



# MONUMENTS IN SONITPUR



Doorframe, Dah-Parbatia, Tezpur

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA  
GUWAHATI CIRCLE



The Sonitpur District of Assam, lying between the north bank of the River Brahmaputra and Himalayan foothills, with its head quarter at Tezpur covers an area of 5324 sq.km. It is surrounded by the State of Arunachal Pradesh in the north, Morigaon, Nagaon, Jorhat and Golaghat Districts of Assam in the south; Lakhimpur District in east and Darrang District in the west. The literal meaning of 'Sonitpur' is 'City of blood'. According to a legend there was a bloody battle took place between the armies of Krishna and Banasura, the legendary king of Sonitpur for the rescue of Aniruddha, the grandson of Lord Krishna.

Tezpur, the head quarter of Sonitpur District, was also the capital of mighty Salastambhas who ruled ancient Kamrup after Barmans from 'Haruppeswar', which is identified by scholars with modern Tezpur. Exquisite archaeological ruins are spread over Tezpur and its vicinity. It is worthy to mention the magnificent door frame of a stone temple of Dah Parvatia having affinity with Gupta school of architecture dated to circa 6th century AD, remains of *panchayatana* temple at Bamuni hill, sculptural and architectural members in the Chummery compound, now shifted to Chitralekha Park and a rock inscription of Harjara Barman (AD 815-32) in the vicinity of Tezpur. Further, the Parbatiya plates of Vanamala (AD 835-65) and the Bargaon grant near Tezpur suggest that Sonitpur was a part of Kamrupa till 12th century AD.

There are eleven centrally protected monuments and sites within Sonitpur District which include remains of temples, rock inscription, sculptures, Architectural members of ancient remains & graves of Britishers.

### **THE MOUND AND RUINS OF THE STONE TEMPLE, DAH-PARBATIYA**

The site is famous for magnificent doorframe of the highest architectural merit. The remains are ascribed to an ancient temple of brick and stone masonry oriented in east-west direction. Both the *garbhagriha* and *mandapa* of the temple are square on plan measuring 5.10 x 5.10m and 7.90 x 7.90m.

respectively. The most noteworthy feature of the temple is its doorframe. The stylistic features show a close affinity with the art tradition of the Gupta period and the doorframe accordingly may be placed around circa 6th century AD. The jambs and lintel of the doorframe are profusely carved. The five vertical bands



**Dah-Parbatia, Tezpur**

begin with the jambs and carry up to the lintel. Beautifully carved river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna respectively occupy the right





**Architectural Members, Bamuni Hill, Tezpur**

and left doorjambs. The figures are shown in gently slanting posture with garlands in their hands. The doorframe is also decorated with scroll designs. The long tails of two *nagis* carved in the doorjambs are shown holding by a figure of Garuda, depicted at the

middle of the lintel. The lintel depicts five *chaitya* windows with figures of Lakulisa, Krisna and Surya.

### **MASONRY REMAINS OF THE BAMUNI HILL, TEZPUR**

The sculptural and architectural remains at Bamuni Hill near Tezpur appear to be the ruins of a *panchayatana* temple dated back to c.9th-10th century. The remains are spread at random over the mound and bounded by a rectangular compound wall. The remains can be ascribed to the later rulers of the Salastambha dynasty. The ancient remains of the floor, pavements suggest that the central shrine was located at the top of the mound and the

remains of the subsidiary shrines appear to be located at the four corners making it a *panchayatana* temple complex. The architectural members lying in the site are pillar shafts, cross-shaped brackets, lintel, carved panels, capitals, doorsills etc. A panel displays the



**Architectural Members, Bamuni Hill, Tezpur**

images of *dasavatara* viz. Narasimha, Parasuram and Ram which suggest that the central shrine was dedicated to Lord Vishnu.

### **RUINS, SINGRI HILL**

The remains appear to be of an ancient temple dated back to circa 11-12th century AD. The architectural members consist of mainly door frame, pillars, ceiling parts, carved and chiseled



**General View, Singri Hill**



stones etc. A door lintel (1.84 x 0.67 x 0.69m) is carved with the figures of Siva and Visnu, shown in *sthanaka* attitude. Another lintel (2.67 x 0.60 x 0.77m) depicts the sculptures of two lions. Also two female figures are depicted in standing posture holding lotuses in their hands along with the panel of the lions. The carved stones depict figures of *gandharbhas*, dancing damsels, amorous scenes etc.



**Architectural Members, Singri Hill**

The carved stones depict figures of *gandharbhas*, dancing damsels, amorous scenes etc.

### **THE ROCK INSCRIPTION ON THE BANK OF THE BRAHMAPUTRA, TEZPUR**

An inscribed stone lying on the bank of the river Brahmaputra is located nearly 2km away from Tezpur town. The inscription refers about the date of the rulers of the Salasthambha dynasty and it is assigned to King Maharajadhiraj Paramesvara Paramabhattacharaka Harijjaravarman (AD 815 – 32), an illustrious king of the Salastambha dynasty. The rock inscription bears the date of 510 Gupta Era, corresponding to AD 829 – 30. It is a royal decree issued for warning fishermen not to cross the area marked for fishing.

### **BISWANATH SIVALINGA, BISWANATHGHAT**

Ruins of an ancient Siva temple of pre- Ahom period can be seen lying in the river bed of the Brahmaputra. The remains are visible during dry season when the river water recedes considerably. It seems that the temple fell down into the river bed due to erosion of the bank. A Siva *linga* lying near the ruins was perhaps enshrined within the main temple.

### **BORDOL TEMPLE, BISWANATH**

The brick built temple is dedicated to Lord Siva. It lies on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra River. The temple consists of sanctum proper over which the domical *sikhara* is adorned and clustered by *anga-sikharas* all around. A porch in front of the sanctum is covered by a low *do-chala* roof in the pattern of Assamese hut. The temple is said to be built by Ahom king Rajesvar Singha (AD 1751- 1769).



**Bordol Temple, Biswanathghat**





## ROCK KNOWN AS SAKRESWAR ON THE ISLAND UMATUMANI, BISWANATH

Geometrical designs, figures of animals, birds and other stylized designs are engraved on a monolithic rock. One of the carvings is found in

### Rock known as Sakreswar, Biswanathghat

the pattern of a *chakrabuha*, depicted on the surface of the rocks in curvilinear lines. The engravings can be stylistically assigned to late medieval period.

### DHANDI TEMPLE, N.C. KAMDAYAL (GOHPUR MOUZA)

Ruins of this brick temple can be ascribed to the Ahom kings dated back to 18th century AD. On plan, the temple is octagonal and built over a raised platform. It was damaged in 1897 due to an earthquake. The temple is said to be dedicated to Lord Siva as Nataraja image found here was shifted to Dephula satra at Kalabari in the nearby locality.

### SCULPTURES IN THE CHUMMERY COMPOUND, TEZPUR

The sculptural remains are stylistically classified into three groups. The first group comprised



Dhandi Temple, Gohpur

of free standing pillars, lintel and other architraves with rosette designs. One sixteen sided pillar ornamented with *kirtimukhas* in upper section is noteworthy to mention. Another architrave is having rows of three horizontal bands. The *kirtimukhas* are depicted at the top of the two bands. The architectural members are probably of a stone temple stylistically assigned to circa 10th-11th century AD. The second group of architectural members is comprised of doorsills and lintels assigned to same period. The third groups of carved stones are slightly later in date.

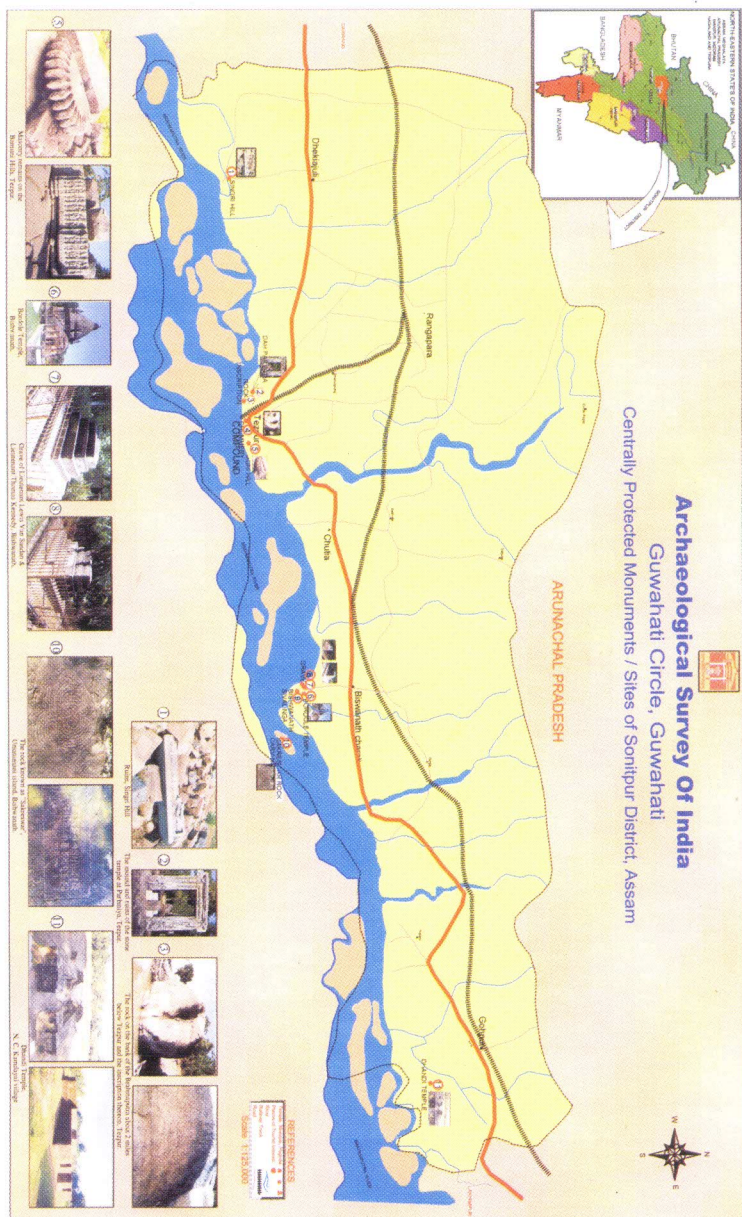
### GRAVE OF LT. LEWIS VAN SANDAN, BISWANATH

This brick built grave was erected in memory of Lt. Lewis Van Sandan, a British Officer who died in this locality. The cenotaph of the memorial is missing.



### GRAVE OF LT. THOMAS KENNEDY, BISWANATH

This grave of Lt. Thomas Kennedy was raised in his memory during nineteenth century AD. Built with brick masonry, the cenotaph of the memorial is missing.



Published by SUPERINTENDING ARCHAEOLOGIST  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA  
GUWAHATI CIRCLE  
G.N.B. ROAD, Ambari, Guwahati - 781 001

Printed at B. B. Printers, TIP TOP Gali, Lakhtokia, Guwahati-781001