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# Temples of Memory: the Bhutnath Temple Environs at Badami as a Commemorative Landscape

Srikumar M. Menon<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>. National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, Karnataka, India (Email: srikumar.menon@gmail.com)

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**Abstract:** *Badami, along with Aihole, Pattadakal and some other sites in and around the valley of the River Malaprabha in Bagalkot District of Karnataka, contain some of the earliest temples built in stone of southern India, beginning with the constructions of the Early Chalukyan dynasty, which ruled from Badami (ancient Vatapi) during the 6th to 8th centuries CE. However, the history of construction of monuments in stone go back much farther in time, as evidenced by the large number of megalithic monuments that are distributed at several sites in the Malaprabha Valley. In continuation of our earlier work which argues that the Chalukyas and their successors were continuing the tradition of commemoration exemplified by the megaliths into later monumental architecture – ranging from temples to miniature shrines to other forms of commemoration, this paper examines the immediate landscape around the Bhutnath Temple at Badami and interpret it as a memorial landscape with various forms of commemorative structures.*

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**Keywords:** Badami, Badami Chalukyas, Megaliths, Early Temple Architecture, Bhutnath Temple, Boulder Memorials, Commemorative Traditions

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## Introduction

The sites of Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal, as well as a host of smaller sites like Naganathana Kolla, Mahakuta, Hale Mahakuta and Siddhanakolla, near the banks of River Malaprabha, straddling Badami and Hundgund Taluks of the Bagalkot District of Karnataka, are best known for early rock-cut as well as structural monuments, mostly temples. Badami, known in ancient times as Vatapi, was the capital of the Early Chalukyan dynasty, which controlled a large part of southern India during the sixth to eighth centuries CE. The landscape is dominated by chains of low sandstone hills with plateau tops which enclose the Malaprabha River for a distance of nearly 25km, forming a valley not much more than 8km at its widest. This valley, (henceforth “the Malaprabha Valley”), is aligned approximately southwest to northeast. Aihole is situated at the north-eastern exit of the river from the valley, Pattadakal roughly at the centre where the river makes a prominent loop towards the north, and Badami lies a few kilometres north of the south-eastern part of the valley, where the river enters it. There is a considerable concentration of temples at Badami, Aihole and Pattadakal, the

oldest of these dated from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, to the period of Early Chalukyan rule. However, as mentioned earlier, these sites are by no means the only places one finds the handiwork of the Early Chalukyan architects – virtually every fold and cleft in the chain of hills bear some evidence of their chisels, with sites like Naganatha Kolla, Mahakuta and Hale Mahakuta near Badami, Huligyemmanna Kolla near Pattadakal and Siddhana Kolla near Aihole all being sites of relevance to the study of early temple architecture in this region.

However, the history of human occupation of this region goes much farther back in time, even to the Palaeolithic, with stone tools and the painted rock shelters at Sidilephadi and rock paintings at Ranganatha Gudda near Badami, among other evidence pointing to human activity in early times (Padigar, 2016). There are a lot of megalithic sites, too, in the region – the megaliths of Meguti Hill being the most well-known, though other sites at Bachinnagudda and Akkaragal, near Pattadakal and Gajendragad, Kodekal etc. are also known (Sundara, 1975), with one extensive megalithic site at Kyaddigere near Meguti Hill having been destroyed in 2008 (Menon, 2012).

### **The Memorial Landscapes of the Malaprabha Valley**

The entire landscape along the Malaprabha Valley bears signs of a commemorative tradition that harks back to the Iron Age or even earlier. The megaliths of Meguti Hill at Aihole, in close proximity to the Meguti Jain Temple, and the rock-cut Jaina Cave, are well-known (Kadambi 2011; Menon, 2012; Morrison, 2009; Sundara, 1975). The Meguti hilltop is also strewn with rubble and large stone blocks, presumably packing from the collapsed dolmens as well as raw material for megalith-building.

Apart from the megaliths of Meguti Hill, there are other megaliths in Aihole, too, at Kyaddigere, east of Meguti Hill (now destroyed), and on the Ramalingeshwara hilltop, to the south-west of Meguti Hill, proximal to the Ramalingeshwara as well as the Galaganatha Temple complexes. Menon (2015) presents evidence that the selection of an existing megalithic site for locating the Galaganatha Temple complex by the Early Chalukyans might have been deliberate and that several, if not all, of the shrines in the complex might be carrying forward the commemorative tradition of the megaliths, in later times.

Apart from Aihole, megalithic complexes exist near Siddhanakolla (Padigar 2004), close to Aihole, as well as Bachinnagudda and Akkaragal, both near Pattadakal, Gajendragad, near Badami, and Kodekal (Sundara, 1975). I have observed a large number of stone circle megaliths, hitherto unreported, to the west of the Early Chalukyan sandstone quarries at Motara Maradi, in the hills north of Pattadakal (Singh, 2009). All this evidence makes a strong case for the existence of an established tradition of commemoration in the Valley. This tradition of commemoration seems to have persisted into later times as well. The existence of memorial temples at Huligyemmanna Kolla, near Pattadakal has been well-established (Ramesh, 1984;

Menon, 2015). Thus the landscape of the Malaprabha Valley, which was dominated by megalithic monuments that were sepulchral or memorial in nature, saw the erection of other forms of commemorative structures in Early Chalukyan times and even later periods.

### **The Bhutnath Temple Complex and Panchalinganaphadi**

The Bhutnath Temple complex at Badami is a collection of shrines situated spectacularly on a platform projecting into the Agastya Teertha tank, on its north-eastern bank (Figure 1a and 1b). The nucleus of the group of assorted structures is a west-facing Early Chalukyan construction, consisting of a *garbha griha*, *antarala*, a closed *mandapa* and a small porch, and this has been enlarged by adding a larger, open porch in later episodes of construction (Michell, 2014). This main temple has several shrines of later construction abutting it (Figure 2), as well as a few independent shrines built nearby. The main Temple is dedicated to Shiva, referred to as Bhuteshwara in an inscription. Two of the shrines abutting the Bhutnath Temple on its northern wall (shown in Figure 2) have interesting images sculpted on their rear walls. One of these, a west-facing shrine with a *phamsana* tower, and a small porch, has a depiction of a Shiva *linga* with Nandi, worshipped by a male figure and possibly his spouse, incised into one of the blocks of the rear wall of the shrine, in a manner reminiscent of depictions on hero stones (Figure 3). There is no icon remaining in the shrine. In the adjacent shrine, which is north-facing, a large stone block comprising the rear wall and in the center of it, has an image of Vishnu, four-armed and standing, with a worshipper at his feet, carved into it (Figure 4). There is a *pitha* inserted at the base of the image, possibly indicating that this is meant to be the principal image in the shrine. As one proceeds beyond the Bhutnath group of temples, to the south of the complex, one encounters a large boulder, locally known as *Panchalinganaphadi* (Figure 5), on the eastern bank of Agastya Teertha. This boulder is conspicuous due to two small temples situated dramatically on top of it. *Panchalinganaphadi* also has a large image of *Sheshashayi* Vishnu carved towards its base on the south-eastern side, around which a small shrine has been built against the rock. Another small excavation near the base faces cardinal east and is believed to receive the rays of the morning Sun every day. Carved on the north-eastern face of the boulder and the north-eastern face of a cleft in it in the east, at varying heights, are a number of relief carvings, of mini-shrines and icons (Figure 6). The mini-shrines enshrine *lingas*, some with Nandis in attendance and others without, while the other depictions have an image of Vishnu in standing position within a niche (Figure 7). A couple of unfinished mini shrines can be discerned blocked out on the north-eastern face of the cleft, too. There is also a large panel of the Hindu Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, flanked by Ganesha and Bhavaraha on one side and Mahishasuramardini Durga and Narasimha on the other, with one of the mini *linga*-shrines on the proper left of the Narasimha image, on the north-western face of the cleft (Figure 8). Beneath this panel is an elongated band of ten seated divinities, diminutive in comparison with the images above. This large panel of

Hindu gods appears to be a later intervention than the mini-shrines since they have partly obliterated inscriptions which existed earlier on the rock surface.



**Figure 1a:** The Bhutnath Temple complex at Badami with the boulder called *Panchalinganaphadi* beside it, with two shrines atop it, against the backdrop of the sandstone cliffs east of Badami.



**Figure 1b:** The boulder called *Panchalinganaphadi*, beside the Bhutnath Temple complex against the backdrop of the Agastya Teertha



**Figure 2: Two shrines, one west-facing, with a *Phamsana* roof, and the other flat-roofed and facing north, adjoining the main Bhutnath Temple**



**Figure 3: A Shiva linga and Nandi, with a couple in adoration, carved on the inner rear wall of the shrine with the *Phamsana* roof shown in Figure 2**

Soundararajan (1981), assigns a date more or less contemporaneous to the structural temples of Badami for the mini-shrines based on stylistic analysis of various components of the temple relief models, but feels compelled by the features of the relief sculptures shown in Figure 8 to advance the date to the end of the 7th century CE. The observation noted above, of earlier inscriptions being partly cut away when the panel of deities was carved can resolve this discrepancy. It is quite likely that the mini-shrines were sculpted earlier, when the inscriptions were incised, followed by the large panel of deities towards the close of the 7th century. Soundararajan (1981) also speculates that “these temple models thus would stand for practical exercises undertaken by craftsmen in the course of their erection of temples here in order to show the complete familiarity they had already achieved with the various structural elements of a temple in elevation.” Rajarajan (2012), proposes a date of the second half of the 6th century CE to these temple relief models, while contending that they were evolutionary prototypes for later structural temples.

The two small structural temples atop the *Panchalinganaphadi* boulder were also examined during this study, despite the difficulty of access since the rock-cut steps up the boulder have been blocked by the ASI. On top of the boulder can be seen, apart from the two temples, shallow foundations incised for the erection of at least two more structures (Figure 9), a long inscription on the bare surface of the rock (Figure 10) stating that a temple to Mallikarjuna was set up by an officer in the year 1033, and a small rock-cut *linga* just beside the larger temple (Figure 11).



**Figure 4:** A 4-armed Vishnu image carved on a stone of the inner rear wall of the flat-roofed shrine shown in Figure 2



Figure 5: The large boulder called *Panchalinganaphadi*, with two small temples on top of it. To the bottom right of the boulder is the shrine enclosing Sheshashayi Vishnu, while the small excavation at the base of the boulder in the triangular strip of lawn is the "Sunlight Cave".



Figure 6: The temple relief carvings and images on *Panchalinganaphadi*, with one of the independent shrines of the Bhutnath complex on the right. (One of the inner walls of the shrine contains a carving of a devotee probably in the act of performing *shraaddha* rituals)



**Figure 7:** A closer view showing one of the temple relief models enshrining a *linga* and a Vishnu image. There is a smaller Vishnu image to the proper right of the shrine model, and two unfinished shrine model carvings to the proper right of the Vishnu image. In the right part of the picture, a part of the large panel of Hindu divinities is also seen.



**Figure 8:** The large panel of Hindu divinities carved on another part of the *Panchalinganaphadi* boulder. The way up the boulder with rock-cut steps, which has been blocked, is visible to the left of the picture.



Figure 9: Shallow excavations, possibly for small shrines, atop *Panchalinganaphadi*



Figure 10: An Inscription atop *Panchalinganaphadi*



**Figure 11:** A small rock-cut *linga* beside one of the temples atop *Panchalinganaphadi*. A collection pit for the runoff from *abhishekha* inside the temple is to the left



**Figure 12:** A Small excavation, possibly for a shrine or a linga, on the top of the boulder



Figure 13: The two small temples on top of *Panchalinganaphadi*



Figure 14: A loose slab with multiple *lingas* carved on it, within the sanctum of the temple with the *Phamsana* roof



**Figure 15: The group of monuments on Hemakuta Hill, Hampi**



**Figure 16: Lingas carved on the rock surface adjoining one of the memorial temples on Hemakuta Hill. A few dolmen-like shrines are seen next to the temple wall to the right of the picture.**



Figure 17: The Kappearabhata inscription protected by a rock overhang. A few idols are carved in niches to the proper right of the inscription



Figure 18: A shrine model carved in reliefs enshrining a *linga* and attended by Nandi, on a rock near the Kappearabhata inscription seen in the background



**Figure 19: A Vishnu image and *linga* carved on a rock opposite the ASI Museum at Badami**



**Figure 20: A water body in a quarried area on North Fort**

A small excavation, presumably for a very small shrine or a *linga*, was also noted (Figure 12). The two small temples are erected directly on the rock and are probably built of blocks excavated from the very rock they stand on (Figure 13). The larger shrine is west-facing and has a porch and a *garbha griha*, with a Karnataka *Phamsana* style *shikhara* over the sanctum. The *shikhara* of the other shrine, which consists of only a sanctum without a porch, has collapsed. The larger shrine has, inside the sanctum, a loose slab containing 4 *lingas* (Figure 14). Though this is a loose slab, given the nature of the high perch of the shrine, it is unlikely that it could have been added later. Slabs incorporating multiple *lingas* elsewhere in the Malaprabha Valley (Mahakuta) have been described as memorial in nature (Mohite 2012). Thus this location seems to have the character of a place meant for erecting memorials – either rock-cut *lingas* or shrines of various sizes. It is worth noting that at Hemakuta Hill in Hampi, known to be a site for erecting memorial temples (Figure 15) from at least the 9th century (Wagoner, 2001), there are rock-cut *lingas* on the surface of the rock adjacent to some of the known memorial temples, some of them with dolmen like structures covering them and abutting the temple walls (Figure 16).

### Evidence for a Zone of Commemoration

The nature of the monuments clustered around the Bhutnath Temple suggests that the temple was quite possibly the nucleus of a zone of commemoration. The several small shrines built against the main temple or in the immediate vicinity, and especially the two shrines mentioned above with images carved in their rear wall, could be memorial shrines built for deceased persons. The two shrines on top of *Panchalinganaphadi* too are most likely memorial shrines, given the slab with several *lingas* inside the sanctum of one. The close resemblance of the structures and rock-cut *lingas* on top of the boulder to the memorial landscape of Hemakuta Hill at Hampi – a known memorial site, adds credence to this. In the light of this, it is proposed that the temple relief models and Vishnu figures too were memorials erected for deceased persons. They might represent a type of commemorative structure similar to the boulder memorials at Sravanabelagola, which will be discussed below.

Further evidence to bolster this hypothesis is found around the Tattukote area on the north bank of the Agastya Teertha, immediately north-west of the Bhutnath Temple. Beside the path leading up to the North Fort from the Tattukote group of temples, north-west of the Bhutnath group, is a rock face on which the well-known Kappearabhata inscription is inscribed (Figure 17). This inscription is a set of laudatory verses to an unknown hero, known only as Kappearabhata, of much interest since they are among the earliest verses in Kannada set in the *tripadi* metre (Settar, 2011).

Settar (2011) opines that Kappearabhata was in all probability a great hero of the Early Chalukyan times. It is likely that the inscription is a memorial to this great hero, though Settar is not sure about this. At other places on the same cliff face and on other nearby boulders are again encountered niche figures of divinities and *linga*-shrines similar to those on *Panchalinganaphadi* (Figure 18). There is one more location, right

opposite the Archaeological Museum at Badami, where, on a face of a large boulder beside the Agastya Tirtha, there are two relief sculptures – of Vishnu and a Shiva *linga* (Figure 19).

In addition, there exist many monuments with clearly commemorative connotations from later periods in and around Badami town. Proceeding further up the path from the Kappearabhata inscription, one reaches the flat top of the North Fort, where, east of the modern *dargah* housing the grave of a Muslim saint, is a water body in a depression formed due to quarrying of rock (Figure 20). On the eastern edge of this water body are several *padukas* (carved footprints usually associated with commemoration) – on two loose blocks of stone (Figure 21) as well as carved on the rock bed (Figure 22). There are several relief sculptures on the side walls of the water body, such as images of a goddess and a Shiva *linga* with Nandi (Figure 23), a Shiva *linga* with devotee etc. The presence of these features adjoining a water body is a clear parallel of the Agastya Teertha and the structures in the Bhutnath area, and is suggestive of memorials constructed beside a water body for ritualistic purposes. Along the path leading up to the North Fort from Tattukote are seen loose sculptures of *padukas*, a votive figure of a devotee (Figure 24), usually kept in temples or other sacred spaces to commemorate a devotee (Sundara, personal communication, 2013), as well as a hero stone located near the Tattukote Hanuman sculpture, bolstering this view of the landscape as one of death and commemoration.

Up in the sandstone cliffs to the east of Bhutnath Temple, moving east out of Badami, is the location called Arali Teertha, where there is a natural cavern created by weathering around a spring-fed natural pool. On the side of this natural rock shelter is sculpted a row of Hindu divinities. Very close to this, to the west, is a rock shelter containing a memorial to a Jain monk (Figure 25). The floor of this rock shelter has a *paduka* in a square recess carved into it with a runoff for oblations, and the rear wall of the shelter, behind the *paduka* has a relief of a seated Jaina monk with a *trichhatra* above and an inscription, in 16th century Kannada script, commemorating the salvation attained by a Jaina ascetic called Vardhamaanadeva (translation by Padigar, personal communication, 2013). All this points to the persistence of the practice of commemoration in the Malaprabha Valley, the origin of which goes back in antiquity definitely to the Iron Age or even before, and continuing up to the 16th century at least.

## Discussion

In view of all the above observations, it is cautiously hypothesised that the Agastya Teertha was a place for performing rituals for the attainment of *moksha* for the dead and prominent persons were commemorated variously by erecting temples or sculpting *lingas* or likenesses of Vishnu according to the religious affiliation of the deceased as a Shaivite or Vaishnavite respectively. The Kappearabhata inscription appears to be a one-of-its-kind memorial of a great hero celebrated by the Early Chalukyas and commemorated by a fine poem, which is in fact repeated at least at two other locations near Badami, too (Settar, 2011).



Figure 21: Slabs with *Padukas* near the water body on North Fort



Figure 22: *Padukas* carved on the rock surface near the water body on North Fort



**Figure 23: A linga and Nandi carved on the rock wall bounding the water body on North Fort**

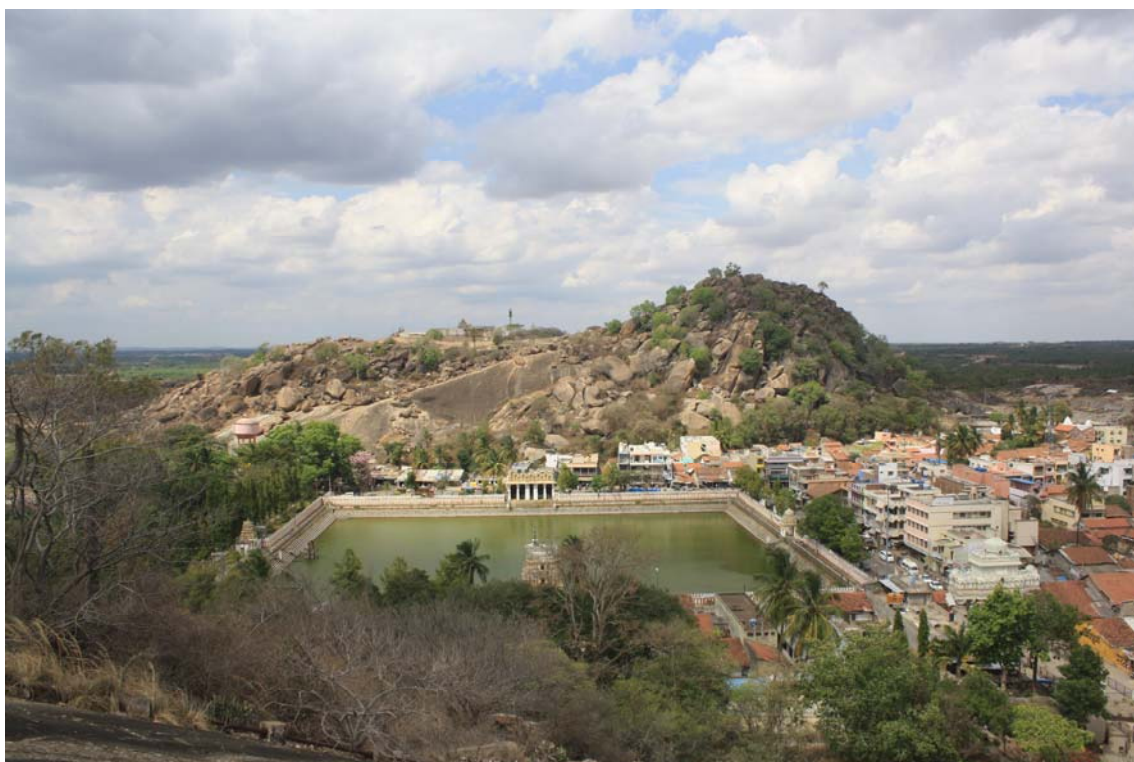
It appears possible that the landscape around the Bhutnath Temple and *Panchalinganaphadi* was a site for commemorative structures since Early Chalukyan times and this tradition persisted into later times as well. It is known that, in modern times, local residents of Badami performed *shraaddha* rituals for the dead in the Agastya Teertha near the Bhutnath Temple, until recently, when this practice was stopped by the Archaeological Survey of India. It is also felt that the name “Bhutnath” (more precisely, “Bhuteshwara” as mentioned in an inscription found inside the temple) could signify a connection with death and commemoration. The lesser shrines built against the Bhutnath Temple with imagery suggestive of commemoration lends credence to this hypothesis. One of the free-standing shrines to the south of the Bhutnath complex (visible to the right of frame in Figure 6) has a carving in shallow relief on the inside of the southern wall, which shows a seated devotee with some offering in his cupped hands, beside a *kalasa*. Interestingly, the devotee has his sacred thread looped over his right shoulder and hanging on the left, as *apasavya*, usually worn this way while performing post-death rituals.



**Figure 24: A loose votive image to commemorate a devotee now incorporated into a rubble wall flanking the path leading from Tattukote to North Fort**



**Figure 25: The memorial to Vardhamaandeva in the cliffs near Arali Tirtha**



**Figure 26: Chikkabetta, or Chandragiri, at Sravanabelagola, as seen from the larger hill called Vindhyagiri**



Figure 27: An inscription on the rock surface at Sravanabelagola



Figure 28: A *paduka* memorial at Sravanabelagola



**Figure 29: The boulder memorial called Siddharagundu at Sravanabelagola**



Figure 30: Pillar memorials within an open pavilion at Sravanabelagola



**Figure 31: A memorial column inside one of the temples at Sravanabelagola**

It is interesting that clusters of what have been interpreted as memorial structures are found near water bodies, such as the small pond atop the North Fort, or Agastya Teertha itself. Padigar (2017) in an important and interesting new paper discusses the connotation of the word *Devadroni* used in several inscriptions, one of which is the pillar inscription of the Early Chalukyan King Mangalesa at Mahakuta, near Badami. Discarding earlier interpretations of this word as “idol procession” or “divine boat”, he proposes that the word suggest a “sacred spot” with a prominent water body, which might be a spring-fed tank or even a river. He identifies Mahakuta, with its spring-fed Vishnu-pushkarini, Alampur (in Telengana) beside the River Tungabhadra, and Pattadakal beside the River Malaprabha, each as a *Devadroni* important to the Early Chalukya dynasty. He also quotes a reference to a *Devadroni* in the *Skanda Purana*, wherein is mentioned that performing *pinda-daana* (a part of post-death rituals) at such a site “fetches heaven to the ancestors.” This, too, supports to the hypothesis that many of the structures mentioned in this paper, clustered near a water body, are memorial structures commemorating people of eminence in the Early Chalukyan Empire.

If, as hypothesized in this paper as well as earlier work (Menon, 2015), later monumental traditions did indeed carry forward the tradition of commemoration in the Valley, why did the Malaprabha Valley come to contain so many sepulchral/memorial monuments? Mate and Gokhale (1971) propose the idea that the region was a *teertha* – a sacred place, which was why memorial monuments were set up in large numbers. For instance, they liken Aihole to Tigowa in Madhya Pradesh, where too, thirty six small shrines in ruined condition were found by Cunningham near a Gupta-period temple, apart from a large number of Shiva lingas scattered nearby. This concept of *teerthas* associated with death and liberation is found applicable to several places all over present-day India. An example that readily comes to mind is Varanasi – the ancient centre associated with death rituals for liberation of departed souls by Hindus. It is well documented that Pampateertha, later part of the Sacred Centre on Hemakuta Hill in the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire, was a *teertha* where a cult of erecting memorial temples had come up at least by 9th century CE (Wagoner, 2001).

The earliest reference to cultural practice of erecting temples in memory of deceased persons seems to be an inscription dated 380CE, from the times of the Gupta ruler Chandragupta II of Mathura, which describes the setting up of Shiva *lingas* called Kapileswara and Upamiteswara in memory of two departed Saiva gurus (Willis, 2009; Mate and Gokhale, 1971). Willis (2009) discusses the naming of *lingas* after individuals and states that in such situations “..death transformed a meritorious and noble person from an individual into a divine entity that was suitable for worship.” He also observes that instances of Vaishnava images named after deceased persons are known. He quotes a passage from the *Kasyapasamhita* to illustrate that the deceased person who had consecrated an image of Vishnu is transformed after his death into an image of Vishnu on his way to communion with his Lord. This could explain the practice of carving of Vishnu images as well as *linga* images in the temple relief models on

Panchalinganaphadi Boulder near the Bhutnath Temple at Badami. The practice of erecting funerary temples called *pallipadai* by the Cholas for departed rulers is also well known (Chakravarthy 2011). Darian (2001), while asserting that it was the grave that gave birth to stone architecture, mentions a Shiva Temple built on the spot of cremation of a local raja in Kathiawar and above the cremated remains. In the Malaprabha Valley, too, this practice was prevalent, as evident from the memorial, possibly even sepulchral temples at Huligymmanna Kolla (Ramesh, 1984) and the possibility of commemorative temples at Ramalingeshwara Hill and Bachinnagudda (Menon, 2015).

Though the above examples illustrate that the practice of erecting a sepulchral (funerary) or memorial temple is encountered at various places in India at various phases in history, for examples illustrating memorial landscapes with a multitude of forms for commemorative structures, we will turn another example from Karnataka – the Jain centre at Sravanabelagola, which was a largely commemorative landscape since at least the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, where there are memorial monuments of various forms. The similar landscape of Pampateertha on Hemakuta Hill at Hampi, the where a cult of memorial temples emerged from the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE onwards has been already mentioned. The region near Hemakuta was referred to as Pampateertha in an inscription from the 7<sup>th</sup> century, suggesting that its history as a *teertha* might stretch farther into antiquity.

Sravanabelagola has a recorded history that dates back to 600CE, while legend has it that Chandragupta Maurya – the founder of the Mauryan Empire moved here in his last days along with the Jain monk Bhadrabahu in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and ended his life by *sallekhana* (ritual fast unto death). Located in Hassan District of Karnataka, Sravanabelagola is an important centre for the *Digambara* Jain sect and is famous for the largest monolithic statue of the legendary Jain ascetic Bahubali, also known as Gomateshwara. However, this monument on the larger hill at Sravanabelagola, called Vindhyagiri, was carved only in the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE and the smaller hill – Chandragiri, was of much importance in earlier times. Chandragiri (Figure 26), mentioned variously as Katavapra and Kalvappu in the earliest inscriptions, was a centre where Jain ascetics embraced death by self-mortification from at least 600CE (Settar, 1986; Nagarajaiah, 2001). In course of time, there evolved a variety of monuments to record the memory of ascetics as well as the lay people who adopted the ritual practice of embracing death voluntarily. These include inscriptions on rock beds and boulders (Figure 27), carving of footprints or *padukas* (Figure 28), boulder memorials (Figure 29) which show the deceased in communion with a *tirthankara*, pillar memorials within open pavilions (Figure 30), memorial columns within temples (Figure 31) etc.

Settar (1986) mentions memorials erected to commemorate Jain monks, nuns, lay followers – both male and female, who have invited death as per the religious strictures, both on the mountain as well as elsewhere. The hill had assumed

importance as a holy centre after the legendary association with Bhadrabahu and Chandragupta Maurya and became the refuge of ascetics who undertook the practice of ritual death during 6th – 9th centuries CE. The practice of erecting temples on Chandragiri seems to have commenced only from the 9th century onwards.

Aided by the wealth of inscriptions available on various monuments on the hill, Settar (1986) presents a detailed account of how the hill transforms from a sanctuary for self-mortifying ascetics to a pilgrimage centre where lay followers too come to worship and to lay down their lives and how the tradition of erecting memorials to monks, nuns, rulers and lay followers developed, along with temple-building activity. A few hero stones commemorating heroic death are also found on the hill.

The variety in form of the various commemorative structures found at Badami exhibits similarity to those at Sravanabelagola. The temple relief carvings at *Panchalinganaphadi*, as well as those near the Kappearabhata inscription, the reliefs near the quarried tank on North Fort etc. are similar to the boulder memorials of Chandragiri. The *padukas* found scattered at several places and the memorial to Vardhamaanadeva are other examples of similarity.

The vocabulary of the entire range of commemorative structures encountered in the Malaprabha Valley is considerably rich – varying from large temples to small shrines, some of them very similar in conception to megalithic dolmens, very small “votive” shrines, boulder memorials etc. The distribution of these structures point to the whole of the Malaprabha Valley as an extended *teertha*, with several nuclei zones of commemoration, of which the Bhutnath area in Badami is only one.

## Conclusion

In continuation of our earlier work examining the nature of the numerous monuments and religious landscape of the Malaprabha Valley, this paper focuses on the Bhutnath Temple complex and its environs in Badami. The Early Chalukyan temple dedicated to Shiva as Bhuteshwara forms the nucleus for a variety of structures, including smaller shrines built adjoining it, and several independent shrines in the vicinity, as well as many relief sculptures carved on the nearby boulder called *Panchalinganaphadi*. These structures can be seen as memorials for deceased persons, probably of varying eminence, in the period of Early Chalukyan rule in the region and later periods, taking into consideration clues from similar landscapes and structures in the Malaprabha Valley and elsewhere.

In view of the widespread occurrence of megalithic monuments at several sites in the larger context of the Valley, in some cases sharing monumental space with temples and hero stones, it is possible that the hero stones, temples of various sizes, “votive” shrines near temples and the temple relief models and images carved on boulders are but evolutionary products of the same cultural expression of commemoration of the dead, as stone-working skills evolved, along with inputs from other cultural influences.

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