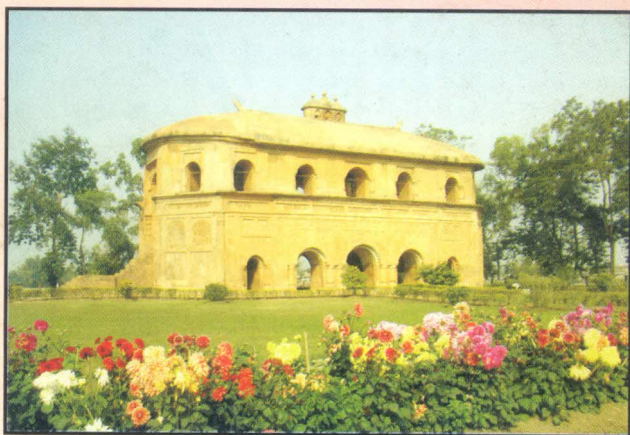


AHOM MONUMENTS SIVASAGAR



Rang-ghar, Rangpur



Ahom Raja's Palace, Garhgaon



प्रलकीर्तिमपावृणु

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

GUWAHATI CIRCLE

AHOM MONUMENTS

Sivasagar, 369 km east of Guwahati in Assam, remained the seat of Ahom power for approx. six centuries whose first king, Sukapha, migrating from Mong-Mao or Mong-Mao Ling (South-west Yunnan province in China) had established his first capital at Charaideo in 1261 A.D. Later on, Sudangpha changed his capital to Charaguya, in 1403 A.D., from where Suklengmung shifted to Garhgaon. Sukampha again shifted his capital to Salaguri and finally Rudra Simha founded the fifth Ahom capital at Rangpur on the bank of river Dikhow. The Sivasagar district encompasses the above cited places where vestiges of Ahoms are located.

The Literary records and local tradition mention about the Ahoms inheriting the tradition of construction by using impermanent materials. 'Satsai Buranji', a literary source, credits king Suhummong who started the tradition of 'building royal palace' with gable ends. Local traditions ascribe the use of permanent materials like bricks and stones to king Rudra Simha who brought the expert artisans for the purpose from Koch Bihar.

The literary sources refer to the construction of Nagasekhar Devalaya at Jamaguri (Dist. Sonitpur) by Susenpha (1439-88 A.D.), temple constructed by Dihingia Raja (1497-1529 A.D.) to commemorate his victory on the bank of the Karatoya in north Bengal and the temples at Negheriting, Garhgaon and Vishwanath Ghat all built during the period of Pratap Simha (1603-61 A.D.) Unfortunately these edifices are either completely obliterated by the later construction or damaged by the vagaries of nature.

Gorakhiya dol at Nazira, the earliest example of Ahom constructions, was built by Pratap Simha. It has an octagonal garbhagriha and a rectangular mandapa. The inverted cone like sikhara is embellished with vertical ridges, radiating down from pinnacle to the junction of the bhatti and sikhara.

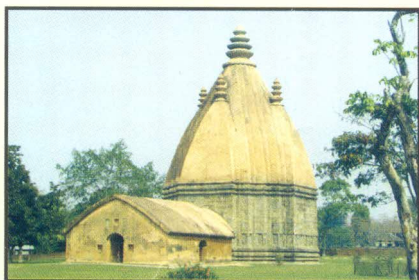
The earliest example of the next phase, the Devighar, was built by king Rudra Simha, on the western bank of Jaisagar tank near Rangpur. The surviving foundation and some wall portion of mandapa and garbhagriha indicate the use of bricks in its construction. The best example of this period is Kesavanarayana temple or Jai dol, situated on the northern bank of Jaisagar tank. On plan it has an octagonal garbhagriha, an antarala and two mandapas, all aligned to the east-west axis. The bhatti portion is decorated with rosette design and images of divine personages in alternate row. Its oval sikhara, provided

with angasikharas, is decorated with numerous squares of receding dimensions formed by linear ads within which are carved full-blown lotus flower. Its squattish pinnacle, with a few modifications, was adopted as standard for the later construction. Next example, the octagonal Fakuwa dol, built on 22-stepped terrace and situated amidst village, Rangpur, is the most curious example. There are the remains of eight subsidiary shrines on lowest terrace, one each built at each octagon.

Siva Simha planned to build temple-complexes on the banks of specially excavated tanks. At the northern bank of Gaurisagar tank he caused the construction of the temples, one each dedicated to Devi, Siva and Vishnu, exhibiting different architectural design such as the nagara style for Devi dol and nilachala type-circular sikhara for Siva and Vishnu dols.



Gaja-lakshmi, Gaurisagar



Devi dol, Gaurisagar.

Devi dol having octagonal garbhagriha, antarala and mandapa on plan, is perhaps, the earliest example of brick built Ahom temple. The sikhara over the garbhagriha, appearing more like

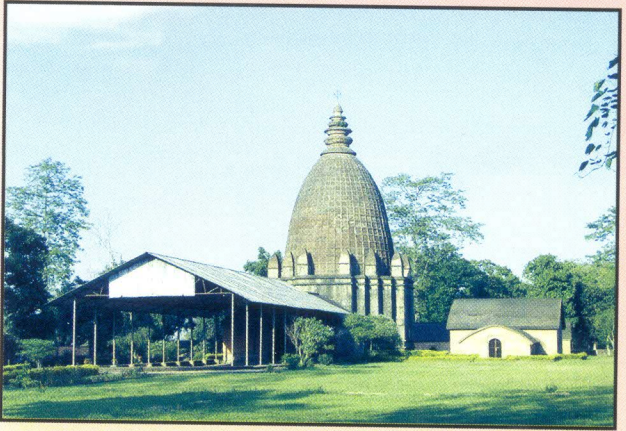
an elongated tower, is corrugated with vertical bands of crest and trough.

The Siva dol having similar plan as in the previous example, was built by reigning queen, Phuleswari Devi, has circular sikhara, decorated with honey-comb design, with one angasikhara at each of the rahapaga. Over the sikhara is placed two kalasas, one above the other.



Siva dol, Sivasagar.

The Vishnu dol is having only octagonal garbhagriha and mandapa. The missing antarala is an interesting feature not found in either of the previous example. With two angasikharas at the rahapaga, this temple appears to be replica of Joy dol, though lacking the grandeur of the former.



Vishnudol, Joysagar

On the southern bank of a specially excavated huge tank called Sivasagar, Siva Simha constructed, three temples dedicated to Siva, Vishnu and Devi. Siva temple, the central one having 40m. high nagara sikhara, built of stones upto bhitti portion. The antarala has do-chala roof whereas the modern mantapa has pyramidal roof with curvilinear eaves. The bhitti is decorated with stone plaques having numerous sculptures and floral designs in low relief. The sikhara, decorated with fluted vertical ribs, has four urnamanjaris at the rahapagas. The amalaka, built in the form of the Buddhist chhatravali, supports the gold plated brass kalasa.

Other two examples, the Vishnu dol and Devi dol, appear more or less similar to Jai dol of Jai Sagar and Vishnu dol of Gaurisagar and the Siva dol of Gaurisagar, only difference being in the execution of the sikharas which are more proportionate in profile and having multi-tiered chhatra.

Ahom palaces have only been found at Garhgaon and Rangpur. The present edifice known as the Ahom Raja palace (Kareng-ghar) at Garhgaon was built during the time of king Rajeswar Simha on the ruins of old impermanent structures. One of the most imposing brick edifices, with the collapsed

Western verandah and watch towers, appear like a square one. It has an underground cellar and four storeys in receding dimension. The top floor has dome like roof with a chamber. It had four watch towers, of which now only two remain. The entrance to the palace is from north. Ground floor has three west facing halls, each with front and rear chambers.



Kareng-Ghar (Talatal Ghar) Interior View

Talatal-ghar (house having several storeys), the largest of all Ahom monuments, is situated at Rangpur. Construction of this edifice, though started by king Rudra Simha was completed during the time of his successor Rajesvar Simha. It is built in a

north-south axis, with long annexes at either ends and

the middle. The first floor built on the columns and stylobates can be approached by an elegant stairway provided in the front and by a narrower one at the mid-western portion of the main axis. Except a Siva temple, a guard room, three large-chambers and a big hall with courtyard having separate entrance, the entire area of this floor was left open. Presence of numerous post holes on the terrace indicate the practice of erecting temporary shades to cater the needs of ceremonial gatherings.



Kareng-Ghar (Talatal Ghar) Front View

Ghanashyam's house the most beautiful construction of Ahom period, is situated on the western bank of the Jaisagar tank. Resembling ekratna prasada, it is a fine example of the beautiful blending of the Brahmanical tradition in the garb of the Islamic one. It is an Islamic type flat-roofed house, having a hall like chamber with verandah



Ghanashyam's House.



Facade, Ghanashyam's House.

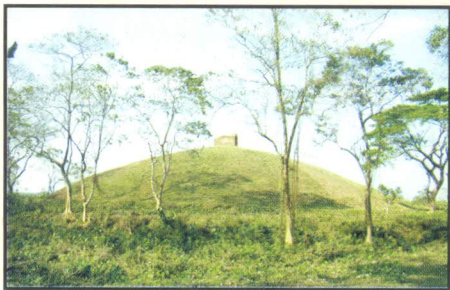
having three engraved-arched entrances, crowned with a row of battlements. Chamber and facade are embellished with exquisitely moulded terracotta plaques decorated with the designs of trellis, creepers, floral, animal, divine personages

and numerous temples.

Rang-ghar, located on the outskirts of Rangpur, was constructed during the time of king Parmatta Simha as a pleasure house for the royal members and dignitaries to witness and enjoy out door games. It is two storeyed rectangular structure trapezoidal ends. Its massive shell-shaped roof is crowned by the model of pleasure boat with makara ending and three turrets at the centre.

Maidams are hemispherical mounds having funerary affiliation. Ahom kings preferred to place their departed family members at Charaideo where their first king Sukapha was laid to rest.

The 'Buranji', literary account of the Ahom Kings, informs that queens, attendants pet animals and huge quantity of valuables were also buried with the departed



Maidam, Charaideo

king. Practice of burying alive was banned by king Rudra Simha. In appearance it is a hemispherical eastern mound erected over an underground vault with one or more chambers having domical super structure, crowned by a small open pavillion called chow-chali (four roofed Kareng-ghar, Gharhgaon. Cottage). Whole mound is usually enclosed by an octagonal wall.

Ahom were the great builders. Their building activities spread far and wide beyond the limit of the political boundary of Sivasagar District. The Navagraha temple (1761 A.D.) of Sukresvara temple (1744 A.D.) at Guwahati, Siddhesvara temple at Suwalkuchi (1764 A.D.) The natyamantapa in front of the Kamakhya temple at Guwahati etc. are some of the examples of their building activities.