

A Report on



National Seminar on Rock Art of Northeast India: Methodological and Technical Issues

at

North Eastern Hill University, Tura Campus, Meghalaya
(5th-6th October, 2016)



Organised by



INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS, NEW DELHI

in collaboration with



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY
(NEHU, TURA CAMPUS, MEGHALAYA)

National Seminar on Rock Art of Northeast India: Methodological and Technical Issues at NEHU, Tura, Meghalaya

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. Tilok Thakuria, Seminar coordinator giving the welcome address



Dr. B.L. Malla, Project Director, IGNCA giving his address about the seminar

Rock art research in Northeast India is in formative stage, and thus required to setup conceptual, technical and methodological framework to avoid ambiguities and the seminar was intended to initiate serious discussion on these issues. Moreover, the multi-disciplinary approaches to the study of rock art need to be appreciated and promoted for their holistic understanding. The ecological, geological, geographical and archaeological factors are undeniable while locating or discovering rock art. Likewise, contributions from social sciences and other scientific disciplines are equally important in explaining, decoding and dating the rock art. Alongside the scholarly discussions on various aspects of rock art, the seminar also provided a learning platform for young aspiring participants on rock art in the Northeast region. This was the second seminar which was organized in the Northeast India as part of outreach programme of IGNCA. The previous one was organized at Agartala, Tripura in Nov., 2015.



Students of NEHU singing the traditional Garo song in the inaugural function



Prof. M. Sangma (Former, Pro V.C., NEHU, Tura Campus) inaugurating the National Seminar

With this perspective, this year IGNCA has organized a two day national seminar in collaboration with Department of History & Archaeology (North Eastern Hill University, Tura Campus), Meghalaya. The inaugural session was chaired by Prof. G. Singaiah (Pro Vice Chancellor, NEHU, Tura Campus) and the Chief Guest was Prof. M. Sangma (Former, Pro V.C., NEHU, Tura Campus). Dr. Tilok Thakuria, Assistant Professor (Dept. of History & Archaeology, NEHU) gave the welcome address and the introductory address about the seminar was given by Dr. B. L. Malla (Project Director, Adi Drishya Department, IGNCA, New Delhi). He also explained about IGNCA'S Contribution in Rock Art studies. The vote of thanks was given by Dr. S. Sivaji, Assistant Professor (Dept. of History & Archaeology, NEHU, Tura Campus).



Prof. A. Sundra presenting his paper in the 1st technical session



Prof. V.H. Sonawane presenting his paper in the 1st technical session



Scholars taking part in discussion after the session



Scholars taking part in discussion after the session



Dr. Dwipen Bezbaruah presenting his paper in the 2nd Technical session



Dr. Suraj Singh presenting his paper in the 2nd Technical session



Group photograph of the scholars at NEHU, Tura



The Chief Guest, Prof. M. Sangma (Former, Pro V.C., NEHU, Tura Campus) addressing the audience



Dr. B.L.Malla addressing the gathering



Dr. S. Sivaji, Assistant Professor (Department of History & Archaeology) giving vote of thanks

The seminar had five technical sessions followed by a panel discussion and valedictory session which was attended by eminent scholars and academicians from all northeast states and few from different parts of India. It was held with a clear objective of exploring the technical and methodological issues to study the rock art of north east region that are countered by the scholars and researchers. The scholars presented their papers on their areas of their research work and had a lively and thorough discussion on the rock art of northeast and its multifaceted approach.



Scholars actively taking part in the plenary discussion in the valedictory session



Scholars actively taking part in the plenary discussion in the valedictory session and giving their recommendations

The following recommendations were made by the participating scholars in the seminar for the continuation of the programmes of comprehensive survey of Rock Art sites in North-East India:

1. Sixteen well researched papers were presented in the seminar by scholars from North east and rest of India. Some of them includes: Dr. Smt. Binodini Devi, presented her paper on the carvings of pairs of human feet, large cup marks, female genital organ, circles etc. in Manipur area; Dr. Shyam Singh on cup marks and other anthropic holes (pits?) in Meghalaya, Mizoram; Nagaland; by Smt. Malsawmlianaon engravings on megaliths in Mizoram; on unique rock art features of the rock art in Nagaland; by Dr. Sukanya Sharma on Hominid adaptations in Prehistoric N.E. India, at Ganol-Rongram valley with Core tool assemblage etc also neoliths at 500 MSL, and by Dr. Nabhajit on cup marks near a Buddhist stupa in Tagtsang, Tawang valley.
2. Among the other presentation made by the scholars include the historical or regional sculptural art or folk chieftain or theme, preparation of lac, making of threads for weaving, Tattoo culture, etc. carved on isolated rock slabs or boulders. Mostly at the instance of local people especially by young scholars who had clues from the published materials, explored the sites and studied the materials which is to be appreciated.
3. With reference to the item 2., in the Plenary session Prof. A. Sundara, the Chairman of the Valedictory session, made clear the difference between rock art in Archaeology and

historical classical rock art. The former is executed pictures in single or many depicting hunting or ritual/festival dance, death ritual etc. What they have in mind on their own directly on the natural surface of the rock by an individual/individuals of community without any traditional practice in many sites helter-skelter at different times in red/white very rarely in yellow or green ochre or lime in rock shelter/cave or engraving or bruising on rock boulders in open fields generally away from their habitation site. The latter is generally cut-out rock art or painting in an excavated cave pictures executed on a well prepared rock surface with plaster in accordance with traditional principles by an artist trained in classical traditions and also in the art of carving in a school of Master Sculptor or Architect who is commissioned for the purpose by a patron. Such pictures can be identified with the help relevant *shilpa* texts. The art pictures are found within or outside a habitation settlement e.g. Ajanta, Badami and others. In the case of Folk art executed on prepared walls of a residence on some occasion in different colours pictures of various kinds by family members or a person good in drawing are drawn periodically or carved on menhirs open to the sky etc. all signify the prevailing traditions of communities.

4. Some valid suggestion made by the delegates and other participants are :

- i. Organisation of Orientation/Appreciation course in rock art for young scholars interested in the subject.
- ii. Continuation of the programmes of both exploration of rock art sites and organisation of seminars on the subject in other states of N.E. India.
- iii. Inclusion of papers on the History of Region and Ethnography highlighting unique features of rock art sites, where the seminar is held.
- iv. Intensive survey of geological and geographical features of the entire state to trace rocky open lands where caves, shelters and open boulder hills where rock art sites are likely to be found e.g. the middle Brahmaputra valley in Assam.
- v. Though documentation of every rock art site done by the IGNCA in Assam, now it should also be extended in other states of N.E. with rock art concentration.
- vi. Educational extension programme relating to south China and tracing cultural affinity between south China and north India. Such programmes are already initiated by the IGNCA and this was explained by Prof.V.H.Sonawane and Prof. A.Sundara.
- vii. Conservation of the selected rock art sites and developing them as tourist centres.
- ix. Publication of the proceedings of the seminar on priority basis.

The event was a great success and was widely covered by both print and electronic media.

Press coverage of National Seminar at NEHU, Tura

MEGHALAYA GUARDIAN

(4th October, 2016)

Meet on rock art to throw light on NE history

GUARDIAN NEWS BUREAU

TURA, OCT 4: With an intent to taking educational research down to the grassroots level, the History and Archaeological department of North East Hill University (NEHU) Tura Campus will hold a two-day national seminar on rock art of North East India.

The event is being held from tomorrow in collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi and will see the participation of scholars and research persons from five north-eastern states as well as from other states of the country.

The study of 'Rock art' is now an active study in 15 states within the country as well as in sites outside the country as well.

The second such seminar, with the one last year being held in Tripura, will see about 18 scholars, most of whom are experts in their fields will look to deliberate on various aspects of 'rock art' and look at new sections to contin-

ue their research.

"Rock art is the study of rock carvings made into rocks during pre history and how humans evolved through time. It provides understanding of how they lived and their entire lifestyle. It is not art for art's sake, but is intrinsic to their lifestyle and provides us vital information of how history evolved," said director of IGNCA, Dr BL Malla, adding that the study goes back 15000 – 20000 years of human evolution.

The director also said that the study of rock art was now renamed to 'Adi Drishya' (primeval vision of man) and looks to bridge the gaps between history of different times.

"The NE region is rich in its history and there is a lot to study within the region. In fact researchers of the region, including Assam, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura will be presenting their first section of their research as early as February next year," added Dr Malla.

"The present seminar aims to delve deep into

the recent methodical and technical issues concerning rock art studies in the North East region. It will provide a platform for scholars to interact and share their opinions, views and theories and also assist in establishing a well designed chronological framework for historical times and prehistoric times," said Tilak Thakuria, assistant professor of NEHU (History and Archeology).

"We believe the study will help in understanding the meaning and jurisdiction of rock art, cognitive neuroscience, relevance of rock art and local culture and traditions," he added.

"We hope that more people in the region will be able to take up research in such areas. Garo Hills holds a special place as it was among the first places in NE where prehistoric sites were found. We are hopeful that the seminar will open newer avenues in the study of evolution of history in the NE region," added Thakuria.

National Seminar on Rock Art to take education research to grassroots

Written by Meghalaya Times. Posted in Front Page

Staff Reporter

SHILLONG, Oct 04: With the intent to take educational research down to the grassroots level, the History and Archeological departments of North East Hill University (NEHU) is set to hold a two day national seminar on rock art of North East India at the NEHU Tura campus in Chasingre. The event is being held in collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi and will see the participation of scholars and research persons from 5 North Eastern states as well as from other states of the country.

The two day seminar will begin on Wednesday with the stakeholders ready to get into serious discussions on research on 'Rock Art'. The study of 'Rock art' is now an active study in 15 states within the country as well as in sites outside the country as well. The second such seminar, with the one last year being held in Tripura, will see about 18 scholars, most of whom are experts in their fields will look to deliberate on various aspects of 'Rock art' and look at new sections to continue their research.

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**Rock Art of North East India-ni bidingo
salgnina National Seminar-ko Tura
NEHU-o ong-atenga**



TURA: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) aro North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) Tura Campus, Meghalaya bakrimenba October jani 5 aro 6 tarikrango salgnina bakrimenba seminar-ko ong-atenga. Indake ia seminar-ko salgro salaram a-dokrangni prehistory aro ethno-archaeological-ni kamrangni bidingo gital dake ma-sianir angko man-a aro am-sandianirangko dakna miksonganio ong-atenga. Indake seminar-ko ong-atanichi mingsinggipa aro namen ma-sigipa ba scholar-rangko damsang ong-atgen aro gital dake ma-sianirangko aro skie ra-anirangko, dakna

man-gen. Da-o ong-ateng gipa seminar India a-songni salgro salaram a-dokrangni batanggimin salrango rock art-ni bidingo am-sandiani kamrangko ka-ani methodological aro technical-ni kamrangni ning-tue sandianirangko dakgen. Indake seminarko ong-atanichi namen ma-sigiparangko an-tang tangni ma-sia u-ianir angko agan talatgr ikanirangko dakani aro chanchichakani biap dake ong-atgen jeon uamang an-tangtangni gamchatgipa ma-sia nirangko sualgrike ia jolrango ba a-dokrangni batanggimin salrango mai ong-aha iarangni bidingo am-sandianirangko dakna man-gen. Iarang baksanaba ian rock of art,

neuroscience-ni nangchapgipa kamrangni bidingo aro rock art aro jolnijatrangni daka rikani bidingo ma-sie ra-na gita cholrangkoba man-gen. Indake ia seminar-ko ong-atani miksonganiana rock art-ni bidingo ma-sie ra-na siggipa rangna bak-ra-gip arangna aro salgro salaram a-dokrangni rock art-ni bidingo skie ra-chakram biapba ong-atgen.

Ia seminar-ko October jani 5 tarikni pringni 10:30 bajio Central Auditorium, Academic Block-II, NEHU, Tura Campus-o oprakaniko dakenga. Ia oprakaniko dakanio mongsonggipa sokgipa Prof. Dhruva J. Saikia
Jak-2-o dongkuenga