

Shrines in the Landscape of the Absolute

(A Brief Historical Note)

The ancient city of Khajuraho, the capital of the Chandela Rajputs, is situated 34 miles to the South of Mahoba, 27 miles to the east of Chhatrapur, and 25 miles to the north-west of Panna. It is inserted in sheet No. 70 of the Indian Atlas as Kujrow, in north latitude $24^{\circ} 51'$, and east longitude 80° , just 4 miles to the south of Rajnagar, and within 8 miles of the west bank of Kane River.

The earliest mention of this capital by name is by Abu Rihan, who accompanied Mahmud in his campaign against Kalinjar in A.D. 1022. He calls it Kajurah, the capital of Jajahuti, and places it at 30 *parsangs*, or about 90 miles, to the south-east of Kanoj. The true direction, however, is almost due south, and the distance about twice 30 *parsangs*, or 180 miles. The next mention of Khajuraho is by Ibn Batuta, who visited it about A.D. 1335. He calls it Kajura, and describes it as having a lake about one mile in length, which was surrounded by idol temples. These are still standing, and form, perhaps, the largest group of costly Hindu temples, now to be found in Northern India.

The earliest mention of the province is by Hiuen Tsang in A.D. 641. He calls it Chi-chi-to, or Jajhoti, and places the capital at 1,000 li, or 167 miles, to the north-east of Ujjain. The bearing is sufficiently accurate, but the distance is about double 1,000 li, or upwards of 300 miles, whether we take Mahoba or Khajuraho to have been the chief city at the time of Hiuen Tsang's visit. He describes the capital as being 15 or 16 li, or upwards of $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles in circuit, and the people as being mostly heretics or worshippers of the gods. There were many dozens of monasteries, but only a few monks, while there were about 1,000 Brahmans attached to 12 temples. The king himself was a Brahman, but a staunch Buddhist. The country was famous for its fertility, and was much frequented by learned men from all the parts of India.

From these accounts of Hiuen Tsang and Abu Rihan, it is evident that the province of Jajhoti corresponded with the modern district of Bundelkhand, in its widest extent. The Chinese pilgrim states that the province was 4,000 li, or 667 miles, in circuit, which would form a square of about 167 miles to each side. Now, Bundelkhand in its widest extent, is said to have originally comprised all the country to the south of the Jumna and Ganges, from the Betwa River on the west, to the temple of Vindhya Vasini Devi, near Mirzapur, on the east, including the districts of Chanderi, Sagar, and Bilhari, near the sources of the Narbada on the south. But these are also the limits of the ancient country of the Jajhotiya Brahmans, which, according to Buchanan's information, extended from the Jumna on the north to the Narbada on the south, and from Urcha on the Betwa River in the west to the Bundela Nala on the east. The last is said to be a small stream which falls into the Ganges near Banaras, and within two stages of Mirzapur. The Jajhotiya