

Architecture of the Temple of Leimapokpa Keirungba

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Abstract

Temple is regarded as one of the most important examples of religious architecture. The temple architecture of Manipur is practically a virgin field of study and no proper work has so far been done. In Manipur temples are found scattered and many of them exist in its complete form. Among them temple of Leimapokpa Keirungba was one of the most popular temple in the 19th century. The knowledge of the development of the temple and its architectural style is meagre among the people. This is because of the failure in giving proper interpretation to the known facts. The aim of this paper is to find out new facts and reconstruction with the help of scientific method. Attempts have been made here to interpret literary sources in the light of the information gathered from material remains and to compare and bring them together. This work was undertaken with careful examination and followed the rules of research methodology.

Keywords: Staircase, Doorway, Trefoil archway, Cell, Brick, Wall, Architecture, Art, Temple, Arch, Cornice, Railing, Plinth, Pilaster, Sanctum, Shrine.

1. INTRODUCTION

Manipur is situated in the North-East frontier of India sub-continent bordering with Myanmar, Mizoram, Assam and Nagaland. The valley is the centre surrounding by the ranges of hill. Manipur is a meeting point between South-East Asia and the India sub-continent. The state is very rich in archaeological sites and relics. There are hundreds of historical monuments, caves, inscriptions, coins, rock shelters etc. Among the monuments, temples were in good condition. These temples throw significant light on the development of the art and architecture and religious life of the people of Manipur. Manipur has a long history of art and architecture. Before the coming of Hinduism and their contact with the South-East Asian Countries, the Manipuri's had developed an independence type of architecture of their own. Whole concepts and designed different from those of the Hindu and Muslims. However, the migration of Brahmin and the process of Sanskritization in Manipur reflected in the art and architecture. A synthesis was created with the local culture. The popularity of the icon of Hindu gods and goddesses caused erection of Hindu temple in Manipur. The temple remains shows that the Manipuri rules were the great devout of Hinduism. Staunch and devout Hindu rulers with their patronage helped to built number of temples in each and every parts of the state. These temples became the seats of Vaishnava culture. Among the temples, the temple of Leimapokpa Keirungba was one of the most popular temple in the 19th century A.D.

1.1 Objective and Methodology: The objective of this paper is to find out new facts and reconstruction with the help of scientific interpretation based on the report of field work and original sources. The temple of Leimapokpa Keirungba has feasibly been selected to be study sites. Measuring tabs, high-tech compass, camera and other simple engineering measurement tools are the tools of the field survey. These technical works have been incorporated with appropriate Engineers and field experts on hiring basis. Attempt has been made here to interpret literary sources in the light of the information gathered from field work and to compare and bring them together. Emphasis has also been laid on the study of the general lay-out, ground plan and vertical features of the temple. Thus the work undertakes the study of the architecture in a critical and exhaustive manner. A comparative study of the architectural remains of the temple with those of some other parts of the country has also been attempted to know the stylistic affiliation.

1.1.1 Discussion: Temple of Leimapokpa Keirungba is situated in the compound of Manipur State Road Transport Corporation, Yaiskul, Imphal West, Manipur. Leimapokpam Dev Singh (Leipok Keirungba), built the temple during the reign of Maharaja Sir Chandrakirti Singh, K.C.S.I. The temple (Plate-I) built in 1875 A.D. (L. Kunjeswori Devi: 203:128) The temple is dedicated to the deity Radha-Binodata. The temple is built of different sizes of brick, wood and cements mortar. There are four sizes of brick used in the construction of the temple i.e., (i) 29 cm. long, and 13.5cm. broad and 7.5cm.thick; (ii) 30cm. long, 15cm. broad and 7cm. thick; (iii)22cm. long, 14cm broad and 4cm. thick and (iv) 29cm. Long, 14cm broad and 4cm thick.

The temple of Leimapokpa Keirungba is a flat-roofed temple. The temple is standing on a low plinth. It is constructed on a square ground plan measuring 8.26X8.26m (Plate-II). The temple is double-celled type. The *Garbhagriha* or the sanctum is square which has a *Pradakshina* or circumambulatory pat around it to move round the sanctum by the worshippers.

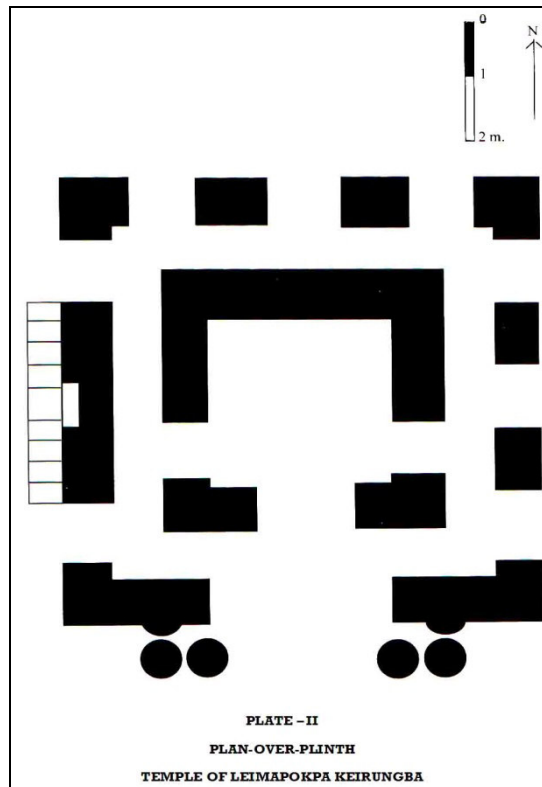


Fig. 1 Front View



Fig. 2 Side View

**PLATE –I
TEMPLE OF LEIMAPOKPA KEIRUNGBA**



The *Pradakshina path* is 90cm breadth. The sanctum hall or the *Garbhagriha* is parted by a wall. This sanctum wall is 90cm thick. The area of the *Garbhagriha* is 2.90X2.90 square metres. The square sanctum has three passages as entrances from east, west and south. The passage provided in the southern side of the sanctum wall is the main doorway which is 2.40m height and 1.67m breadth. Above this rectangular door frame of the interior sanctum wall a concealed arch is provided. In the exterior side of the sanctum wall this arch is not highlighted and this was field up with bricks by separating the rectangular doorframe. Other passages provided in the eastern and western sanctum wall are rectangular which are 97cm breadth and 1.73m height. The interior side above the rectangular passage is a concealed arch which is 2.19m height from the ground level. In the exterior portion of this wall the arch is not highlighted. These two passages are to approach from the *Pradakshina path* to the *Garbhagriha*. There are five concealed windows like small cells are provided around the interior side of the sanctum wall. Two in the eastern side of the of the sanctum wall facing west, another two cell provided in the northern side of the sanctum wall facing south and one cell provided in the western side of the sanctum wall facing east. These cells are 45cm. broad and 57cm. height.

The temple is 7.60m height from the ground level. The temple is facing toward the south with flight of steps in front leading to the *Garbhagriha*. The four sides of the outer wall of the temple are differently designed with plasterwork and stucco which raised vertically and meet the decorated straight cornice. The outer walls of East, West and North are 90cm. thick. The outer wall provided in the southern side is 1m. thick. There are 12 small cell of corbelled arch projected in the interior portion of the sanctum wall and the exterior wall. Two of them are biggest in sizes which is 61cm breadth and 1.40m height provided in the both side of the interior portion of the outer southern wall, facing north. The railing of the temple is 1.55m high having floral designs on it, supported by a row of horizontal *patti* or band running across the exterior wall of the temple. The straight cornice and railing above the cornice are provided distinctly in the four side of the temple. Hexagonal figure holes are provided in the railing as decoration. The face of the temple, provided in the southern wall, is decorated with floral motifs of different designs and a semi-circular engrailed arch as main doorway measuring 3.90m height and 2.90m breadth from the ground level. This engrailed arch is supported by three rounded European Classical pillars, *Stambha*, posted in triangular form in each side. The pillars are 2.40m height from the ground plan. The capitals of the pillars are well decorated with leaf motifs seems like the banyan leaves (above the Springer on post). The voussoirs of the engrailed arch are made of well burnt bricks. A curved cornice is surmounted above the semi-circular arch. A row of rectangular hexagonal figure holes are provided above the curved cornice of the semi-circular arch as '*kapota*'. There are two '*Karna-kuta*' or small square shrines with single final which are posted on either side of the arch. The ceiling between the sanctum wall and the outer wall is barrel vault type.

In the western side of the outer wall of the temple there is a staircase in a triangular form consisting of

six steps in each side. This staircase provided separately in the western side of the temple is 1.90m height and 2.10m long. This staircase is joined with the spiral course staircase projected in the middle of the inner part of the outer western wall. The door of the spiral staircase is 77cm breadth and 1.55m height. This spiral staircase is leading up to the roof of the temple. The staircase which is provided in the middle of the western wall is consisting of 15 steps. It is so constructed that it allows only one person at a time. There are two cusped or trefoil archway provided in each side of the western wall. This archway is 2.26m height and 1.22m breadth. The northern wall of the temple is provided three trefoil archways as triple entrance measuring 2.26m height and 1.22m breadth each. The architectural feature of the eastern wall is similar to the northern wall.

1.1.2 Stylistic affiliations: Flat-roofed *Chandni* temples type of late mediaeval Bengal.

2. CONCLUSION

Maharaja Chandrakriti Singh (1850-1886 A.D) was the most powerful ruler of Manipur in the 19th century. (Iboonghal Singh, L. & Khelchandra Singh, N.:1989:302) His royal patronage helped in the spread of Brahmanism and Vaishnavism in Manipur. He donates lands, built temples and excavated tanks. He encouraged his court nobles to built temple and other religious establishments. After conversion to Hinduism the Manipuri Hindus followed the pattern of Hindu Architectural styles, *Vastusastra* and later adopted Islamic styles. This led to the development of Indo-Islamic architecture in Manipur. They freely employed Hindu master-craftsmen for designing and constructing their building including temples. However, availability of raw materials, climatic conditions, religious revivalism and contacts with neighbouring countries responsible for the stylistic difference. The temple of Leimapokpa Keirungba is divided along the vertical axis into four principal parts i.e., *Adhithana*, the plinth part or pedestal; *Bhitti* or *Jangha*, the wall part or body of the temple; and roof of the temple. The temple of Leimapokpa Keirungba is the only flat-roof temple found in Manipur. Brick is the major raw material for the construction of the temple. According to this structure, the temple is stylistically affiliated to the Flat-roofed *Chandni* temples type of late mediaeval Bengal. The temple, like other temple, was one of the most important religious and cultural centre of the Manipuri Hindus in the second half of the 19th century. During the religious festival and ceremonies people of the locality visited the temple and assembled there to hear the exposition of sacred literature such as the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and Gita. The temple received contribution from the disciples on the occasion of religious ceremonies and festivals such as scripture reading, devotional singing sessions, ritual, feasting, weddings, and funeral ceremonies etc. The income of the temple was used for the maintenance of the temple, payment of the Brahmin, cook etc.

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