-*mardana*), the slaying of the elephant Kuvalayapiḍa, and the climactic duel with Kamsa.

Particularly striking is the recurring emphasis on Balarama, whose presence in sculptural cycles is comparatively rare. Indeed, the recovery of a relief exclusively dedicated to Balarama, representing possibly the illustrations of his marriage or his encounter with the River-goddess Yamuna, suggests that the temple complex sought to place Balarama on a higher pedestal, thereby highlighting the larger Vrishni Viras worship tradition.

On the temple mouldings, niches depict divine couples, though their precise identities remain uncertain. The *Dikpalas*, too, are represented with their consorts in the same alignment. This repeated pairing points to a deliberate thematic concern with union and love, reminiscent of Kamadeva. Within the Vrishni framework, this could allude to Pradyumna, son of Krishna and Rukmini, whom Puranic texts identify as the rebirth of Kamadeva. Hence, at Gadhgach, one perceives an emphasis on three Vrishni Viras, namely Krishna, Balarama, and Pradyumna, on a confirmed basis. Yet the occasional appearance of other forms of Vishnu, such as Rama, complicates the matter further, leaving open questions for future inquiry about whether this temple was dedicated to all forms of Vishnu, including Vrishni worship or a temple dedicated to Vrishni Viras with depictions of other Vishnu forms.

In this whole Krishna-*lila* prominence imagery, particularly significant is the representation of Kubja, the hunchbacked woman whom Krishna encounters in Mathura (*Bhagavata Purana* X.42). While this episode occupies an exceptional place in textual sources, it is virtually absent in medieval sculptural programs. Stella Kramrisch (1928: 93) had already observed the absence of Kubja in early temple art, noting instead her flourishing in later painting traditions at Nathdwara and in North Indian miniature schools. The discovery of a sculptural panel depicting Kubja, which is now placed in the Gadhiya temple at Atru, likely originates from the ruins of Gadhgach, and thus constitutes a unique and rare survival. This singular panel bridges a significant gap between text and image, and enhances the importance of Gadhgach as a profound and exceptional centre of Vaishnava sculptural depictions.

Another significant feature of the Atru temples, particularly those of Gadhiya and Gadhgach, is the unusual presence of the *Dikpalas*. As is well established, the *Dikpalas* function as the guardians of the eight cardinal and inter-cardinal directions, and in normative *Silpa Sastra* tradition, they are to be represented only once in their prescribed places. However, the sculptural program of Atru departs from this convention. At the Gadhiya temple, the *Dikpalas* appear twice, depicted as single figures on the same directional axis, which is a striking anomaly. At Gadhgach, the variation is even more noteworthy, as here, the *Dikpalas* are represented in two modes. They are once in their solo form, and again paired with their consorts. Such duplication and variation are rare within the temples of early medieval Rajasthan or North India. Their occurrence at Atru not only underscores the innovative sculptural tradition at the site but also suggests a deliberate iconographic emphasis on the protective guardianship of space or on the Sakti aspect. This dual representation, especially the presence of the *Dikpalas* with consorts, may further align with the broader thematic concerns of the Gadhgach Temple, where paired figures and divine unions emerge as a recurring motif.

The site reveals a strong Saivite affiliation, evident not only from the dominance of Sivalingas found here but also from the number of temples dedicated to Siva. Within this framework, the presence of the Gajasurasamharamurti becomes especially significant. The theme, in which Siva is shown

triumphantly dancing upon the flayed hide of the elephant demon, is one of the most celebrated narratives in the South Indian Saiva sculptural tradition. By contrast, in the sculptural corpus of North India, this episode remains largely absent. Temples of the early medieval period in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh instead privilege other Saiva mythological themes such as the Andhakasuravadha, the Nataraja icon, or fierce manifestations like Bhairava, but they do not usually include the Gajasurasamhara episode. This absence renders its occurrence at Atru particularly remarkable. Here, the discovery of a niche depicting the rare Gajasuramardana scene fills this gap, marking it as an exceptional instance of southern narrative influence filtering into the northern Saiva visual repertoire. The placement of this episode within a Saiva-dominant sacred landscape further reinforces the unique iconographic experimentation that characterises the site.

The pronounced Saivite influence in the region perhaps explains why numerous mouldings depicting sages and *rishis* appear even on the Gadhgach Vishnu Temple, a site otherwise associated with Vaishnava devotion. Alongside this, the presence of strong Tantric and Sakta elements within the main Gadhgach Temple is particularly striking. On the *mandaraka*, we encounter depictions of *Matrikas*, an iconographic feature that is rarely integrated into the sculptural program of a Vishnu temple. Furthermore, a structure situated behind the temple appears to have been dedicated to the *Matrika*, as suggested by a lintel discovered on the spot. While the possibility remains that this may have functioned as a Ganesa's temple, the stylistic execution of the *Matrika* lintel closely corresponds to that of the Gadhgach Temple, strengthening the likelihood of its association with the goddess worship. The Tantric-Sakta undertone is also reflected in the nearby Sardev Mata Mandir, where the principal deity appears in a highly unusual form, possibly a *Yogini* figure identified as Anjana with a goat's head and a child, or alternately as a manifestation of Hayagriva with a child. The convergence of these multiple strands of Saiva, Tantric, and Sakta traditions may further be explained by the presence of Pasupata traditions in the region, whose theological and ritualistic frameworks allowed for such syncretic amalgamations within a sacred landscape that otherwise foregrounded Vaishnava affiliation.

Apart from these developments, the site appears to have also functioned as a significant Jain centre, as indicated by the presence of multiple Jain temples. At the location where an image of Adinatha currently stands, the sheer scale of the sculpture suggests that it must have originally belonged to a large and prominent shrine. In addition, references to a temple dedicated to Parsvanatha are attested—although the structure itself has not survived, the discovery of Parsvanatha sculptures and inscriptions strongly supports its existence. Equally noteworthy is the frequent representation of Arishtaneminatha, which supplements the iconographic program of the site in intriguing ways. In Mathura art, Arishtanemi is often associated with Krishna and Balarama, who are represented as his cousins according to Jain tradition and this triadic linkage is represented across several sculptural programs. The recurrence of Arishtanemi sculptures here, therefore, not only affirms the Jain character of the sacred landscape but also points to a cross-religious and intertextual framework of imagery that situates the site within the broader currents of north Indian religious and artistic expression.

Altogether, the convergence of Saivite, Vaishnava, Sakta, and Jaina traditions at this site resembles much of the southeastern temple tradition of Rajasthan during this period, and its placement as the

bridge between Malwa and Rajputana explains this nature as being on a possible trade and pilgrimage route. The most intriguing part of this town's architectural history was the Gadhgach Temple, which is now solved to an extent. What remains astonishing is the construction of a Vishnu temple in such a way as are most tantric nature temples dedicated to Siva and Sakti constructed. Whether this was due to the prominence of Krishna worship or Kama/ Pradyumna, this tantric overlap positions it as a unique crucible of religious syncretism, demanding detailed scholarly study to fully understand its significance in the evolution of North Indian temple art.

Some Important Sculptures



Accession No. – GT-2a and GT-2b

Locus- Loose

Material- Sandstone

Identification- Dhenakasura-*vadha* and Kaliya-*damana*

Description- The architectural member has carving on two of its faces. The front face (a) depicts a narrative although with partial broken figures the identification is difficult. From left to right the narrative depicts; a broken male figure holding perhaps a mace. The figure is followed by a male figure holding a staff in his right hand and a discus kind of object in his left hand. The next figure similarly has his left hand raised up holding discus, the left hand however rests on a mace. Another figure is depicted in a similar manner but instead of a mace he holds a sword or a flute. The next depiction is of a man riding a donkey (horse?), who holds a plough in his right hand with which he is inflicting suffering on the animal whereas his left hand grabs the ear of the horse. The figure is followed by a broken male figure whose left hand rests on the face of the horse in a combative pose. He may be identified as Srikrishna assisting in the killing. The narrative is identifiable as Balarama killing Dhenakasura, the donkey demon and the above-mentioned figures may be identified either as the *gopas* or the Vrishni viras (due to the weapons). Above the figures is carved a *maladharigandharva*, now partially damaged.

In between the above-mentioned narrative and the next narrative, there is an arched motif which seems to have been left unfinished. On top of it a figure of a female is carved which is broken at many places. To her right three partially broken *maladharigandharvas* are carved facing right. Below them is a

depiction of a male figure standing atop a five-hooded snake and subduing it; the figure is holding a weapon-stick made of plant stem or branches. The figure which is depicted on the edge is of a male figure with folded hands, though damaged. The narrative is clearly identifiable as Child Krishna subduing the Serpent Kaliya at Vrindavan. The broken female figure at the left may be identified as the wife of Kaliya who is propitiating Krishna not to kill her husband. In the Harivamsa Purana, the serpent Kaliya is mentioned as a five-hooded serpent and in this relief too he is shown five-hooded only. The celestial gods are shown propitiating and praising Krishna during these episodes.

The corner male figure is depicted on the other face (b) of the architectural member too. This face (b) depicts four male figures standing facing east with their left hands in unique *mudras*. The figures are damaged. All the figures are elaborately ornamented with *mukutas*, *kundalas*, *nupuras*, *katisutra*, *kanaganas*, *bajubandhas* and draperies. These figures may be identified as Krishna-sakhas in case these relate to the same Kaliya-damana episode.



Accession No. – GT-3

Locus- Loose

Material- Sandstone

Identification- Architectural Frieze depicting Vaishnava narrative.

Description- The fragment of an architectural frieze is partially damaged but it depicts important mythological narrative. From left to right, it depicts a male figure holding a piece of cloth in his hand, followed by three figures. The central figure is bending down towards a stool or a stand, his right hand is holding something over his head. The figure to his right is holding a staff in his right hand and his left hand is perhaps holding the drape of the figure in the centre. The figure to the left of the central figure is shown tying a turban. The next figure is of a male tying his turban with a mace resting next to him. The frieze continues with a female figure standing in *namaskara mudra* towards the figures to her right. The next figure is seated on a stool but is apparently much damaged. She seems to be a lady with her breast damaged. Her headgear also confirms her to be a lady. The next figure is of a male who is pulling her with a plough held in his hands. There is a male attendant figure shown behind him.

There are two narratives in this panel. The first one on the left is possibly related to Balarama but the exact identification is not clear. The next narrative towards the right is clear in which plough wielding Balarama is pulling the seated lady with his plough. The lady is either the anthropomorphic representation of the River Yamuna or Revati, his to be wife and the narrative is either the one defined in the *Harivamsa Purana* in which Balarama in an inebriated and angry state pulls the Yamuna in other direction or the one related to the marriage of Balarama as described in later texts in which he reduces the height of Revati to make her compatible to marry him.



Accession No. – GT-5

Locus- Loose

Material- Sandstone

Identification- Architectural Frieze depicting Putana-vadha

Description- The fragment of an architectural frieze is in a poor condition with depiction of damaged figures. From left to right it depicts a female figure with broken head and arm, she is presumably in a dancing pose and is holding her drapery with her left hand. Behind her is a floral motif. The next figure is of a female who is seated in *lalitasana* on a pedestal, the arms figure are broken and a partially visible figure of a child is seen suckling the figure. The figure is followed by a band of musicians and dancers commencing with a broken dancing figure, followed by a dancing dwarf figure, a partially damaged *dholak* player, another dwarf figure, a damaged *dholak* figure, a female dancer with her breasts broken, a dancing dwarf, a damaged *dholak* payer and the band ends with a male figure with unidentifiable attributes due to damage. Additionally, silhouette of *maladharigandharvas* are visible flanking the musicians. The presence of *gandharvas* around the musicians associate the figures with some divine activity. Here the panel represents the celebration activities after the birth of Krishna and the story of Putana's killing when she had come to breast-feed the child with the intention of killing him with his poisonous nipples. Krishna extracted her *prana* while suckling her breast and the representation of the story is quite vivid here in spite of the damage to the panel. The female demon is shown in a helpless situation with both her hands raised up in acute pain when the Child Krishna is sucking out her life.



Accession No. – GT-15

Locus- Loose

Material- Sandstone

Identification- Architectural Frieze

Description- The fragment of an architectural frieze depicts *bhairavahakas*. The figures from left to right are depicted: holding a mace, a sword, drapery, a *kalasa*, and a spear. All the figures are ornamented elaborately.



Accession No. - GT-29

Locus- Loose

Material- Sandstone

Identification- Architectural Member depicting Krishna-lila

Description- The architectural panel is in a poor condition with most of the figures depicted on the panel being damaged. The panel commencing from left depicts a broken figure, an elephant being tamed by a male figure. The figure is missing its arms, legs and face; even the attributes are missing to identify him. The figure is however flanked by *maladharigandharvas* confirming him to be a divinity. The narrative is

identifiable as a Krishna-*lila* in which *Kishora* (boy) Krishna kills Elephant Kuvalayapidha when he enters Mathura along with his elder brother Balarama on the invitation of Kamsa and the elephant attacks them on the behest of Kamsa. The broken figure at the extreme left might be of Balarama. After this episode, next activity starts with the next figure who is holding a staff in his right hand and looking in other direction. This figure might be of a *gopa*. This figure is followed by two royal figures. The figure to our left is standing in somewhat pose of dancing in *tribhanga mudra*. Following him is the second male with his right hand holding a staff and his left hand holding a *padma*. The face of the figure is broken and here is a hood like depiction over his head. A pestle-mortar is carved at the base. The two figures might be identified as Krishna and Balarama. The identification of Balarama is confirmed by the presence of pestle and mortar and the presence of possible snake canopy over his head. Next is a female figure holding perhaps offerings in her hands. A fire-altar is carved between the female figure and the last figure who is a male. The figure is damaged and he is holding a mace. The *maladharigandharvas* are depicted over the fire-altar facing towards the female figure. The male figure is identifiable as Balarama as indicated by mace and the narrative seems to be the marriage ceremony of Balarama and Revati.



Accession No. - GT-31

Locus- Loose

Material- Sandstone

Identification- Architectural Member depicting Krishna-*lila*

Description- The fragment of an architectural panel depicts a narrative; the condition of the panel is poor with significant damage. The panel depicts three male figures on the left wielding weapons, a mace, and swords respectively. The figures are followed by a male figure standing with his right hand resting on his left hand in a relaxed pose. The figure next is of a bearded male holding a child with his mother seated on a bed forming part of some action. All three figures are partially damaged and there are pots with items carved below the bed. The female figure is flanked by two figures one of which is evidently a female, both the figures are attendants holding a fan and a *chauri* respectively. The female figure seems to be the central figure to the narrative and is possibly a royal lady surrounded by attendants and guards. The scene possibly depicts Bala-Krishna in the episode in which Vasudeva is taking him to Gokula to exchange him with the newly born Ekanamsa in the house of Nanda to Yasoda. The warriors on the left seem to be the soldiers of Kamsa.



Accession No. - GT-32

Locus- Loose

Material- Sandstone

Identification- Architectural Member depicting Krishna and Balarama

Description- The architectural panel is in a damaged condition, the faces of all figures barring one are broken. The panel depicts a broken figure at the very left followed by a male figure seated in *lalitasana* on a pedestal. The two figures attending to him are a male and a female respectively. The body of the male figure is completely damaged and the female figure is either holding a mirror or a bowl. The next depiction is of a male figure seated on a pedestal in *lalitasana* and four male figures are attending him. The male figures have broken hands and the last figure is completely worn out. The figures are ornamented with *hara*, *yajnopavita*, *kanganas*, *bajubandha*, *katisutra*, *nupura*, and a *mukuta* or a *mukutasutra*. The two seated royal figures may be identified with Krishna and Balarama who are being anointed after the killing of Kamsa.



Accession No. - GT-50

Locus- Loose

Material- Sandstone

Identification- Architectural Member depicting Krishna-lila

Description- The fragment of an architectural frieze depicts a narrative. The left most side depicts two male figure standing facing right, they are wielding staff in their right hand and their left hand is partially raised. The figure following them are shown in a tussle with the

figure the left is shown grabbing the neck of the other figure who is kneeling. The next depiction is of a duel with both figures posed with their legs locked and hand raised in a position to attack. A smaller figure is shown next who is aiding the last depicted figure. The last figure is damaged and is shown in perhaps a jumping stance. The narrative depicted is evidently of a duel. All the figures are elaborately ornamented. The narrative can be identified as Krishna and Balarama's combat against Kamsa's evil forces in the *rangabhumi*. The battle might be identified with the killing of Tosala, a lieutenant of Kamsa and Sunama, Kamsa's brother in case the identification of above-mentioned reliefs is correct.



Accession No. - GT-51

Locus- Loose

Material- Sandstone

Identification- Architectural Member depicting five warriors either Pandavas or Vrishnis

Description- The fragment of an architectural frieze is in damaged condition, each of the figures is mutilated. All the figures are facing left as evident from their body posture. From left to right it depicts two female figures, the one in front holds a lotus pod and the latter holds a *chauri*. Followed by a smaller female figure either a dwarf or an attendant holding a *padma*. The next figure is a male figure holding a leaf like

object in his left hand and his right hand is raised holding some indistinct object. Following him, another male figure is depicted with his left hand holding an unidentifiable object and his right hand is raised as to hold something. There is an arch like depiction over which the leg of the next figure rests, the figure is wielding a sword. The last two figures are holding ring like objects in their left hand and their right hand is raised. All the figures are elaborately ornamented in a typical manner of this temple. The narrative is difficult to identify with varied depictions but the figures might be identified either as five Pandavas or Vrishni viras.



Accession No. – GT-55a and GT-55b

Locus- Loose

Material- Sandstone

Identification- Architectural member depicting Krishna-*lila* episode

Description- The architectural member has carving on two faces. The first face (a) depicts three figures. The figure on the left most side has a damaged head, he is holding a sword in his right hand and his left hand is holding drapery. The central figure is standing in *tribhanga mudra* welding a mace in his left hand

and his right hand is in *kativinyastha mudra*. The last figure is kneeling with his hands in *namaskara mudra*, his face is mutilated as well. The other face (b) is damaged as well. From left to right it depicts two female figures facing each other, the face of the left figure is damaged. Both are holding an object with some floral decoration on one face in one hand whereas the left hand of the left side lady is raised above shoulders and the next lady is putting her hand around the left side lady. The next figure is of a female who is standing facing the viewer, her left hand seems to be in *abhaya mudra* and her right hand in *varadahasta mudra*. The lower part of her body is covered by an arch-shaped motif. The motif is plain and has carvings made on it suggesting that these might be the line drawings for the sculptor to carve the stone and the carvings have been left unfinished. The next figure depicts a male holding a bow and facing towards the female. The next four figures are standing facing left towards the female. The figures are holding the back of the head of the figures standing in front of them with their right hand as if accompanying the man holding the bow. The left hand of the figures is holding a weapon, a plough, as indicated by the ploughshare depicted at the base and the other three are holding staffs. All of the figures are ornamented elaborately, there is no difference between the ornamentation of the female deity and the rest of the female figures. The overall narrative suggests that the male figure holding the bow is Krishna himself, followed by Balabhadra and three other Vrishni viras. The occasion seems to be Krishna's marriage or a *svayamvara*.



Accession No. – GS-44

Locus- Fixed on Gadhgach Temple

Material- Red Sandstone

Identification- Architectural member depicting a Saivite narrative.

Description- The architectural member depicts a niche with a roofed pediment. The niche is flanked by *simhavyala* figures that are attached to the pilasters and the niche is covered in patina deposit. The niche houses three figures, a central male figure flanked by a male figure on either side. The central male figure is standing in *tribhanga mudra* with his right hand in a peculiar *mudra* and his left hand is holding a scroll or a belt like object. The figure on the left is holding a *danda* in his left hand and his right hand is holding some offering whereas the figure on our right is holding a *kamandalu* in his left hand and his right hand is raised up. All the figures are adorning a *jatamukuta*, *hara*, *yajnopavita* and *kanganas*. The three figures may be identified as Saivacharyas, the central one being of almost divine stature.



Accession No. – GS-63, 64, 65, 66

Locus- Fixed on Gadhgach Temple

Material- Red Sandstone

Identification- Pillar

Description- The pillar is an L-shaped carved stone made on a square base and shaft which transitions into an eight-sided segments or an *ashtasakha*. The shaft of the pillar is plain except the central and wider faces which have figures. The Face A on the shaft has a female figure carved standing on a lotus pedestal. The figure has suffered from damage with her left hand broken. The figure stands in *tribhanga mudra*. She is ornamented with hairdo, *kundalas*, *hara*, *bajubandha*, *katisutra*, *nupuras* and a drapery. There is a halo depicted behind her which suggests that she is a deity but the identification is not apparent. She held a lotus flower in her left hand whereas her right hand is in a peculiar *mudra*. Another female figure is depicted to her right on the base holding a musical instrument. To her left at the base is carved a dancing attendant who holds an upturned snake like object. Above the niche is a pediment having *gavakshas*.

Above the niche in the central medallion a *kinnara* couple is carved holding *padmas*. The band is followed by a *purvakalasa* with foliage topped by a *kirttimukha* with festoons coming out of his mouth. The band above is again a depiction of a foliage and the top band depicts an arrangement of *kirttimukha* with festoons coming out of its mouth. The Face B has a prominent lady figure standing on a lotus pedestal with both her hands missing. She is having a lotus halo confirming her a deity. She is adorned with ornaments as the deity on Face A. A lady attendant is carved on the base to her right. A mace is visible behind this lady attendant figure. In a semi-circular niche above the prominent deity figure is carved a female dancer flanked by male musicians. It is followed by decorative bands as described on Face A. The capital of the pillar is missing.



Accession No. – GD-39

Locus- Fixed in Gadhiya Temple.

Measurements- 87x51cm

Material- Red Sandstone

Identification- Nrisimha incarnation

Description- The architectural member depicts an elaborate niche divided into seven sections by pilasters. The pediment of the niche is broken and the base is depicted as an intricately carved lotus motif. The central and the most protruding section depicts a male figure depicted with a lion's head and eight arms

standing in *alidhasana* on a lotus pedestal. The upper most hands of the figure are placed behind his head, the lower left arm holds a *padma*, the lower right arm holds a mace, the next hand grabs a male figure by his head on the left and his similar left hand holds the legs of a female figure raising her from the ground. The natural hands of the figure are tearing apart the stomach of the male demon lying in his lap. The figure is minimally ornamented and adorned with a *mukuta* and a garland. There is another figure depicted at the base over which the deity stands. The representation is of the narrative of Nrisimha, the *avatara* of Bhagavana Vishnu killing Hiranyakasipu. The surrounding figures who are being tormented by the deity may be identified as servant demons of Hiranyakasipu. The figure beneath the lotus pedestal can be Prahlada, though it is uncertain. The niche is flanked by akin depictions. The upper register depicts a *vyala* standing on an elephant head and the lower register depicts a female attendant. The attendant holds a *padma* in her one hand and her other hand is in *kativinyasthamudra*. The next flanking niche depicts the same imagery but the female figures are depicted facing the central niche and standing in *namaskara mudra*. The lateral sides depict a diamond-shaped flower motif and at the base it depicts partially broken male figures with animal head.



Accession No. – GD-5

Locus- Fixed in the Gadhiya Temple.

Measurements- 74x61cm

Material- Red Sandstone

Identification- Tapasvini Parvati

Description- The architectural member depicts a niche with roofed pediment and a lotus motif as its base. The niche is flanked by *vyala* figures attached to the piers. The niche houses a four-armed female figure who is standing in a *samabhanga mudra*. The natural hands of the figure are broken and her upper right hand holds a Sivalinga kept on a *padma* base and her upper left holds a male figure seated on a *padma* base with elephant's head and seated in *lalitasana*. The figure holds a *parasu* in his right hand and a *patra* in his left hand. The figure is identified as Bhagavana Ganesa. The female figure is donning a *jatamukuta* and is elaborately ornamented. The figure is representing Tapasvini Parvati. The figure of the female deity is flanked by a female figure in *namaskara mudra* on her left side. The

figure is partially mutilated with a broken head, she probably represents an attendant. On her right a male figure stands in *tribhanga mudra*. Three heads of the figure are visible and he holds a staff in his left hand and his right hand is in *kativinyasthamudra*. The figure is of Karttikeya. There are lotus stems depicted behind the two flanking figures. The depiction of Karttikeya, Ganesa and Sivalinga with Parvati in penance is quite interesting.



Accession No. SMT-5

Locus- Fixed in the Sardev Mata Temple.

Material- Red Sandstone

Identification- Sardev Mata

Description- The architectural member is fixed on the *sikhara* of the temple. It depicts two niches, the one to our right depicts diamond-shaped flower motif separated by pilasters. The niche on the left is depicted without a pediment whether it is broken or not, is not clear. The niche is flanked by half diamond-shaped flower motifs. The niche houses a female figure seated in *lalitasana* over a pedestal. The figure is goat-headed and is four-armed. The upper left hand holds a *kapaladanda*, the upper right hand holds a *trisula*, the natural left hand holds a child who is goat-headed as well, and the natural right hand holds a *patra*. The figure is ornamented by a garland as well as jewellery. The deity is representation of a form of Sakti, locally revered as Sardev Mata.

not, is not clear. The niche is flanked by half diamond-shaped flower motifs. The niche houses a female figure seated in *lalitasana* over a pedestal. The figure is goat-headed and is four-armed. The upper left hand holds a *kapaladanda*, the upper right hand holds a *trisula*, the natural left hand holds a child who is goat-headed as well, and the natural right hand holds a *patra*. The figure is ornamented by a garland as well as jewellery. The deity is representation of a form of Sakti, locally revered as Sardev Mata.



Accession No. – GM-9

Locus- Fixed in the Ganesa Temple.

Material- Red Sandstone

Identification- Ganesa

Description- The sculpture is the main idol of the temple, affixed in the *garbhagriha*. The idol is depicted with an elephant head and is four-armed. He is holding a *parasu* in his upper left hand, a *danta* in his upper right hand, a *modaka* in his natural left hand and possibly a radish in his natural right hand. The figure is seated in a *lalitasana*. There is a mouse holding a *modaka* depicted on the left which represents his *vahana*, the *mushakaraja*. The idol is of Bhagavana Ganesa. The figure is covered in vermillion and is adorned with drapes and garlands. These decorations as well as painted eyes of the idol are later additions. The sculpture is one of the better examples of large size Ganesa images.



Accession No. – NP-16

Locus- Fixed on the walls of Natho ka Math

Material- Red Sandstone

Identification- Lintel

Description- The architectural members depicts two lintels. The lower lintel depicts a scroll of lotus petal motif followed by a band of foliage which depicts a niche in the centre. The niche depicts male figure with elephant head seated in *lalitasana*. The figure is four-armed and is holding a *padma* in the upper right hand and a *kalasa* in the natural left hand. Other attributes of the figure are undefined due to heavy accretion on the figure.

The upper lintel is more decorated and finely carved. The outer most band is a U-shaped band which has a series of *vyala* figures on the horizontal side and the lateral sides have two *vyala* figures mounted by male figures. The next band depicts three niches separated by three bands; the topmost band is decorated with lotus petal motif and the middle band with human figures: a female figure holding a *Padma*, followed by a *maladhari* male figure and the imagery continues. The lower band is carved with snake coils. The niche on our left depicts a male figure with three heads and four arms. The figure is seated in *lalitasana* and holds *sruka* and *sruva* in his upper hands, his natural left hand holds a *kamandalu* and his natural right hand is in *abhaya mudra*. The figure is intricately ornamented including a *jatamukuta*, *yajnopavita* and a garland. The figure also dons a beard and is accompanied by a swan which is depicted on the left corner. This representation is of Bhagavana Brahma. The central niche depicts another male figure with four arms who is seated in *lalitasana* on top of a half bird half human figure. The deity holds a *gada* in his upper right hand, a *chakra* in his upper left hand, a *sankha* in his natural left hand and his natural right hand is in *jnana mudra*. The figure is ornamented akin to the last figure only his *mukuta* is different, that is a *kiritamukuta* in this case. The figure is identified as Bhagavana Vishnu mounted on his *vahana*, Garuda. The right niche depicts a four-armed male figure seated in *lalitasana*. He holds a *trisula* in his upper right hand, a *sarpa* in his upper left hand, a *kamandalu* in his natural left hand and his natural right hand is broken but was perhaps in *abhaya mudra*. The face of the figure is mutilated and he is carved similar to the figure of Brahma except the beard. A bull figure is depicted on the left side which is the *vahana* of Bhagavana Siva which further confirms the identity of the figure. The central niche

housing Bhagavana Vishnu suggests that it is from a Vishnu Temple but is currently affixed on the walls of a Siva temple. This lintel being intricately and beautifully carved can be of the main Gadgach Temple or a similar important temple.



Accession No. – NP-5

Locus- Neelkanth Math

Material- Red Sandstone

Identification- *Dikpala* Agni

Description- The architectural member depicts a niche divided in three sections with pilasters. The pediment of the niche is broken. The central section houses a male figure with four arms. He is depicted seated on a ram. The figure holds a *sruga* and *sruvain* in his upper hands, his natural left hand is holding a *patra* and his natural right hand is in *abhaya*

mudra. The figure dons a *jatamukuta*, *kundalas*, *hara*, *yajnopavita*, *kanganas*, and a garland. He is depicted with an evident beard as well. On the basis of these attributes the figure can be identified as Agnideva. Whether he is represented here as a *dikpala* or not, is difficult to confirm in the absence of other such images. The niche is flanked by female figures in a mutilated condition. Both hold their drapery with one hand and a *padma* in the other hand. These figures are of *apsaras* or attendans.



Accession no. –LGT- 81

Locus- Loose

Material - Sandstone

Identification - Architectural Member depicting *Samhara murti* or narrative of Siva

Description- The sculptural fragment is part of a panel which depicts seven human figures in mutilated condition carrying various weapons. From left to right; a male figure is standing with one

foot on a lotus, holding a partially broken *trisula* in one of his arms and attacking the figure in front with it, the rest of his arms are broken. The figure is adorned with a *jatamukuta*, *kundalas*, *hara*, *katibandha*, and a *mala* which suggest it to be of a divine figure. Additionally there are two *gandharva* figures one at the bottom who is holding *apadma/trisula* in his left hand while his right hand rests on his thighs and another figure is on top who is holding a garland which further confirms the divinity of the figure. The figure is followed by a male figure who is holding a sword; another male figure with damaged hands but carrying an unidentifiable object; a male figure who is holding the drapery of the previous figure; a male sword-bearer standing in *tribhangamudra*; male figure with broken head carrying an undefined object in his right hand and lastly a human figure whose only lower portion is

visible. All of them are ornamented similarly with a beaded *hara*, *kundalas*, *bajubandha*, *kangana*, *katibandha*, *nupuras* and a drapery, though some of them are in much mutilated condition. The panel is definitely representing the killing of some demon at the hands of Siva. The demon might be identified as Andhakasura etc.



Accession no. - LGT-91

Locus- Loose

Material - Sandstone

Identification – Architectural Member depicting *Sapta-Matrikas*

Description- The architectural member possibly a lintel features three prominent figures and three ornately carved rows. The figure on the left shows a partially damaged elephant-headed figure seated in *lalitasana*. The figure is four-armed and holds a mace in his upper right hand while his natural right hand holds a *danta*, his upper left hand holds a *padma* while his natural left hand is broken. The figure can be identified as Ganesa. The central figure depicts a female seated in *lalitasana* on a pedestal. The figure is holding a *trisula* in her upper right hand while her natural right hand is in *varada mudra*. Her upper left hand is probably holding a snake while her natural left hand is holding a *kamandalu*. The figure is surrounded by a halo and is adorned with a *jatamukuta*, *kundalas*, *hara*, *kanganas*, *bajubandhas*, and *katibandha*. From the following attributes figure can be identified as that of Goddess Mahesvari. The rightmost figure is that of a male standing in an *atibhanga mudra* on a plain pedestal. The upper right hand of the figure holds a snake and the natural right hand is in *gajahastamudra*. In the upper left hand the figure holds a *trisula* while his natural left hand rests on the his right thigh. The figure is adorned with a *jatamukuta*, *hara*, *kundalas*, *kanganas*, *mala*, and a drapery. From the following attributes the figure appears to be that of Siva Natesa. The space between these figures is divided into two rows. In the upper row, *vyala* figures and *kirttimukhas* are carved. The lower row depicts four *maladhariyugals* followed by a band of scrolls. The topmost band is carved with *Saptmatrikas*, all of them are shown seated in *maharajalilasana* and having four hands. The exact identification of each of them is not possible. The lintel of this door-frame confirms that the temple was dedicated to Maa Sakti.



Accession No. – 59/49

Locus- Kota Museum

Measurements- 48"x36"

Material- Sandstone

Identification- *Dikpala Agni*

Description- The architectural member depicts an elaborately decorated niche with a missing pediment. The niche houses a male figure, depicted with four arms and standing in *tribhanga mudra*. The upper hands of the figure hold *sruva* and *sruka* and the natural hands of the figure are broken, although a *kamandalu* is visible probably held by the natural left hand. The figure is richly ornamented and is donning a *jatamukuta* and a *mala*. There is a mutilated ram depicted at the bottom left section of the niche and towards the right a female figure probably an attendant holding a *chauri* is carved. Fire-flames are shown coming out from behind the head of the

deity. On the upper section the figure is flanked by two *maladharigandharvas*. On the basis of the attributes the figure can be identified as *Dikpala Agni*. The niche is flanked by akin imagery on both sides, from top to bottom it depicts a *makara* head, a *vyala* figure, a *gaja* head, and a male attendant figure which is partially broken. The attendants hold a *padma* and a staff, both are adorning a *mala* and a *jatamukuta*. The artistic style of the member suggests that it was part of the main Gadhiya Temple at Atru.



Accession No. – RS-1

Locus- Originally part of *Jagati* of Gadhgach Temple

Material- Red Sandstone

Identification- A deity couple, possibly Balabhadra and Revati

Description- The sculpture was originally fixed inside a niche of the *Jagati* of Gadhgach Temple which was exposed in 2005 when the debris was partly removed from the temple. The sculpture was stolen in 2009 from the site and later on retrieved by India. It was housed in the Gallery of Retrieved Objects in Central Antiquities Collection, Purana Qila, N. Delhi. The sculpture represents a deity couple, possibly a Vrishni, carved inside a pilastered niche topped by a canopy and a decorated *gavaksha*. The lady is holding a *veni* in her left hand whereas her right hand possibly holds a *sinduradani*. The male deity is also two-handed; with his left hand kept near his thigh, he possibly holds a dagger whereas his right hand is touching upon the *sinduradani* held in the hand of his consort. A mace (*musala*) is kept upside down near his left elbow. Both the deities are very finely carved and adorned with rich ornamentation, beaded

yajnopavita is of particular interest. A small dwarfish figure is carved between the feet of the deities who seems quite peculiar. The niche on either side is flanked by female attendants on lower end and *vyalas* carved above them. The lady attendants are having proportionate body delineation in contrast to the below-mentioned retrieved deity couple. At present, this sculpture is housed in the new Parliament

building, N. Delhi. Interestingly, the female deity is standing to the right of the male deity in contravention to the established practice. The deity couple can be identified as Balabhadra-Revati based on the presence of mace and the narrative depicted seems to be the solemnisation of their marriage.



Accession No. – RS-2

Locus- Originally part of *Jagati* of Gadhgach Temple

Material- Red Sandstone

Identification- A deity couple, possibly a Vrishni

Description- The sculpture was originally fixed inside a niche of the *Jagati* of Gadhgach Temple which was exposed in 2005 when the debris was partly removed from the temple. The sculpture was stolen in 2009 from the site and later on retrieved by India. It is presently housed in the Gallery of Retrieved Objects in Central Antiquities Collection, Purana Qila, N. Delhi. The sculpture represents a deity couple, possibly a Vrishni. The lady is holding a *vina* in her right hand whereas her left hand possibly holds a *sinduradani*. The male deity is also two-handed; with his left hand raised near the shoulder he is making a peculiar gesture whereas his right hand is kept on his right thigh. Both the deities are very finely carved and adorned with rich ornamentation. A *kiritamukuta*, a beaded *yajnopavita* and *vaijayantimala* are of particular interest. A small figure is carved near the feet of the male deity who seems

quite peculiar. The niche on either side is flanked by female attendants on lower end and *vyalas* carved above them. The lady attendants are not having proportionate body delineation in contrast to the deity couple who are carved with a lot of precision. The deity couple is identifiable as a Vrishni couple either Vasudeva and Rukmini or his grandson Aniruddha and his wife Usha.



Accession No. – RS-3

Locus- Originally part of Gadhgach Temple

Material- Red Sandstone

Identification- Pradyumna-Rukmavati/ Kamadeva-Rati

Description- The sculpture stolen sometime in 1990s from the Gadhgach Temple premises was recovered by the local police soon after. It is to be handed over to the ASI soon. The sculpture represents a deity couple which might have formed part of a niche of temple's *jagati*. The male deity seated to our left holds an arrow in his upper right hand and a bow in his upper left hand while going around the shoulder of his consort. His natural left hand is gently touching the breast of his consort while the natural right hand is damaged. He The couple sits on a lotus pedestal and is surrounded by attendants. The male deity is wearing a beautiful crown, adorns a

srivatsa on his chest and is bedecked with beaded *yajnopavita*, multi-stringed necklace, *karnakundalas*, *vaijayantimala*, *katisutra*, *kankana*, *nupura* etc. His consort is seated on the left side of his lap and is two-handed. Her right hand is going around the shoulders of the male deity in a pose of embrace whereas his mutilated left hand possibly held a mirror. The male deity with his bow and arrow is identifiable as Kamadeva but as the temple is a Pancharatra temple, it seems that he is Pradyumna, the Vrishni hero, considered an incarnation of Kamadeva; the presence of *vaijayantimala* also supports it. The name of consort of Pradyumna is found as Rukmavati in literature, so she may be considered as a form of Rati.

Conservation Works

The Jaipur Circle of Archaeological Survey of India has carried out a number of conservation works at the monuments of Atru. The most important works include the exposing of Gadhgach Temple and other temples and conserving them to the extent possible to prevent further damage. Particularly during the period between 2022 and 2026, many conservation works have been carried out quite vigorously.

Conservation and restoration of Chhinahari Temple at Atru



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Chhinahari Temple at Atru



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Chhinahari Temple at Atru



Before



During



After

Conservation and Development of the Nagadev Temple at Atru



Before



After

Conservation work at Gadgach Temple, Atru



Before



After

Conservation work at Gadgach Temple,Atru



Before



After

Conservation work at Gadgach Temple,Atru



Before



After

Conservation work at Gadgach Temple, Atru



Before

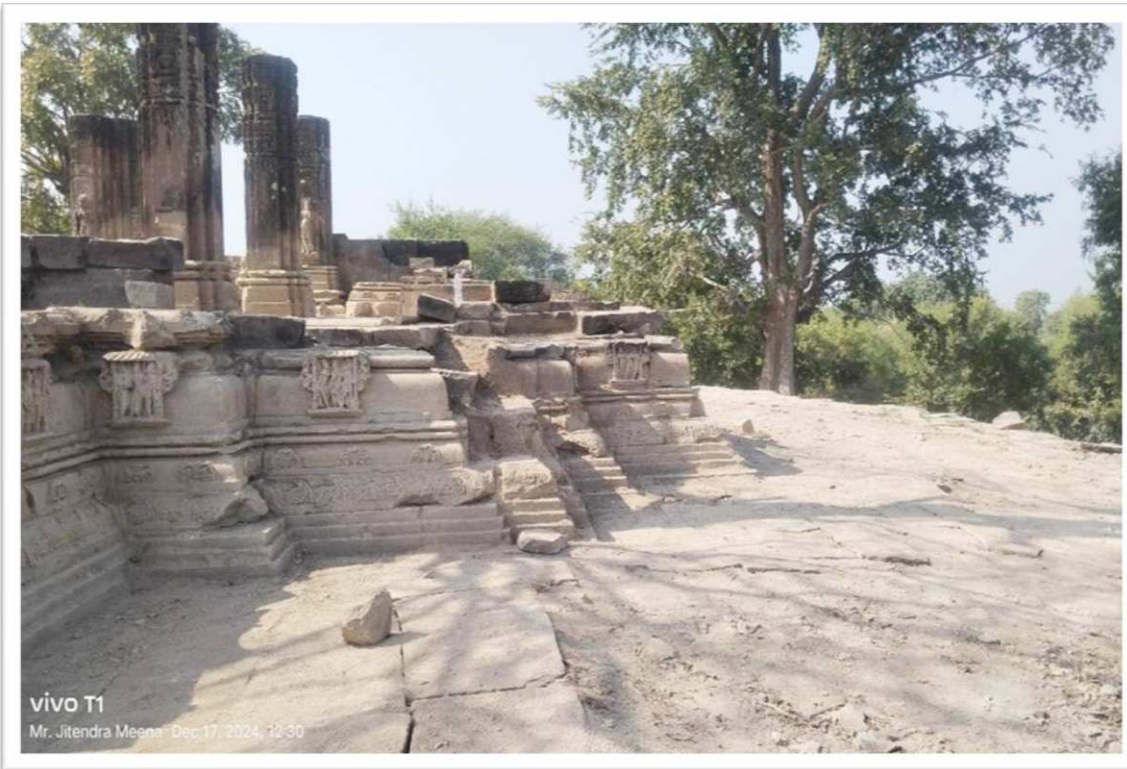


After

Conservation work at Gadgach Temple, Atru



Before



After

Conservation work at Gadgach Temple, Atru



Before



After

Conservation work at Gadgach Temple, Atru



Before



After

Conservation work at Gadgach Temple, Atru



Before

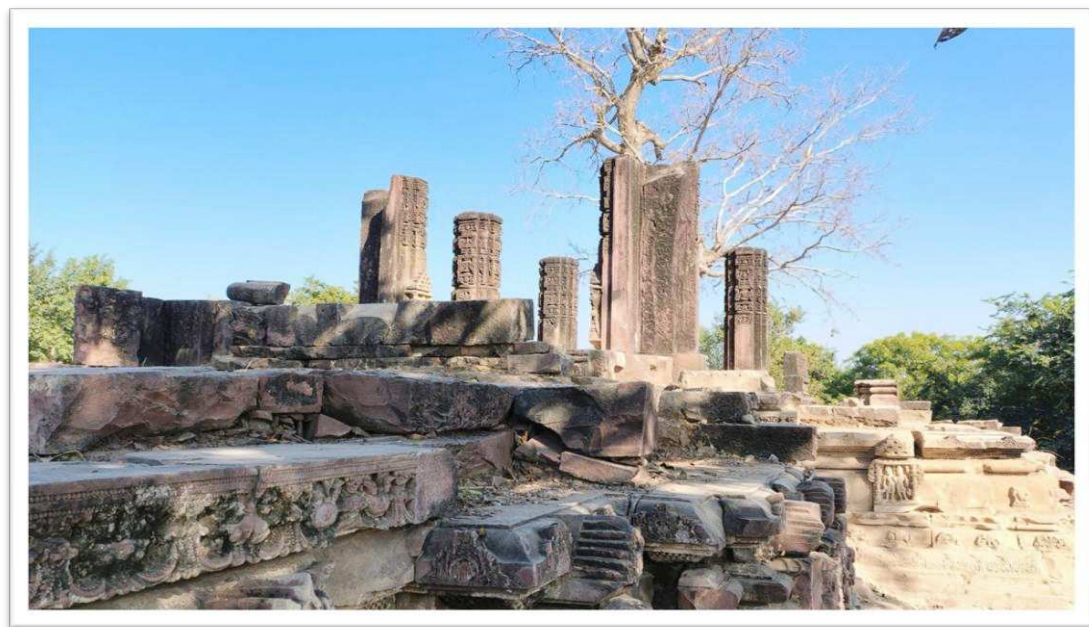


After

Conservation work at Gadgach Temple, Atru



Before



After

Conservation work at Gadgach Temple, Atru



Before



During



After

Conservation work at Gadgach Temple, Atru



Before



After

Conservation work at Gadgach Temple, Atru



Before



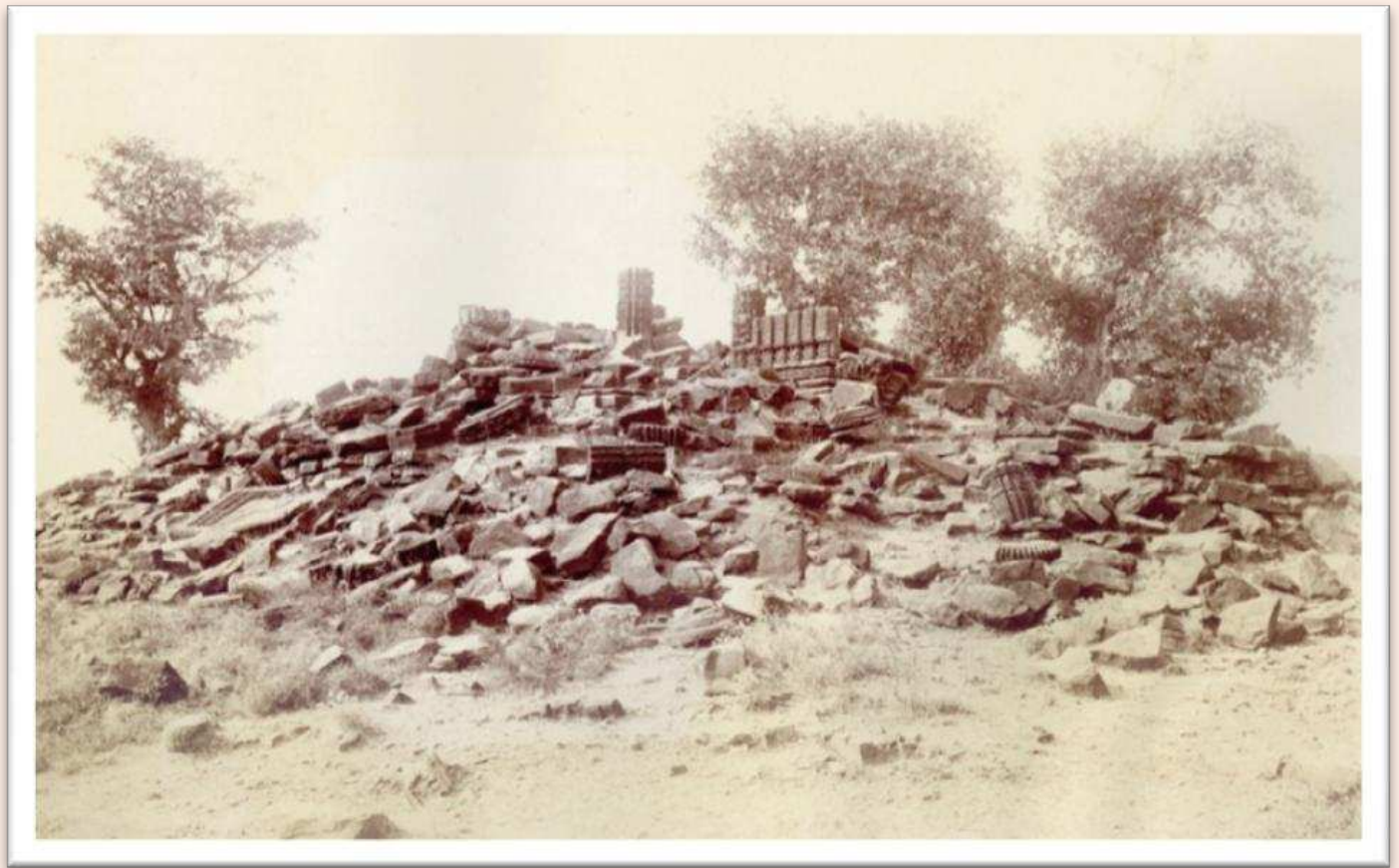
After



Work of construction of a new larger sculpture shed and upgradation of existing sculpture shed at Ganesh Mandir, Atru in progress

Further Readings

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Archival Image Gadhgach temple mound and ruins taken in 1904-05.

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