AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
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In Greenland, climate change is not just a danger to ecosystems but also a threat to history, as global warming is affecting archaeological remains, says a study.

There are more than 1,80,000 archaeological sites across the Arctic, some dating back thousands of years, and previously these were protected by the characteristics of the soil.

“Because the degradation rate is controlled by the soil temperature and moisture content, rising air temperatures and changes in precipitation during the frost-free season may lead to a loss of organic key elements such as archaeological wood, bone and ancient DNA,” the report, published in the scientific journal *Nature*, stated.

The team behind the study, led by Jorgen Hollesen, has been examining seven different sites around the vast Arctic territory’s capital Nuuk, since 2016.

In addition to organic elements, such as hair, feathers, shells and traces of flesh, some of the sites contain the ruins of Viking settlements.

Projections used in the study, which are based on different warming scenarios, predict that average temperature could increase by up to 2.6 degrees Celsius, leading to “higher soil temperatures, a longer thaw season, and increased microbial activity within the organic layers”.

“Our results show that 30 to 70% of the archaeological fraction of organic carbon (OC) could disappear within the next 80 years,” Mr. Hollesen said. This means that these remains, some of which provide a glimpse into the lives of the first inhabitants of Greenland from around 2,500 BC, are at risk.

When findings were compared with previous surveys, they found evidence of ongoing degradation. “At some sites, we did not find any intact bones or pieces of wood, suggesting that these have disintegrated within the last decades,” he said. In regions such as Alaska, ancient artefacts are emerging as the permafrost thaws due to rising temperatures.