



The Architecture of Assam

Prepared By, Habib Fazlul Basid, Assistant Professor of History
Sapatgram College, Sapatgram

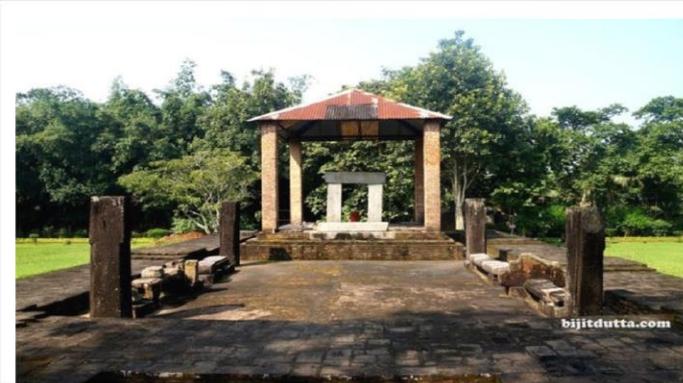
PPT Prepared for the Students

Data collected from internet sources

<https://www.re-thinkingthefuture.com/fresh-perspectives/a1342-the-heritage-architecture-of-assam/>

Date 21-6-21

Assam is a state whose medieval architecture is greatly influenced by its cultural contact with West Pakistan, i.e., present-day Bangladesh and Burma, yet maintaining its firm cultural relation with mainland India. The heritage of Assam is all about historic ruins, ancient temples, magnificent forts, and vibrant wildlife. The architectural heritage of Assam can be easily perceived when seen through the lens of how various dynasties ruled over the land of Assam.



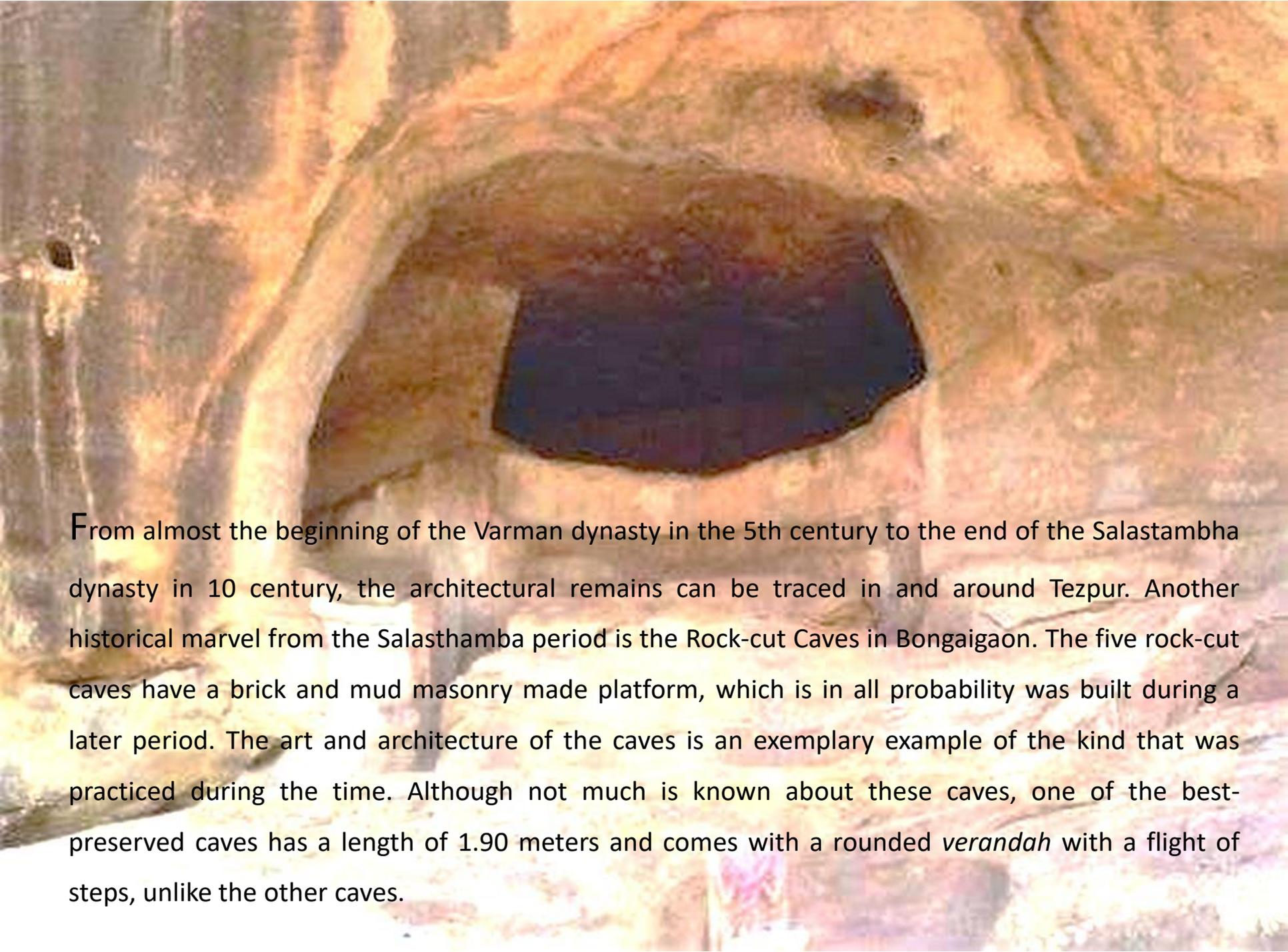
PRE-AHOM PERIOD

- The earliest evidence of architecture in Assam dates back to the Gupta Period, during the rule of the Varman dynasty in Kamarupa. Not a single temple of this period is in standing condition and only ruins are seen, over which temples of the Āhom period were constructed. Da-Parbatia, an ancient village near Tezpur has ruins of two ancient temples, one belonging to the 5th or 6th century, on which another temple was constructed during the Āhom rule.

- The site is currently protected by the Archaeological Survey of India. Amidst the lush greenery and the snow-capped Himalayas, the temple ruins show a square-shaped Garbhagriha (sanctum) while the mandap (outer gallery) is rectangular.

- The site is a major attraction with a well depicted Hellenistic style of sculptures and figurines that resemble Gupta style.

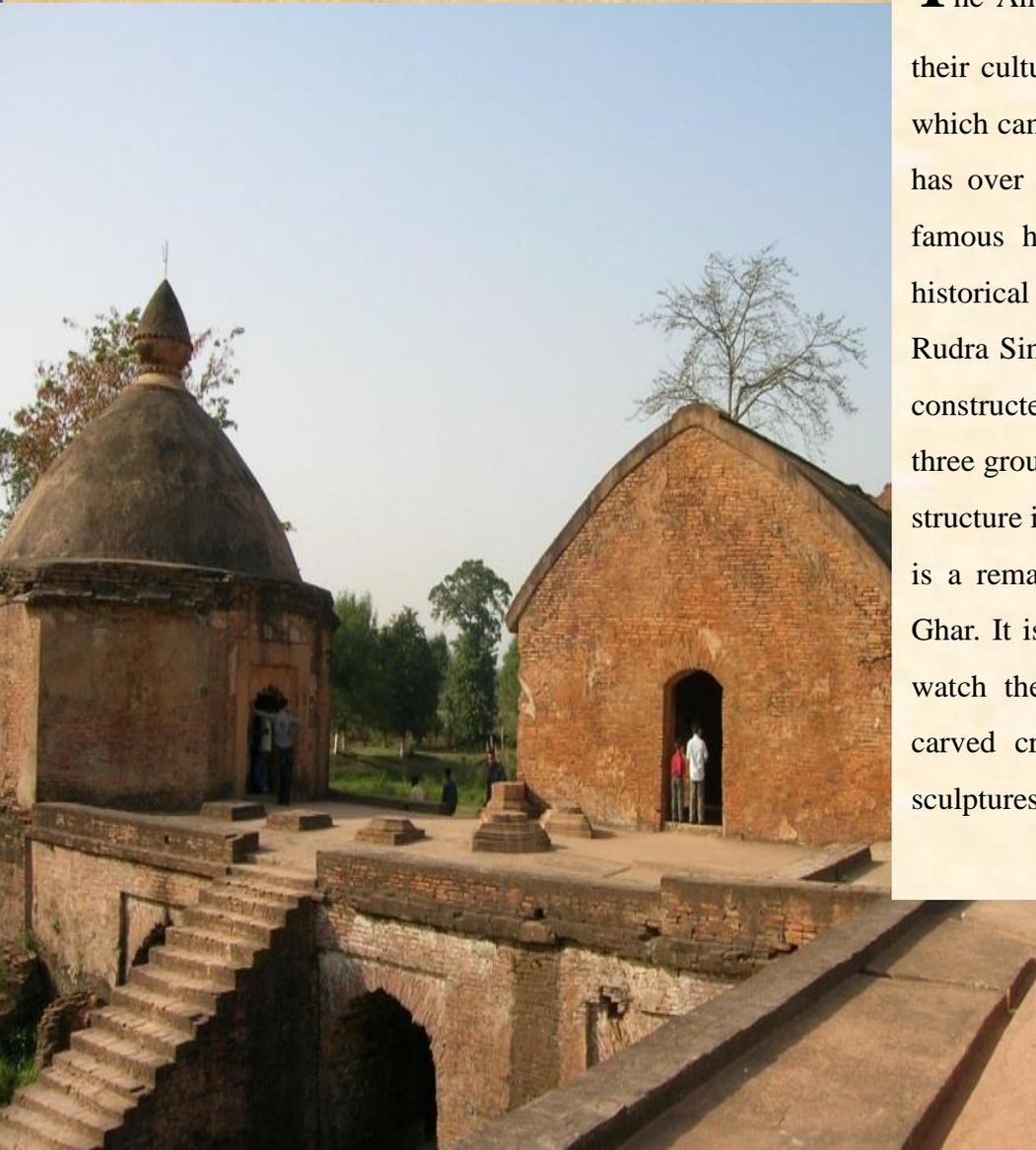




From almost the beginning of the Varman dynasty in the 5th century to the end of the Salastambha dynasty in 10 century, the architectural remains can be traced in and around Tezpur. Another historical marvel from the Salasthamba period is the Rock-cut Caves in Bongaigaon. The five rock-cut caves have a brick and mud masonry made platform, which is in all probability was built during a later period. The art and architecture of the caves is an exemplary example of the kind that was practiced during the time. Although not much is known about these caves, one of the best-preserved caves has a length of 1.90 meters and comes with a rounded *verandah* with a flight of steps, unlike the other caves.

AHOM PERIOD

The Āhoms, based on which Assam got its present name, established their cultural and economic stability in the region for over six centuries, which can be seen in their monuments in the town of Sivasagar. The town has over 170 tanks, depicting a typical style of architecture. The most famous heritage sites of Assam, Kareng Ghar, and Talatal Ghar are historical treasures of this period. In the former capital Rangpur, Swargeo Rudra Singha built a palace from organic bricks, which was later further constructed into a seven-story palace by his successor Rajeshwara; the three ground storeys are known as ‘Talatal Ghar’ while the rest four-storey structure is called ‘Kareng Ghar’. Another construction by King Swargdeo is a remarkable two-storey structure of the Ahom period, called Rang Ghar. It is a royal sports pavilion also used for cultural programs and to watch the traditional ‘bull-fights’. The main entrance has two stone-carved crocodiles while the interiors are decorated with magnificent sculptures.



In this second phase of temple architecture, inclination towards Hinduism was observed with the erection of Hindu temples, especially devoted to Goddess Durga. But subsequently, temple architecture adopted the “Nilācala type” in the construction of Jai Dol. Though Islamic influence is seen, the indigenous do-Cala typed gained prominence. The style reached its zenith during the period of Siva Singha, after the construction of the tallest historical monument in Assam, the Siva Temple at Sivasagar. Like the pre-Āhom period, the temples of this period also have an Indo-Aryan influence, consisting of Garbhagriha, Vimana, Sikhara, and Mandap.



Islamic Architecture

In spite of their best efforts, the Mughals were unable to conquer Assam due to the strong resistance by the Ahom dynasty, yet in the western parts of Assam, Mughal advances are marked by three Muslim monuments: Rangamati mosque near Gauripur, Pach Piran Dargah, and Mirijumlar Masjid. The heritage architecture of Assam has the greatest influence from the Indo-Aryan style of architecture that was predominant since the pre-Åhom period. However, due to the Mughal rule in mainland India, the architecture of Assam was influenced by the Islamic style.



Koch Dynasty

- During the reign of King Naranārāyana and his brother General Chilārāi, the dynasty reached its epitome of glory. The king built the famous Kamakhya temple on Nilachal hill, in 1565 AD over ruins that date back to even before the pre-Āhom period. This sacred temple of Kamakhya Devi is a prominent religious site, one of the four primary Shakti Pithas and flocked by pilgrims all year long.
- The 'Nilachala style' originated from this temple, which put more Islamic style ignoring the Indo-Aryan style of architecture.



JAYANTIA AND KACHARI DYNASTY

The Kacharis had its first capital in Dimapur and then later shifted to Maibong and Khaspur. The monuments, monolithic hut, and rock-cut temples of these days resemble a typical Bengal *do-Cala* structure. The Kachari architecture grew heavily under Bengal's influence and ended with the decline of the Kachari rule. The Kachari Fort built during this time depicts the noteworthy architecture and a mix of Non-Aryan and Hinduism culture.



Secular Architecture

The secular building architecture is rare in Assam and the most noteworthy examples are three monuments that were built during the Āhom period- the Rang Ghar, the Talatal Ghar, and the Kareng Ghar. The Rang Ghar is built in Islamic style for the members of the then royal family. However, the Talatal Ghar is built in the Mughal style and the Kareng Ghar is built in the South-Asiatic style.

