

# Unakoti of Tripura

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**In news**-Unakoti, famously known as the 'Angkor Wat of the North-East', is vying for a UNESCO world heritage tag with both the government and ASI.

## **About Unakoti-**

- Dating back to the 7th-9th centuries, **Unakoti is a 'Shaiva' (Saivite) pilgrimage site with marvellous rock carvings**, murals with their primitive beauty and waterfalls.
- **Literally, Unakoti means 'one less one crore' in Hindi and Bengali** and it is believed that these many rock carvings (ninety-nine lakh ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine) are present here.
- In the **local Kokborok language, it is called Subrai Khung** and is the central tourist spot of the Unakoti District in the Kailashahar Subdivision of Tripura.
- According to Hindi mythology, when Lord Shiva was going to Kashi along with one crore gods and goddesses, he made a night halt at this location.
- He asked all his fellow gods and goddesses to wake up before sunrise and proceed for Kashi. I
- t is believed that in the morning, except Shiva, none of them could wake up so he set out for Kashi alone, cursing others to become stone images.
- As a result of this curse, ninety-nine lakh ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine stone images and carvings continue to be present at Unakoti.
- **A local tribal myth says that Kallu Kumhar**, a devotee of goddess Parvati who wanted to accompany Shiva-Parvati to Mount Kailash, **was the maker of these idols.**
- **The images found at Unakoti are of two types**, namely **rock-carved figures and stone images.**
- Among the rock-cut carvings, the central Shiva head and gigantic Ganesha figures deserve special notice.

- The central Shiva head is known as 'Unakotiswara Kal Bhairava' and is about 30 feet high including an embroidered head-dress which itself is 10 feet high.
- On each side of the head-dress of the central Shiva, **there are two full-size female figures – one of Durga standing on a lion, and another female figure on the other.** In addition, three enormous images of Nandi Bull are found half buried in the ground.
- **Every year, a big fair, known as 'Ashokastami Mela',** takes place in the month of April and is visited by thousands of pilgrims.

### Why is it called Angkor Wat of North-East?

The structures of the rock-cut sculptures are gigantic and have distinct mongoloid features and display almost the same mystical charm as the spellbinding figures in the Angkor Wat temple of Cambodia. So call it the Angkor Wat of North-East.

### Angkor Wat temple-

- **It is a temple complex in Cambodia and is the largest religious monument in the world,** on a site measuring 162.6 hectares.
- **Originally constructed as a Hindu temple dedicated to the god Vishnu for the Khmer Empire by King Suryavarman II,** it was **gradually transformed into a Buddhist temple** towards the end of the 12th century; as such, it is also described as a "Hindu-Buddhist" temple.
- The **original name of the temple was Vrah Viṣṇuloka or Parama Viṣṇuloka** meaning "the sacred dwelling of Vishnu.
- Angkor Wat was built at the behest of the Khmer King Suryavarman II in the early 12th century in **Yaśodharapura, the capital of the Khmer Empire,** as his state temple and eventual mausoleum.
- Angkor Wat **combines two basic plans of Khmer temple architecture: the temple-mountain and the later galleried temple.**

- It is designed to represent Mount Meru, home of the devas in Hindu mythology: within a moat more than 5 kilometres long and an outer wall 3.6 kilometres long are three rectangular galleries, each raised above the next.
- At the centre of the temple stands a quincunx of towers. Unlike most Angkorian temples, Angkor Wat is oriented to the west; scholars are divided as to the significance of this.
- The modern name Angkor Wat, alternatively Nokor Wat, means “Temple City” or “City of Temples” in Khmer.