

Name of the Element: Rashmela of Kantajir Mandir

Name of Inventory: Test Inventory 1

Serial No: D3-00002

Brief Description,

Kantanagar Temple, commonly known as Kantajir Mandir or Kantajew Temple at Kantanagar, is an 18th century Hindu temple. It is about 12 miles north of Dinajpur town, and about a mile west of Dinajpur- Tetulia highway across the Dhepa River. It has gained eminence as an outstanding monument in Bengal for its fabulous terracotta embellishment. This nava-ratna or 'nine spired' Hindu temple, now stripped off its original nine spires atop its corners during the devastating earthquake of 1897, exhibits the exuberance of terracotta art at its best in Bangladesh. Maharaja Prannath of Dinajpur started its construction in 1622 and it was finished by his son Maharaja Ramnath in 1752.

Every year the temple hosts Rashmela, on the occasion of Kathik Purnima/Rash Purnima (usually happens at the end of November). Fifteen days before the festival starts, temple Gods Radha and Krishna travel to Dinajpur Rajbari which is considered Radha's home, through a boat journey on Punarbhava River. After 15 days, they return to Kantajait Mandir on a Palki, or palanquin. Then they perform a chakra around the temple (circumambulation) and take their place and thus the 1 month long Rash Mela or Festival starts.

The rituals are performed on the night of the full moon in accordance with a tradition that dates back 500 years, and is connected with the Rajas of Dinajpur. The festival is observed by people from all walks of life. Thousands of devotees from India, Nepal, as well as across Bangladesh. Magura, Mymensigh and Patuakhali, Nilphamari and Bhola pay their homage. Many spend the festival night around the temple area, believing that such rituals can promote the welfare of society. During this period, the temple authorities provide food and entertainment. The latter includes ritual songs and Radha-Krishna dances, much to the delight of the pilgrims and in keeping with traditional temple hospitality.

Region: Dinajpur- Tetulia highway across the Dhepa Rivers

Photographs: Video: Consent:

Submitted by: Swaksar Adhikary, +8801738402815

E-mail: niloyutsav@gmail.com; BRAC University, Biotechnology, Anthropology