



Ahom-Period Temple Architecture in Assam: Royal Patronage, Regional Styles, and Cultural Exchange

Dr. Lakhya Protim Nirmolia*

Assistant Professor (Selection Grade), Department of History, Kakojan College, Jorhat, Assam – 785107, India

ABSTRACT :

Temple architecture in Assam developed through the interaction of local building traditions, religious patronage, regional artistic exchange, and changing construction technologies. The Ahom period (thirteenth to early nineteenth centuries) was long, but the major surviving architectural programme is concentrated in its later centuries, especially the seventeenth and eighteenth. Earlier Ahom-era shrines are reported in chronicles and historical studies, while the best-known temple ensembles at Sivasagar emerged under royal patronage in the age of Rudra Singha and Siva Singha. Their variety – Nagara and Nilachala forms, brick and stone construction, sculpted façades, and the distinctive terracotta work of monuments such as Ghanashyam Dol – argues against treating Ahom temple architecture as a single fixed style. The evidence instead points to a regional tradition that adapted wider Indian forms to Assam's materials, crafts, and political-religious landscape. The date and patronage of Ghanashyam Dol remain disputed, and some stylistic labels in the available secondary literature are not fully consistent; these uncertainties counsel caution in assigning a singular origin or formal taxonomy.

Keywords: Assam; Ahom; Temple Architecture; Sivasagar; Terracotta; Joy Dol, Ghanashyam Dol; Siva Dol

Introduction

Assam's temple architecture is not a product of one dynasty or one stylistic moment. The Varmans of Kamarupa began building temples and other structures between the 4th and 7th centuries. This architectural tradition continued under the Salastambha and Pala dynasties, but became less visible by the second half of the 12th century. At roughly the same time, the imperial Guptas flourished in the Ganga basin while the Varmans ruled in the Brahmaputra basin. Both dynasties supported Brahmanical culture and helped establish architectural traditions that later developed into what is commonly called Indo-Aryan, or Brahmanical, temple architecture. Evidence of this early period survives in a few copper-plate inscriptions of Bhaskar Varman, the Umachal rock inscription associated with Surendra Varman, and the remains of a temple at Borganga bearing an inscription of Mohabhuti Varman. During the Salastambha period, a stone temple was built on the bank of Gela Beel, south of the Brahmaputra and about five kilometres from present-day Nagheriting Shiva Dol, in what is now Golaghat district. Local tradition associates the site with the sage Arba Muni, who worshipped there and hoped to make it a second Kashi. To this end, he is said to have gathered numerous Shiva lingas and buried them in Sital Pather, near Nagheriting Shiva Dol. After the earlier temple was damaged by natural calamities, Swargadeo Pratap Singha used its materials to build a new dol.

The Ahoms, who ruled in the Brahmaputra Valley for roughly six centuries, built upon a region with older religious and architectural traditions. Within the Ahom period, construction was uneven: one historical account places much of the visible structural development from the seventeenth century onward, with particularly intensive activity during the reigns of Gadadhar Singha, Rudra Singha, and their successors. However, the Tai-Ahom rulers paid special attention to the construction of Dols. These structures were generally built on the banks of excavated tanks dedicated to gods and goddesses, as well as to distinguished members of the royal families. The major Sivasagar monuments are therefore best understood as the culmination of a longer history, rather than as the beginning of temple building in Assam.

This paper examines the historical development, architectural vocabulary, materials, ornament, and patronage of Ahom-period temples, with Sivasagar as the principal case study. It also considers Ghanashyam Dol as a focused example of terracotta architecture and discusses the limits of current evidence. The central argument is that Ahom temple architecture was regionally distinctive but not stylistically isolated: it drew on and reworked forms and techniques circulating across Assam and neighbouring regions.

Review of Literature:

The historical development of temple architecture in Assam must be understood against the background of the region's earlier religious and architectural traditions. H. K. Borpujari's *The Comprehensive History of Assam* provides a broad historical framework for understanding the political, social, and cultural developments of Assam, within which religious institutions and architectural patronage can be examined. The historical narrative presented in the present study traces temple-building traditions to the Varman, Salastambha, and Pala periods, demonstrating that Ahom architecture developed in a region with an established history of religious construction. The study of Ankita Kashyap and Salam Anand Singh, "The Nagheriting Temple—A Study in Historical Perspective" (2025), is also relevant to understanding the historical continuity of temple traditions in Upper Assam. Taken together, these works provide a historical foundation for examining the Ahom period not as an isolated architectural phase but as part of a longer regional tradition.

The available historical accounts discussed in the present paper indicate that the construction of monumental temples became particularly prominent during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The reigns of Gadadhar Singha, Rudra Singha, and Siva Singha are associated with important developments in temple construction and royal patronage. The construction of temples alongside tanks, palaces, and other public structures

suggests that religious architecture formed part of a wider programme of political and urban development. However, the historical evidence varies in its level of detail, and the origins of some early temples remain dependent on chronicle references and later interpretations. This limitation makes it necessary to distinguish between monuments supported by relatively clear historical evidence and those whose chronology remains uncertain.

Chow Lao Tze's *Architecture of the Tai Ahom Period* (2016) is an important work listed in the present study's bibliography for examining the architectural traditions of the Tai-Ahom period. The title and subject of this publication make it relevant to the broader historical and architectural context of the research. Nevertheless, its specific arguments and conclusions should be examined directly before particular interpretations are attributed to the author.

More directly, Debojyoti Khataniar and Rubul Khataniar's "The Temple Architecture of the Ahom Period with Special Reference to Sivasagar" (2025) addresses the architectural heritage of the Ahom period through the monuments of Sivasagar. Its subject is closely related to the present paper, which examines Joydol, Devidol, Sivadol, Ghanashyam Dol, and Fakuwa Dol as examples of architectural diversity. The present manuscript distinguishes between Nagara and Nilachala classifications and draws attention to variations in temple plans, superstructures, roof forms, and decorative features. These differences suggest that Ahom-period temple architecture cannot be adequately described through a single stylistic category.

The architectural descriptions in the manuscript further indicate that the major temples of Sivasagar reflect the adaptation of different architectural vocabularies to local circumstances. Joydol is classified as Nilachala, while Sivadol is described through its curvilinear superstructure and other features associated with Nagara architecture. Devidol presents another architectural configuration, including its pañcaratha plan and do-chala-style mandapa. These examples establish the value of comparative architectural analysis. At the same time, inconsistencies in stylistic terminology across secondary accounts demonstrate the need for careful examination of architectural features rather than reliance on labels alone.

Dipamjyoti Buragohain's "Terracotta Art of the Ahoms: A Case Study of the Ghanashyam Dol in Sivasagar, Assam" (2024) is particularly relevant to the present research because it focuses on one of the region's distinctive terracotta monuments. The study is cited in the manuscript for its discussion of the architectural characteristics and decorative programme of Ghanashyam Dol. The monument's terracotta panels, as described in the available material, include geometric and floral patterns, human and animal figures, deities, and representations associated with the Ramayana and Puranic traditions. Such decorative elements provide opportunities to examine the relationship between religious representation, artistic practice, and the social world reflected in temple ornamentation.

The importance of Ghanashyam Dol extends beyond its decorative features. Its architectural form has been compared with the at-chala tradition associated with Bengal, particularly the temple architecture of Bishnupur. This comparison raises questions about the movement of artisans, the circulation of architectural knowledge, and the adaptation of regional artistic traditions. The resemblance provides a possible basis for investigating cultural interaction between Assam and Bengal, although architectural similarity alone cannot establish the precise direction or historical circumstances of influence.

Another important issue concerns the date, patronage, and original function of Ghanashyam Dol. The present manuscript discusses competing interpretations connecting the monument with either the reign of Rudra Singha and Ghanashyam Khanikar or the reign of Rajeswar Singha and Nati Gosain. Neither attribution is treated as conclusively established. The absence of a definitive identification of the monument's original function also complicates its classification as a conventional Hindu temple. Consequently, the study of Ghanashyam Dol requires an approach that distinguishes observable architectural features from historical interpretations that remain provisional.

Saurav Khuttiya Deori, Sukanya Sharma, and Deep Bora's "Architectural and Comparative Material Study of Brick and Mortar of Ahom Terracotta Monuments, Assam, India" (2023) adds a scientific dimension to the study of Ahom-period architecture. As described in the present manuscript, the research examines brick and mortar from Ghanashyam House and Namath Kali Mandir through techniques including energy-dispersive X-ray analysis, Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy, and powder X-ray diffraction. The reported similarities in the elemental composition and structural patterns of the sampled materials provide a basis for investigating historical construction practices through scientific methods.

This line of research is significant because the study of architectural monuments need not depend exclusively on stylistic descriptions and historical narratives. Scientific examination of bricks and mortar can contribute to understanding material composition, technological practices, and possible relationships between building traditions. Such findings may complement architectural and historical evidence, particularly when documentary information about construction is limited.

Nevertheless, the scope of the available material analysis must be recognised. Findings from two particular monuments cannot automatically be generalised to every temple constructed during the Ahom period. Further comparative analysis involving additional monuments and samples would be necessary to establish whether similar materials and techniques were widely used. The combination of historical research, architectural documentation, and materials analysis therefore offers a promising approach for future investigations of Ahom architectural heritage.

Imran Hussain's "A Structural Beauty of the Ahoms Architecture" (2023), listed in the manuscript, is relevant to the broader discussion of architectural form and structural characteristics. The present study similarly considers the relationship between architectural composition, construction materials, and decorative craftsmanship. Its discussion of Sivadol, for example, draws attention to the sanctum, vestibule, mandapa, curvilinear shikhara, subsidiary architectural elements, and sculptural ornamentation. Joydol and Devidol provide contrasting examples through their respective plans and superstructures.

The literature and historical descriptions consulted for this research indicate that royal patronage played an important role in the development of monumental temple architecture during the Ahom period. The construction of temples near excavated tanks, particularly around Joysagar and Sivasagar, suggests that religious buildings were integrated into broader royal landscapes. The association of temple construction with rulers such as Rudra Singha and Siva Singha highlights the relationship between religious institutions, political authority, and public architecture.

The monuments discussed in the paper also reflect a diverse religious landscape. Sivadol represents Shaiva worship, Devidol is associated with Shakta traditions, and other monuments reflect different religious and commemorative functions. Their construction and patronage should therefore be considered within the wider religious and political developments of the Ahom kingdom rather than interpreted as evidence of a single, uniform architectural or religious process.

Cultural exchange forms another important theme in the present research. The reported recruitment of specialist artisans from neighbouring regions and the architectural similarities between Ghanashyam Dol and Bengali temple traditions suggest possible channels through which techniques and design ideas circulated. Yet these relationships require careful interpretation. Similarity in roof forms or ornamentation does not, by itself, establish direct borrowing, the movement of a particular artisan, or the precise chronology of influence. Comparative evidence from monuments, historical records, and material studies is needed to clarify these connections.

Research Gap:

Existing studies and historical accounts document important Ahom-period temples, describe their architectural forms and terracotta decoration, and provide initial materials analysis. However, the evidence discussed in this paper remains uneven across monuments: some descriptions rely on secondary accounts, stylistic labels are not always consistent, and the date, patronage, and original function of Ghanashyam Dol remain uncertain. Materials analysis cited here is limited to particular monuments, while this study does not include a measured architectural survey, systematic comparison of monuments, or direct examination of chronicles, inscriptions, and archaeological records. Consequently, the relationship among royal patronage, regional architectural forms, construction materials, and cultural exchange has not yet been established through a consistent,

monument-by-monument evidence base. This paper addresses that gap through a comparative analysis of selected temples, while treating disputed attributions as provisional and identifying where primary-source, field, or materials evidence is still required.

Objectives of the Study

The present paper, entitled “Ahom-Period Temple Architecture in Assam: Royal Patronage, Regional Styles, and Cultural Exchange,” aims to examine the historical development and distinctive characteristics of temple architecture during the Ahom period. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- 1) To examine the historical development of temple architecture in Assam during the Ahom period, with particular attention to the major phases of temple construction.
- 2) To analyse the architectural features and regional styles of selected Ahom-period temples, particularly Joydol, Devidol, Sivadol, Ghanashyam Dol, and Fakuwa Dol.
- 3) To investigate the role of royal patronage in temple construction and its relationship with religious practices, political authority, and the development of sacred landscapes in the Ahom kingdom.
- 4) To study the construction materials and decorative techniques employed in Ahom-period temples, with special reference to brick, stone, lime-based mortar, and terracotta ornamentation.
- 5) To explore the influence of regional cultural interactions on Ahom temple architecture, particularly the possible exchange of architectural ideas and artistic traditions between Assam and Bengal.
- 6) To examine the architectural significance of Ghanashyam Dol, focusing on its terracotta decorations, distinctive structural features, and the unresolved questions concerning its date, patronage, and original function.
- 7) To identify the major gaps and limitations in existing scholarship and highlight the need for further historical, architectural, archaeological, and scientific investigations into Ahom-period temple heritage.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, historical-analytical approach to examine the development and distinctive features of temple architecture in Assam during the Ahom period. It is based primarily on secondary historical scholarship, published studies of Ahom architecture, and descriptions of selected monuments, particularly those in and around Sivasagar. The analysis considers how royal patronage, architectural form, construction materials, decorative practices, and cultural interaction shaped temple construction in the region.

The discussion is organised thematically around the historical development of temple building; the plans and superstructures of selected monuments; the use of brick, stone, and lime-based materials; terracotta decoration; and the religious and political contexts of architectural patronage. Joydol, Devidol, Sivadol, Ghanashyam Dol, and Fakuwa Dol are examined as examples of the variety within Ahom-period architecture. A comparative approach is used to consider similarities and differences in their plans, elevations, decorative features, and possible regional influences. Particular attention is given to Ghanashyam Dol, for which the available secondary literature does not establish a clear date, patron, or original function.

The evidence is assessed with attention to the claims and limitations of the sources in which it appears. Historical accounts, architectural classifications, and interpretations of decorative panels are not treated as equally certain or independently verified. Where a monument's attribution is disputed, competing interpretations are acknowledged rather than assigning a definitive date or patron without adequate evidence.

This study is interpretative and relies on published sources; it is not an archaeological investigation or a measured architectural survey. Its conclusions are therefore constrained by the availability, reliability, and detail of the literature consulted. Further work with historical chronicles, inscriptions, archaeological records, field documentation, and scientific analysis of building materials could help address questions that remain unresolved.

Historical development of Ahom temple construction

The chronology of Ahom religious construction extends well before the celebrated Sivasagar complexes. A secondary historical account reports that Ahom chronicles referred to a Nagasankara Devalaya associated with Sushenpha (1439–1488), while noting that the temple itself has not been securely evidenced beyond an associated tank. The same account identifies Garakhiya Dol, attributed to Pratap Singha (1603–1641), among the earliest surviving examples of Ahom temple construction; it also records temples associated with Gadadhar Singha, including Thaora Dol and the Umananda shrine in Guwahati. A later study similarly calls Garakhiya Dol the earliest surviving Ahom-period temple and identifies Nagashankar Devalaya as an earlier structure reported in historical writing.

A major shift in monumental construction is associated with the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One account describes early Ahom structures as largely timber, bamboo, cane, and thatch, and associates the more permanent use of brick and lime mortar with Rudra Singha's reign (1696–1714). It also reports the recruitment of artisans from Koch Bihar and Bengal, including Ghanashyam Khanikar, for work at Rangpur and Sivasagar. These accounts suggest both a change in material practice and an institutional capacity to mobilize specialist labour. The historical narrative should not, however, be reduced to a simple transition from “temporary” wood to “permanent” masonry: timber construction remained important, while masonry and brick enabled new monumental forms and durable temple complexes.

Royal patronage helped organize these projects as ensembles. Rudra Singha's development of Rangpur and the temples around Joysagar is linked in one account to a broader programme of tanks, palaces, roads, and religious buildings. The Joysagar complex included Joydol, Devidol, and Sivadol. Under Siva Singha, temple construction continued at Gaurisagar and Sivasagar; the source associates the Gaurisagar tank, dated to 1724, with Devidol, Sivadol, and Vishnu Dol on its northern bank. Tanks and temples thus formed connected sacred and civic landscapes, rather than isolated monuments.

Architectural forms and regional adaptation

The surviving Ahom temples do not conform to a single architectural template. Joydol, also known as the Kesavanarayana Temple, is described as Nilachala in style, with a *pañcaratha* plan and a dome-shaped *sikhara*. The term *pañcaratha* refers to a plan with five projections or offsets; it does not, by itself, mean a representation of Shiva accompanied by Surya, Shiva, Ganesha, Durga, and Vishnu. The temple's plan, wall projections, superstructure, and entrance arrangement together give it a distinct architectural profile. Joy Dol was constructed in 1698 CE on the north bank of the great tank, Joysagar, by Rudra Singha, described in the source as “the Shivaji of East India.” According to the *Chang-Rung-Phukanor Buranji*, the temple is 39 metres high. Its entrance faces east. The *jangha* is built in a *pañcaratha* form, while the *sikhara* has a faceted, honeycomb-like shape. The temple's exterior is richly decorated with sculptures, and its craftsmanship continues to draw admiration.

During the reign of Siva Singha, Ahom temple architecture reached its zenith. His two grand architectural projects at Gaurisagar and Sivasagar not only produced some of the largest temple complexes of the period but also established a more refined and distinctive style in Ahom

architecture. The historical source describes Devi Dol at Gaurisagar as a Nagara-style temple, with a *pañcaratha* plan based on the *Vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala*, an *antarāla*, and a spacious *maṇḍapa* of the Assamese *do-chala* type. It classifies the nearby Sivadol and Vishnu Dol as Nilachala-style temples. Among the three temples, the Devi Dol is the largest, the finest and the best preserved. It may be regarded as the earliest brick-built temple of the Nagara style in later medieval Assam. Earlier rulers appear to have renovated existing medieval stone Nagara temples rather than built new ones in that style. The Devidol is preceded by a concave structure resembling a Jagamohana, built in front of the main temple. The temple follows a *pañcaratha* plan based on the *Vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala*. In addition to the main *mastaka*, four smaller *mastakas* are positioned on the eastern, western, northern and southern sides of the temple. The rear surface of the *gandī* is decorated with grooves resembling those found on gourds.

Siva Dol is one of the most prominent historical and architectural landmarks of Sivasagar, Assam. Constructed in 1734 CE under the patronage of Queen Ambika, also known as Madambika, the wife of Ahom king Swargadeo Siva Singha (1714–1744 CE), the temple stands on the southern bank of Borpukhuri, also known as the Sivasagar Tank. It is dedicated to Lord Shiva and represents the distinctive architectural achievements of the Ahom period. According to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the temple is built of brick and stone masonry and consists of a garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum), an *antarala* (vestibule), and a *mandapa* (hall). The sanctum has an octagonal plan, while the shikhara (superstructure above the sanctum) follows the curvilinear *Rekhanagara* style. Its exterior walls are adorned with sculptures of Brahmanical deities, together with geometric and floral motifs. The shikhara is further distinguished by four subsidiary *angasikharas* positioned at its corners, while its summit features successive tiers of kalashas crowned by the emblem associated with the presiding deity. The *mandapa*, constructed with brick masonry and covered by a *char-chala* roof, also displays distinctive decorative elements. The temple is widely described as one of the tallest Shiva temples in India, with its height commonly reported as approximately 180 feet (54.8 meters). The summit is crowned by a prominent golden *kalashi*, which enhances the monument's visual grandeur. The architectural composition, sculptural embellishments, and imposing vertical form of Siva Dol reflect the artistic skill, religious patronage, and aesthetic sensibilities of the Ahom royal establishment. Its scale and vertical emphasis distinguish it within the regional landscape, while its location beside Devi Dol and Vishnu Dol makes it part of a deliberately composed sacred group. These measurements and stylistic labels come from a secondary account and warrant verification against architectural surveys before being treated as definitive technical documentation.

Ghanashyam Dol represents a distinctive architectural tradition and is particularly significant as a historical monument whose origin and patronage remain uncertain. The detailed study of the monument points out that the Ahom chronicles contain no direct reference to its construction. It identifies two possible explanations for its origin: one attributes its construction to the reign of Swargadeo Rudra Singha and associates it with Ghanashyam Khanikar, while the other suggests that it was built during the reign of Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha for Nati Gosain. The author considers the first explanation more plausible, partly because of the monument's proximity to the Joysagar temple complex. However, this interpretation remains tentative, as conclusive historical evidence establishing its date and patronage is lacking. Therefore, Ghanashyam Dol's architectural characteristics can be examined with greater certainty than its precise date of construction, patronage, or original purpose. The absence of a deity image within the structure, together with certain architectural features, further complicates its identification as a conventional Hindu temple. Consequently, the monument warrants careful architectural and historical examination without assigning it a definitive identity unsupported by available evidence.

The Fakuwa Dol, also known as the Phakuwa Doul, is an unusual monument at Joysagar in Sivasagar, Assam. Built during the reign of Swargadeo Rudra Singha, around 1703–1704, it is traditionally associated with Queen Joymoti Konwari, the king's mother. According to accounts of Ahom history, Joymoti endured torture rather than reveal her husband's whereabouts. The monument is therefore understood not only as a religious structure but also as a memorial to her sacrifice. Its design differs from the more familiar forms of Ahom temples. The Dol rises in stepped, pyramid-like tiers from an octagonal base, with subsidiary spires and stairways leading upward. This distinctive profile has prompted comparisons with pagoda-like architecture, though such visual similarities do not, by themselves, establish a direct architectural connection. The structure is commonly described as combining Hindu temple features with forms associated with Ahom royal funerary monuments, or maidams. That combination gives the Fakuwa Dol significance beyond its architectural form. Its religious associations – including its connection with the Fakuwa festival – sit alongside its commemorative role. Read in its historical context, the monument may be seen as expressing both the Ahom court's engagement with Hindu traditions and Rudra Singha's public tribute to his mother.

A comparison of the major sites makes the variety clear. Sivadol's vertical Nagara profile differs from Joydol's Nilachala classification and Ghanashyam Dol's Bengali-derived at-chala roof. Such differences reflect a process of adaptation: regional builders worked with multiple architectural repertoires, shaped by patronage, function, local craft, and contact with neighbouring regions. Ghanashyam Dol's resemblance to the Bishnupur temple tradition is specifically noted in its study, which proposes cultural and architectural exchange between Assam and Bengal as a possible context.

Materials, construction, and ornament

Material change is an important part of the Ahom architectural record. Historical accounts describe a movement toward brick, lime mortar, and stone in major works, while retaining indigenous construction practices and specialized labour. One account records the use of differently shaped bricks and describes "Karhal," an indigenous cementing material, as incorporating stone lime and a range of organic ingredients. Such reports are valuable indicators of local technical knowledge, but the named recipes should be read as historical descriptions rather than standardized formulas for every monument.

Terracotta is among the most visually distinctive forms of Ahom temple ornament. At Ghanashyam Dol, the façade panels are described as arranged in horizontal and vertical bands, with geometric patterns, floral motifs, human and animal figures, deities, and episodes associated with the Ramayana and Puranic narratives. The eastern and western walls also preserve panels interpreted as scenes of everyday life, ritual, and myth, although the article's identifications of individual figures are interpretive rather than inscriptionally confirmed. The façades therefore operate as more than surface embellishment: they bring religious narratives and social imagery into the architectural experience of the shrine.

Scientific materials analysis contributes a complementary perspective. A comparative study of brick and mortar from Ghanashyam House and Namath Kali Mandir reports that it used energy-dispersive X-ray analysis, Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy, and powder X-ray diffraction, and found similarities in the elemental composition and structural patterns of the sampled materials. This result is relevant to the study of construction practices, but it concerns two particular monuments and cannot establish that all Ahom-period brickwork used identical sources or recipes. Its strongest contribution is methodological: architectural history can be tested alongside material evidence, while the limited sample set constrains wider generalization.

Religion, patronage, and cultural contact

Temple-building under the Ahoms was tied to evolving patterns of religious patronage. The historical account connects the growth of Shiva- and Vishnu-dedicated temples with the rulers' Hindu religious patronage, especially under Rudra Singha and Siva Singha. The regional record also includes Shakta worship: the Sivasagar temple group includes a Devidol dedicated to Durga, and accounts describe the making of clay images and the movement of artisans and techniques across regional boundaries. These developments indicate an expanding and plural religious landscape, not a single linear conversion story.

The presence of Bengali and other regional architectural influences is especially visible in the discussion of Ghanashyam Dol. Its study compares its roof and terracotta features with the Bishnupur group, and interprets its architectural combination as reflecting exchange and cultural interaction. Alongside these influences, Ahom-period construction retained local materials, labour systems, and forms of royal organization. The resulting architecture is best characterized as a regional synthesis: external models were adapted through local building knowledge and particular dynastic projects.

Conclusion

Ahom-period temple architecture in Assam is best understood as a diverse, evolving regional tradition. Its historical trajectory includes early temples known through chronicles and surviving shrines such as Garakhiya Dol, followed by a major phase of monumental construction in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Sivasagar complexes show that royal patronage could bring together tanks, temples, and urban development; their Nagara and Nilachala forms demonstrate that no single style defined the period. Ghanashyam Dol adds an important terracotta and at-chala example, while its ornament and unusual architectural features point to wider cultural contact.

The distinctive contribution of Ahom temple architecture lies not in stylistic isolation but in adaptation: regional builders combined brick, stone, lime-based materials, local labour, terracotta craft, and architectural ideas circulating through Assam and Bengal. The evidence base remains uneven, particularly for the dating and patronage of individual monuments. Further architectural documentation, inscriptional study, archaeological investigation, and conservation-focused materials analysis would help resolve these questions while protecting the monuments that preserve this history.

References

1. Borpujari, H. K. (2007), The Comprehensive History of Assam. Vol. 3, Publication Board.
2. Buragohain, Dipamjyoti (2024) "Terracotta Art of the Ahoms: A Case Study of the Ghanashyam Dol in Sivasagar, Assam." *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, vol. 6, no. 4, July–Aug., <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i04.25820>.
3. Deori, Saurav Khuttiya, Sukanya Sharma, and Deep Bora (2023) "Architectural and Comparative Material Study of Brick and Mortar of Ahom Terracotta Monuments, Assam, India." *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, vol. 5, no. 1, <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2023.v05i01.1754>.
3. Hussain, Imran (2023) "A Structural Beauty of the Ahoms Architecture.", *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Vol. 72, Issue 01, No. 03
4. Kashyap, Ankita, and Salam Anand Singh (2025) "The Negheriting Temple—A Study in Historical Perspective." *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, <https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2025.91200314>.
5. Khataniar, Debojyoti, and Rubul Khataniar (2025) "The Temple Architecture of the Ahom Period with Special Reference to Sivasagar." *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, vol. 7, no. 4, <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2025.v07i04.52215>.
6. Tze, Chow Lao (2016) *Architecture of the Tai Ahom Period*. Krantikal Prakashan