

Report on

National Seminar on Prehistory and
Ethnoarchaeological Context of Rock Art with
Emphasis on Assam and Adjoining States

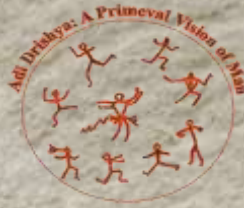
26th-27th November, 2015

at

Agartala, Tripura



Report on



National Seminar on Prehistory and Ethno-archaeological Context of Rock Art with Emphasis on Assam and Adjoining States at Agartala, Tripura

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) has conceived a major academic programme, which relates to exploring artistic manifestations emanating from man's primary sense perceptions and rock art forms a crucial component of the *Adi Drishya* (primeval vision) programme. The main concern of the Rock Art Project is to systematically survey, study, document and disseminate the rich plethora of knowledge which has been highlighted in man's creativity across time and space and civilisations and cultures through the perception of the sight.



Dr. Dwipen Bezbaruah, coordinator, NE, Rock Art, IGNCA of G.U. giving the welcome address



Dr. B.L.Malla, Project Director, IGNCA addressing the gathering about the Seminar

With such broad perspective, IGNCA has organized a two day national seminar in collaboration with Tripura University & Gauhati University on 26th - 27th November, 2015 at Tripura Central University, Agartala, Tripura. The

inaugural session was chaired by Prof. A.K. Mukherjee, Pro-VC, Tripura University and the chief guest of this session was Dr. Mridul Hazarika, VC, Gauhati University. The welcome address was given by Dr. Dwipen Bezbaruah and the introduction to the event was given by Dr. B.L.Malla, Project Director, IGNCA. The guest of Honour was Prof S. Poddar, Dean Faculty of Arts and Commerce, Tripura University. The vote of thanks was given by Dr. S. Debbarma, Convener of the seminar.



Felicitation of Prof. M. Hazarika, VC, Gauhati University by Prof. A.K.Mukherjee, Pro VC, Tripura University



Felicitation of Prof. A. K. Mukherjee, Pro VC, Tripura University by Dr. B. L. Malla, Project Director, IGNCA

The seminar had three technical sessions followed by a panel discussion and valedictory session which was attended by eminent scholars and academicians from different parts of India. It was held with a clear objective of exploring the new perspectives on the prehistory and ethno-archaeological aspects of north-east India. The senior scholars like Prof A. Sundra (Karnataka), Prof. V. H. Sonawane (Gujarat), **Dr. G. L. Badam (Maharashtra)**, Dr. S. Pradhan (Odisha), Dr. Jonali Devi (Assam), Dr. P.B.Devi (Manipur), Dr. R. Handique (Assam), Dr. S.Phukan (Assam), Dr. T. Thakuria (Meghalaya) and Mr. R.Mohana (Karnataka) presented their papers and had a lively and thorough discussion on the rock art of northeast and its multifaceted approach. The students and faculty from Tripura University attended the seminar and raised their concerns and views on the topic of the seminar and actively took part in

the discussion which is a good sign for this emerging discipline especially related to northeast areas.



Dignitaries on the Dais



Dr. S. Debbarma, Tripura University giving vote of thanks after the inaugural session



Eminent scholars participating in the National Seminar



Prof. A. Sundra being facilitated as Chairperson of the 1st Technical session by students of Tripura University

The participation of the renowned scholars and students enriched the deliberations of the seminar and helped in working out the basic approach/planning for the survey and study of rock art in the northeast region.



Dr. Jonali Devi from Gauhati University presenting her paper



Dr. P. Binodini Devi from D.M. College of Science, Manipur presenting her paper



Dr. Rajib Handique from Gauhati University presenting his paper



Dr. Tilok Thakuria from North-Eastern Hill University presenting his paper

A conclusive summary of the seminar is that a bird's eye view of the rock art sites, so far known of the region of the seven sisters on the one hand and of the discovery of the stone age sites recently, especially the Mesolithic on the other would imply the probability of the existence of many more rock art sites apart from the rock cut art sites in the region. The review also implies that petroglyphs on open boulders are numerically the most and pictographs are scarcely known. It is because that depiction of pictographs is not desirable on open boulders since they soon get damaged because of weathering.



Dr. G.L.Badam from Maharashtra presenting his paper



Prof. V.H.Sonawane from Baroda presenting his paper



Various scholars, faculty members and students of Tripura University actively participating in the National Seminar



Some participants at the National Seminar in Tripura University

Elsewhere in the vast region of Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh is innumerable extensive hill ranges with countless rock shelters and caves; hundreds of painted rock shelters/ caves are found of which a small part is known. Nearby such sites in Karnataka are located human habitation sites with material cultural remains of the Neolithic in the Chalcolithic, Iron Age Megalithic. In view of these facts, it is to be examined if there are rock shelters and caves in the hill range in the region of Assam for tracing pictographs.



Dr. S. Poddar, Dean, Faculty of Arts, T.U. chairing the Panel discussion and Valedictory session

The following recommendations were made by the participating scholars in the seminar:

1. A thorough understanding of the geology and minerals as well as flora and fauna, drainage system to recognize/locate caves and shelters in the hill ranges as well as to trace pre and proto historic sites especially in the valley of Brahmaputra and her major tributaries, is required in the first place.
2. A close contact with the shepherds, hunters, forest department guards, honey-collector etc of the region that generally move about in hills who can provide information on rock art sites has to be developed.
3. To sensitize villagers, high schools and college students to be informed through TV, periodicals, social media about rock art sites. Local people should be addressed in a language they understand. The local people should be made more aware for preservation/conservation of rock art sites, it can be considered to mark rock art sites as 'endangered', 'critically endangered' as done for the fauna and flora species.
4. After getting all information about sites from the above mentioned sources. A systematic and multidisciplinary study by IGNCA can be taken up for exploration/field documentation in the different states of north-east after pilot survey. In this way, mapping of the rock art sites of north-east India in a comprehensive manner is necessary.
5. More attention can be given to discover the varied unattended archaeological materials which lay in different parts of north-east India to include in the rock art map of India. Manipur region can be considered for in this aspect.
6. Enumerate and contextualize the available rock art ecology, history, geography and belief system of the area/region. Efforts should be made to explore potential areas bearing granite outcrops to look for rock art in the form of either engravings or bruising.

7. Northeast India being a contact zone of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asian countries, the region has a great diversity of cultural material dating from prehistoric times. The rock art studies should be encouraged in northeast part as it is considered as a corridor for migration of culture including the rock art tradition to South-east Asia. A fresh approach with archaeological, linguistic and ethnographic evidence is adapted and applied in order to understand the relevance of Northeast India, commonly known as the 'Seven Sisters', to early origins of pottery and agriculture in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia. To extend academic collaboration with scholars and institutions in South-east Asia region for understanding the context of rock art in a much better way for a comprehensive understanding of the rock art culture in the region. We may explore the possibility of organizing an International Conference on 'Prehistory and Rock Art of North-east and South-east Asia region'.
8. There is need to organize more such seminars in different parts of north-east India. A seminar and workshop can be organized in North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong covering the art and engravings from archaeological and anthropological perspective for proper understanding and preservation of the rich heritage.
9. Seminars may also be organized in schools and colleges by inviting resource persons and the local populace for spreading awareness among the school children and youth in Rock Art sites for better preservation, protection and projection of the rock art sites. Such initiative will also promote rock art tourism in the longer run.
10. Inclusion of a paper with emphasis on Rock Art in the History syllabus (at least in Ancient History group). Also, attempt should be made to include lessons on Rock Art in school textbooks. Need to bring out publication on north-east India prehistory and rock art.
11. Use of social media for proper dissemination of the knowledge.

Press coverage of National Seminar

TRIPURA TIMES

27.11.2015

National seminar on Rock Art conducted

Times News

Agartala, Nov 26: A two-day long national level seminar on 'Prehistory and Ethnoarchaeological Background of Rock Art with Emphasis on Assam and Adjoining States' was organized at the Seminar Hall, Directorate of Distance Education in Tripura University began today.

The seminar was organized by Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi in collaboration with Tripura University and Gauhati University.

Dr. M Hazarika remained present in the seminar as chief guest.

Director of Rock Art, IGNCA - Dr. BL Malla, Professor S Poddar, dean faculty of Arts and Commerce of the varsity, pro-vice chancellor of Tripura University + professor AK Mukherjee were also present in the seminar.

Professor Subhendu Debbarma, convener of the seminar delivered vote of thanks in the seminar.

Dainik Samvad

Seminar on Ancient Rock Inscription

27.11.2015

प्राचीन विज्ञानविधि विद्यालय (प्राचीन)

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