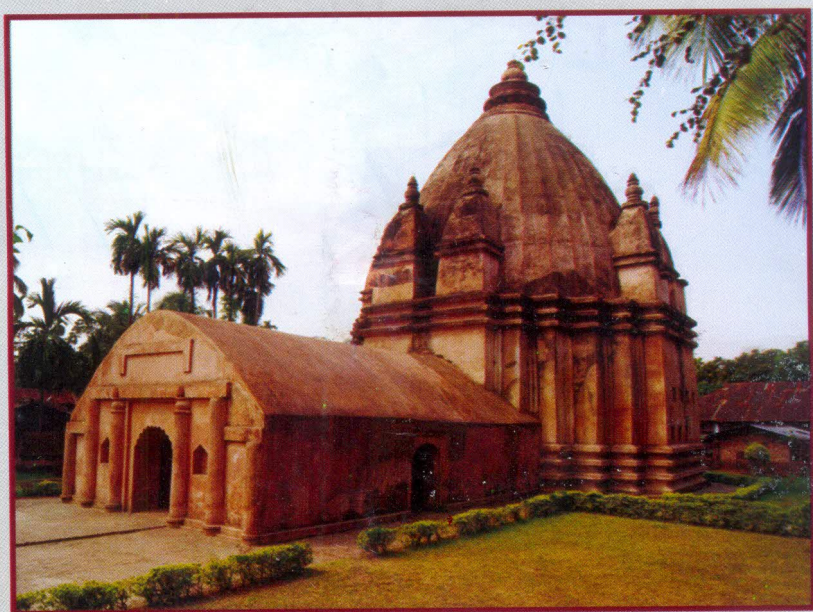




# **Centrally Protected Monuments of Biswanath District**



**Bordol Temple, Biswanathghat**

**Archaeological Survey of India  
Guwahati Circle  
2016**



## Biswanath

The newly formed Biswanath district of Assam has its headquarter at Biswanath Chariali, which is situated in the north bank of river Brahmaputra. This bifurcated district from the erstwhile Sonitpur district has 6 monuments of Archaeological Survey of India, Guwahati Circle. Among these four are temple sites whereas the other two are graves of British officers.

The Biswanathghat locality of this town is known for its temples. As per the legends, all the temples of Biswanath area were built by a mythical king, Bānāsūr. The area where the temples are situated is collectively known as Biswanath *Kshetra*. The *Kshetra* is also known as Second Kāśī or Guptakāśī which was created by Bānāsūr, who was a devotee of Siva. The deity, worshiped in this kshetra, is called as Bāneśvar Siva.

### Bordol Temple, Biswanath

The Bordol temple stands on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra River at Biswanathghat. *Bor* means



Big and *dol* means temple. The date of the construction of this temple is uncertain. Some sources mention that the temple was built by

Ahom king Rajesvar Singha (1751- 1769 CE). Two noted Assamese scholars, Hiteswar Barbarua (*Ahomar Din* 2006:210) and Maheswar Neog (*Pabitra Asom* 1969:185-6) write that this temple was built by Ahom king Gadadhar Singha (1681-96 CE) in 1685 CE. According to *Assam Buranji* (2013:81), written by Padmeswar Naobaisa Phukan in the later phase of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Ahom king Pratap Singha (Buddhi Swarganarayan) or Burha Raja (1603-1641 CE) built a temple over the Siva linga of Biswanathghat which already existed on the site.



This temple is one of the finest specimens of Ahom temples standing on the northern bank of river Brahmaputra. The Bordol temple was constructed with bricks in lime mortar. The temple consists of a *pancharatha garbhagriha* (sanctum) with *Nāgara śikhara*. The *śikhara* is decorated with vertical low ribs and topped with two *āmālakas*. The *śikhara* is clustered on all sides by the eight *anga-śikharas* of similar design. In each *bhadra*, there are two *anga-śikharas*. The temple has four off-set projections between the *bhadras* (central off-set of walls). The *bāda* (wall) of the temple has three tier horizontal mouldings at the level of plinth and the cornice. A *mandapa* with *do-chālā* roof of Assamese hut style is attached to the *garbhagriha*. From inside, the *garbhagriha* is attached with *mandapa* with an *antarāla* which is invisible from outside. There are many niches on the exterior walls of the *garbhagriha*. The *mandapa* is south facing with two doors. The main door and the southern façade of the temple are ornamented with pilasters and two niches, carved on either side of the door. The plan of the *garbhagriha* is octagonal while the plan of *mandapa* is rectangular.

King Pratap Singha or Buddhi Swarganarayan appointed different *khels* (*Khel* is the group of the people who were assigned to do specific job during the Ahom reign) of people for working in the temple. These *khels* were known as: *Barthākur*, *Pātrathākur*, *Parichārak*, *Āthpariyā*, *Telī*, *Malī*, *Dhobā*, *Nāpit*, *Kamār*, *Kumār*, *Chamār*, *Dhuliyā*, *Bali-katiyā*. *Gāyan*, *Pakhaujiyā*, *Gāyan*, *Nāchaniyār*, *Negeriyā*, *Khātowal*, *Bārichowā*, *Belichowā*, *Chāulkarā*, *Malakhubachā* and *Pānitolā*. To supervise these *khels*, he also appointed two officers, known as *Bora* and *Biswanāthar Baruā* or *Doloi*. *Bora* was under *Biswanāthar Baruā*.

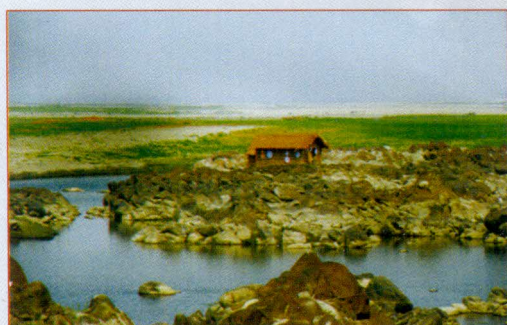
A copper plate inscription of the Ahom king Lakshmi Singha (1769-80 CE) states about the appointment of priests and land donation to the temple of Biswanath in 1774 CE or Śaka 1696. The inscription is known as *Copper plate Inscription of the Appointment of*



*the Priests and Brahmottara Land Donation to the Temple of Visvanātha, Śaka 1696 Jaisthya Māsa.* The inscription referred that the king Lakshmi Singha donated 22 pura Brahmottar land to the Biswanath temple and appointed 'Durgaram' as chief priest with other Brahmins and workers.

### **Biswanath Siva Linga, Biswanath**

Near the locality of Biswanathghat area, ruins of an ancient Siva temple of pre-Ahom period is found in midst of River Brahmaputra. Originally, there was a Śiva Linga at the site, which is now shifted to a modern temple situated on the bank of River Brahmaputra. Perhaps, the



Linga was enshrined within the main temple at the site. At present, only the cavity of the *Yoni* is visible at the site. The site is now scattered

with the ruins of temple in the form of architectural remains. The scattered stones on the River Brahmaputra are accepted as Śiva Linga. The remains are visible during dry season when the river water recedes considerably. Like all other temples of the pre-Ahom period, the temple might have fallen due to floods or earthquake. The Biswanath Siva linga was first reported in the Annual Report (1924-25) of Archaeological Survey of India by R.D. Banerji. (1924-25: 99), who writes:

“The linga which was once enshrined inside this temple continues to be worshipped and a thatched hut is raised over it when the water level is low.”

### **Rock Known as Sukreswar (Umatumani Island), Biswanath**





The Umatumani Island is situated between the River Burhigang and Barhmaputra. The name Umatumani is derived from goddess Uma, the wife of Lord Siva. As per the legends, it is believed that Umā



worshipped Śiva to get him as her husband on this island. A monolithic rock known as Śukreśwar is engraved with images of Ganeśa, dancing female figures, designs of temple or house, geometrical designs, figures of animals, birds and other motifs. The rock also has two engraved inscriptions on it. One of the carvings engraved in the rock look like a *chakravyuh*. The engravings can be stylistically assigned to c. 10<sup>th</sup> century CE.

### **Dhandi Temple, N. C. Kamdayal, Gohpur**

The Dhandi temple was made of brick work in lime mortar. On plan, the temple is octagonal, which is a typical feature of the Ahom temples. The temple is built on a raised platform. It collapsed in the earthquake of 1897. This temple was built by the Ahom king Rudra Singha (1696-1714 CE) in 1705 CE and the Ahom kings donated 232 *bigha Nishpikheraj* (land assessed at half the usual rate of revenue) lands to this temple. The temple was dedicated to Śiva.



### **Grave of Lt. Lewis Van Sandan, Biswanath**

The grave belongs to Lt. Lewis Van Sandan, a British officer who died in this locality. The cenotaph is missing from the grave. The Archival records inform that





in 1905, Rs. 25/- was estimated for the repairing and fencing of the graves of Lt. Sandan.

### **Grave of Lt. Thomas Kennedy, Biswanath**

The grave belongs to Lt. Thomas Kennedy, who was a British soldier who died in this locality. The cenotaph is missing from the grave. The Archival



records inform that in 1905, Rs. 25/- was estimated for the repairing and fencing of the grave of Lt. Kennedy.

### **References:**

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