

## Temple ruins of Kamrup kingdom face flood threat

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**Guwahati:** The site of a ruined, ancient temple at Bhitoripam village in flood-hit Lakhimpur district, which experts believe to be the remains of the prosperous Kamrup kingdom, once again faces the threat of extinction if incessant rain continues.

The site that has withstood disasters for ages now is assumed to belong to a period between eighth and 12th century. A close study of the temple's architecture revealed that it collapsed because of an earthquake that changed the course of a river flowing nearby.

The discovery of the stone blocks at Bhitoripam last year corroborated the fact that the Brahmaputra valley abounded in many such stone temples.

Owing to the region's vulnerability to earthquakes and floods, archaeologists are of the opinion that a detailed study of the site should be done at the earliest before the site is completely destroyed by rain and floods. The site can serve as a window to Assam's history predating the Ahom's arrival and establish the region's linkage to ancient India's history.

"The temple that once stood at Bhitoripam faced imminent threat from natural disasters because of the region's topography. The deposits carried by river, consisting of sand and pebbles, were found in one of the trenches at the site. The

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site is vulnerable and can be destroyed any day if the floods take a terrible turn," said an ASI official.

Most temples here have either been forced underground because of topographical or climate changes in the past centuries or have been swallowed up the mighty Brahmaputra.

A trial excavation at Bhitoripam, conducted by the ASI a year ago, had to be stalled because of heavy rainfall following which the areas became waterlogged, with some sections caving in.

"Bhitoripam is one of the many examples that could provide us clues of ancient culture in Kamrup. Many such temples have vanished because of natural disasters. There should be an urgency in carrying out a detailed study of the lost structures that once heralded the extension of the ancient Kamrup kingdom," said Milan Chauley, superintending archaeologist, ASI, Guwahati circle.

"The floods have affected the district. Bhitoripam is not that affected yet. There could be waterlogging," said Ajit Kumar Sharma, circle officer, Naoboicha.