

**REPRESENTATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN MUSEUMS OF  
NORTHEAST INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NAGALAND**

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**MEPUSANGBA**



**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
NAGALAND UNIVERSITY  
KOHIMA CAMPUS, MERIEMA**

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**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY**

**NAGALAND UNIVERSITY**

**KOHIMA CAMPUS, MERIEMA**

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**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the research data presented in this accompanying dissertation titled, *Representation of Cultural Identities in Museums of Northeast India with Special Reference to Nagaland* has been carried out by Mr. Mepusangba bearing Regd. No. 646/15 under my direct guidance and supervision.

The present work is original in its content and has not been submitted in part or full for any other degree or diploma in any other University/Institute.

It is further certified that the candidate has fulfilled all the conditions necessary for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy under Nagaland University.

(PROF. TIATOSHI JAMIR)

Supervisor

Department of History & Archaeology

Nagaland University, Kohima Campus

Meriema, Kohima, Nagaland.

Date:



**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY  
NAGALAND UNIVERSITY**

**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the work embodied in this dissertation titled, *Representation of Cultural Identities in Museums of Northeast India with Special Reference to Nagaland* has been carried out by me under the supervision of Prof. Tiatoshi Jamir is original and that the thesis or a part of it has not been submitted for a degree in other University or Institute.

**Candidate:**

**Head:**

**Supervisor:**

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# CHAPTER-1

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the issue of representation of cultures and their associated material collections has become a core concept of museological theory and practice. This context is integral to how museums can address the various histories of their respective collections and can help argue the interpretation of objects and their display. The present study on museum studies is the outcome of research in multidisciplinary fields and more specifically the postcolonial discourse on the development of museums. Culture is reflected through tangible and intangible elements and both are represented in the museum context. Material cultures are closely knitted with their representation in museums, because the collection of a specific culture has its origins in the culture itself and narrates both tangible and intangible attributes that are connected to the identity of individuals, communities or nations. A museum's specific collection is not only concerned with a single aspect of the culture but various intertwined elements. Before acquisition of an item, one has to document the provenance of an object, how it was acquired, its purpose, role, the financial implications for the museum with its ideological history, and finally the representation of "one's own and the other".

The chronological sequence of museums, collections and institutionalization began with the Greek *mouseion*, and the activities and attributes of the nine Muses, the daughters of Zeus associated with the arts and sciences (see Findlen, 1989). According to Crook (1972) "The Greek *mouseion* first became a shrine of the muses, then a repository for gifts, then a temple of the arts, and finally a collection of tangible memorials to mankind's creative genius" (Crook 1972, p. 19). Pearce (1992) completes this unilinear evolutionary view by noting the successive periods – "archaic, early modern, classic modern and post-modern – coinciding with specific institutionalization of collections in medieval treasuries, cabinets of curiosities in the eighteenth to mid-twentieth century museum, and contemporary museums" (Pearce 1992, p. 90).

The museums of today evolved as a result of basic human nature - curiosity and the desire to collect. The history of museums may be traced back to the 3rd century BC, when Ptolemy I Soter founded the great museum at Alexandria, along with a college of scholars. Its

library was more of a university model than a repository for preserving and interpreting material aspects of heritage. Although it is believed that the first public museum opened in the nineteenth century (Black, 2011), the foundation of these institutions can be traced back to the studios of the fifteenth and sixteenth century aristocratic Italians (*orbis in domo*), the monastic libraries of the Jesuit Order, and the priceless collections held by some families throughout the European continent (see Findlen, 1989). The growth of museums corresponds to the age of imperialism and the spread of European nation-states. A new institution known as the Wunder Kammern arose during the late Renaissance and Enlightenment periods in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This institution was created to standardize and transmit the ever-expanding information from fields such as science, geography, culture, and history. Initially, this institution was limited to only a few elite scholars. In the decades to come, these institutions were made available to the public, and this was the turning point in the development of museums, which gave new insight for the mushrooming of new museums in the later decades to come. The late eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century saw a rapid evolution and the birth of the principle of public collections, mainly at the instance of artists and naturalists. Some of these significant institutions were the British Museum, the Louvre, the Museum National d' Historiore Naturelle, the Vatican Museum and others (see Findlen, 1994). The period from 1850 to 1950 saw the emergence of several phenomena, which influenced the formation of a world of museums. New categories of museums were added during this phase, for instance museums of anthropology, ethnology, science and technology, history, and archaeological museums.

Museums continued their civilizing and educating missions, but they are no longer restricted to the bounds of western civilizations. According to Angelina (2007), "the development of museums continues to be influenced by the mission, principles, philosophies and practices of historically western museums" (Angelina 2007, p.1). The western idea of the museum has been adopted by developing nations but it is not rooted in developing societies, whereas in the western context the history, science, arts and technology are deeply connected with the development of museums as an institution. The postcolonial ideas of knowledge have given new insights to rewriting history, but at times an opposite explanation of the past. Likewise, it had its own impact in the world of museums as well. These transitions or shifting of understanding has brought the idea of representation as a core notion in the realm of museum studies.

## **Overview of Museum Movement in India and Northeast India**

In India, there are evidence of museums and picture galleries from early times. The epics speak of *Chitrashalas* and *Vishvakaram* mandirs, which were centres of recreation as well as education. The modern museum movement was initiated pre-independence dating back to 1814, when Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta (now Kolkata) established the Indian Museum. According to Jain (2011), “The museum was kind of still-born in colonial India– it never took root in the country as other colonial institutions did– the game of cricket and the railways - they grew, they adapted, they touched the masses” (Jain 2011, p. 52). Before India’s independence, the British administrators took an active part in the preservation and research of the art and archaeology of our vast country. They started by enacting legislation to protect monuments and historical sites, as well as instituting research into them. In reality, they pioneered the museum movement by constructing a number of museums across the country to conserve the country’s art and antiquities. Dr. J. Ph. Vogel published the first Directory of Indian Museums in 1911, which included thorough information on 39 institutions that had been created since the Orientalists Conference in China. Markham MP and former Director General of The Archaeological Survey of India, Hargreaves, published a study in 1936 on the 105 museums that existed in India at the time. As Rath (2014) maintains, “There has been a steady growth of museums, both in the government and private sector, and the numerical strength has gone up to more than 800 today.” (Rath, 2014, p. 57). The founding of the Museum Association of India in 1944 and the National Museum at Delhi in 1949 gave a new impetus to the importance of museums in the educational set-up, thus providing a new dimension and orientation to the museum movement (see Ghose 1968). As a result, the museum movement in India has grown steadily since Independence. However, in post-Independence India, the cultural endeavors that began during British rule could not be perpetuated. The new Indian government’s priority was on beginning new industries, opening new colleges, expanding science and technology, and so on, therefore sufficient attention to the preservation of India’s historic legacy could not be provided. Choudhury (1998) remarks, “Culture is kept at the bottom of the list as only about two percent of the total budget of the Human Resources is spent on art and culture” (Choudhury 1998, p.2). By post-Independence, a decade after the new museology emerged globally; it gave a face-lift to the existing museum culture towards a new scenario in the museum movement in India. Apart from numerous archaeological museums and multipurpose provincial museums, a different taste in museums started developing; for instance, the Craft Museum, Delhi, the Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmadabad, the Science and the Technological Museum, Calcutta, and the Natural

History Museum, New Delhi, and so on. We also see the development of the Village Museum, the Tribal Museum, and the Folk Art Museum, etc. later. The Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, and the Tribal Museum, Bhubaneswar, for instance, belong to this category of museums. There is scarcely a theme in India today where a museum cannot be established. These museums are managed by the Central government, while others are managed by various state governments, district administrations, local groups, and, in certain cases, private trusts.

In Northeast India, the museum movement developed very late compared to other states. The colonial administration did not pay much attention to establishing museums. Their driving interest was the ethnographic and anthropological aspects of the region. J.B. Fuller (1909), in his introduction to Major Alan Playfairs book on “The Garos”, wrote, “The province of Assam at the far northeast corner of India is a museum of nationalities.” For them, the region was like an anthropological paradise. It was a period when numerous administrators and academicians started engaging in the collection and documentation of the various communities in Northeast India. One can see, however, two categories of agencies that were networking, besides the growing zeal of the administration. First, to collect ethnographical data to help the growing discipline of anthropology, which coincided with colonialism, and to fill space of the curiosity cabinet. Second, to spread the Gospel and to carry out missionary activities. The people involved in these activities were guided by the idea of educating the communities through Christianity. In the later decades, these two facets became an important asset for rediscovering the past of the region or, in other cases, a legacy of contested issues in search of history and self- identity.

The idea of establishing the very first museum in these regions started as early as 1912. In that year, modeled after the Barendra Research Society of undivided Bengal, now in Bangladesh, the *Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti* or the Assam Research Society was formed by some genuinely interested individuals in Guwahati. The main aim of this research institute was to have a museum in the state (see Choudhury, 1998). The first museum was thus established in the greater undivided Assam province. After the creation of other states from Assam– Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Assam, and Tripura separate state museums were established.

The idea of new museology was developing well in the global context during the formation of these states; museums, however, were still established on old traditional framework. The main objective of these museums was to collect and preserve cultural heritage. The present Northeast India comprises of eight states, which have their respective

state museums, apart from various district, local, private community museums, showcasing their rich culture and people. It is interesting and encouraging to note that, in recent years, private collectors and institutions have added a different flavour in the museum movement of this region- for instance, the Don Bosco Museum, Mawlai, Shillong, the Tribal Museum, Churhandpur, Manipur, the Butterfly Museum, Shillong, the Chumpo Museum, Nagaland, the Peoples Museum, Manipur, etc. Along with the growth of academic institutions, university and college museums for teaching and departmental collections are also expanding. Some of the prominent museums in this category are the Madhad Chandra Goswami Museum, Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University, Assam; Salesian College Museum, Salesian College, Dimapur, Nagaland etc. Today, the region has at least one Science Museum Centre, Art Museum, and numerous other museums, mainly characterized as ethnographic museums.

The museums in Northeast India are mostly a product of post-colonial India. Indeed, the colonists did not make efforts to invest in museums like those in mainland India. Thanks to internet and the latest media connectivity, the best practices of museology across the globe reach our desks easily. On the other hand, however, the lack of a museum mindset and the developing economy, the post-colonial, social and political administrative of this region is the spine that controls the growth of museum since it all got started. The setting up museums in this region was never thought to be important by the colonial administrators; rather history tells us that the transfer of ethnographic materials was at its peak from these parts of region during the colonial times, and it continues. These collections could be listed as gifts, souvenirs, loot, collections of self-interest and profit. Today, the western museums have to be held accountable for their collections from these corners of Northeast India. In recent years, such collections have become an important dataset for material cultural studies in museum discourses.

### **Objectives of Research**

From a global perspective, museums have come a long way from diverting attention away from the traditional curio cabinets to interpretation and representation of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Research and discourse in museum studies have achieved a wider understanding, not simply restricted to collecting objects but being more participatory and inclusive. In the words of Charman (2013) , “this new way of thinking about museums is often described as the “New Museology”, and also referred to as post-museum or new museum” (Charman, 2013, p. 1067). This new multidisciplinary dimension of museology,

with the application of theories from other disciplines, deals mainly with the representation and projection of the communities' cultures or people from both the past and the present. As Bouquet (2012) maintains, "Significantly, such changes that were taking place in museums during the second half of the twentieth century should be seen in a larger context; for instance, post-colonial thoughts also had a greater influence on museums" (Bouquet, 2012, p.6). What does this mean for museum practice? Towards new visions and policies: to open up to individual learning styles, subjective interpretation and the incorporation of multiple stories throughout collections and exhibitions. More attention has been given to museum display, believing it to function as a powerful agent in creating certain narratives that tell the visitors something about the world, its cultures and its people. No longer are museums considered merely a place containing treasures and a place for education, but as an important pioneer in the creation of knowledge (Moser, 2012). It is also acknowledged that the museum with these influences has become more diverse. An ongoing question is how to conceptualize the museum space of different communities and the same goes for issues of how to address contested concepts where there are different ethnic groups and multi-cultures. The museums of Northeast India face a unique challenge because of the presence of numerous ethnicities and cultures in the region. The population of the region consists of many different ethnic groups, and the differences in them are in their cultural backgrounds, origins, religions, lifestyles and other aspects. It is believed that cultural heritage can contribute to the relationship between communities and their citizens and, at the same time, the representation of these multi-ethnic groups in a museum context mark the cultural identity of a community.

Based on the above concept, certain research questions were put forward for the current research. How do state museums in Northeast India address and deal with cultural identity of various communities in their permanent collections, as well as in temporary exhibitions? Contrary to the state museums, what role do the community, the district and the private museums play in conserving and representing the cultural identity of ethnic groups? To support and supplement this research question, the concept of cultural identity and new museology has been put forward while addressing the following objectives:

- Examine how cultural identities are represented in and connected to the idea of a museum.
- Understand how cultural identity is constructed and represented in a museum setting.
- Investigate the role that museums play in the current cultural process and identity.
- Understand how museums in Northeast India address challenges of multi-culturalism.

- Investigate the policies of museums across Northeast India and outline necessary recommendations.
- Examine museum inclusiveness and participation.

### **Area of Research**

The northeast region of India which includes the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura lies between the coordinates: 21°58'-29°27'N, 88°00'-97°24'E (Figure 1). It has over 2000 km borders with Bhutan, China, Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar and is connected to the rest India by a narrow 20 km wide corridor of land. The whole area encompasses 262,230 square km and the population is approximately 40 million (2011 census) which represents 3.1% of the Indian population. Every state of Northeast India is itself an abode of multiple ethnicities with the bulk of the people converts to Christianity. There are around 220 ethnic communities in the Northeast alone and more than 220 dialects (see Jain, 2016). The hill-states in the region such as Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland are predominantly inhabited by native ethnic communities with a degree of diversity even within the ethnic groups.

This research takes into account the geographical, the social and the cultural contexts of the region. As this research employs case studies, it will cover the state museums of the region, keeping in mind the commonality and dissimilarity among the collections and the representations of the culture in museums. Considering the vastness and distinctiveness of the cultures of the region, only four state museums, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, and Meghalaya, were selected for the research. The research also focuses on local community museums at the rural level, districts museums and university museums from these parts of the region and especially the Naga collections from overseas. Giving equal importance to all the above-mentioned state museums, emphasis is given to Nagaland, covering all the museums beginning from the colonial period to the present times in terms of collections and their representation

The reasons for selecting Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya and Manipur for the current research are many. First, the vastness of the region and cultures represented are beyond the scope of a single research work; significantly, the state of Assam alone could produce more research. Second, is the geographical distribution of the states' populations in terms of ethnic and cultural attributes, for instance, the politics of Hills and Plains in Tripura and Manipur states. In such contexts, the question is how do museums balance and project their cultures.

Further, case studies from Nagaland and Meghalaya State Museums have been adopted to understand the multi-layered communities in museum spaces of both the regions. Special focus is given to Nagaland in order to understand the museum movement, representations, policies and work done so far in museum studies.

### **Methodology and Sources**

A literature review was conducted to study and identify new approaches in museum representations to understand the museum movement from global as well as local perspectives. The review also includes understanding the concept of the new museology, theories of cultural identity, ethnicity and politics of representation in museum spaces keeping in view the aims and objectives of this research. The primary information was sourced mainly from data collected and analyzed through case studies from state, district, local communities and private museums of the Northeast Indian states. The following has formed the data collection for the current research. Museum visits and personal interviews on related issues provided the primary data. The secondary data was collected from various sources: books, published and unpublished materials, journals and magazines, seminar paper presentations and journal articles related to the research problem. Extensive secondary sources were consulted with regard to the collections; issues related to representations and contested debates in recent times. The approaches for the data collection was formulated focusing on the formation of cultural identities in museums employing extensive case studies from respective state museums and other museums within the area of research. For this, each museum was examined from the following points of view:

- Type of artifacts represented
- Number of cultures included
- Chronological and thematic order of the exhibit
- Text and information provided to the public on collections and the represented cultures
- Difference of observation in the orientation of the collection and the cultural context
- Types of tools used for dioramas, reconstructed buildings, audio and visuals.
- Finally, the inclusive and participatory nature of museums.

## **Problem of Research**

The aspect of the land and the people of the Northeast region have been studied regularly and there exists extensive literature on this. A majority of this research is based on old ethnographic reports and monographs, which cover some interesting subjects on the peoples of the region and their cultures. The reliability of these reports, however, in the present context is doubtful. With changing perspectives and the emergence of the postcolonial outlook on the increase, a shift towards a search for the insider's view of the 'self' and crosschecking of past history has emerged in recent times. Northeast India is regarded as an anthropological museum because of its rich ethnic and cultural diversity. The region with its various ethnicities and cultures has put together a challenge for representation of a common cultural identity within multicultural identities.

Owing to colonial rule, the period after Independence and the aftermath of the reorganization of the political administration, the country witnessed several social reforms and political developments. The present state of social and political unrest in various parts of Northeast India is an expression of the desire for economic and political resolution, which directly or indirectly involves the cultural identity of the people. The socio-economic, political and cultural contexts are shared and are deeply rooted in the history of the region, and therefore should be reflected in the representation, both in theory and practice. The museum movement in this part of the region is recent. Along with museums in each state, there are other museums at the rural and district level as well as in private and government institutions and universities, which have specific aims to conserve, preserve and educate. The pertinent questions here are:

- How does the museum as an institution, representing a particular region, group, community or culture, engage and tackle museological theories and practices in its discourse, policies and activities?
- How are such situational contexts reflected in museums?
- What are the representations and interpretations of collections, and how are they represented?
- What are the roles that museums play in current cultural processes and identities?
- What are the views of Insiders and Outsiders?
- Is there any influence on the themes in the museum set-up in the representation of cultures?
- How do these museums address challenges of multi-culturalism?

In recent years, museums in this part of India developed various themes, but the region still lacks theoretical application in museography. Museum literature is also scanty. In other words, like in other parts of the world, museums are not research-oriented. In addition, the projection of cultural identities has been complex, which has different meanings and contexts. Besides the notion of representation, the rapid growth of urbanization and globalization in recent times and the shifting of cultural identities had their consequences in the society. The lacks of proper infrastructure, incompatible policies and activities of the concerned departments and ignorance of the public have also contributed to difficulties in tackling the issues in the context of museums.

### **Significance of Research**

- The research should be of great value to a large number of aspiring museum curators.
- The issues of contested space, place, identities, culture and heritage of the region have been addressed and these would be valuable to museum specialists and others.
- This research will pave the way for heritage professionals to offer greater attention to politically sensitive construction of the past and how they may best be represented.
- Understanding “outsider and insider” representations of cultural identity and the shifting identities of the present scenario will be other important aspects of this study.
- This research attempts to understand object-oriented museums as well as the aspects of museum inclusiveness and participatory museums, which would enhance further research.
- This research attempts to place museum activities within their social contexts.
- Outlining the main factors influencing policy makers, thereby paving the way for the understanding of public participation, cultural policies and sustainable development, this will be enormously beneficial to cultural sector research.
- This research will enrich the literature on museum studies with particular reference to Northeast India.

### **Review of Literature**

The review of literature provides an overview on research, politics and practice on the representation of culture in museums. In recent decades, the issue of museum politics on representation of cultural identities has taken keen interest and stirred debates culminating in various multi-disciplinary fields of research. The literature consulted during the present

research is based on new museology, museum movement, museum representation, concept of cultural identities, and people and culture of the Northeast India. Some readings were made about the prehistory of Northeast India and especially Nagaland. Recent theories and practices of museology and issues in the contexts of India, the Northeast and Nagaland, specifically, from the museological perspectives were looked at.

Theoretical as well as practical issues in politics of cultural representation have increased significantly over the years. Collections and classifications, curatorial agendas and the educational role of museums were the foci of museums in their early developmental phase (Alexander, 1979; Hooper, 2000, Asma, 2001 and Carbonell, 2004). With the emergence of the New Museology in the 1980s, the main focus of museums shifted and was scaled down to a more democratic view of the museum, linked to social context, education and development (Vergo, 1989; Weil, 1990; Ross, 2004; and Stam, 2004). From the latter part of the twentieth century, there was a transition to the new trend of involving different fields. This new paradigm shift was brought forth by a change in focus: from being object-centered to being visitor-oriented, more emphasis on the relationship of collections, the representation of the material culture, developing awareness on identity and cultures through museums (Weil, 2004 and West, 2011). This new paradigm shift tries to maintain the balance of the social context, education, culture and identity and in all the sensitive issues and statements in museum theory and practice. The ideas of this paradigm shift can be seen in Bennett (1995). Hooper (2000), Weil (2004), West (2011), and Such ideas have been of great help in understanding and application in this research.

The postcolonial theories have brought in yet another angle to the study of museum representation. Several works (Combes, 1988; Simpson, 1996; Barringer and Flynn (Eds.), 1998; Simpson, 2001; Handler (Ed.), 2001; Angelina, 2007; Witcomb and Healy (Eds.), 2006; Byrne, et al. (Eds.) 2011) in this context bring into focus the other side of museum politics and theories. A number of significant researches work, increased interest and experimentation in seeking justice on the representation of culture and identities in the realm of museums in recent years. They have raised various questions on collections, interpretations, histories and policies of global concern. On the occasion of the World Conference on Cultural Policies UNESCO (2010), strongly recommended the inclusion of the concept of cultural identity in global cultural policies. It was stated that for apposite progress, the equality and dignity of all cultures must be recognized. Similarly, the right of all people and communities must also be preserved to affirm their cultural identities and thereby earn the respect of others. Cultural identities have been well examined in the new paradigm.

According to Pratt (2005), “museums as a social institution with its own set of goals for educating, from histories to cultural interpretation through means of display and exhibition has its bonds and reaction with the term cultural identity” (Pratt 2005, pp.66-86). As Edson *INTERCOM* (2006) mentions “identity concerns in a museological perspective are: Do museums have a meaningful role in contemporary society and what must they do to successfully compete with an expanding array of leisure time activity? What are the guiding principles for museums and the heritage section as they address decreased expectations? Who will lead the next generation of museum and heritage facilities?” Cultural identity is a well-examined concept and has been critiqued within a multitude of disciplines. Multiple interpretations may be offered from a variety of perspectives, ranging from the individual to the collective, the national to the global. One important element of cultural identity is its [re] presentation in the public realm (see Kelly 2004). Karp (1991) states that museums are sites for “the play of identity, [with displays] involved in defining the identities of communities- or in denying them identity.” Further, Clifford and George (1986), who presents the questions generally asked “on collection and display, that is, whose culture, whose property or who we are, links cultural identity to claims of cultural property, especially in the contest over representation and ownership in current museum debates”. In recent decades, more arguments on such issues of critical museological concerns such as representation of culture and identities, interpretation and histories can be seen in the numerous work (see Roman, 1992; Walsh, 1992; Ashworth and Larkham,1994; Macdonald,1998; Das, 2004; Dahl, et al. 2000; Hooper–Greenhill, 2000; Durrans, 2004; Smith and Vergo, 2006; Bjerreregard, 2006).

Approaches to understanding museum practices and theory have been attempted. Some of such works includes those of Walsh(1992); Pearce (Ed.) (1994); Macdonald(1998); Simpson(2001); Timothy(2002);Weil(2004); Marstine(2006); Watson(2007); Smith (Ed.) (2009); Assurcao dos Santo and Judite Primo (Eds.) (2010), and Sarah Byrne et al. (Eds.) (2011). These sources will prove useful in constructing the concept, values, views and knowledge in understanding the museum and representation of culture.

*Communicating Ethnic and Cultural Identity* (2004), edited by Mary Fong and Rueyling Chuang, is a volume that delves into various aspects of ethnic and cultural identity and how they interact in daily life. In the global setting, the book examines identity issues such as gender, ethnicity, class, spirituality, alternative lifestyles, and inter- and intra-ethnic identification. In Yea-Wen Chen and Hengjun Lin (2016), the essay on Cultural Identities provides different themes on culture, diversity, intercultural communication, approaches to cultural identities, theorizing about cultural identities.

In the Indian context, ever since the museum movement evolved, various scholars have extensively worked in areas such as museum education, museum architecture, role of museums in the social context, museum management, and policies (Vatsyayan, 1972; Smita and Vinod, 1973; Ghosh, 1976; Banerjee, 1990; Choudhury, 1998; Chakrabarti, 2004; Bhattacharya, 2006). There is a series of research papers on conservation of objects in museums (Agrawal, 1981, 1995; Agrawal and Dhawan, 1985). The twentieth century saw the uncovering of politics in museums, tracing the agents from the 1960s and 1970s, which are viewed as part of an antiquated colonial tradition of institution rather than an active political agent in the development of Indian national consciousness, according to Rustom Bharucha (2001). Notable exceptions include the works of Guha (2004) and Singh (2003), who attempted to offer selective approaches to the conditions of museology in the non-West, and highlighted the role of postcolonial theory in comprehending the museum institution in India. A new shift in understanding Indian museum politics is well depicted in Smith (2000), Phillips (2006), Kishor (2010) and Vardhan (2013). The Indian museum movement, even though it is an old institution, has been directly or indirectly influenced by elements of colonial ideas. Indian museums however are experimenting with the new dimensions, thereby facilitating more room for research.

In recent years, addressing the issues in the colonial museum history and Indian museum, Burdhan (2017) investigated the historiographic portrayal of the development of museums in India in *Colonial Museums: An Inner History*. The author explains the colonial attitude toward Indian culture and its millennia-old antiquities. It highlights how the British government exploited museums as a hegemonic tool to gain control of ancient remains. The report specifically states that the primary goal of the colonial authority in India, behind great exhibitions, was not to promote India's historical inheritance, but to describe India as a dormant economy with a dormant culture. Throughout the study, the colonial benevolence of cultural preservationism as projected through museums and exhibitions is studied in depth. The work is a typical example of post-colonial museology, which attempted to decolonize the museum on the one hand while glorifying the concept of museum as present in every society since time immemorial on the other. Again, Burdhan (2017) examines a wide range of discourses on museum movements around the world in *Museological Pedagogy: Colonial Politics versus Peoples' Museography*, with a focus on the evolution and growth of the new museum theory. The author employs case studies concerning the politics and poetics of display. This reading aids in the creation and comprehension of the museum movement and other ideas that will emerge in this thesis.

To understand the people, culture, identity, ethnicity of the Northeast, some select literary sources were studied; Pakim's (1990) *Nationality, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in North East India* is a collection of essays dealing with the issues of nationality, ethnicity and cultural identity in general and northeast region in particular, which should be scientifically analyzed. In Misra's (2014) edited book, *India's Northeast Identity Movements, State, and Civil Society*, the essays and commentaries written over three decades present an incisive wide-angled study of India and the Northeast. Temjensosang and Ovung (2015), in *Historicity, Cultural Diversity and Identities in Northeast India*, covers an extensive theme of understanding multiculturalism in Northeast India, illegal immigration and emerging issues, regional disparity and dynamics of development, revivalism and demand for autonomy, historicity, land and identity formation. The various chapters depict the insider's view of the scholars and cover issues of diversity of the region over above themes.

Mitri and Kharmawphlang (2011), in *The Northeast Umbrella Cultural-Historical Interaction and isolation of the Tribes in the Region (Pre-History to 21st Century)*, bring an interesting collection of essays from renowned scholars from Northeast India. The book delves into different aspects of the prehistoric identity of the region's various language groups. In addition, issues such as regionalism, marital customs, indigenous knowledge, and lithic technology in the Northeast are thoroughly investigated, providing a clear picture of the region's history from prehistory to the present.

Tandon's (2006) edited book, *Interpreting the Heritage of the North-East*, represents a genuine endeavour to comprehend the region's old culture and heritage, to identify the people's problems, and to explore how best to bridge the breach between the mainland while preserving their unique way of life. It discusses indigenous knowledge systems, biodiversity and culture, economic and material heritage and craft traditions, agents of change (grassroots, media, and government agencies), and building culture sensitive culture tourism. Such a broad discourse of the region provides a different viewpoint on the region.

Less explored has been in the field of critical museum practice and studies in Northeast India; the paucity of literature promises ample scope for research. Important classic scholarly publications from the region are mainly found in Assam State Museum Directorate, (for example, Choudhury and Das, 1959; and Morley, 1968). In later years, we have publications that deal with basic museum trends specially on Assam and other states (Das, 1975; Nayal, 1975; Singh, 1975; Baruah, 1975; Sarmah, 1975; Bhuyan, 1985; Bhowmik, 1985; Nigam, 1985; Sharma, 1988; Bhattacharya, 1988; Sonowal, 1988; Gupta, 1988). The 1990's and the succeeding decades also saw some important publications addressing the role

of museums and new issues pertaining to collections (for example, see Dey, 1994; Anam, 1994; Das, 2000; Roy, 2008; Devi, 2008; Goswami, 2008). The above works are pioneering in the field of museum research in Northeast India and give ideas in understanding the development of museum movement in this region.

Very scant research has been carried out in Nagaland, as museums are recent. In recent years, the debates on representation of cultural identities through objects and theories and the question of collections and representation of objects have become important issues in museological studies. The earliest collectors and researchers of the Nagas were ethnographers, missionaries, the British administrators and scholars from the anthropological field. These writings, monographs, documents, sketches and photographs of the twentieth century became the general basis for research, for example, Jacob (1990) pictographic books compiled from various museum collections of the West. There have been several research papers from the mid-nineteenth century. The early twentieth century writings were dominated by the British and German anthropologists (e.g. Hudson, 1911; Hutton, 1921a and 1921b; Mills, 1922, 1926, and 1937; Smith, 1925; Fürer-Haimendorf, 1939; Bower, 1951 and 1952). Notable contributions on Naga collections were made during the late twentieth and early twenty-first century (see Ganguli, 1993; Arya and Joshi, 2004; Kanungo, 2006, 2011 & 2014; West, 1992 and 2011). An attempt was made in the early twenty-first century on Naga identities and cultures (see Lotha, 2007, 2008; von Stockhausen, 2008). A close examination on the approaches and the available literature has helped in understanding the research problem from a museological perspective based on the insider's views.

Interestingly, the first of its kind volume on Naga collection in the Western world is by West (2011), *Museums, Colonialism and Identity: A History of Naga Collections in Britain*. The book investigated a variety of problems fundamental to museum studies, such as the relationship between colonialism and museum collections, the intricate exchange relations that existed between collectors and the collected, and the expression or perception of identity through material culture. The study focuses on the nature, origins, and interpretations of Naga collections in British museums. As a case study, the subject of the function of anthropology as a discipline in the establishment of ethnographic collections in museums is central to this book. The relationship between colonialism and anthropology, which has become an important field in shaping museums throughout the United Kingdom, is clearly articulated. The Naga collections at several British museums are used as a case study, providing a very detailed account of the Anglo-Naga relationship and the complex engagement in material culture acquisition. On the lines of identification, the topic of the

provenance and circulation of Naga Hills artefacts is raised. Further questions have been raised, including: Who were the people who created these objects? What was their significance, and how did they get up in British museums? The study offers a viewpoint that charts the intricacies discovered in order to identify concerns at the heart of museum work.

Representation of archaeology in museums of Northeast India has not enjoyed the same level of interest and productivity compared to other parts of the world. Since the first reporting of prehistoric tools, archaeology has been prevalent in northeast India and, in recent years, numerous prehistoric as well as historical sites have been excavated. For the chapter “*Museum and Prehistoric Archaeological collection in Northeast*”, selected literature on the archaeology of Northeast India were consulted, starting with Sir John Lubbock (1867), who reported for the first time the findings of polished stone axes from the region, which was collected by Capt. E. H. Steel of Royal Artillery, earmarked the presences of prehistoric tools from Northeast India. Later Capt. Steel (1870), Anderson (1871), Lt. Barron (1872), H.B Medlicolt (1875), Godwin-Austen (1875, 1876), and Cockburn (1879) reported the discovery of polished stone axes from the region. The prehistoric phase was placed in the archaeological map of Northeast India with the reporting of the famous “jadite ground polished tool”, which is unfortunately yet to be physically examined or relocated from the museum in the west where it is now preserved. Since the discovery of the first prehistoric tool, numerous studies have been carried out on the prehistory of Northeast India. Early reports were made by colonial administrators and ethnographers and other local scholars. This phase was mainly confined to reports, scant surveys, and exploration. From the 1960s onwards, there is a gradual rise in investigation on the prehistory of this region. Mention may be made of the first pioneering excavation at Daojali-Hading, Assam, conducted by the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University, after the establishment of its prehistoric branch in 1956, followed by numerous others (see Goswami and Bhagabati, 1959; Sharma, 1966, 1967, 1971, 1974, 1980, 1981 and 1985; Sharma & Sharma, 1968 and 1971; Sharma, 1972, 1975, 1976, 1988 and 2003; Singh, 1972 and 1986; Sharma & Roy, 1985; Medhi, 1980; Nienu, 1983; Sonowal, 1987; Sharma & Singh, 1986; Hussian, 1991; Mahanta, 1995 and 2010; Hazarika, 2012; Sharma, 2002, 2007 and 2013; Ashraf and Duarah, 2014; Bhuyan and Marak, 2014; Marak, 2010 and 2014; Deka, 2015; Sharma and Singh, 2017; Jamir, Mitri and Thakuria, in press ; Marak, Bhuyan, Meitei and Sangma, 2017).

The book by Manjil Hazarika (2017), *Prehistory and Archaeology of Northeast India: Multidisciplinary Investigation in an Archaeological Terra Incognita*, is multi-disciplinary in its scope and its objective is directed towards the reconstruction of the subsistence strategies

and way of life of the prehistoric communities in Northeast India and their movements, dispersals, and settlements. The necessity of gathering evidence from all possible scientific lines of inquiry in order to paint a vivid picture of the development of early farming societies, who must have been the ancestors of some or all of the present-day indigenous ethnic groups, has dictated the essential nature of this work. The author has eloquently examined the history of archaeological study undertaken so far in the eight sister states, as well as all known pre-Neolithic and Neolithic sites unearthed and documented, as well as their discoveries.

*Glimpses of Northeast India Archaeology*, a book by Dhritiman Sharma (2012), highlights the history and archaeology of Northeast India, stone tools and megaliths; history and archaeology of Assam; megalithic traditions in Meghalaya and Assam; archaeology and tourism in Manipur; and numerous archaeological findings, including ancient sites of stone tools, megaliths, monuments, and their historical context.

*An Outline of the Neolithic Culture of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya, India*, by Marco Mitri, (2009), analyses existing data from field surveys in the Khasi and Jaintia hills of the Meghalaya plateau to establish a Neolithic culture distribution pattern in the region. It tries to get a picture of the relationship between the Neolithic sites of the region and the Neolithic cultures of the surrounding areas, and to follow migration patterns, both domestically and out of the region.

A vast edited volume by Tiatoshi Jamir and Manjil Hazarika (2014) *50 Years after Daojali-Hading: Emerging Perspectives in the Archaeology of Northeast India (Essays in Honour of T. C. Sharma)*, includes contributions from eminent archaeologists of Northeast India. This is the first book of its sort to describe the complete scope of archaeological investigations in the region, from the beginning to the present. Prehistory, ethnoarchaeology, megalithic traditions, archaeometallurgy, historical archaeology, museology, and other topics are covered. It provides a comprehensive overview of northeast Indian archaeology from prehistory to the historical period.

A.A. Ashraf's (1990) *Prehistoric Archaeology of Lower Subansiri*, an exploratory report on the investigation into the prehistoric archaeology in and around Itanagar, Lower Subansiri District of Arunachal Pradesh, is a notable work where he reports several finds from sites such as Pachin, Simpu, Poma and Doimukhand and categorized the finds into Lower Paleolithic, Middle Paleolithic and Neolithic on the basis of typology.

The above selected works on the prehistoric archaeology of Northeast India gives a broader outlook on the past and present of the cultural existence of the region. These readings enhance the understanding of the relationship between museum displays and the prehistoric

archaeology of the region. Further, also a question pertains to how academic discourse of the subject and the interpretation in the museum display are projected, and how the chronological sequences of the cultures are placed in the museum from the archaeological perspectives.

### **Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach**

The current research is guided by several theoretical and methodological aspects: New museology, postcolonial museology, indigenous museum and cultural identity theories and concepts are some of the theoretical frameworks of the study. The dissemination of new ideas within museum studies from the end of the twentieth century onwards derives from the change in focus from objects to visitors and multi-vocal approach, which is also known as “New Museology”. The notion that museums ought to strive towards being inclusive and participatory, which has direct links to representation and debate against the colonial concept of museum, forms the conceptual basis of this thesis. The research is structured by theoretical key concepts of ‘new museology’, “representation”, and “cultural identity”. They originate from the broader concepts of social relevance of museums and curatorial matters. Other concepts that are connected to the research, for instance “reflexive museology” and “postcolonial museology”, which are driving wheels of new museology are addressed within the key concepts. The most evident connections exist between community and cultural identity on the one hand, and objects and collecting policy on the other. It is obvious that, for instance, the concepts of cultural identity and representation through collection also hold a connection. Although all are linked to a certain extent, the concept of representation has the most evident connections with every concept. Nevertheless, the concepts are described as, more or less, separate elements in an effort to structure the research. In this theoretical framework, the key concepts are clarified and illustrated through publications that enable to answer the research question of the thesis, starting with community, ethnicity, identity and cultural diversity in museums. Thereafter, communities, representation, objects, and collection are described accordingly.

In contrast to traditional, collection-centered museum models, the “new museology” is a discourse on the social and political duties of museums, fostering new communication and new modes of expression (Desvallees and Mairesse, 2010). As Smith (1989) states, “It has become a theoretical and philosophical movement linked to a shift in focus and intention within the museum world, away from the functional idea of museums. Areas that were suggested for reconsideration in the “new museology” included the position of museums in conservation, the epistemological status of artefacts on display, and the nature and purpose of

museum scholarship” (Smith, 1989, pp. 20–21). The “new museology” has been broken down to changes in “value, meaning, control, interpretation, authority and authenticity” within museums. This also includes the redistribution of power within museums and “curatorial redistribution” (see Stam, 1993). Peter Vergo highlights in *The New Museology* (1989) that while “old” museology focused on methods, “new” emphasizes museum goals, signaling a shift from what and how to why and to what end. Janet Marstine’s edited volume *New Museum Theory and Practice* (2005), published two decades later, gives more modern viewpoints on the politics and ideologies of museum practice.

Discourses on the postcolonial museum, representation and indigenous museum, the institution of the museum derives from western philosophy and has a history of colonialism (see Bennett, 1995; Phillips, 2011). For example, the museum has long been interested in “exotic” non-Western cultures, has collected “curios”, and has represented and classified non-European cultures as “others”, “uncivilized”, “inferior” (see Iseke-Barnes, 2007). As Domosh (2002) argues, such a representation of “others” stresses the contrast between “civilized white” and “uncivilized non-white”. In the last half of the twentieth century, the museum experienced a major paradigm shift from being a colonial institution to a post-colonial one. Taking an idea from North America, especially since 1990, major museums have eagerly developed collaborative projects with the indigenous peoples to realize a non-colonial style of cultural representation, repatriations, and the welcoming of communities (Peers and Brown, 2003; Phillips, 2011; Trofanenko and Segal, 2012). In parallel with the paradigm shift in major museums, indigenous peoples have established their own perspectives and values. Indigenous museums are now widely discussed and the literature on indigenous museums is being enriched (Clifford, 1997; Erickson, 1999; Simpson, 2001; Erickson et al., 2002; Mauze, 2003; Hendry, 2005; Nesper, 2005; Lawlor, 2006; Christen, 2007; Isaac, 2007; Stanly, 2007; Srinivasana et al., 2009). Such works are noteworthy to understand the new museology, broadening the scope of the research including repatriation, history, cultural rivalry, the politics and conflicts over cultural representation, eco-museum, and community development and public education.

Offering a perspective on “what museums have been and have become,” Hilde Hein’s (2000) *The Museum in Transition: A Philosophical Perspective* articulates the ways museums have shifted from being object-centered institutions to being narrative-centered spaces that emphasize experience. Put simply, museums must earn their keep, a point Stephen Weil also notes throughout his *Making Museums Matter* (2002). Weil goes so far as to list attributes of the good museum - efficiency, responsiveness, and accessibility - and asks museums to make

a difference. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (1991) take up the politics of display and agency in *Exhibiting Cultures: the Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, which includes essays by museum directors, curators, art historians, historians, anthropologists, and folklorists. In *Museum Bodies: the Politics and Practices of Visiting and Viewing*, Helen Rees Leahy (2012) looks at the shift away from the museum as collection to the museum as site for social and corporeal practices. Kylie Message (2006), in *New Museums and the Making of Culture*, positions museums as media that are “evolving as a cross-disciplinary, self-consciously political, and often avowedly self-reflexive institution.” Message argues that the new kind of museum that emerged in the late twentieth century was brought on by shifts in museum practice and cultural policy; appropriations of museums by scholars of cultural studies; and the changing relationship of the museum to the state and other bodies.

Moria G Simpson (2001), in *Making Representations Museum in the Post-colonial Era*, examines the cultural and political atmosphere that has placed these issues on the agenda of museum staff for over the past thirty years. It examines the recent historical context in which the criticisms and calls for change must be understood in order to unravel the complexities of intellectual and social conventions that pervade academic disciplines in which museums operate; conventions that date back to the colonial era, when many collections were established, and which continue to influence contemporary museum practices. As a result of the public’s dissatisfaction with those techniques, museums are under increasing pressure to embrace more inclusive working practices and allow communities to participate in the process of cultural representation in museums. The subjects of exhibitions - the original producers and consumers of the objects - have typically been passive informants, as much objects as the artworks themselves, who have been seen, recorded, analyzed, and excluded from the planning procedures. Such restricted practices by mainstream museums prompted ethnic communities to build museums in order to seize control of cultural representation and develop museums that, while frequently based on the conventional European model, are utilized to meet their own requirements and can thus take on new roles and functions. In recent times, the book focuses on a number of case studies to show how to organize exhibitions that involve community collaboration, better-informed content, and enhanced accessibility and relevance for the cultural group represented. Specific case studies show how indigenous peoples are beginning to build new ties with museums and anthropologists, allowing them to use their work to their benefit and ensuring that exhibition content is more informed and representative of alternative cultural values and perspectives.

Since the late 1990s, it has become a norm for museums to strive towards inclusiveness in the broadest sense. The notion of the “inclusive museum” derives from the work of Richard Sandell (1998); with “Museums as agents of social inclusion”, Sandell responds to a political discussion in the United Kingdom regarding the exclusion and inclusion of minority groups. Sandell contends that if museums are capable of excluding minorities, they should also be capable of including them, which may be proven by resolving exclusion in matters of participation, representation, and access. The matter of participation is thoroughly addressed by Nina Simon (2010) in *The Participatory Museum*. Simon states that instead of passive receiving, the “participatory museum” asks visitors to engage actively, and is an institution where people can “create, share, and connect with each other around content.” The principles, techniques, and tools presented by Simon for cultural institutions to (re)connect with their audiences and affirm their relevance for present-day life and societies have proven to be influential within the museum discourse.

In understanding and formulating cultural identity in museum, some basic theory and concepts of cultural identity have been investigated. Since cultural identity is the central theme of this thesis, it is important to understand the basic ideas and concept to correlate in future discussion. Cultural identity is a well-studied notion that scholars employ to achieve their goals. In the age of globalization, where personal, social, and national identification have taken on new connotations, it has become increasingly significant in recent years. Cultural identity has primarily been researched in multicultural cultures with histories of modern Western colonization. The United States and the United Kingdom have been in the forefront of developing relevant ideas and empirical studies, influenced by civil rights movements in the 1960s and identity politics in the 1980s. The popularity of interpretive and cultural approaches to identities increased in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The beginning of the 2000s marks a turn toward identity politics, intersectionality, and critical approaches such as postcolonial theory, postmodern theory, and critical race theory ( see Mendoza, et al. 2002; Shin and Jackson, 2003; Yep, 2004).

According to Chandler and Munday (2011), “it is the definition of groups or individuals (by themselves or other) in terms of cultural or sub-cultural categories (including ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, and gender) and in stereotyping, this is framed in terms of difference or otherness”(Chandler and Munday,2011, p.137). According to Ibrahim (1993) “cultural identity within a person’s primary cultural context, ...includes ethnicity, gender and gender identity, spiritual assumptions, age and life stage, ability and disability status, family, community, and nation” (Ibrahim 1993, pp. 23-58). Cultural identity refers to

identification with, or sense of belonging to, particular group based on various cultural categories, including nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and religion. Cultural identity is constructed and maintained through the process of sharing collective knowledge such as traditions, heritage, language, aesthetics, norms and customs. As individuals typically affiliate with more than one cultural group, cultural identity becomes complex and multifaceted. While formerly scholars assumed identification with cultural groups to be obvious and stable, today most view it as contextual and dependent upon temporal and spatial changes. In the globalized world with the increasing intercultural encounters, cultural identity is constantly enacted, negotiated, maintained, and challenged through communicative practices (see Chen, 2014). According to Kim (2007):

Research on cultural identity today has a blurring conception and approaches. Kim's synthesis of differing conceptions of cultural identity consolidates three core understandings about cultural identity. First, cultural identity is simultaneously an individual entity, a social category, and a system of communicative practices. Second, cultural identity is both an individual choice and a group right. Third, cultural identity is adaptive, evolving, flexible, negotiable or non-negotiable, distinct, communal, and discrete. (Kim, 2007, pp. 237-253)

The Cultural Identity Check List - Revised (Ibrahim, 2008) includes the following variables: "age, gender, cultural background, and religion/spirituality as identification variables. The exploration of cultural influences begins with racial/ethnic/national identity, migration or indigenous status, migration pattern of the communities' cultural group, dominant or non-dominant group status, sociopolitical history, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status of family of origin and the community, religion or spirituality, educational level, birth order in the family of origin".

Out of the above-mentioned influencers on cultural identity, more focus is stressed on ethnicity, because this thesis is focused on Northeast India, which is the hub of many ethnic groups. According to data compiled by the People of India Project of the Anthropological Survey of India in Kolkata, there are 357 groups in Northeast India, the majority of which are Mongoloid in origin and speak Tibeto-Burman and certain Austro-Asiatic) languages. The majority of these ethnic communities have their own customs and civilizations. Globally, especially in Northeast society, the concept of ethnicity is gaining traction as society's plurality grows because of economic globalization, migrations, and conflicts, as well as challenges of cultural integration of the culturally distinct in existing cultural communities. Ethnicity is considered a multifaceted variable. An individual's self-identification can change depending on time and space, and the people in the person's environment at any given time (see Spencer, et al.1997; Thomas, et al. 2003; Huot and Rudman, 2010; Uman a-Taylor,

2011). Ethnic identity can be differently defined in various government agencies and states (see Jackson, 2006). Many authors argue that it is the reference to descent and common origin that makes a group an ethnic group; it is this idea and belief that a common descent origin and history distinguish ethnic identity from other social identities (see Verkuyten, 2005). During the pre-colonial period, except the kingdoms in Assam, Manipur and Tripura, most communities of Northeast India were not conscious about their ethnic identities and their world was confined to their family, clan, and village. The initial processes of this sense of ethno-identity were during the colonial administration. Later, during new post-colonial phase of development, different cultural- linguistic communities wanted to retain their tradition and relative prestige while desiring to improve their social, economic, and political status. These ethnic groups reflect their cultural identity that has passed certain formation processes. Acharya (1990) has elaborately discussed such ethnic formation processes. He discusses six types of ethnic formation, giving examples from Northeast India: ethnogenic divergence, ethnogenic interethnic consolidation, ethnogenic mixing, intra-ethnic consolidation, inter-ethnic integration or homogenization and assimilation:

First, ethnogenic divergence has been defined as a process in which a community detaches itself from the former single ethnic community, or in which the former is divided into two or more parts, each becoming separate independent people. An example is the migration of the Ahoms and the establishment of a kingdom in the Assam valley in 1228; this migration changed the history of Northeast India. The Ahoms first became a separate ethnos, later to be wholly assimilated by their Assamese subjects who were their cultural superiors.

Second, ethnogenic interethnic consolidation is the process by which several linguistically and culturally kindred ethnoses merge together and form a new ethnos, enlarged by its own ethnic self-awareness. Notable instances from this region are the seven closely related tribes integrated to form the Manipuri (Meitei) ethnos (Bromley 1983, p.76). Four tribes (Khyntriams, War Khasis, Bhois, and Lyngngams) have been integrated into the Khasi ethnos, and the modern Garo ethnos was evolved with the ethnogenic integration of 12 tribes (Zubov, et al. 1976, p.20).

Third, ethnogenic mixing is the process in which two ethnoses unconnected by kinship interact and as result there arises a new ethnos, that is, a new ethnic sub-division of the basic level, with a new ethnic self-awareness among the members. An interesting case of ethno-formation as a result of mixing of two well-established ethnoses is the formation of Lyngngams as a result of mixing of Khasis and the Garos in Meghalaya. Lyngngam is the ethnonym of the people according to the Khasis, while the Garo term for the same people is Megam. Lyngngam villages occur in the Northwestern parts of the West Khasi Hills District and in the adjoining northeastern parts of East Garo Hills District. The Lyngngam speech is basically related to the Austro-Asiatic Khasi though there are some differences between the two (Gurdon 1975, p.620). Garos regard Megams as one of their sub-tribes and there is no restriction on inter-marriage between them. Thus, we have a people formed by the fusion of two distinct communities

having their homeland included within the ethnic territories of their parent stocks. As such, Lyngngam/Megam people are subject to pull from both the directions; Khasi and Garo. Another such example of ethnogenic mixing in Northeast India is the Bisnupriyas of the Sylhet-Cachar-Manipur region. This is a new ethnos formed as a result of interaction between Manipuris and the Bengalis of the Sylhet-Cachar tract, making its debut in the early eighteenth century.

Fourth, the intra-ethnic consolidation processes relate to the internal consolidation of large ethnos through the smoothing over of differences that exist between ethnographic groups, that is, local internal elements of an ethnos: people who have lost their ethnic self-awareness but are endowed with individual specific culture components, everyday life distinctions as the general ethnic self-awareness is strengthened (Bromley 1984, p. 95).

Fifth, inter-ethnic integration or homogenization is a type of ethnic process, which, if left to itself, may be regarded as evolutionary as a new ethnos generally comes into being through such processes. However, in mature capitalism or socialism in a multinational state these processes become very important as they try to homogenize the country's various ethnic communities with their characteristic differences in language and cultures. In this process, initially inter-ethnic formation happen and later it becomes a metaethnic community, for instance, in India at the national level. In Northeast India, such examples are the Nagas which is a formation of various ethnos having various languages, and the Mizos which have numerous entities and communities, and the list continues.

Lastly, assimilation is the ethnic process when as a result of interaction between two groups of people one group is dissolved into the other, the first one losing all or almost all its traditional ethnic attributes and acquiring new attributes of the other group. Generally, smaller groups as well as immigrant minorities are susceptible to assimilation by the larger indigenous ethnos. In Northeast India, numerous communities were assimilated by the advanced or populous communities. Cases of assimilation of the Raltes, Paites, Hmars and other small communities into the larger Mizo ethnolinguistic entity are obvious. Such assimilations were very common in Northeast India in past and is a continuing process even now (Acharya, 1990, pp 69-100).

Shifting the context to Nagaland (since the current study has its special reference to this region), it is important to examine the formation of cultural identity from the above ethnic process under discussion. This region has retained its tradition and culture till recent years. However, with the influx of people, modernization, education and a new religion, the region has shaped new cultural contours. In such a scenario, the projections within a museum must reflect as to what society has constructed. It is important to understand how museum perceives a community's cultural identity, recognizing the vital aspects of identity and how the community wishes to be perceived. Accepting the evaluation of the community's own cultural identity is critical to the process of developing and projecting the relationship between the object and people represented. There are numerous issues, for instance, the Chakhesang community prefer Khezha, Chokri as their cultural identity, instead of the accepted conglomerate term 'Chakhesang'. In such a case, museums need to respect self-

definition and cultural identity if they hope to develop a working alliance with the community that is represented. Assessing cultural identity is crucial for understanding the importance of presenting. It may be necessary to receive input from the people represented to resolve dilemmas, and to correct some of the assumptions of what the community believes about their cultural background and the influence, or lack of it on their cultural identity, especially when negative stereotypes are internalized and accepted in displays.

A case of such amalgamation of community is that of the Pochury community which is regarded as an indigenous group. Geographically, this community resides in the extreme southeast of Nagaland in Phek District bounded by Myanmar in the east, Zunheboto and Tuensang districts in north, and Manipur State in the south. The term 'POCHURY' is an acronym formed by the amalgamation of letters derived from three names *Sapo, Kuchu and Khwiry*. It is used to denote a compact area and the people living there (Mepingthu, 2016, p.2). The history of the formation of this community dates back to colonial times. The British called the Chakhesang and the Eastern Sangtams, Eastern Angamis. Interestingly, these three sub- communities – *Chakruma, Khezham and Sangtam*– merged to be eventually known as Eastern Angami, and later their prefixes– *CHA+KHE+SANG*– were adopted to arrive at the community name Chakhesang in 1948. On 21 December 1973, Phek district bifurcated from Kohima District and it is to assume that with the difference in language and cultural practices, the Eastern Sangtam group, which was under the flagship of Chakhesang, felt the need to have a distinct identity which gave birth to the Pochury Tribal Council in 1951. The formation of Pochury Tribal Council and their strive for a separate community finally gave birth to the fifteenth (15) community of Nagaland. The Pochury community is a conglomerate of different ethnic groups who migrated from different routes into the present geographical location. Although the tribe had existed from time immemorial, with its distinct dialect, socio-cultural and political identity, it was recognized as a separate tribe only on 19 April 1990 (Mepingthu, 2016, p.14). Further, the three sub-communities within the Pochury are mixed people with diverse linguistic groups, some of which are *Meluri, Lephori, Akhegwo, Phor, Yisi, Laluri, Mukury, Samphuri, and Matikhru*. From among these dialects, Meluri was accepted by the Pochury community as their official lingua franca in a general meeting on 3 April, 1957 at Hutsu (Nyusou, 2001, p.18). It is to be noted that these groups are not confined only to the present state of Nagaland but some are in present-day Myanmar as well. There are more issues of such conglomeration and merging of groups in Nagaland, for example, the Yimchunger (Yimkhiung) and the Khamniungan communities.

The above discussion on cultural identity is limited to its geographical span. In reality, every mile in Northeast India differs in language and dialect or practices, therefore, one needs a careful understanding while setting up dialogues or discourses in a museum set-up and environment. The process of change in identities, whether of culture, ethnicity and so forth, over time has great implications for historical museum collections. The question, therefore, arises: Do museums as custodians of tangible and intangible heritage deal with issues such as cultural identity while projecting the community, or are they partial representations of what the society or past politics have created? Objects of the community represented are important in establishing and maintaining one's identity. Both tangible and intangible culture displayed in museums are thus important in providing a foundation and resource for the formulation of identity on several levels, including a link to the past, and a connection with long-standing relationships within and outside the community. With the above-mentioned concepts of understanding the cultural identity formations of the region and the collections represented, the present research attempts to formulate ideas about collections in museums by drawing connections to the people and community. Hence, to place museum as a democratic platform, not only is it necessary to build up collections but to undertake research and present the community with equal balance from the grassroots.

Publications on how museums can successfully use cultural identities and communities have three basic points. Museums should include a variety of viewpoints, hold open conversations, and encourage community participation. If museums are charged with social responsibility, they must intentionally prioritize many points of view and discourse over a single authoritative voice. Sandell's appeal for social equality is directly related to the importance placed on community development and the promotion of cultural diversity in this regard. In several publications, Sandell (1998, 2002, 2007) advocates the important role of museums and galleries in contributing to the increase of social equality. According to Sandell (2002), "Many museums hesitate to involve themselves in social change, because they believe autonomy and impartiality to be the most appropriate choice." (Sandell, 2002, pp. 3-23). He goes as far as to state that these museums are at risk of becoming irrelevant.

In this regard, Crooke (2007), and MacDonald and Alford (2007) identify three types of collaboration in which museums might engage minority populations in museum activities. The first is a project-based approach in which communities are requested to represent (aspects of) their culture at certain events or the museum consults a community member in the organization of an exhibition. The second paradigm is co-curatorship, in which the museum policies and activities demonstrate a continuing relationship with the communities

and a more significant participation in curatorial concerns. In the third paradigm, community authorship, community representatives serve as curators, while the museum merely provides what is required. It is critical for museums to create networks and/or form partnerships in order to participate in projects like these successfully. Museums, for example, might form alliances with other (local) cultural institutions, as well as organizations and individuals representing sub-communities, in order to interact, share knowledge, and establish relationships. The idea of museums vital social role and obligation to communities is ingrained in today's museum discourse. Only a few people openly oppose it, and hence opposing viewpoints appear to be uncommon. Appleton (2007) provides a concrete example, emphasizing that when the museum's primary focus is on people, the collections worth and importance will inevitably fall. Museums, according to Appleton, "should only be concerned with the preservation, display, research, and accumulation of items because that is all they are capable of. Wherever its focus lies, either on the intrinsic quality of the object or the engaging of communities, a museum display is always an act of representation." (Appleton, 2007, pp. 114-126).

The concept of community representation in museums raises numerous questions. For instance, how do we represent diverse communities and their cultural identities in museums? Should communities be represented in exhibitions specifically devoted to them? Or, should the concept of communities be replaced by a focus on individual stories, and how meaning is a personal and unique construction? Evidently, there are no definite and straightforward answers to these questions. The selected museums from Northeast India for this study will help understand better the perspectives of representation of communities and culture and also the museum collection and their policies. Despite numerous questions involving the theoretical discourse of representation in museums, what is evident is that there exists an important connection between communities, cultural identity, and representation. Despite the fact that it may appear self-evident, display methods are a powerful instrument in exhibitions and representation. Individuals can be affected by display methods, according to Sandell (2002), including changes in social values, behaviour, and perception. In addition, Michael Baxandall (1991) suggest that an exhibition is full of dynamic relationships, due to the goals of the show-makers, the exhibitions organization, the items, and what the visitors bring to the field, all of which alter with each exhibition. In relation to representation in exhibitions, Rosmarie Beier-de Haan (2011) points to the shift that history museums underwent during the last thirty years, from mere representation of facts to emphasis on emotion and context. According to Rosmarie Beier-de Haan, this "shift has led to the critical attitude of museum

staff members towards their construction of historical narratives. Evidently, on the basis of the construction of narratives in museum exhibitions lies the concept of representation.” (Rosmarie Beier-de Haan, 2011, pp .186-197).

Furthermore, the relationship between representation and objects is critical. Traditionally, a museum works with meaningful objects; this is also the case for the majority of museums today. Nonetheless, the definition of a meaningful item has been expanded significantly. Sculpture, archaeological treasures, historical documentation, and everyday appliances are examples of tangible objects. Oral history and traditional dance, for example, are examples of intangible objects. For a museum, its collection, and its visitors, any type of object might have great importance. The objects narrate different meanings, for instance, through periods in time, type of meaning (factual, cultural, emotional, and historical), through institutional interpretation, and individual interpretation. One object can have, convey, and be ascribed with numerous meanings. In reference to this, Hooper-Greenhill (2000) maintains “objects have shifting and ambiguous relationships to meaning” and “their significance is open to interpretation.” Objects have the unique qualities to trigger conversations and connect people, features that can be of great use for museums (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p.30), while Simon (2010) emphasizes that these so-called “social objects” make it easier for people to converse and connect, because it enables them to focus on a third subject.

The purpose and placement of artefacts in the museum context have evolved as the focus has shifted from the object to the visitor. The majority of writings regarding museum artefacts are focused with the place and purpose of objects in a twenty-first-century museum such as the following:

- Should objects be evaluated based on their material and/or intrinsic features, or on what they mean to individuals on an individual and social level?
- Should curators inspire additional meaning given to items in order for visitors to see a connection with their own reality and personal stories, and if so, how?
- How should objects be reinterpreted for the connection they have with this day and age?

Obviously, there are no simple solutions. This will be evident in the museums visited for this study, which will demonstrate how museums utilize their collections. Every circumstance is unique because each museum, object, visitor, exhibition, theme, and goal is unique. As a result, the questions should be asked and answered several times to suit the situation. It is also important to be aware of the more concrete dimension of the representation of communities

and objects. In museum exhibitions that display objects from the museum collection, it can be problematic to represent communities that are not represented in the objects of the museum collection, which consequently hinders inclusiveness and participation. Black (2011) observes that “representation in museum collections and exhibitions is of vital importance in affecting a feeling of inclusion, especially for the local communities that were previously left out of the collection and historical narrative; therefore, the content that is on display must be inclusive and representative of these communities.” (Black, 2011, pp. 415-427)

Many museums, for example, incorporate contemporary interpretations of historical artefacts on exhibit, juxtaposition them with modern-day objects, or actively collect and show narratives. Furthermore, in order to adequately represent their communities, museums current collecting practices must be proactive in terms of inclusive contemporary collecting and re-evaluating studies on current (historical) collections. The important connection between the museum collection and the social or community value is aptly described by Hooper-Greenhill (2000) in the following statement: “Museums uphold specific accounts of the past through the objects they chose to collect, and the expository juxtapositions they choose to make. Museums and their collections embody and exhibit social values”(Hooper-Greenhill (2000, p.19). Therefore, an inclusive and participatory museum must be aware of this fact and incorporate its collection and collecting policy in the realization of its aims.

The research content is therefore organized and mainly directed towards “Representation in Exhibitions”, “Representation in Objects and Collections”, “Cultural Identity” and “Museum Practice.” The questions that are asked about museums correspond with the theoretical concepts described above and the main question of this thesis. This research thus seek to inquire about the place and role of diverse communities and cultural identities in the practices, policies and intentions of museums, and more specifically, the involvement and place of minority groups in such practices, and policies across museums in Northeast India.

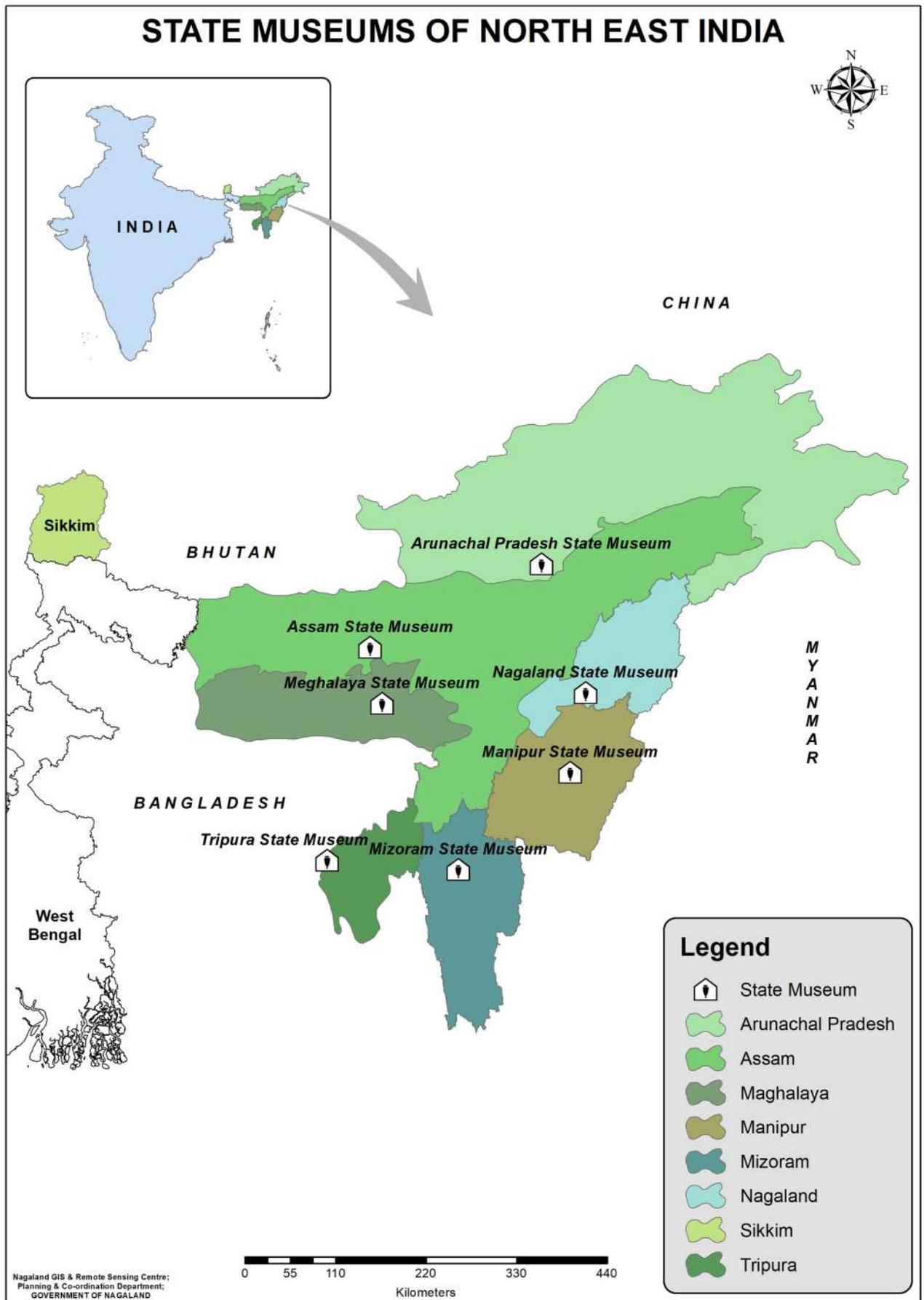


Figure 1: Map of Northeast India showing area of study and the State museums

## CHAPTER-2

### NORTHEAST INDIA - PEOPLE, CULTURE, AND MUSEUMS

Northeast India has been vastly termed and described as ‘Salad Bowl’, ‘an Anthropologist’s Paradise’, a ‘Folklorist’s Paradise’, a ‘Living Museum’ or region of the ‘Melting Pot’ to name a few. Indeed, the diverse cultures, traditions, distinct structural and linguistic identities from the past are witness to the above terms. It is difficult to answer how and when such diverse groups and cultures came to be concentrated in this region. No doubt, the presence of more than 200 communities and ethnic groups has made any research in the region challenging and interesting, entangled with vibrant people and their distinct cultures. It would be wrong or narrow to agglomerate and put ‘Northeast India’ as one homogenous culture and share some common aspects when we view the region from ‘outsider’ perspectives. The term North East Frontier Agency and later Northeast India itself originated from colonial convenience for administration that was further adopted by the Indian government in the post-Independence period. Before colonial contacts, the region was never known as Northeast India but comprised small independent kingdoms/nations scattered by hills and princely states in the valleys, such as those in Manipur, Tripura and Assam. The upsurge for power over political boundaries or the growing identity process of ethnic groups based on language, culture, race, religion was not known to region until the colonization by the British. This is articulated by Temjensosang (2015) who maintains, “History speaks that these ethnic groups lived in their own ways in small kingdoms or territory in the rhythm of nature with having their well defined culture, customs, traditions and a well structured institution of governance” (Temjensosang, 2015, p. 21). The region was well structured although in a small way and the people were self-sufficient, content economically and politically. For example, the Nagas inhabiting the hill tops in their small villages, the Meiteis living in the valley in their secured kingdom; so also the Mizos, the Khasis, the Arunachalis, the indigenous Tripuris and the plains of Assam all lived and had contact through trade and warfare for centuries until they were finally annexed by the British, which gave the region a different outlook.

Whether it is a creation of colonial or the political demarcation under the present Indian Union, it is an understood and established fact that Northeast India is a region comprising of multi-ethnic groups with diverse languages, dialects and cultures, which form their own distinct unique features. Table 1 lists the diverse ethnic groups of the region.

**Table 1:** Major Ethnic groups of Northeast India

Sl. No.	State	No. of Districts	Ethnicities
1	Assam	33	Ahom, Assamese, Mising, Sonowal Kachari, Rajbongshi, Rabha, Dimasa, Garo, Boro, Chutia, Deori, Naga, Bodo, Karbi, Santal, Bengali, Thengal Kachari, Khamptis, Khasi, Singphos, Hajong, Kuki, Hmar, Tai Phake, Chakma, Koch, Chaporis, khamti, Turungs, Aitonias, Khamyangs, Kaibartas, Jaintia, Synteng, Pnar, War, Bhoi, Lyngngam, Lakher, Man (Tai), Mizo, Mikir, Pawi, Lalung, Barmans, Hojai, Mech, Adivasis and Tea Tribes which includes- Munda, Santhals, Gonds, Kharia, Soara, Bhumij, Kuikonda, Chik Baraik and Gowalas etc..
2	Arunachal Pradesh	25	Abor, Adi , Adi Gallong, Adi Minyong, Adi Padam, Aka, Naga, Apatanis , Bangni, Dafla, Deori, Galong, Idu/Chulikata Mishmis, Khamptis, Miji ,Mishing/Miri, Monpa, Nishang, Nocte, Tagin, Tangsa, Tawang Monpa, Buguns, Hrusso, Singphos, Nyishi, Sherdukpens, Wanchos, Noctes & Khambas etc.
3	Manipur	16	Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Inpui, Hmar, Kharam, Khoibu, Koirao, Kom, Lamkang, Liangmai, Mao, Maram, Maring, Mate, Monsang, Moyon, Paite, Poumai, Purum, Ralte, Rongmei (Kabui), Simte, Suhte, Tangkhul, Tarao, Thadou, Thangal, Vaiphei, Zeme and Zou.
4	Meghalaya	11	Khasi, Jaintia, Garo, Chakma, Dimasa Kachari, Hajong, Hmar, Synteng, War, Bhoi, Lyngngam, Kuki, Lakher, Man, Mizo, Mikir, Pawi, Boro Kachari, Koch, Raba.
5	Mizoram	11	Lushei, Ralte, Hmar, Paite, Pawi, Hrangkhoh, Baite, Lai, Mara, Thadou, Shendus, Bru, Chakma, Tanchangya
6	Nagaland	12	Angami, Ao, Chakesang, Chang, Khiamiungan, Kuki, Konyak, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sangtam, Sumi, Yimchunger, Zeliang, Garo, Kachari
7	Sikkim	4	Lepcha, Bhutia, Nepalese
8	Tripura	8	Tripuri, Riang, Jamatia, Noatia, Uchai, Chakma, Mog, Lushai, Kuki, Halam, Munda, Kaur, Orang, Santal, Bhil, Bhutia, Chaimal, Garo, Khasi, Lepcha

Discourse on the Northeast region needs a powerful discursive understanding on inter-cultural, inter-ethnic and geopolitical situation of the region. Considering the

geography, the region may be divided into the Plains and the Hills. The plains comprise the Brahmaputra Valley of the Assamese, Bodos, Adivasis and other plains tribals, the Barak Valley or Cachar of the Bengalis and tribal communities; Tripura of the Bengalis and Tripuris. The hills include the Khasis, Garos, Jaintias, etc. of Meghalaya; Mizoram of the Mizos, Kuki-Chin etc, Nagaland of various Naga communities, Manipur of Meiteis in the valleys and various Naga groups. Arunachal Pradesh of the Adis, Akas, Apatanis, Khamptis, Miris, Nishis, Noctes, Wanchos etc, the hills of Tripura of Tripura, Reang, Jamatia, Chakma, Kuki, Garo, Lushia, Bhutia etc.. The above groups are further sub-divided into numerous sub-communities having their own ethnic identity and culture related to a major group in which they are merged.

The agglomerations of one or more minor communities to form a major group in Northeast India are common. For example, the Nagas of Nagaland where sub-communities merge to form the Yimchunger, Chakhesang, Pochury as major communities. Secondly, the cross border distribution of the same community in both international and state borders, for instance the Mizos in Manipur and Tripura, the Nagas in Manipur and Myanmar, the Garos in Nagaland etc. As a result of economic, socio-political and cultural roots of the communities in this region, such disparities have risen because of the tendency to search for varied identities. Approaching this search for new identities from much wider perspectives gives a link to formation of cultural identity. Thus, in Northeast India, cultural identity is one of those aspects, which are fixed as a marker to be identified, based mainly on the ethno-linguistic, customs and traditions, material culture, and religion having a homogeneous character. Above all, ethno-linguistic and material culture has been the main identifiers and it is on these lines that the colonists had mainly constructed the identity of multi-diverse communities.

Another important shift in the formation or collapse in cultural identity, especially in the hill states, for instance in the Naga Hills was the introduction of Christianity. This gave the people an outlook of both modern and traditional – a confused state where on the one hand, they practiced the Christian code of ethics and celebrated traditional festivals with more agility. The characteristic features of identity among the communities are the more tangible forms of culture – costumes, ornaments, ritualistic objects, weapons, and architecture. Notable works to understand and demonstrate the Naga identity and culture can be seen in the works of Aier, 2003 & 2004; Lotha, 2008; Longkumer, 2010; Thong, 2012; Temjenwapang, 2012 and Nienu, 2015. Besides Christianity, there are other elements that triggered the construction

of ethnic identities in northeast India (see for example Pakim, 1990; Nag, 1990; Hazarika, 2004; Misra, 2014 and Temjensosang and Ovung, 2015).

From museological standpoint, museums in Northeast India, both state, district, local and private museums have attempted to collect, preserve and represent the past of the community with certain significant cultural markers. It has therefore been an effort of the museums to represent the people along the lines of museum practice. The state museums represent the history of the communities, both tangible and intangible culture, holistically, and the district museums and private initiatives representing the culture of the community within the district. At the grass roots, we have the community/local/village museums which are generally small in size but which curate and exhibit the history, culture and tradition of a particular village, clan etc. Initiatives by private, individual museums are also important to note from this region, which have contributed, equally to the preservation and promotion of village or community heritage. A closer observation of the above museums in Northeast India reveals the main aspect of representation through the material culture of a community present and past.

According to Prown, “Material culture is just what it says it is - namely, the manifestations of culture through material productions. And the study of material culture is the study of material to understand culture, to discover the beliefs - values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions - of a particular community or society at a given time” (Prown 2005, p. 1). The underlying premise suggests that human-made objects reflect, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, the understanding of the individuals who commissioned, fabricated, purchased, or used them and, by extension, the beliefs of the larger society to which these individuals belonged. Thus, material culture constitutes the hallmark of the Northeast region in distinguishing cultural identities. This material culture are the moving wheels of museums be it the state, district or local in Northeast India. Even though most of the museums are in a state of stagnation, the material culture, which they exhibit, have powerful semiotic or communicative messages for both the past and the present context. Development of research and writings on the museum material culture with emphasis on its history, society and culture of this region have been well executed in recent years; for instance Julian Jacobs, 1990; Andy West, 1985, 1992, 2011; and Alok Kanungo, 2014; to mention a few have illustrated the past Nagas for the museum collections of the West. The study of such material culture offers a direct link to the history of collection and curation, the provenance of the objects, the social and religious aspects attached to the object, the

procurement of the object, for the museum and the understanding of the political dimensions of the region where the curated objects were originated.

Apart from the display of material culture, the exhibitions of communities through dioramas are also a common trend in museum representations of various communities (Figure 2). Such ornamented dioramas represent a single 'majority group'-in other words, the socio-cultural developments and identity politics taking place in the society is reflected in the museum set-up without any questions or scrutiny. The other issue for such exhibitions is the financial implication. Such a case can be witnessed in the Nagaland State Museum, whereby to represent the sixteen Naga communities, the museum has to build sixteen dioramas each for a general representation of the communities. If the museum displays a section on Naga indigenous games, on most occasions, the sub-communities are ignored and only the major games are represented. Another aspect is the extensive deliberations that are undertaken within communities and museum experts to resolve which attire, dress, ornaments or games best represent the community. Such activities and policies form important parts of the museum. They tackle the representation of the communities throughout the region. In addition, the question of object and identity are also closely knit. Indeed, museums in Northeast India have projections of extensive and intrinsic material culture in the museum set-up. Because the theme "Museum, Material Culture and Identity" are inseparable, museums need progressive understanding in their role in educating and preserving the heritage in Northeast India.

The people of Northeast India have a rich cultural heritage. Each society has its own code of ethics and other attributes followed from time immemorial that continues till today. Hence, traditions are respected. In respect of handicrafts, Northeast may be called a veritable reservoir of traditional arts and crafts such as weaving, painting, basketry, mask-making, ivory-work, black-smithy, doll making, pottery making, carpentry, paper-making, and smithy work and so on. Both men and women specialize in these art forms from weaving to artisanship of metal and non-metallic art works. However, in recent times, material culture which are dominated by ethnography are dismantling traditional arts from the society at a rapid rate replacing them with readymade items, losing the above traditions associated with the object. Given such a situation, museums are the custodians of such material collections, and are experts in exhibiting the unique objects, which are a link to identity. The other issues that museums face and needs to rethink, at this juncture is the representation on grounds of showcasing the communities; in other words inclusive representation through both tangible and intangible forms without bias between major and minority communities. In other cases

what society has constructed - the social, political or religious are replicated through cultural representations. It is observed that materials are the stronghold in interpreting the cultural identity, which are common themes in museums of this region. The objects or the collection and display conveys a powerful semiotic message as it signifies a glorious past and history. As many might presume, museums are for the general mass- a platform for amusement, entertainment and informal institution of imparting knowledge. It is also important to consider and understand that what is constructed and the provenance of what is exhibited is to gain accuracy of the representation of culture and communities with the changing needs of time.

### **Museums in Northeast India: A General Overview**

Museums play an important role in collecting, and preserving the rich heritage of the Northeast. Even though on the part of the general public and outsiders who cannot visit all the interiors of the region, such museums play a significant role in showcasing every aspect of life and culture within the four walls of heritage spaces. Each State represents the vibrant, cultural material of the region. Within the State are the district museums, which are significant in projecting the community of a particular district and act as a networking institution to state museums. Since most of the districts in Northeast India is based along community lines, the various aspects of a community's culture that a particular state museum is unable to represent are well equipped in the district museums. It is interesting to note that in recent times, there is a rise in community/local museums at village level, which are playing a key role in conserving and promoting awareness of a community's identity and culture at the grassroots level. Other kinds of museums that are promising in this region are those of the initiatives made by private individuals, university and college museums. Over 110 museums in the region can clearly showcase the Northeast region in no small measure. In addition, there are digital and virtual means of communication thus providing a great opportunity for the audience to obtain a bird's eye view of the region. In the present study, museums in Northeast India have been listed and categorized according to their respective states. Although the list in table is exhaustive, some museums might have been missed out or new museum may have emerged in recent times, much after the current study. Tables 2 to 11 list a few of the important museums in Northeast India:

**Table 2: States Museum in Northeast India (2016-17)**

Sl.No.	Name of Museum	Year of Establishment	Ownership	Details of Gallery	Museum Category
1	Assam State Museum	1940	Govt of Assam Deptt of Cultural Affairs Directorate of Museum	Freedom Fighter Gallery, Painting Gallery, ethnography Gallery, Village life of Assam, Sculpture Gallery, Manuscript Gallery, Arms & Ammunition Gallery, Epigraphy Gallery, Pre & Proto Historic and Terracotta Gallery, Numismatic Gallery, metallic Gallery, Textile Gallery, Wood Craft Gallery, Natural History Gallery, The Northeast Gallery	Multi Purpose Museum-ethnography, Archaeology
2	Jawaharlal Nehru State Museum, Arunachal Pradesh	1990	Directorate of Research  Deptt of Cultural Affairs Govt of Arunachal Pradesh	Political and social development, socio- cultural Heritage of the people, life style gallery, textiles, archaeology, wood carving, weapons, basketry, ornaments and household articles Galleries, Painting Gallery, Mountaineering Gallery	Multi Purpose Museum-ethnography
3	Manipur State Museum	1969	Deptt of Art & Culture Govt of Manipur	Ethnological gallery, archaeological gallery, Art gallery, Natural	Multipurpose Museum

				history gallery, Children's gallery, Musical Gallery	
4	Mizoram State Museum	1977	Deptt of Art & Culture Govt of Mizoram	History gallery, Anthropology Gallery, Ethnological Gallery, Textile Gallery, Zoological Gallery, Archaeological Gallery	Ethnographic Museum with Multipurpose collection on Display
5	William Sangma State Museum, Meghalaya	1975	Directorate of Art & Culture Govt of Meghalaya	Dress & Ornaments section, Flora & fauna section, weapons section, Bamboo & wooden craft section, Diaromas representing communities, portraits and musical instruments	Ethnographic Museum
6	State Museum Nagaland	1970	Directorate of Art & Culture Govt of Nagaland	Ethnological collections, painting gallery, textile collections, Indigenous bamboo wall on display, wooden sculpture collection, Dress, ornaments, headgear and jewelry collections, art wing and archaeological park, Archaeological and indigenous games section	Ethnographic Museum
				Introductory gallery, Geology, anthropology and forest	

7	Tripura State Museum, Ujjayanta Palace	1970	Deptt of Information and Cultural Affairs Govt of Tripura	gallery, Archaeology gallery, Enchanting natural beauty of Northeast India, Tagore and Tripura Gallery, Rajamala Gallery, Embroidery works and crafts, Archaeology Gallery- II, Archaeology Gallery- III, Community Gallery I, II & III, Royal Painting Gallery	Historical & Ethnological Museum with Multipurpose
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**Table 3:** Categories of Museums in Arunachal Pradesh

Sl. No.	Name of Museum	Year of Establishment	Ownership	Museum Category
1	Jawaharlal Nehru State Museum	1988	Directorate of Research Deptt of Cultural Affairs Govt of Arunachal Pradesh	Multipurpose Museum, Ethnographic
2	District Museum, Khonsa	1956	District Research Officer, Tirap District	Ethnographic Museum
3	District Museum and Craft Centre, Tezu	1956	District Research Officer, Lohit District	Ethnographic Museum & Craft Centre
4	District Museum, Pasighat	1962	District Research Officer, Pasighat District	Ethnographic Museum Art and crafts
5	District Museum, Aalo	-	District Research Officer, West Siang District	Ethnographic Museum
6	District Museum, Bomdila	-	District Research Officer, West Kameng District	Ethnographic Museum Centre for Art and Craft
7	District Museum, Tawang	-	District Research Officer, Tawang District	Ethnographic museum
8	District Museum,	-	District Research	Ethnographic

	Ziro		Officer, Lower Subansiri District	Museum
9	District Museum, Seppa	-	District Research Officer, East Kameng District	Ethnographic Museum, Craft and Library
10	District Museum, Daporijo	-	District Research Officer, Upper Subansiri District	Ethnographic Museum
11	District Museum, Changlang	-	District Research Officer, Changlang District	Ethnographic Museum
12	District Museum, Roing	-	District Research Officer, Lower Dibang Valley District	-
13	Malinathan Archaeological Museum	2000	Directorate of Research	Archaeological Site Museum
14	Ita Fort Archaeological Museum	-	Directorate of Research	Historical Archaeology Museum

**Table 4:** Categories of Museums in Assam

Sl. No.	Name of the Museum	Year of Establishment	Ownership	Museum Category
1	Assam State Museum	1940	Directorate of Museum Cultural Affairs	Multipurpose Museum
2	District Museum, Halflong	-	District Museum Officer Directorate of Museum Cultural Affairs	Ethnographic Museum
3	District Museum, Dhubri	1988	District Museum officer Directorate of Museum Cultural Affairs	Ethnographic Museum with Historical collection
4	District Museum, Mangaldoi	1987	District Museum officer Directorate of Museum Cultural Affairs	Anthropological and Archaeological in Nature
5	District Museum, Kokrajhar	1986	District Museum officer Directorate of Museum Cultural Affairs	Ethnographic Museum with Historical collection
6	District Museum, Dibrugarh	1987	District Museum officer Directorate of Museum Cultural Affairs	Multipurpose Museum
7	District Museum, Barpeta	1987	District Museum officer Directorate of Museum Cultural Affairs	Ethnographic Museum with Historical Collections

8	District Museum, Nagaon	1996	District Museum officer Directorate of Museum Cultural Affairs	Ethnographic Museum with Historical collections
9	District Museum, Jorhat	1989	District Museum officer Directorate of Museum Cultural Affairs	Ethnographic Museum with Historical collections
10	District Museum, Tezpur	1986	District Museum officer Directorate of Museum Cultural Affairs	Ethnographic Museum with Historical & Archaeological collections
11	District Museum, Diphu	1986	Autonomous District Council Karbi Anglong	Ethnographic Museum with Historical collections/ Heritage museum
12	Purbajyoti Sangrahalaya Museum	1998	Govt of Assam Deptt of Cultural Affairs	Ethnographic Museum & Heritage Museum
13	The Doll Museum	-	Purbajyoti Sangrahalaya	Doll Museum
14	Dr. Bhupen Hazarika Cultural Museum	-	Purbajyoti Sangrahalaya Museum	Memorial Museum
15	Regional Science Centre	1994	National Council of Science Museums, Ministry of Culture Govt of India	Science Museum
16	MCG Anthropological Museum	1948	Deptt of Anthropology Guwahati University	Ethnography and Archaeology Museum
17	Purnananda Memorial Museum, Darrang District	-	Private Organization	Personalia Museum
18	Nilima Barua Folk Art Museum, Gauripur Dhubri	1997	State government	Ethnographic & Folk art Museum
19	Assam Forest Museum, South Kamrup Division Guwahati	1979	Central Government	Natural History Museum
20	Geological Museum Guwahati University	-	Department of Geology Guwahati University	Science Museum
21	Commercial Museum Guwahati University	1956	Guwahati University	Multipurpose in character
22	Ethnographic Museum, Assam Institute of Research for Tribal and Scheduled caste, Guwahati	1977	Assam Institute of Research for Tribal and Scheduled caste	Ethnographic Museum
23	Museum of Veterinary		Assam Agriculture	Science Museum

	Science and Animal Husbandary, Khanapara Guwahati	1967	University Veterinary college Guwahati	
24	Hamran, Sub-Divisional Museum Karbianslong District	-	District Autonomous Council	Ethnographic Museum
25	Purvabharti Museum, Nalbari	1972	Private Organization	Ethnographic Museum
26	Assam Government Cottage Industry Museum	1955	State Government	Ethnographic Museum with art and craft collections
27	Sibsagar College Museum, Sibsaagar District	-	Sibsagar College	Ethnographic Museum with art and archaeological collection
28	Museum cum Archive of Cultural Studies Tezpur University	-	Deptt Cultural Studies Tezpur University	Ethnographic Museum
29	Auniati Satra Museum North Guwahati	2007	Private Organization	Ethnographic Museum with collection of Satra cultures & others
30	Ambari Archaeological Museum	2004	Archaeological Survey of India	Archaeological Museum and Site Museum

**Table 5:** Archaeological Site Museums in Assam

Sl. No.	District	Site Museum
1	Guwahati	Park and Site-Museum at Ambari Archaeological site
2	Kamrup District	Park and Site-Museum at Madan Kamdev Archaeological site, Baihata Chariali
3	Kamrup District	Park and Site-Museum at Nazirakhat Archaeological site, Sonapur
4	Bagaigaon District	Park and Site-Museum at Abhayapuri Archaeological site
5	Nagaon District	R.M. Archaeological Park, Hojai
6	Nagaon District	Site-Museum at Rajbari Archaeological site Rajbari
7	Nagaon District	Site-Museum at Mikirati Archaeological site Doboka
8	Nagaon District	Park and Site-Museum at Akashiganga Archaeological site, Akashiganga
9	Nagaon District	Park and Site-Museum at Devasthan Archaeological site, Devasthan
10	Udalguri District	Park and site-museum at Tamreswar Archaeological site, Khairabari
11	Marigaon District	Park at Burha-Mayang Archaeological site, Mayang
12	Karbi Anglong District	Park and Site-Museum at Burhagosain Than Archaeological site, Dokmoka
13	Golaghat District	Park and site-museum at Deoparvat Archaeological site, Numaligarh
14	Sivasagar District	Park at Charaideo Archaeological site, Charaideo

15	Sivasagar District	Park at Na-pukhuri Siva Temple Archaeological site, Rudrasagar
16	Dibrugarh District	Park and Site-gallery at Mairamora Than Archaeological site, Khamtighat
17	Golaghat District	Park at Dubarani Archaeological site, No. 1 Barpathar
18	Dhemaji District	Park at Ghuguha Doul Archaeological site, Ghuguha
19	Lakhimpur District	Park at Maghowa Temple Archaeological site, Narayanpur
20	Sonitpur District	Site-Museum at Bamgaon Archaeological site, Biswanath Chariali
21	Sanitpur District	Park at Gardol Archaeological site, Kumargaon
22	Nagaon District	Park at Hatimura Archaeological site, Hatimura
23	Nagaon District	Park&at Na-Nath Archaeological site, Jogijan,.
24	Darrang District	Site - Museum at Jaljali Archaeological site, Jaljali
25	Nowgaon District	Site Museum, Bordowa Nowgaon District

**Table 6:** Categories of Museums in Manipur

Sl. No.	Name of the Museum	Year of Establishment	Ownership	Museum Category
1	Manipur State Museum	1969	State Government	Multipurpose Museum
2	Kangla Museum	2004	State Government	Historical Museum
3	Tribal Museum and Research Centre, Leikai	1987	Private	Ethnographic Museum
4	Museum of Tribal Research Institute	2006	State Government	Ethnography Museum
5	Agape Museum	1995	Private Religious Organization	Multipurpose Museum
6	Tribal Museum, Zogam Art and Cultural Development Association Churachandpur	1991	Private Organization	Multipurpose museum
7	Cultural Heritage Complex Andro	1979	Private	Living Museum
8	Peoples Museum, Kakching	1981	Private Organization	Multipurpose Museum
9	RKCS Art Gallery, Imphal west	1990	Private	Art and Craft Museum
10	Anthropological Museum, Manipur University	-	Deptt of Anthropology D.M College of Science	Ethnographic Museum
11	Manipur University Museum, Manipur University	1980	Manipur University	Multipurpose Museum
12	Agriculture Museum, Sanjenthong Imphal	-	State Government	Science Museum
	Leimarel Museum	-	Private	Ethnographic

13	and Research Centre, Imphal West District		Organization	Museum
14	Children Museum cum Doll House, Bal Bhawan Khuman Lampak Imphal	1988	State Government	Children's and Doll Museum
15	Manipur Science centre Imphal	2005	State Government	Science Museum
16	Loktak Folklore Museum	2016	Private Organization	Multipurpose Museum
17	Police Museum, 1 <sup>st</sup> Manipur Rifle Campus Imphal	1991	State Government	Military Museum
18	State Kala Akademi Museum, Khuman Lampak, Imphal West	-	State Government	Ethnographic museum
19	Biological Museum, Manipur Zoological Garden Imphal	1988	State Government	Science Museum
20	INA Museum, Moirang	1969	State Government	Military Museum
21	Ranshak Living Museum Lungha Village Ukhrul District	-	Private	Living Museum
22	Purul Living Museum, Purul Atongba Village Maram Senapati District	-	Private	Living Museum
23	Archaeological Museum Sekta village	1991	State Government	Archaeological site/ Living Museum
24	Orient Museum, Tamenlong District	1985	Private	Ethnographic Museum
25	The United Museum, Noney Village Tamenlong	-	Private	Ethnographic Museum

**Table 7:** Categories of Museums in Mizoram

Sl. No.	Name of the Museum	Year of Establishment	Ownership	Museum Category
1	Mizoram State Museum	1977	State Government	Multipurpose Museum with Ethnographic museum
2	District Museum, Lunglei	2006	State Government	Ethnographic Museum
3	Khawbung Village Museum,	1989	Private Organization	Ethnographic museum

	Champhai			
4	Government Gandhi Memorial Higher Secondary School Museum, Champhai District	1968	Gandhi Memorial Higher Secondary	Ethnographic Museum
5	Cultural Centre (Zokhua) at Falkawn	1992	State Government	Living Museum

**Table 8:** Categories of Museums in Meghalaya

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Year of Establishment	Ownership	Museum Category
1	William Sangma State Museum	1975	State Government	Ethnographic Museum
2	District Museum, Jowai	2010	State Government	Ethnography Museum
3	District Museum, Tura	1989	State Government	Ethnographic Museum with Archaeological collection
4	Wankhar Memorial Museum of Entomology	1973	Private Organization	Science/ Entomology Museum
5	Air Force Museum, 7 <sup>th</sup> Mile Upper Shillong	2004	Central Government	Military Museum
6	Manekshaw Museum, Happy valley Shillong	1980	Central Government	Military & Personalia Museum
7	Rhino Heritage Museum	1998	Central Government	Military & Personalia Museum
8	Ever Living Museum	2015	Private Organization	Ethnography Museum
9	Geological Museum, Geological Survey of India Nongrim Hills	-	Central government	Science, Geological Museum
10	Don Bosco Museum, Mawlai	2010	Salesian of Don Bosco in Northeast India	Ethnography & Archaeology Museum
11	Oriens Cultural Historical Documentation Centre Museum Mawlai	1979	Oriens Theological College	Ethnographic Museum Cum Documentation Centre
12	Zonal Anthropological Museum, Mawlai	1953	Central Government	Anthropological Museum
13	Brookside Bungalow Rabindranath Tagore Museum	1992	State Government	Personalia Museum, Historical Museum
14	The Museum of the Zoological Survey of	1959	Central	Natural History Museum

	India		Government	
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**Table 9:** Categories of Museums in Nagaland

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Year of Establishment	Ownership	Museum Category
1	State Museum Nagaland	1970	State Government	Multipurpose Museum/ Ethnographic
2	Chumpo Museum, Dimapur	2010	Private	Living Museum
3	NEZCC Museum, Dimapur	1986	Central Government	Ethnographic Museum
4	Nagaland Police Archival, Chumukodima	-	State Government	Military Museum
5	Salesian College Museum, Salesian College, Dimapur	-	Salesian College	Ethnographic Museum
6	2 <sup>nd</sup> World War Museum, Kisama	2008	State Government	Military Museum
7	Touphema tourist Museum, Touphema village, Kohima	2001	Private /Village community	Ethnographic Museum
8	Tribal Museum Khezakeno, Phek	2019	Private Organization	Ethnographic Museum
9	Heritage Museum Khonoma, Khonoma, Kohima	-	Private Organization	Ethnographic Museum
10	Zapami Heritage Museum, Zapami village ,Phek	2017	Private /Village community	Ethnographic Museum
11	Mimi community Museum, Mimi village, Kiphire	-	Private /Village community	NIL
12	District Museum, Phek	-	State Government	Ethnographic Museum
13	Library cum Museum, Mopongchuket Village, Mokokchung District	-	Private /Village community	Ethnographic Museum
14	Library cum Museum, Sungratsu Village, Mokokchung District	-	Private /Village community	Ethnographic Museum
15	Library cum Museum, Longkhum Village, Mokokchung District	-	Private /Village community	Ethnographic Museum
16	Community Museum cum Library, Mulongyimsen village, Mokokchung	-	Private /Village community	Historical Museum

	District			
17	Tribal Museum, Longsa Village, Mokokchung District	-	Private /Village community	NIL
18	Archaeological site Museum, Chungliyimti Village		State Government	Archaeological site Museum
19	Archaeological Site Museum, Khezakeno Village		State Government	Archaeological site Museum
20	Archaeological site museum, Kachari Ruins, Dimapur		Archaeological Survey of India	Archaeological site Museum

**Table 10:** Categories of Museums in Tripura

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Year of Establishment	Ownership	Museum Category
1	Tripura State Museum Ujjayanta Palace	1970	State Government	Historical & Ethnological Museum with Multipurpose
2	Tribal Museum cum Heritage Centre, Khumulwng	2010	Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council	Multipurpose Museum
3	Tripura State Tribal Museum	2009	State Government	Ethnographic Museum
4	Havali Museum	2012	Private Organization	Historical Museum
5	Doll Museum	-	State Government	Doll Museum

**Table 11:** Categories of Museums in Sikkim

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Year of Establishment	Ownership	Museum Category
1	Namgyal Institute of Tibetology	1958	Sikkim Government	Historical Museum
2	High Court of Sikkim Museum	2017	Sikkim Government	Historical Museum
3	Sikkim Science Centre	2008	Sikkim Government	Science Museum
4	Black Cat Museum	2012	Private Organization	Art Museum
5	Flower show Museum	1990	Sikkim Government	Botanical Museum
6	Ganju Lama War Museum	2016	Central Government	Military Museum
7	Ram Gauri Sangrahalaya	2001	Private organization	Multipurpose, ethnographic museum
8	Lepcha Museum	2003	Private Organization	Ethnographic Museum
9	Nepali Museum	-	Private Organization	Ethnographic Museum

The observation from the data (Figure 3, 4, 5, 6) demonstrates the current situation of museums in the region. Firstly, most of the museums are under the respective State Government; secondly, at the grassroots level, there are students' and the community initiative in maintaining and functioning of the museum. Thirdly there are Private Individual Trusts on the ownership of the museum which are lower in proportion compared to the above two sectors. While observing the networking of museums, except the state of Assam, which has the Directorate of Museums under Ministry of Cultural affairs, the museums in other states of the region are seen to function under different directorates or departments. At the apex is the state museum under which we have the district museums, and the archaeological site museums. The other groups of museums, which receive funding from the government but function independently, are the local/community museums. The private individual museums although at times funded by the government are mostly self-administered and function according to their institution. Considering the university and college museums, the functioning and funding are under the college and university and sometimes from the Government. However, for funding support all the museums have direct or indirect funding assistance from the Central as well as State Government.

In addition, in examining the lists of museums tabulated above, the types and categories of museums in Northeast India are limited. All state museums in this region are mainly multipurpose museums, which are characterized by ethnology, ethnography, historical, and archaeological in nature. The region, nevertheless, has the least number of science museums and a few Personal/Memorial Museums. Other interesting categories are the Doll museums, Historical Museum, Heritage complex and few Art Museums. Besides, the Archaeological site museums are also an important category of museums. However, overall, museums in Northeast India are generally dominated by museums that are ethnographic and historical in nature.



Figure 2: Examples of dioramas from various museums of Northeast India

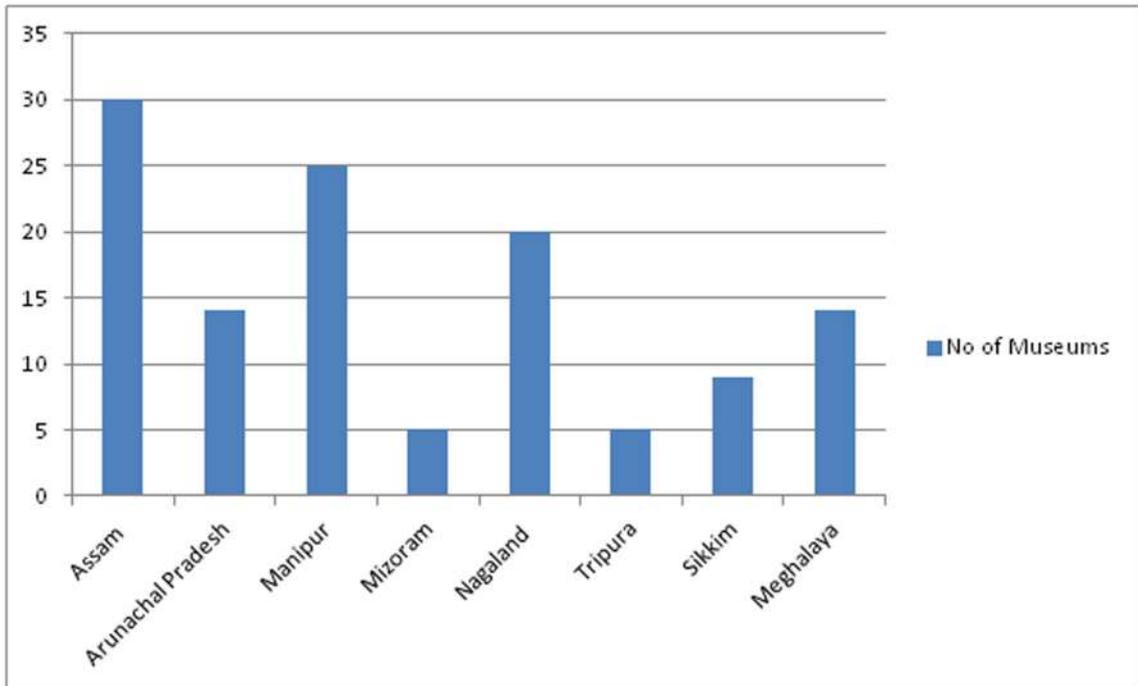


Figure 3: Graph representation of number of Museums in the States of Northeast India

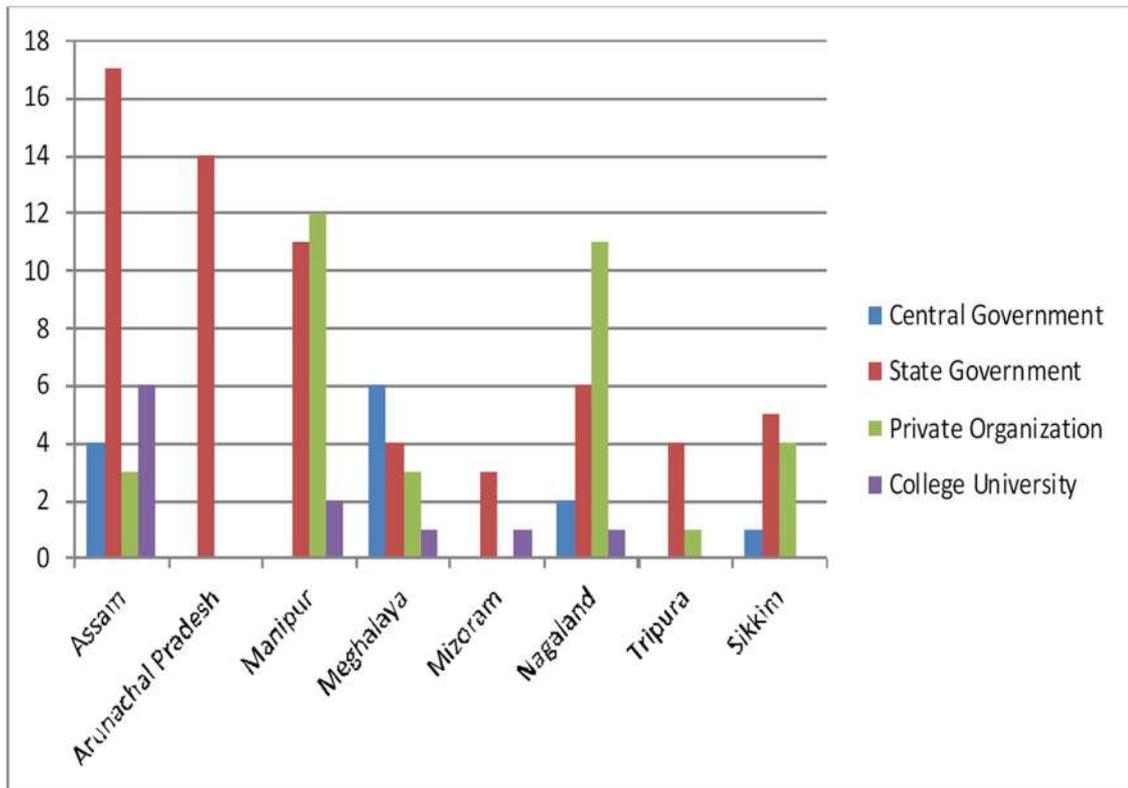


Figure 4: Graph representation of ownership and Management of museums in Northeast India

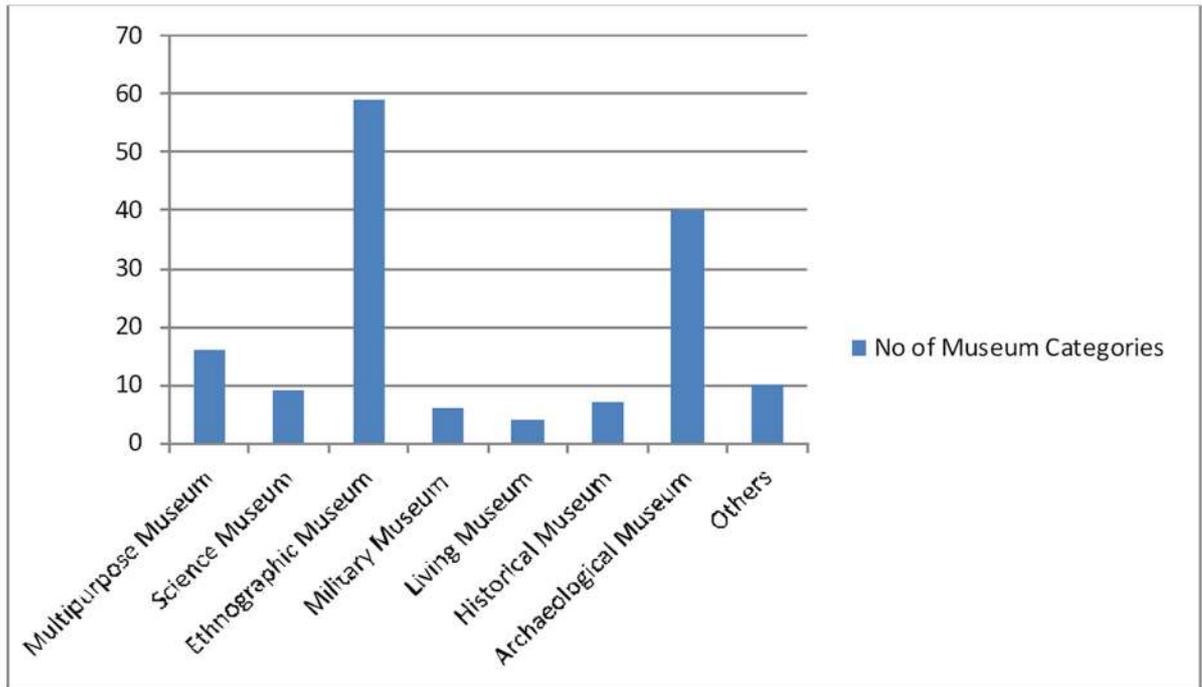


Figure 5: Graph representation of categories of Museums and their nature of collection

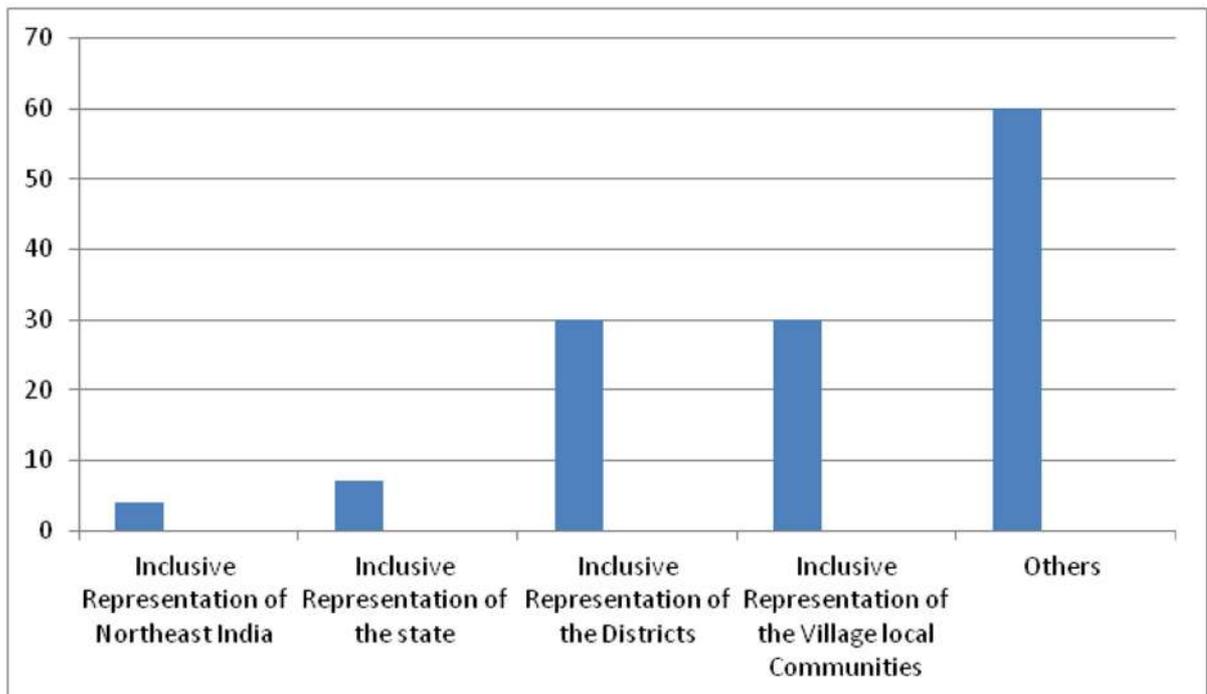


Figure 6: Graph representation of inclusive Representation of cultures in Museums of Northeast India

## **CHAPTER-3**

### **MUSEUMS AND PREHISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS IN NORTHEAST INDIA**

#### **Understanding Representations of Archaeology in Museums**

Archaeology and museums each represent dynamic disciplines with wide-ranging and growing fields of associated scholarship. Their intersection is broad and deep, if one broadens the knowledge of understanding the past, the other conserves, preserves and exposes its experiences to a larger audience. Therefore, scholars differ over what constitutes a museum (see Ginsburgh & Mairesse, 1997; Hudson, 1998). On the contrary, and in many respects, an appropriate definition depends on the context of the discussion and why a definition is sought (see Weil, 1990; Alexander & Alexander, 2008). There are multitudes of issues in museum studies but museum as an institution, it seeks to constantly balance the conflicting demand of access and interpretation on the one hand, and preservation and stewardship on the other, where importance is given to one or the other side of the equation. Such a relationship needs an equal balance in representation that reflects the changing role of museums in recent years.

With the emergence of an emphasis on representation in museums, there has been growing research literature on museum representations of the past (see Hewison, 1987; Shanks and Tilley, 1987; Vergo, 1989; Gathercole and Lowenthal, 1990; Karp and Lavine, 1991; Mac Donald and Fyfe, 1996; Simpson, 1996 and Lumley, 1998). According to Merriman (1999), “the essential critique that emerges from this literature is that museums represent a partial, commodification and mythical past... such a perspective has often been coupled with critiques grouped together under the umbrella of ‘post modernist, which have challenged the whole basis of approaches to rationality, truth and evidence on which museums and archaeology have been based” (Merriman, 1999, p. 300). From the perspective of archaeological interpretation Merriman (1999), suggests that the tradition of interpretation is the outcome of the historical myths that have been put forward to construct identities by the interest groups for themselves and those around them. Furthermore, academic institutions must approve the display of such myths. Non-established myths, on the other hand, coexist in museum representations without the necessary conceptions of established academics. As a result, throughout the last few decades, museum portrayals of the past have been scrutinized. The focus of this investigation is on the background of the museums evolution from a

Western, utilitarian mentality to a viable purpose in a culturally varied, post-modernist, and post-colonial world (see Merriman, 1999). The shifting role of the museum has been significant in recent decades, at such a crossroads and critiques.

Museums themselves have evolved from private entities through public charities into non-stock corporations or units of government (Hall, 1992). This shift had the effect of moving many museums from a narrow focus on the interests and passions of the individuals who built the collection (e.g., Larson, 2009; McMullen, 2009) to a broadly defined emphasis on public betterment, and more recently a better-defined emphasis on meeting the needs of specific audiences, largely owing to shifts in governance that placed key stakeholders in governance positions. Hudson (1998) argues that it can be asserted, "...with confidence that the most fundamental change that has affected museum...is the now universal conviction that they exist in order to serve the public. The old-style museum felt itself to be under no such obligation. It existed, it had a building, and it had collections and a staff to look after them. It was reasonably adequately financed, and its visitors, usually not numerous, came in to look, to wonder and to admire what was set before them. They were in no sense partners in the enterprise. The museum's prime responsibility was to its collections, not its visitors."(Hudson, 1998, p. 43) The role of the museum to public service and education were articulated in the late- nineteenth and early twentieth century's in the works of Brown Goode, 1891; William Henry Flower, 1898; Franz Boas, 1974 & 1905; Harlan Smith, 1912; John Cotton Dana, 1920; Alexander Ruthven, 1931; among others. According to Barker (2010), "This educational role is crucial to both the development of modern archaeological museums and the wide range of critical approaches to them because it requires that museums move from passive repositories to active arbiters and interpreters of the past." (Barker 2010, p. 295). The shift from the old tradition or style of museum to the growing experience of museums had pointed out the new role of museums globally. In such context, museum archaeology cannot escape from the debates and implications of representation in recent decades. Learning from the development of museum history from private collections to education of public and visitor experience, representation of archaeology in museums whether on prehistory or historical archaeology, needs to adopt the lines of explanation and presentation, authority and interpretation, role of the expert or curation and conservation.

In recent years, there has been a broader interpretation involving multi-interdisciplinary subjects to understand humans and their environment, both past and present. The museum as an institution is the final destination of materials, which has been consumed and digested by academicians whether collected from the surface or excavated. Given a

platform, museum stores and seeks collections both tangible and intangible, which have both theoretical and narrative concepts and attributes. These theoretical and narrative attributes play an important part in maneuvering the four wheels of the museum in representing the material culture. Every object, both man-made, as well as the natural collection, has its own story, the former is associated with certain civilizations, cultures, and identities. The associated elements, which are the products and discourse of museum studies, are limited to a small interested community. Museums are not confined to certain limits of intellectual categories but are vast in their range covering various groups of audiences. Thus, in these lines, it is important for the museum, as a teaching and learning center, to first incorporate the theoretical and narrative discourses and represent the material culture. As a result, it will further enhance the authenticity of the collection not only for the general public but for the museum specialist, art historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists seeking for the past in the future. Taking note of the above, the issues and discourse on the prehistory of Northeast India and especially the presence of Palaeolithic and other lithic industries are of great interest.

The museum has in time come to be equivalent with, not only historically but also beyond the premise of history. Museums from their beginnings were part of archaeological collections, which reflect a complex and dynamic balance between documenting, preserving, representing, and sharing of knowledge. The interpretation and understanding of the pieces of evidence are the main objectives. Objects in the museum reflect several layers of 'knowledge creation' that they participated in (see Larson, 2007). Museums were once the primary venue for archaeological research (Willey and Sabloff, 1980); Shanks and Tilley (1992) maintains, they are still recognized as "the main institutional connection between archaeology as a professional discipline, and wider society" (Shanks and Tilley, 1992, p. 68). Pedagogical approaches in museums generally focus on either objects or ideas, what Weil (1990, 1995) called emphasis on the "isness" of objects or their "aboutness". Object-based learning is a pedagogy that views direct interaction with physical objects as central for learning (Witcomb, 1997). However, the challenges related to the management of increasing number of archaeological collections described in the literature that are poorly curated are emerging issues.

Objects on display in a museum context are chosen for their beauty and the aspects of their period, which can enlighten are often neglected. Hence, many museums present their material as mere objects of art instead of 'timepieces'. Museums are storytellers (Bedford, 2001; Johnsson, 2006). Starting from the premise that the meaning of archaeological objects

is not immediately accessible to non-expert audiences, museums propose one or more interpretations of objects, which are usually presented through a combination of different mediators sequentially located within the space of the gallery. The 19th-century museum proposed a monolithic, authoritative perspective, based on a chronological and geographical arrangement, and labels (Wyman, et al. 2011). Consequently, storytelling was implicit, mainly related to the objects' historical context, and therefore only accessible to experts. The transformation of the museological practices during the second half of 20th century (the so-called New Museology) has transformed exhibitions, which now present different points of view (mainly related to the social and cultural context) based on other arrangements (e.g. thematic), and include different tools for different audience sectors to build their interpretations or even share authorships with the museum (see Fisher, et al. 2008). The function of museums so far has also been threefold: collect, preserve, present, but an even more important function is emerging. According to Hooper-Greenhill (2007), "the role of museums is no longer limited to the conservation of objects: they also have to share and continuously reinterpret them" (Hooper-Greenhill 2007, p. 1). Museums have to obtain the role of mediators of cultural competence, a deeper understanding of our culture and heritage, mediated through the museum material. Hence, information needs to be projected as a debate to engage the audience; if the information is simply presented, it will be difficult to digest our experience beyond the showcases. In this connection, further, according to Hooper-Greenhill (2007), "Due to these factors, a theoretical objective and interpretation of the material will serve very well to engage the visitor in a discussion." (Hooper-Greenhill 2007, p. 177). When theories, as well as the material, are explained systematically, the visitor will have a broader idea in understanding the knowledge, and hence a much more active experience of the museum.

Since the first report of prehistoric tools, archaeology in Northeast India and in recent years numerous prehistoric, as well as historical sites, have been excavated. The present chapter basing on the above understanding, therefore poses the question: Does the region contain a well-defined prehistory of the region? If this is so, how are archaeological objects from such excavations represented in museums across Northeast India? What are the measures undertaken by museums to represent the archaeology of the region? What is the status of the museum in conserving and preserving the excavated artifacts? How does the museum project and support the archaeology of the region? Keeping in view the above questions, this chapter draws attention to museum movements and the development of archaeological studies in Northeast India and attempts to study the archaeological collections

in museums of Northeast India with special reference to prehistoric collections of the region from selected museums as case studies.

### **History of the Museum Movement and Development of Archaeology in Northeast India**

The concept of museums in Northeast India can be traced to that of 'Jadu Ghor,' meaning 'Magic house' where traditional magical objects and other spirit objects were stored and used for black magic towards the welfare of the people (e.g. Mayong village Morigaon District Assam). Such traditional knowledge, manuscripts, and objects used during healing through magic were preserved and passed down for generations. Other collection and preservation of past objects, for example, ornaments and costumes can be witnessed within the household collection in most parts of this region. The living museum that we have today is reflected in the *Morung* system where the young ones learn the skill of the arts and crafts passed on for generations. Today, such an institution or household in remote villages can be termed as 'living ethnographic museums'. Replications of such traditional structures are very common in most of the northeastern states representing past heritage, some termed it the heritage complex. The museum movement and archaeology in Northeast India did not evolve together as a discipline and interest as compared to that of mainland India. The intentions of the colonial administrators and ethnographers were not to set up museums in the region but their interest was mainly to explore the unexplored regions. Their interest was to report on anthropological perspectives for example on Naga Hills, (Hudson, 1911; Hutton, 1921 a, 1921 b; Mills, 1922, 1926, 1937). Such reports and writings of Northeast India dominated academic discourse for several decades in post-Independence India. On the other hand, the collection from this part of the region to museums in the West, for instance, Pitt Rivers, Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin; Horniman Museum UK too produced several publications and exhibitions (e.g. Jacobs, 1990; West, 1992, 2011; Kanungo, 2014).

The Treaty of Yandaboo, in 1826, was an important landmark in the history of Northeast India that would change its historical development. The aftermath of the Treaty saw several colonial administrators, scholars, and missionaries who were given open access to explore and investigate the region. Sir John Lubbock (1867) reported finds of polished stone axes of jadeite from the region, which was collected by Capt. E. H. Steel of the Royal Artillery and noted for the first time the presence of prehistoric tools from Northeast India. Later Capt. Steel (1870), Anderson (1871), Lt. Barron (1872), Medlicolt (1875), Godwin-Austen (1875, 1876), and Cockburn (1879) reported the discovery of polished stone axes

from the region. Occasionally, reports on stray finds of stone implements began to appear in several periodicals and journals published in India and abroad. Mention may be made of T.C. Sharma (1966) who systematically studied the ground stone tools from Northeast India kept in various museums in India and abroad and compared it with the excavated materials from Daojali Hading.

Since the colonial era, archaeologists have been developing and investigating architecture, numismatics, and inscriptions, which are all a part of archaeology. In recent decades, archaeology collections and displays in museums in Northeast India have been confined to small sections within such museums. Despite its rising research and collection, the most prevalent representation of archaeology is in general, the State museum of a particular state or district museum restricted to limited space. In Northeast India, the various museums include local community museums, private museums, district museums, and state museums that provide an overall view of the art and culture of the region. Most of these museums often provide a specific gallery dedicated to showcase the archaeology of the region but without any specialist staff. In other cases, the curator of the general collections takes the responsibility of the archaeological collection. Museums provide importance to archaeology, but most of them have various themes on history, community life, art, ethnographic materials of the communities, personal individual collections, etc.

While considering the history and museum movement in Northeast India, undivided Assam can be considered as the starting point. The history of museums in the modern sense in the region was started in the early part of the 20th century. The most popular and oldest museum in Assam is the Assam State Museum, which is located in Gauhati. The nucleus of the Assam State Museum is *Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti*, a voluntary organization founded on 7 April 1912 by a few people interested in the history and culture of the eastern India (see Sharma, 2009). Since its inception, the *Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti* has been endeavoring to collect information regarding the archaeological and historical relics and other antiquities lying scattered in different parts of the province and has made several exploratory excursions in various parts of the state. Rule three of the Samiti states, “The main object of the Samiti is to carry on research in matters relating to history, archaeology, and ethnography, etc. - all that generally comes under the purview of a research society, and to collect books, manuscripts, coins, copper plates, statues, carved stones, etc. - the things that should find place in a library and museum of such society.” (Report and prospectus of the *Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti* 1927, p. 4). The devoted members of *Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti* made a good collection of stone images and other objects to establish their museum. One of the first steps it took for

realizing its objectives outlined in Rule Three was that it issued a request in the beginning of the Society's prospectus adopted on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1914 which states, (Figure 7) "If any gentleman comes across any (a) statue (b) carved stone (c) coin (d) copper plate (e) inscription (on rocks or stones) (f) manuscript (in Sanskrit, Assamese, Bengali or any other language) (g) other things of historical or archaeological interest, he will either send the same to the Samiti in the case where that is possible, or supply all necessary information relating thereto in order to enable the Samiti to take steps for its acquisition if practicable or when this is deemed impossible, to obtain copy, impression, photograph or description thereof. All such collections will be deposited in the government Museum shortly to be constructed at Gauhati" (Prospectus of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti 1914). The Samiti's main aim behind the formation of the museum is directed towards the preservation and exhibition of antiquities bearing the history and culture of the land.

With growing activities and a growing collection, the museum, initially known as the Assam Provincial Museum, was inaugurated on 21st April, 1940, by Sir Robert Neil Reid, the then Governor of undivided Assam. The Provincial Museum was later taken over by the Govt. of Assam in 1953 and placed under the Museums and Archaeology of the Education Department. Subsequently, for systematic and efficient management, two separate entities i.e. Directorate of Museums and Archaeology was established in 1983 (<https://museums.assam.gov.in/information-services/the-assam-state-museum>). Although it was intended to primarily be a cultural museum, the Assam State Museum was an archaeological museum containing collections of epigraphy, iconography, and numismatics. Today, the archaeological section of the Assam State Museum is housed with a rich collection. The principal object of this section generally falls under three main heads namely, epigraphy, iconography, and numismatics.

The bifurcation of the state of Assam after Independence gave birth to various state museums and a number of district museums. In recent decades, numerous private and local community museums are increasing within the region. The main objective of these museums was to conserve, preserve the rich heritage, and educate the people. The close connection between archaeology and museums like those in the West did not occur in this region. For example, the State museum in Kohima, Nagaland, was established to conserve and preserve the rich heritage of the state ignoring the archaeological dimensions. It was only recently after negotiation and deliberation that a small gallery was allotted to display the various excavated materials from various localities of the state. Now the gallery displays at least the materials excavated from the earliest to recent years.

The second example representing the prehistory of the region is the Don Bosco Museum, Shillong, where a gallery is dedicated to prehistoric of the world and the region (Figure 8). The display projects the evolutionary stages of early human evolution from a global perspective. Large imaginary images of hominin, their habitation and tool technology are depicted (Figure 9). Another noteworthy observation is the collection of stone tools donated by Gauhati University labelled as the lower, middle, and upper Paleolithic period of Northeast India (Figure 10). Thirdly, the Manipur State Museum has a separate gallery for archaeology (Figure 11). The entrance of the gallery replicates the cave habitations of early humans. The collections from Khangkhui cave, Machi, Songbu cave, Nongpok Keithelmanbi includes palaeolithic stone tools from various excavation carried out in the region. What is interesting to note is the display of Hoabinhian tools from Tharon cave. The other collection includes neolithic celts and axes of various shapes and sizes. Representation of prehistory through stone tools is also exhibited in the State Museum Arunachal Pradesh under the general theme 'Prehistoric Tools' (Neolithic context) which displays Neolithic axe, chisel, ring stone and celts from Komkar village, upper Siang District, Monigong Bokar area, West Siang District, Bomdila, West Kameng District, Poma and Itanagar. Other tools representing the Palaeolithic period includes the Palaeolithic chopper from Doimukh, end scraper from Chimpu, illustration of a low dap (scraper), stone blade, bamboo and iron blade (Figure 12 & 13).

Besides the state museum, other smaller museums also exhibit prehistoric collections. One important district museum in Meghalaya is the Tura District Museum. The museum is ethnographic in nature and displays archaeological objects. Prehistoric stone tools collected from the Garo Hills are exhibited in showcases (Figure 14). The tools include finished and unfinished tools, flakes, core, chips, etc. In general, the museum attempts to classify the tools as 'neolithic' from the Garo Hills. In addition, in terms of prehistoric collections in university museums, the Madhab Chandra Goswami Museum of the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University, is a good example. Besides ethnographic materials, this museum also provides prehistoric and historic materials such as the stone tools of the Lower Palaeolithic, Middle Palaeolithic, Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic period of the Garo Hills, Meghalaya, and the other parts of Northeast India. Pottery of the Neolithic and Historic periods of Daojali Hading, Karbi Anglong, Ambari sites of Kamrup district, and other parts of India are also housed in this museum. Besides, there are other state museums in Northeast India that contain prehistoric collections but are limited to small showcases.

Prehistoric archaeological research has been a key issue of the North Eastern states and continues to encounter difficulties in terms of their methodology and lack of a coherent interpretation of its finds. In spite of its enormous wealth of data, and its location in one of the most strategic regions of India, any attempt to trace the course of human history, especially of the vast unrecorded prehistoric past becomes a difficult task. The historical connection of the region to other parts of the subcontinent and its cultural affinities has been attempted in order to understand the region's prehistory holistically, in their proper archaeological and cultural ecological context in recent decades by scholars. However, with limited archaeological evidence, it has become a conundrum to understand the prehistory of early human migration and other prehistoric cultures of the region. According to Jamir and Hazarika (2014):

It comes to us as no surprise whenever our archaeological data do not fit within the mainstream Indian cultural schema and participants in an Indian archaeological conference are very often perplexed; and by the end of a presentation, it generally passes either as a 'confusing' or rather as an 'interesting' remark. Eventually, discussions winds up with suggestions to compare our dataset with Southeast Asia based on broad observed similarities across Mainland Southeast Asia and South China, a pattern previously recognized by Worman (1942) and Dani (1960)... Since the discovery of the first stone artefacts from Upper Assam in 1867, new site discoveries and excavations, although not numerous, have nonetheless placed the prehistory of the region into – Palaeolithic, Neolithic and Megalithic phases. However, we are yet to understand these cultural sequences within a chrono-stratigraphical context (Jamir and Hazarika 2014, p. 5).

The study of prehistory was placed in the archaeology map of the subcontinent with the report of the ground polished stone tool in 1867, which is yet to be physically examined or located where the specimens are presently housed. Since this first report, numerous studies were carried out on the prehistory of Northeast India. Early reports on such areas were not only undertaken by colonial administrators and ethnographers but also by local scholars. This early phase of research was mainly confined to reports and sporadic surveys and exploration. From the 1960s onwards, we witness a gradual rise in archaeological investigation on the prehistory of the region. Ever since the first pioneering excavation at Daojali-Hading, Assam, conducted by the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University, after the establishment of its prehistoric branch in 1956 (Sharma 2003) various anthropologists and archaeologists over the years have concentrated their studies on various aspects of the region's prehistory (Goswami and Bhagabati, 1959; Sharma, 1967, 1974, 1980, 1981, 1985; Sharma and Sharma, 1968, 1971; Sharma and Roy, 1985; Medhi, 1980; Nienu, 1974, 1983; Sonowal, 1987; Sharma, 1972, 1975, 1976, 1988, 2003; Singh, 1972, 1986; Sharma & Singh, 1986; Hussian,

1991; Mahanta, 1995, 2010; Hazarika, 2012; Sharma, 2002, 2007, 2013; Ashraf & Duarah, 2013/2014; Jamir & Hazarika, 2014; Bhuyan & Marak, 2014; Marak 2010, 2014; Deka, 2015; Sharma & Singh, 2017; Jamir, et al. 2017; Marak, et al. 2017). In addition, there are other studies dealing with the prehistory and historical archaeology of the region. Furthermore, in recent years, attempts have also been made to understand the various aspects of the region from paleo- environmental research into zooarchaeology, the question of agriculture, and the use of historical linguistics and genetic data linking the region to other parts of the world.

There are very little research on paleo-environmental studies based on multiproxy approaches carried out in the region of Northeast, both early and recent (Goswami 1981; Bhattacharyya and Chanda, 1982; Bhattacharyya, Chanda and Barui, 1986; Nautiyal and Chauhan, 2009; Prokop and Bhattacharyya, 2011; Bera et al. 2011, 2014; Jamir et al 2017). Besides, on ceramics and its related aspects on prehistory of the region, there have been various studies in the past and in recent decades (see Roy, 1977; Medhi, 1992; Singh and Singh, 1996; Singh, 1999; 2004; Medhi, 2003; Ngunlie, 2006, 2008 & 2014; Singh, 2008; Vasa and Aier, 2008; Vasa, 2011 & 2014). In recent decades, new investigation and interpretations on other sub-disciplines of archaeology are emerging from this region; examples are human Bioarchaeology and zooarchaeology (see Mushrif et al. 2008; Mushrif and Jamir, 2011; Tetso, 2014).

With such an extensive quest on the prehistory of the region, several issues are of concern to pre-historians. Of such is the debate on the presence of Palaeolithic culture in Northeast India. According to Jamir, et al.(2017, in press) “the prehistory of Northeast India is represented by two key dominant issues: one view is the presence of early Paleolithic that is validated by the evidence of Palaeolithic-like tools occurring within Pleistocene sediments, while the other concerns the beginning of the Neolithic and the origins of agriculture in Northeast region, particularly rice and millet cultivation”. As Hazarika (2012) remarks, “The presence of Palaeolithic tools in Northeast India is a much-debated issue in Indian Prehistory. Based on tool typology, several assemblages have been placed within the context of ‘Palaeolithic’ in this region. One of the main problems with these Palaeolithic assemblages is that they occur in relatively younger deposits and in most cases, in association with axes/adzes of Neolithic origin and pottery.”(Hazarika, 2012, p. 48).The Garo Hills, Meghalaya, has yielded the largest number of stone tools with Palaeolithic characteristics (Medhi, 1988), but without a well-understood chrono-stratigraphic context. Several early workers (Sharma, 1972; Sankalia, 1974) have analyzed and divided these materials based on

typology into chronological sequences of Lower, Middle, and Upper Palaeolithic periods. However, Ghosh (1978) has contradicted these views and suggested that these lithic assemblages are not of Palaeolithic origin, but are instead ‘Neolithic debitage’. Another issue on the region’s prehistory is the presence of cultures associated with the Late Pleistocene lithic technology of Southeast Asian prehistory - the Hoabinhian culture that is again a debatable subject although archaeologists have drawn parallels. Further, to substantiate and understand the important sites bearing artifacts with elements of Palaeolithic culture, the site inventory (Table 12) provided by Hazarika (2012) is of great value in view of all previous investigative reporting of prehistoric elements from Northeast India.

**Table 12:** Sites Bearing Artifacts with Elements of Palaeolithic Culture

(after Hazarika, 2012)

Site	Geological Position	Artifacts	Reference	Comments/Observations
Rongdu, Garo hills	Artifacts collected from river terraces(610 m. AMSL)	Chopping tool made of sandstone, heavily patinated and rolled. Scraper made of quartzite	IAR, 1966-67	Earliest discovered artifact resembling Palaeolithic chopper
Selbalgiri 2 (Surface collection), Garo hills	Artifacts recovered from eroded gravelly surface	Handaxes, picks, discs, scrapers, borers, blades, microliths etc, besides neolithic stone artifacts	IAR, 1967-68	Existence of handaxes, flake/blades, microliths
Selbalgiri 2 (Excavation), Garo hills	Layer 1: Reddish earth mixed with small quantity of quartz gravel, Layer 2: Reddish brown earth with large quantity of quartz gravel, Layer 3: Yellowish earth with less gravel	Layer 1: Ground and Chipped axes, scrapers, potsherds, Layer 2: core, hammers, flakes, pottery, Layer 3: Microliths with pottery	IAR, 1967-68	Microliths occur in lower levels with pottery
Thebronggiri, Garo hills		Crudely flaked axes, knife-blades, microliths, arrowheads, points, cores, hammers etc.	IAR, 1968-69	Not well understood stratigraphy

Selbalgiri Locality 3 (Mokbol Chiring), Garo hills		Early and Late Stone Age (?)	IAR, 1969-70	Interpretation on the basis of typological analysis
Michimagiri, Garo hills	Eroded surface of slope of hillock	Early, Middle and Late Stone Age (?)	IAR, 1969-70	Heavily eroded and rolled artifacts
Michimagiri Locality 1 (Watri Abri), Garo hills	Hillock	Early, Middle and Late Stone Age (?), Large roughly flaked heavy tools, small tools of flakes, microliths, neolithic tools and pottery	IAR, 1969-70	Typological analysis without stratigraphic differences
Michimagiri (Excavation), Garo hills	Eroded surface, 76 cm thick deposits of single layer of reddish silt with artifacts	Flakes, cores, blades, scrapers, points, burins etc. made of dolerite, heavily patinated	IAR, 1975-76	Single layer of artifacts with Upper Palaeolithic elements
Michimagiri III factory site, Garo Hills	Heavily eroded hill slope	Blades and burins of Upper Palaeolithic period	IAR, 1978- 79, for details see Sonowal and Sharma, 1986	Typical flake and blade industry an indication of complete assemblage
Rambhagiri, Garo hills	River banks	Early and Middle Stone Age	IAR, 1970-71	Surface collection
Chibrigiri, Garo hills	Hill ridges	Palaeolithic and Neolithic tools	IAR, 1974-75	Surface collections
Siju area, Garo hills	Hill slopes	Handaxes, flakes, cleavers, choppers etc.	IAR, 1976-77	Sporadic finds
Ganol Abri	Top	Terrace Choppers, cleavers, handaxes, Flake cores, prepared Levalloisian core, blade cores etc.	IAR, 1981-82	Large quantities of cores, flakes and unfinished tools, indication of factory site, surface collection
Muksak Abri	Terrace	Choppers, handaxes, cleavers, scrapers, points, blade flakes, and cores	IAR, 1981-82	Surface collection
Nangalbibra A, Garo hills	Well cemented gravel deposits of pebbles and boulders of dolerite	Choppers, chopping tools, and flakes	Sharma and Roy, 1985	Artifacts shows chopper chopping core tool elements
		Scrapers of		Upper

Nangalbibra B, Garo hills	Surface of river banks	various types, points, arrowheads, flakes and cores	Sharma and Roy, 1985	Palaeolithic/microlithic elements
Waramgiri, Garo hills	Erosional surface of a terrace of hilly stream	Handaxes, points, scrapers of Mousterian character, small flake tools, blades, microliths etc	Sharma, 1974	Site seems to be a factory site and without elements of Neolithic stone artifacts and pottery
Rongram Terrace site(Excavation), Garo hills	Silt layer overlying on a highly cemented gravel	Edge ground types of artifacts in the upper levels within a depth of 7 cm and Chipped pebble axes of Hoabinhian tradition up to 60 cm of single Implementiferous silt layer. In addition, a large pounding stone in a subsequent excavation	Sharma, 1988	No stratigraphical distinction of the artifacts
Didami, Garo hills	Bank of streams	Bifacially flaked artifacts, blade flakes and probably utilized flakes	Sharma, 2007	Elements of Palaeolithic culture
Daphabum area, Arunachal Pradesh	High terraces	Choppers, proto-handaxes, cleavers, scrapers, flakes and cores etc	IAR, 1969-70	Sporadic finds of heavily weathered and rolled artifacts
Kamla & Dikrong valley, Arunachal Pradesh	High terraces	Palaeolithic stone tools consisting chopper, cleavers and handaxes	Ashraf, 1990	Sporadic finds
Khangkhui, Manipur	Rock shelter	Handaxes and cleavers at the lower deposit, points, borers, scrapers, blade, burins, cores and few bone points from the upper deposit	IAR, 1968-69	Excavation shows stratigraphical differences of artifacts within the upper and lower level
Somgbu, Manipur	Cave site	Scrapers, borer-	IAR, 1982-	Artefacts occur in the

		cum-hollow scraper, Knives, flake blades, flakes, cores etc.	83, 83-84	disturbed cave floor
Singtom, Manipur	Cave site	Handaxes, worked flake pebble with round edge, flaked pebble, blade, flake, pebble striker, split pebble, waste flake etc	Singh and Ranjit Singh, 1990	Typical elements of Palaeolithic culture
Teliamura, Sonai Bazar area, Mohanpur, Sonaram, West Tripura	Late Quaternary deposits	stone tools comprising scrapers, points, chopping tools, hammer stones, blades, and cores from which blade scars, or flutes	Poddar and Ramesh 1983; Ramesh, 1989	Silicified fossil wood industry similar to Lalmai-Mainamati industry of Bangladesh and Late Anyathian of Myanmar

On the chronological framework of the Northeast region, T.C. Sharma (1966), based on typo-technological grounds of the archaeological record, suggested a prehistoric cultural sequence beginning with the early Holocene Hoabinhian period, then succeeded by the Neolithic which might be seen as having two distinct phases: i) the Early Neolithic, and ii) the Late Neolithic. Further, based on stratigraphical evidence provided by S.N. Rajaguru (IAR 1981-82), H.D. Sankalia (1981) based on typo-technological evidences of the Stone Age tools from Garo Hills and other parts of Northeast India, proposed the following culture sequence for the Neolithic period: New Stone Age (A) - c. 5000 – 2000 BC and New Stone Age (B) - c. 2000 - 1000 BC. According N.R. Ramesh (1989), relying on available stratigraphical data and typo-technological evidences corroborated by radiocarbon dates, proposed a chronological scheme for prehistoric cultures of Tripura in the following framework: Holocene–Evolved Tripurian=Upper Paleolithic-Early Neolithic: 3450±110 BP and Late Pleistocene- Late Tripurian=Late Middle Palaeolithic: 35690±3050 BP. Similarly, the sites of Nongpok Keithelmanbi and Napachik in Manipur have been dated to 4,460±120 years BP and 1450 BC respectively by O.K. Singh (1993) (on a detailed discussion, see Jamir & Hazarika 2014; Sarma& Hazarika 2014; Hazarika 2012).

Apart from their chronological sequence, Table 19 clearly indicates that most of the chronologies refer to the characteristic features of the tools established in other parts of the world, which are well established both experimentally and in terms of their dating sequence.

Such proposed works were the result of the development of prehistoric studies influenced by assemblages outside the region. On the study of stone tools from prehistoric sites across Northeast India, lithic technology and microwear studies are neglected areas that need to be strongly emphasized in Northeast India (Jamir & Hazarika, 2014). The lack of knowledge on lithic technology through replication based on experimental knapping, we believe, has led to debate on the presence of Palaeolithic elements in the region (see Sharma, 1972; Sankalia, 1974; Ghosh, 1978; Medhi, 1988; Chakrabarti, 2006 and Hazarika, 2012) which has been loosely assigned based on tool typology.

Therefore, empirical evidence with application of multidisciplinary approaches to conclude the presence of Palaeolithic cultures is a matter of debate that is still ongoing. At such a crossroad, the question arises whether it is appropriate within museum spaces to represent the presence of the culture, which is still poorly established. To understand such a question, the display at the prehistory gallery in Don Bosco Museum, Mawlai, Shillong, which assigns the prehistory of the Northeast into Lower, Middle, and Upper Paleolithic cultures and neolithic tools from Northeast India (see Figure 10) raises concern regarding the representation of the prehistory of the region. The gallery also displays a flow chart of the tool types from the region represented in Table 13. It is critical to recognize that there are other attributes to understand the prehistory of any culture or region, not only based on a few stone tool assemblages. Further, the comparison of display illustration of Palaeolithic lithic technology of the world which are well established with the region has a lacuna in the understanding the sequence of tools from Northeast in India. The neolithic tools within the gallery is unquestionably found from this region but certain details need to be addressed, for example; whether the tools are from context or surface, as well as the dating of the site which are missing. While a representation of world prehistory has been well executed to understand the first appearance of our human ancestors and the environmental set up within the gallery. Yet, within a museum display setting, the reflexivity in interpretation of archaeological objects cannot be set aside which will otherwise be misleading or will not provide authenticity of information to the reader or a visitor to the museum.

**Table 13:** Display Chart of Prehistoric Tools of Northeast India (till 1999) Don Bosco Museum Prehistory Gallery, Shillong, Meghalaya

State	Palaeolithic tool types	Mesolithic tool types	Neolithic tool types
Assam	Not found till date	Not found till date	Shouldered celts, faceted celts, groove hammer stone,

			quadrangular axes, round axes, adzes and chisels
Arunachal Pradesh	Unifacial and bifacial choppers, proto-hand axes, cleavers, ovates, side scrapers on flake points, parallel side flakes, cores, discoidal	Pebble flake tools, short axes, lanceolates etc.	Rectangular or faceted tools, waisted axes
Meghalaya	Chopper-chopping, cleavers, disc, pebble tools, handaxes, scrapers, points, blades, burins etc.	Pebble flake tools, short axes, lanceolates etc.	Tanged or shouldered celts, wedges, axes, adzes etc
Nagaland	Not found till date	Not found till date	Rounded shouldered to quasi-tanged axes
Manipur	Handaxes, chopper-chopping tools, scrapers, blades, points, borers, burins etc.	Not found till date	Triangular and quadrangular axes, adzes, chisels, hoe-blades, shouldered axes
Tripura	Handaxes, cleaver, borers, knives, scrapers, hammer stones, flakes and few pebble tools	Not found till date	Pecked and ground axes, adzes, grinding stones, points and celts
Mizoram	Still to be explored	Not found till date	Not found till date

Another museum that represents the prehistory of Northeast India is the Archaeological Gallery of Manipur State Museum. The gallery throws light on the various facets of the long prehistoric era of human society. The gallery opens with a diorama depicting the life of the pre-literate man in his cave and how in his struggle for survival, he makes tools and implements. The depiction from the gallery shows both Palaeolithic and Neolithic artifacts discovered from the districts of Manipur. Megalithic cultures, pottery, ancient coins, stone sculptures, stone tablets, and iron smelting are well depicted through objects and dioramas. The entire gallery reflects the sequence from early prehistory to the archaeological history of the region. The Guide Book of the Archaeological Gallery, which details the objects and dioramas, supports one important note of this gallery. The Palaeolithic remains on display in the gallery are found from the caves and open-air site of Songbu caves in Chandel District and Khangkhui cave in Ukhrul District. The open-air sites are the Machi and Singtom in Chandel Districts and Nongpok Keithelmanbi locality II and III in Senapati District. The tools represented are chopper/chopping tools, hand axes, cleavers, points, scrapers, blades, burins, Levallois, and discoid core flakes. Bone tools on display include blades, scrapers, points, and perforators.

As far as the dating is concerned, no absolute date for the Palaeolithic culture of this site has so far been known. However, typo-technologically, scholars have assigned the date ranging from Late Pleistocene to Terminal Pleistocene of the last Ice Age. Besides, the Hoabinhian culture of Manipur from both cave and open-air sites are well placed in the gallery. These sites are from Tharon cave in Tamenlong District and Nongpok Keithelmanbi locality in Senapati District. The artifact types from these sites include chisel-edged choppers, pickaxes, scrapers, blades, splits and batter-marked pebbles, edge-ground pebbles axes, adzes, edge-ground knives, querns, and grinders. The guidebook of the gallery informs that the Hoabinhian culture of Manipur is not so far dated by absolute dating methods. Yet the stratigraphic evidence from the Nongpok Keithelmanbi locality-I and the typological characters of the stone tools suggest a tentative date range of 10,000 to 5,000 years BC. Neolithic stone tools exhibited in the museum include s triangular celts, gouged adzes, tanged celts, rectilinear shouldered celts, quadrangular axes, chisels, and a core. Considering the neolithic period of Manipur, some of the sites range from 4,000- 1,000 BC dated by <sup>14</sup>C carbon and TL dating method.

Further, evidence of Palaeolithic tools is reported from Tripura as well as Arunachal Pradesh. But the items represented in museum exhibitions in these states are limited and confined mainly to surface findings. Speaking of open-air museum on prehistoric themes, the Regional Science Centre Assam (Figure 15) has a theme “Prehistory Life Park” in which visitors can develop an imagination of the evolution of life on earth that are described in text books. It depicts the period and the first species of animals and our human ancestor through 3D models and labels. Such representations offer the audience an understanding and experience of past living, environment and life. Other examples of open-air and site museums from this part of the region are those of Sekta Archaeological Museum in Manipur (Figure 16) and the Chungliyimti archaeological site Nagaland (Figure 17). It is interesting to notice that such site museums are an initial initiative in the region in conservation and preservation of the site on one hand, and community participation on the other. Such site museum exhibitions play a significant role for the public to gain first-hand information of the archaeological investigations and the importance of past heritage of the site.

In recent years, themes on museum and gender, and the representation of prehistory have begun to carry a clear responsibility towards society. Museums necessarily aspire to become spaces in which various social groups that make up our citizenship are represented. These must be spaces that reflect the diversity of our society, places that host the history of different age and gender groups that ultimately have the capacity for transmitting the

collective memory of a community (see Merriman, 1999; Sorensen, 1999). In such spaces, no individual should feel excluded on the grounds of gender, age, race, religion, social group, sexual choice, and so on. It is here that museums are under the obligation to play a key role in education towards equality (Izquierdo Peraile, et al. 2014; Prados Torreira, et al. 2013). As Kerstin Kowarik and Jutta Leskovar remark, “Archaeological exhibitions make statements not only about chronology, material culture and production techniques, but also about aspects of social organization and dynamics. This includes statements about gender roles and their development through time”(Kowarik and Leskovar2015, pp.51-55).Prehistoric archaeological collections in museums have recently been criticized for their lack of displays of people’s multiple social identities, including the representation of gender (see Gonzalez, 1993; Ballard, 2007; Solometo and Moss 2013; Kowarik and Leskovar, 2015). While a large body of gender studies in prehistoric archaeology exists (e.g. Donald & Hurcombe, 2000; Bolger, 2012; Brysbaert, 2012; Koch & Kirleis, 2019). Swain (2007) observe that, “very few studies have investigated whether displays of archaeological collections follow past and current theoretical debates in archaeology...and changing approaches to museum displays of prehistoric collections may subsequently attract interest from contemporary and future visitors who may be able to connect personally to some past human activities and identities” (Swain, 2007, pp. 195-215).

From global perspectives, approaches to museums and gender, and the representation of prehistory, have raised significant discourses on equality. Such discourses in Northeast India museums of archaeology and archaeological sites, in comparison to the other parts of India are not well articulated and developed. The representations of prehistory in museums sampled in the present research, therefore, implicitly pose a few questions on museum exhibitions and displays: Do permanent exhibitions on the prehistory of Northeast India raise gender related concerns. Secondly, do these exhibitions make statements about the roles of men and women in prehistory? Thirdly, how are these issues presented to the public? Finally, by which means and on what medium? To understand such questions from the above museums having prehistoric collections and galleries in Northeast India have been put in Table 14 and (Figure 18, 19) below:

**Table 14:** Representation of Prehistory, Proportion of Gender and Activities Through Exhibitions in Selected Museums of Northeast India

Name of the Museum	Name of the Gallery	Medium of Representation	Culture & associated hominin species	Male	Female	Child/Adult	Activities Represented
Don Bosco Museum of Indigenous Culture Mawlai	Introductory and Prehistory Gallery	Large imaginary Images, Stone tools, fibre glass 3D facial models of the species, textual illustration on physical features, cultural life, conceptual facial features, site maps, stone tool technology	<i>Australo pithecus africanas</i> , <i>boise</i> & <i>robustus</i> ; Homo habilis; Homo erectus; Neandertal, Cro-Magnon, Lower, Middle, Upper Palaeolithic and Neolithic cultures, Lower Palaeolithic tools of Northeast India	43	1	1	Cave environment, skinning of animals, tool-making, fire-making, hunting scene, butchering,
Manipur State Museum	Archaeological Gallery	Large imaginary images, 3D models human size, stone tools, photographs, potteries	Palaeolithic and Neolithic	5	-	-	Photographs of caves, tool making, digging the soil for cultivation, reconstruction of cave environment
Assam State Museum	Pre and Proto History and Terracotta gallery	One large image of early man, stone tools, potteries	Palaeolithic-hic, Neolithic and Indus valley civilization	1	-	-	A man knapping tool
Jawaharlal Nehru	Archaeologi	Stone tools,	Palaeolithic and				

State Museum Arunachal Pradesh	cal section	pottery	Neolithic	-	-	-	-
Nagaland State Museum	Archaeological section	Stone tools, potteries	Neolithic	-	-	-	-
Manipur University Museum	Showcases	Imaginary image, stone tools	Neolithic	4	3	2	Hunting and gathering, man on a tree, tool making, butchering, women collecting eggs, mother carrying baby on back
Regional Science Centre Assam	Open air	Models of extinct species, , 3D facial models of hominin, text illustration		1	1	1	Tool making block -on-block technique, mother and child
Madhab Chandra Goswami Museum Dept of Anthropology Gauhati University	Showcases	Stone tools, potteries	Palaeolithic and Neolithic	-	-	-	-
District Museum Tura	Showcases	Stone tools, potteries	Neolithic	-	-	-	-
Peoples Museum Kakching	Showcases	Stone tools	Neolithic	-	-	-	-

In representation and receiving, in other words museums and audiences, we see a visualization of the past sometimes unfurl half knowledge to the visitors. The depictions constructed for visual narrative are a result of the consultative discussion of the researchers and the artist. Such narratives are widely use in museum representations and literature which are a myth of enormous potency to the audience. Thus, in critically examining representation, structure and themes, we need constructive perspectives adding broader

actions and activities. Such a visualization of the past demands a clear dissemination of knowledge to audience needs and includes long-term study and experimentation for interpretations. The cave dioramas and human anatomical representations are the outcome of a long scientific research. Illustrations of such works are a result of a careful understanding between the artist and the experts. Gonzalez (1993) in this regard maintains:

“Artists’ depictions of prehistoric people are a didactic device, conveying a distillation of expert knowledge to the general public like their close kin, museum dioramas, they render the “stones and bones” of Palaeolithic archaeology vivid and intelligible to the knowledge-seeking child or adult who visits a museum or pages through a book. They thus purport to render fact and expert opinion to a general audience. However, in contrast to dioramas depicting living faunas and exotic cultures, neither scientific expert, artist, nor viewing public can delude themselves for a moment that depictions of Palaeolithic life literally represent nature and human experience. Embodied direct experience of the situations and people portrayed, as is at least theoretically possible with wildlife or ethnographic dioramas, is impossible. Everyone producing and consuming these prehistoric representations thus knows that they are imaginative blends of scientific knowledge and artistic creativity” (Gonzalez, 1993, p.25).

The available data (Table 14; Figure 18 and 19) on the proportion of social activities, the depictions from dioramas and art illustrations of the prehistoric way of life suggests that the displays are gender biased with men taking center stage and put as actors in action. Presentation and action of women is less represented in most of the archaeological galleries in Northeast India. The schemata thus speak to the viewer on the stereotypic perceptions in relation to gender, age, power, and potency. Those involving males reveal active achievers in the prime of life, while those involving women show idealized, static mothers and anonymous drudges. The most iconic of all representation is the “tool- making, tool use, and hunting”, the greatest symbol exclusively reserved to men in their prime. Here again, men are tied to the hearth, sitting or engaged in fire making. Women are absent from such activities and only seen to attend to postnatal childcare, and other parental activities, and engaged in fundamentally uninteresting background pursuits.

Two examples can further be drawn to understand the situating context. Firstly, issues on the allocation of the galleries within the museums and the reduced importance given to archaeological collections. Secondly, the College and University programmes on prehistory and museology of the region. In the first case, the State Museum, Kohima, which is an old institution mainly, runs on ethnographic collections. It has a small glass fitted showcase of Neolithic ground stone tools until a new gallery was allotted in 2018 – yet, Nienu (1974, 1983) undertook the first archaeological excavation in this region as part of his doctoral

research. After a gap of more than two decades, archaeological excavation was further carried out on a small scale led by Jamir and Vasa in 2000. Since then, various archaeological investigations were carried out in joint collaboration with the Department of History and Archaeology Nagaland University, Anthropological Society of Nagaland, and the Department of Art and Culture, Government of Nagaland. Some of the major works under these research programs include the Chungliyimti excavation, Longtikimong, Kubok (Jamir et al. 2014a); Phor, New Phor, Khusomi, Laradvü, Mimi caves, Khezakeno (Jamir, et al. 2014b and Jamir et al. 2017), Hutsu (Jamir et al. 2014), cave and rock shelter site of Tsiekhien, Photangkhum Longkhap (Jamir and Tetso, 2020); Wui (Jamir, et al. 2018) and Changsang Mongko (Jamir and Tetso, 2019) . The chronologies of these sites bring to light for the first time empirical evidence of the earliest possible settled life of the Naga ancestral communities and others. At such a juncture, the University or the State authority has insufficient space in displaying important excavated materials for the public. The gallery in the state museum exhibits only a small portion of the materials from the above-excavated sites. Hence, there is a need to address the problem of infrastructure and enhanced space in order to take these exhibitions to a more diverse audience outside the academia targeted at further enhancing public services and educational roles of museums. There are some encouraging efforts from few academic institutions that hold collections for classroom teaching, for example, Department of Anthropology, Kohima Science College, and the Department of History and Archaeology, Nagaland University. However, it is now essential to draw attention to a more expansive spatial environment in order to attract visitors for a firsthand multisensory experience and interaction with the display.

The second concern is the lack of a curriculum by colleges and universities on prehistory and museology. Except IIT Guwahati, which undertakes technical studies on prehistoric, archaeological materials and later periods, the region still lacks an exclusive archaeology department committed to the prehistory. This lack of attention is even seen to extend to the secondary and graduate level where there is hardly any emphasis on archaeology or museum studies. A few universities offer archaeology at the post-graduate level, such as the Department of History and Archaeology, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus; North Eastern Hill University, Tura campus, and Cotton University, Guwahati, Assam. Besides, there are no departments of museology from any of the universities in Northeast India. In cases where museology or museum related studies are introduced in under-graduate or post-graduate programs, they are incorporated either as sub-units within a course or elective papers. Given the situation wherein the number of museums are gradually

increasing both in urban and rural areas of the region, the absence of such training institutes and departments on museology has led to the lack of an adequate understanding of the core issues underlying the meaning of museum, museology and museography.

Both archaeology and museum studies in Northeast India do not enjoy a central place compared to other parts of the world. In general, the communication between the ancient past, and archaeology that is exhibited, and the audience is the primary focus of the museum or a given gallery within a museum. Museum play the role of collectors and exhibit objects which have intrinsic qualities that make it valuable, whereas, for archaeologists, the real value of each object lies in the context of its finding. Ancient objects in museums are not understood in terms of archaeological heritage or scientific value; instead, they seem to be lost in the mist without reaching the public domain. In addition, the issues on chronology, assigning prehistoric cultures of the region, and the other topics of concern are public education towards care of prehistoric sites from vandalism and illicit antiquity trafficking. The Northeast region possesses a past that is connected to this land since prehistoric times. The search for the past is supported by strong theoretical and applied disciplines in interpreting the data and such analysis is reflected in academic discourses. These, dialogues and debates should be reflected in museum practice for consumption by the public. In addition, the museum as an institution is an expert authenticating agency for disseminating education at large, which needs precautionary measures in exhibiting the past culture.

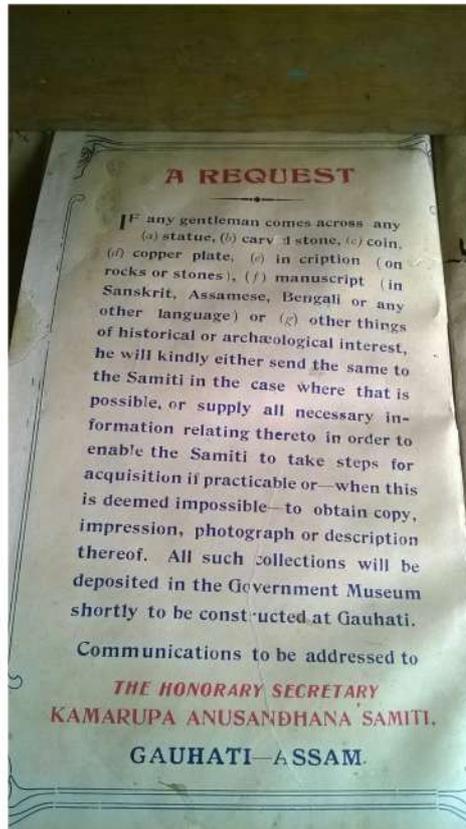


Figure 7: Kamarupa Anusandhana Samiti request plea issued in the beginning of the Society's prospectus adopted on 5th December, 1914.



Figure 8: Prehistory Gallery of Don Bosco Museum of Indigenous Culture, Mawlai, Shillong

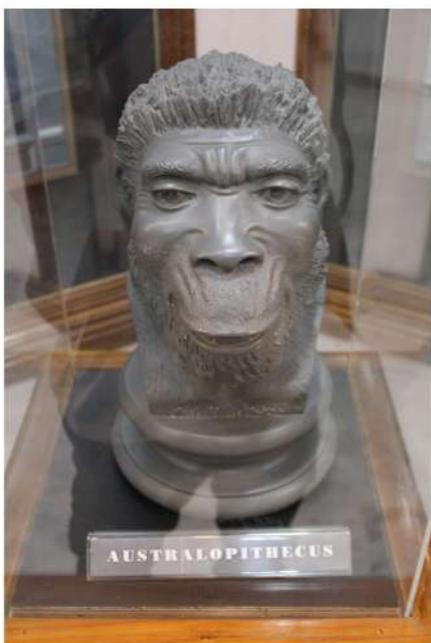
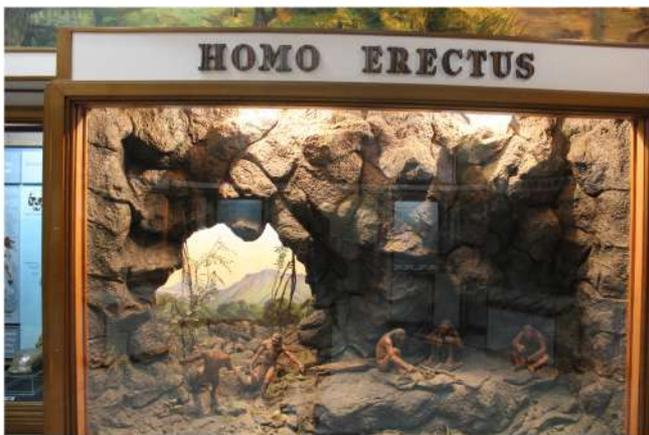


Figure 9: Representation of Hominin and imaginary illustration of prehistoric life



Figure 10: Palaeolithic stone tools of Northeast India



Figure 11: Schematic representation of the prehistory of Manipur in the Archaeology gallery of Manipur State Museum, Imphal.

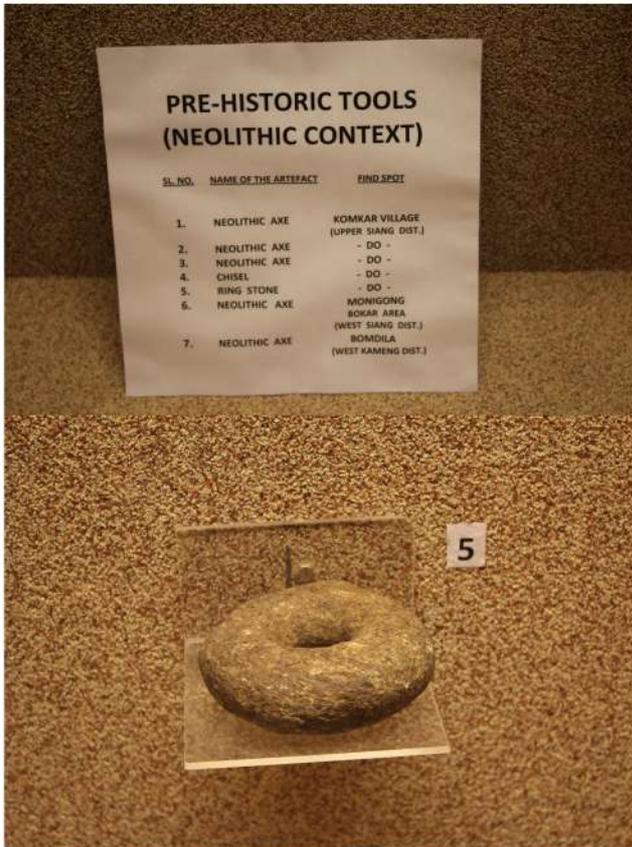


Figure 12: Palaeolithic and Neolithic stone tools State Museum, Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar

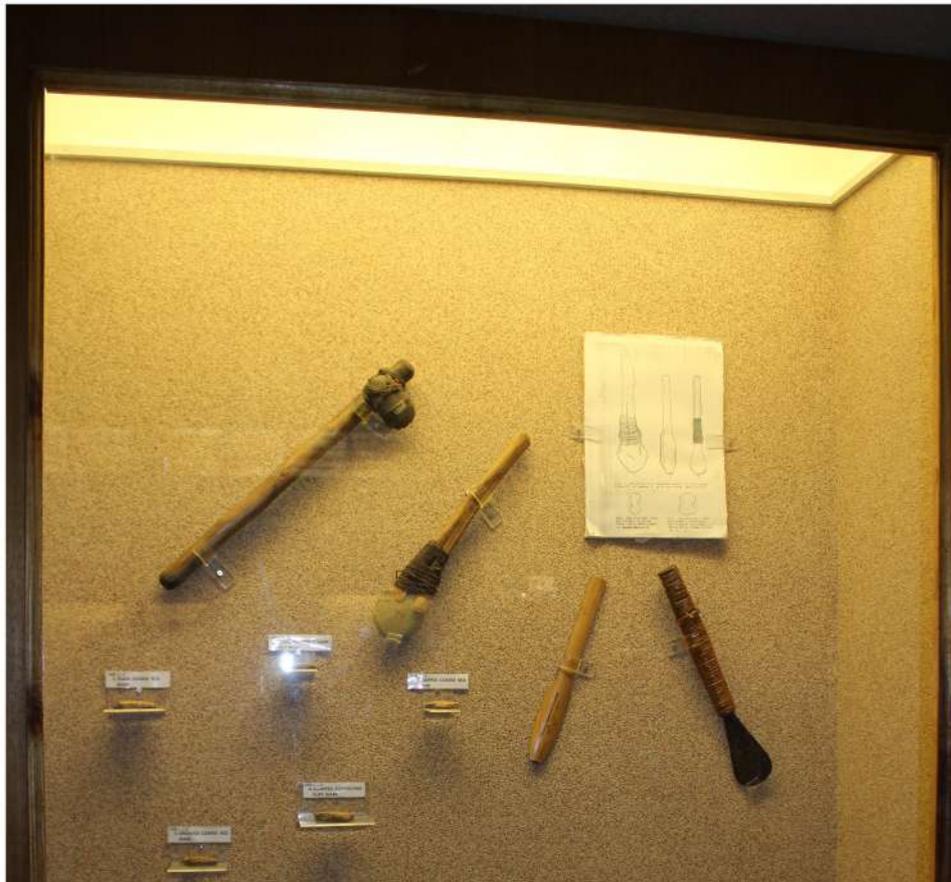
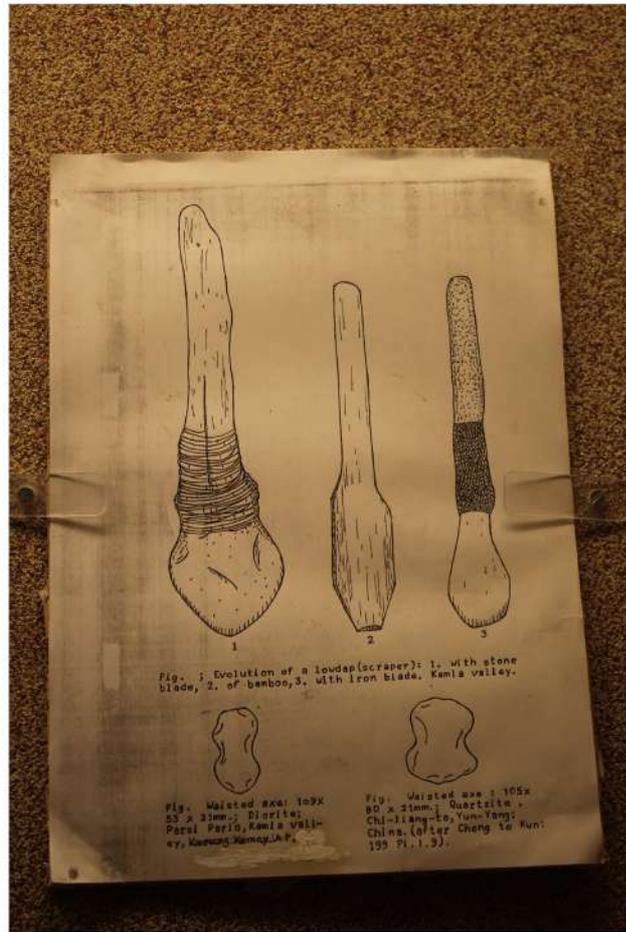


Figure 13: Illustration of a low dip (scraper) showing its evolutionary stages from stone blade to bamboo and iron blade.



Figure 14: Stone tools at District Museum Tura, Meghalaya.

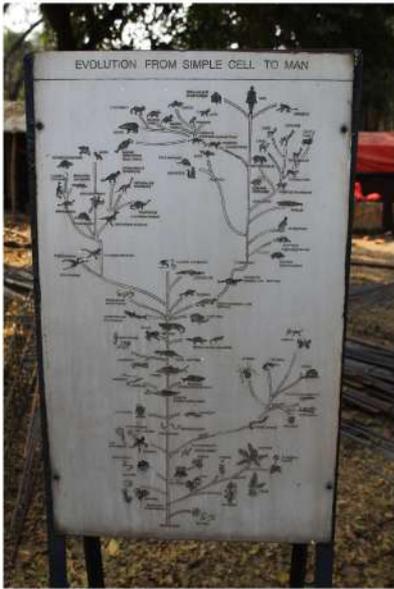


Figure 15: Prehistory Life Park, Regional Science Centre Guwahati, Assam





Figure 17: Chungliyimti archaeological site top (photo by Jamir 2008) and below a group of visitor in one of the site catchment area (Yimsenpirongs pond)

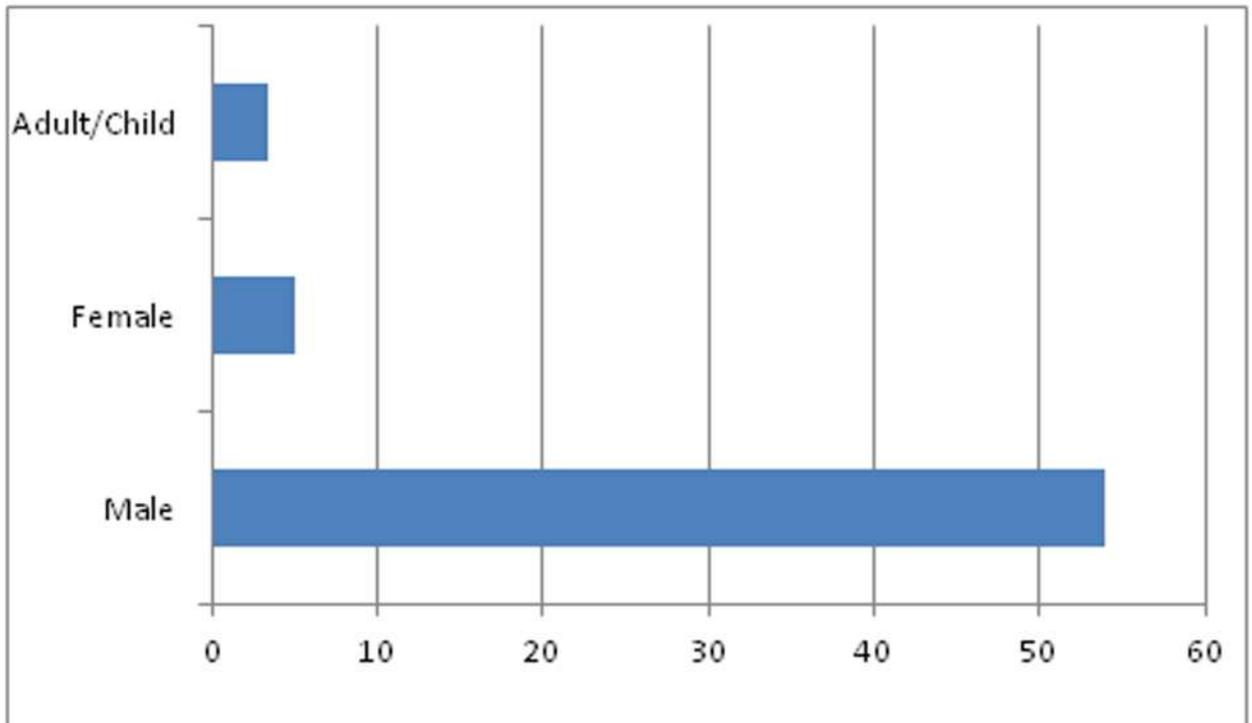


Figure 18: Graph representation of Gender in Prehistoric period from Museums of Northeast India

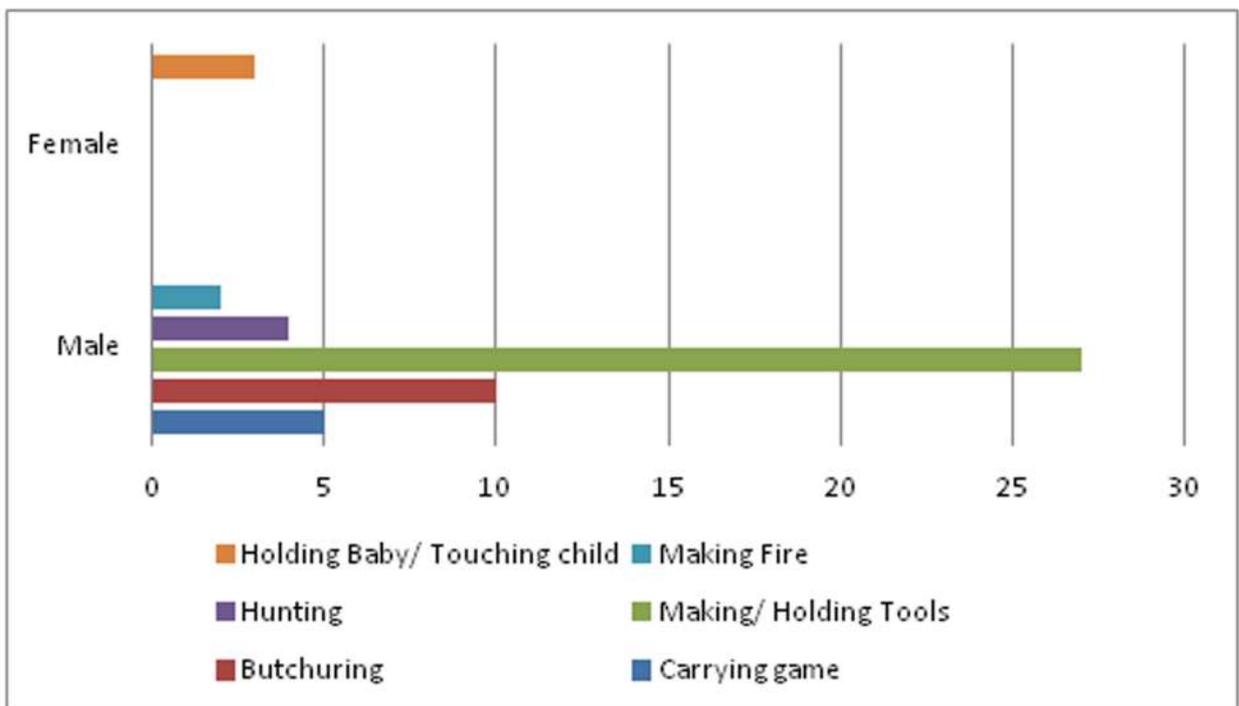


Figure 19: Graph representation of gender-wise representation of activities in museums of Northeast India

## **CHAPTER-4**

### **COMMUNITIES, HISTORIES, AND REPRESENTATIONS IN MUSEUMS OF NORTHEAST INDIA**

Over the last few decades, in response to critiques and multidisciplinary studies on modern museum objects, collections and their processes have been redefined. The shift has radically broadened the functions and processes not simply emphasizing collection and preservation but rather having codes and activities streaming to communicate with the public. In recent decades the new museum practices, apart from visitor's experiences, management, display techniques, objects collections, historical narrations and interpretation, representations have become core issues in museological discourse. The old notion of the museum as a repository or a storehouse displaying collections has shifted towards a new trend culminating in various disciplinary fields. Rather than as an amusement or an entertainment center, museums today have emerged as an institution with a careful understanding of the social, cultural, economic, and political milieu of the society under consideration. The museum, as a role model in educating - such as representation and projection, has vital significance in disseminating the true aspects of the society or culture that is exhibited. Either directly or indirectly, display of culture represents identity and histories most significantly perhaps the self-image and sometimes who we are not (see Karp, 1991).

Limiting the area, the idea of re-signified and re-posed new museum is explored to investigate selected museums from Manipur, Tripura, and Meghalaya states of Northeast India and explore identities represented and other contested interpretations from the museum in these three regions. The concept of identity is complex and dynamic; it has been introduced in multidisciplinary fields justifying their needs and explanations. According to Breckner (2014), "Identities are shaped in processes by acquiring, living in and moving through different social contexts and positions in families, generations, milieus, life spheres, institutions, societies, and not least collectivities constructed as national or ethnic ones. The actual placing, be it by others or by oneself, is part of the process in which social positions are created, stabilized, changed, and transformed" (Breckner, 2014, p.16). According to Karolewski (2010), "From the methodological point of view, there are social (group) identities of individuals and collective identities. Social identities are the result of the

identification of the individual concerning groups, the collective identities - the result of the comparison of imagined communities which form the idea of or the notions 'who we are'"(Karolewski 2010, pp.24-43). Kidd (2002) defined identity as, "...the characteristic of thinking, reflecting and self- perception that is held by the people in the society and [is] further identified three forms of identity; first individual identity- the unique sense of personhood held by each person in their own right. Secondly, social identity- a collective sense of belonging to a group, identifying themselves as having something in common with other group members and thirdly, cultural identity- a sense of belonging to a distinct ethnic, cultural, or subcultural"(Kidd 2002, p.24). The concept of identity is employed in various aspects - nationalism, religion, politics, culture, psychology, sociology, electoral; ethnicity, and many among others. Museum objects and collections in its broader understanding link with the above aspects, as collections and objects have their provenances, which are identifiers. The idea of 'Identity' has been discussed in museum literature over the past decades (see Hooper-Greenhill, 2000; Leinhardt and Knutson, 2004 and Falk, 2006). It has shown that museums play a crucial role in shaping both individual and national identities through their collections, research, and public programs. Hence, a visit to a museum can influence both a person's identity and their sense of self (Falk, 2006; Rounds, 2006). In addition, identity can be shaped by visitor's interactions with museum objects; visitors recall meaningful objects during museum visits that elicit feelings relevant to their identities (see Paris and Mercer, 2000). Objects are used to construct identities, on both a personal and national level. Thus, objects can become invested with deeply held feelings and can symbolize powerful convictions through which life is led (see Hooper- Greenhill, 2000).

In recent times, storming demands of the return of objects from colonial museums by indigenous communities across colonial nations are examples of seeking and respecting one's roots and cultural identity (for example Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003, Australia: Repatriation of Historic Human Remains – July 2009, Truscott, 2006; Ghoshray, 2007; Dianina, 2010 and Roehrenbeck, 2010). Cultural displays create opportunities for the community to represent its identities. Thus, seeking authentic knowledge of past traditional society, museums play an important institution for the preservation and presentation of identities. The rapid change of culture attracts more for understanding the identity and knowledge from the past society and such research will directly or indirectly base itself on the museum collections and other allied sources. Exhibitions represent identity, directly, either through assertion, or indirectly, by implication. Karp (1991) maintains that, "When cultural 'others' are implicated, exhibitions tell us who we are and, perhaps most significant,

who we are not... exhibitions are privileged arenas for presenting images of 'self' and 'other'. ” (Karp, 1991, p.14). Representation needs a clear concept whether be it constructed, reconstructed, or in its originality, describing its identities as a museum plays a crucial role in educating the public about identities in this age of celebrating and respecting cultural diversity and plurality.

Whether it's a consequence of the colonial legacy or the political demarcation under the present Indian Union, it is understood and established that Northeast India is a region comprising multi-ethnic groups, multilingual and multicultural attributes that form a unique feature on the ethnic background of the region. Discourse on the northeast region also needs a powerful discursive understanding of the intercultural, inter-ethnic, and geopolitical situation of the region. Considering the geography, the region may be broadly categorized into the Plains and the Hills. The plains include the Brahmaputra valley of the Ahoms, Bodos, Adivasis, and other plains tribals, the Barak valley or Cachar of the Bengalis and tribal communities, Tripura of the Bengalis and Tripuris. The hills comprise of the Khasis, Garos, Jaintias, War, Baite and Kukis of Meghalaya. The Mizos, Kuki- Chin of Mizoram, Nagaland of various Naga communities, Manipur of Meiteis in the valleys and various Naga communities in hills and valleys Mizo and other communities in the hills. Furthermore, the Adis, Akas, Apatanis, Khamptis, Miris, Nishis, Noctes, Wanchos of Arunachal Pradesh; the Tripura, Reang, Jamatia, Chakma, Kuki, Garo, Lushia, Bhutia of Tripura. The above ethnic groups are further sub-divided into numerous sub-communities having their own identity and culture that draws affinities to the major group in which they are conglomerated. The conglomeration or agglomeration of one or more communities, and the minority within a larger group is apparently common in this part of the region. Indeed, the projection of such a scenario in a museum set up requires rethinking, as representation in museum generally showcases the major communities. Consequently, it is important to consider and understand the constructed and provenance of what is exhibited in order to gain the accuracy of representation of cultures and communities.

The notion of identities on the social, political, ethnic, or cultural identity has engaged the attention of scholars working in Northeast India, which is of great significance in understanding the diverse communities of the region. Three states amongst the eight share some common features; they comprise of tribal populations, groups of communities demarcated by political boundaries, colonial legacy, contest for identity, and rich diverse cultures and communities. It is here that the museum as an institution holds an important place in the society as it creates and tells a story of the society and the environment.

The premise of New Museology practice and ideas are evident across the museums of Northeast India. However, on close observation, it suggests that many of the museums are derived from nineteenth-century museum concepts, which are in need of critical constructive ideas. The idea that museums served as cultural institutions whose task was to safeguard cultural expressions for the future has now become a meeting point where social and cultural ideas are generated and shared. Collections, communities, and culture represented in the museum in recent times play a crucial role, for instance - the accountability on whose culture is represented? Which community is represented and what does the museum interpret about the nation, region, and individual, or how does the representation reflect the situating context? As a result of such queries, material cultures placed in museums are markers and representation of communities that underlines the past and the present context. A cross-examination of the mode of display techniques in museums of Northeast India are the traditional glass fitted showcases, shelves and dioramas which are a very common practice. Museums have evolved and adapted over time in the present context, however, most of the museums in Northeast India do not have digital learning platforms, electronic displays, interactivity or handheld guides within the museum which are necessary and relevant in the present context.

As the present study addresses the region of North East India, museums are still at its nascent stage evolving and deriving their ideas from traditional museum practices. Along with district, private, local museums, and other institutions, the eight states of Northeast India, except the State of Sikkim, the other seven states have their state museums representing their people, culture, histories, and communities. The nature of collections and the displays of the museums are mainly ethnographic in character. The collections and displays of various textiles, dresses, ornaments, and paraphernalia of other domestic items of these museums are the heritage treasure of the communities. Portrayed, preservation and conservation are preferably the main objective of the museums. Most museums create and represent the idea of the region within and not the broader picture, as the contents display their people and culture and not the region in its entirety. Despite sharing close cultural and social affinities that political demarcation has created, the same boundary is maintained within the museum space. Exceptionally, the gallery at the Tripura State Museum has vividly represented the whole of Northeast India. Another such museum is the Don Bosco Museum, Mawlai, Shillong, which has brought about a new trend in the role of museums and can be regarded as a great landmark in the museum movement of North East India and India in general. The museum here at Mawlai has modern museum technologies and all eight states

are represented under one roof that attempt to give a broader outlook of the visitor's experience.

Besides the state museum, the region also comprises district, private and local community museums which are institutions for conservation and preservation of the region's heritage at the grassroots level. The natures of such museums are confined within the communities in their districts, while others, represent a particular community, clan or individuals. It is interesting to note that such museums fill the lacuna of the state museums at the apex, in other words, representing material cultures that escapes the attention of the state museums. While such museums are small and limited in size, they nevertheless display community and individual initiatives with a keen interest in preserving the past and educating the public. In general, a museum as a nonprofit institution, lacks funding and adequate policy, awareness of the public, understanding of the region, limitations on research are some common hindrances to the development of museums in Northeast India. Hence, representation of communities and cultures in museums directly or indirectly co-relates with the above problems.

### **Manipur**

A general background on the geopolity of Manipur for understanding communities represented in the museum is essential - Manipur is situated in the northeastern frontier of India bordering Myanmar on the east and south, the southern border adjoins Mizoram and is bounded on the west by Cachar District of Assam, to the southeast by North Cachar Hills of Assam and to the North by Nagaland. The State covers an area of land surface measuring 22,256 sq. km, and comprises of nine districts - Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal and Bishnupur in the Valley, Churachandpur, Ukhrul, Senapati, Tamenglong, and Chandel in the hills. The major indigenous people of the state are Meiteis, the Nagas, and the Zo Communities. The Meiteis are mainly concentrated in the valley of Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal, and Bishnupur districts, while the Zo and the Naga communities mainly occupy the five hill districts. According to Devi (2006), "There are thirty-three (33) recognized Scheduled Tribes and other unrecognized tribes- Aimol, Anal, , Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Hmar, Kabui, Kacha Naga, Koirao, Kom, Lamgang, Mao, Maram, Maring, Lushei/Mizo tribe, Mongsang, Moyon, Paite, Purum, Ralte, Suhte, Tangkhul, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zou, Kharam, Tarao, Kuki and Poumai Naga. Manipur with such groups and culture has a vibrant culture and it is a land of diversity" (Devi, 2006, p.7).

The Manipur State Museum was originally established in 1969 as an anthropological museum and has considerably grown into a full-fledged multipurpose museum today. The primary objective for its establishment underlines the necessity to preserve and highlight the rich and diverse cultural heritage of the region (see Museum Brochure). Currently, the museum consists of six galleries - i) ethnological gallery, ii) archaeological gallery, iii) art gallery, iv) natural history gallery, v) children's gallery, and vi) Musical gallery (Table 15). The galleries show the sequence of the state culture beginning from the Stone Age to the production and smelting of iron. The display sequence continues with the megalithic culture associated with communities that practiced such tradition. Pottery collection from various archaeological sites is a significant benchmark in understanding the communities. The epigraphical record, numismatics, manuscripts, sculptures, and stone relics add to the later development and interaction of the region.

**Table 15:** Details of collection in Manipur State Museum

Sl. No	Galleries	Collection	Mode of Display Technique	Total No of Collection
1	Ethnographic gallery	Ornaments, Headgears, Textiles of various communities ; Royal utensils, Meitei textile, Jewelry, arms & weaponry, decorative borders and lace, <i>hookahs</i> , Indigenous games of Manipur, wooden dish -on- stand and plates, basketry crafts, agricultural tools, hunting implements, fish traps, weaving and cotton spinning implements, bamboo & gourd container	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, Blowup	10,000
2	Musical Instrument gallery	Various indigenous instruments of Jew's Harp, Idiophone, Chordophone, Aerophone, Membranophone, Miniature Log drum		
3	Art gallery	Royal and prominent individuals' portraits, contemporary arts, and paintings depicting nature, social and creative works of the region		
4	Natural History gallery	Wildlife, minerals, flora, and fauna, types of rice, medicinal plants of the State		
5	Children's gallery	Dolls from the Soviet, China, Japan, Korea, Latin America, etc... other significant displays are miniature dolls representing the		

		communities/state of India and the thirty-three (33) tribes' couples in their traditional dress and costumes. Rasa Lila's depiction through dolls is the center of attraction showing the traditional Rasa songs.		
6	Archeological gallery	Palaeolithic stone tools, Neolithic stone tools, potteries, coins, stone tablets, numismatics, traditional iron smelting, megalithic traditions		
7	Others	Royal Boat, Shamu Taipot and sculptures		

The ethnographic gallery (Figure 20a and 20b) represents the visual richness of cultural material, and the diversity of the indigenous communities. The collection on display includes sections on ornaments, headgear, and textiles representing the identity of the various communities. Another case of identity representations are the Royal utensils, Meitei textiles, jewellery, arms and weaponry, and indigenous games which are the chief markers of Meitei communities. Here, identity is structured as what was developed in the society through the objects. The objects become essential criteria for marking identities. Another important gallery supporting the understanding of identities of the community through music is the musical instrument gallery, exhibiting the various indigenous instruments widespread in the state from both the hills and the valley. In addition, the art gallery exhibits the royal and prominent individual's portraits, contemporary arts, and paintings depicting nature, social and creative works of the region. The Natural history gallery (Figure 21) represents the varied wildlife, minerals, flora, and fauna of the state. Visitors to the museum include people from all walks of life, both old and young. It is interesting to note that to attract and learn the cultures, museums have dolls showcases that are informative through informal means. The Children's Gallery (Figure 22) displays numerous dolls from around the world with their national attires and costumes, for instance, the Soviet Union, China, Japan, Korea, Latin America, etc. While other significant displays include miniature dolls representing the communities/state of India and the thirty-three (33) communities' couples in their traditional attires. Rasa Lila's (story based and love story of Radha and Krishna) depiction through dolls is the center of attraction showing the traditional Rasa songs. The replication of images in a playful manner helps children to learn the identities, culture, dress, religion, lifestyle through the dolls around the world and their surroundings. Manipur State museum plays a crucial role in educating the public about Manipur identities in this fast-changing society. From the above observation of the galleries, the primary objective of the museum is fulfilled and displays the

collections and objects that represent the identities of the communities and the state in general.

The museum is a living institution in preserving the cultural heritage of the state, but considering the representation of identities, the museums lack other important aspects such as the failure to provide a historical sequence of objects/items on display, historical relation with other states/countries, and representation of sub-communities. However, the financial constraints which are common, the state museum as a whole representing the state bearing the significance of the ethnic way of life, costumes and traditional ritual of the tribal communities needs rethinking to show more interest in the communities and the cultures of the region, by adopting inclusive and participatory concepts from their perspectives using the various embedded sources. The motive here is not to create further an identity politics, but rather to encourage and respect cultural diversity and celebrate plurality.

There are about twenty-four (24) museums in Manipur listed in the following table. On the distribution, categories, management and ownership (see Table 16). It is apparent that most of the nature of collections can be categorized as ethnographic museums. Concerning ownerships, three agencies are evident viz. central, state and private organizations. On the networking or distribution of museums, the state museum stands at the apex, followed by the Tribal Institute Museums, College and University Museums, Individual and Private Organization Museums. The modes of display techniques are primarily glass fitted showcases, table showcases, open display, shelves, models, and dioramas.

**Table 16:** Lists of Museums and Mode of Display Technique, Manipur

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Museum collection	Mode of Display Technique	Total No of Collection (approx.)
1	Kangla Museum	Photos, Rare documents, Coins, Instruments	Showcase, Table Showcase,	100
2	Tribal Museum and Research Centre, Leikai	Pottery, utensils, basketry, Arms and Armory, Musical instruments, Dress and ornaments etc.	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging	200
3	Museum of Tribal Research Institute	Pottery, utensils, agricultural implements, dress and ornaments, headgears, wooden and bamboo crafts, etc.	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging	300
4	Agape Museum	A pictorial representation of	Photographs	-

		Christ's suffering and promises, photos of the Holy land, pictures of Christian values and teachings, etc		
5	Tribal Museum, Zogam Art and Cultural Development Association, Churachandpur	Kerosene run Refrigerator , Charcoal run oven, rare books, initial laptop models, and computers, dolls, dress and ornaments, II World War collections, flora and fauna collection, coins, musical instruments, Bibles and rare books, miniature tribal houses, wooden and bamboo works etc.	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, Children's Park	1400
6	Cultural Heritage Complex Andro/ Mutua Museum	Tribal architecture, megaliths, potteries, wooden and bamboo crafts, tribal arts, open air tribal habitat	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, traditional houses, open air	3600
7	Peoples Museum, Kakching	Coins, Dresses, stone tools, armour, sculptures, Manuscripts, arms and weaponry, musical instruments etc	Showcase, Table Showcase, Open Display, Hanging	1200
8	RKCS Art Gallery, Imphal west	Paintings, Crafts, sculptures, Vintage Hollywood Poster, Rare stamps, rare Photographs.	Hanging	500
9	Anthropological Museum, Manipur University	Coins, musical instruments, Sculpture, Natural things, pottery, photos etc.	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging	450
10	Manipur University Museum, Manipur University	Books, Coins, tribal Musical Instruments, Ornaments, weaving implements etc.	Showcase, Table Showcase, Hanging	200
11	Agriculture Museum, Sanjenthong Imphal	-	-	-
12	Leimarel Museum and Research Centre, Imphal West District	Ethnic textiles, rare books, musical instruments	--	-
	Children Museum -		-	-

13	cum- Doll House, Bal Bhawan Khuman Lampak Imphal	Varieties of dolls		
14	Manipur Science Centre, Imphal	Digital Planetarium, open air park, Indian trains, dinosaurs, open air gymnasium ,	-	-
15	Loktak Folklore Museum	Tribal ethnographic collection of dress and ornaments, utensils etc..	-	200
16	Police Museum, 1 <sup>st</sup> Manipur Rifle Campus Imphal	Photos, Arms and Ammunition etc.	-	-
17	State Kala Akademi Museum, Khuman Lampak, Imphal West	Rare books and Manuscripts	-	18000
18	Biological Museum, Manipur Zoological Garden Imphal	Rare animals and birds etc.	--	40
19	INA Museum, Moirang	Uniforms, binoculars, hand grenades, gun, gun powder, poison bottles, empty cartridges and parts of tank, Photographs, Coins, arm and armour, hand book, hand bills, helmets, oxygen mask, amulets,	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging	300
20	Ranshak Living Museum, Lunga Village, Ukhrul District	Dress and ornaments, agricultural implements, utensils etc..	-	-
21	Purul Living Museum, Purul Atongba Village, Maram, Senapati District	Dress and ornaments, agricultural implements, utensils etc..	-	-
22	Archaeological site Museum, Sekta village	Potteries, photos of the site excavation	-	-
23	Orient Museum, Tamenlong District	Dress and ornaments, agricultural implements, utensils etc.	-	-
24	The United Museum, Noney Village, Tamenglong	Dress and ornaments, agricultural implements, utensils etc.	-	-

### **The Tribal Museum, Zogam Art and Cultural Development Association, Churachandpur, Manipur**

The Tribal Museum, Zogam Art and Cultural Development Association, Churachandpur, Manipur (Figure 23), a private initiative museum collections from within and outside the state have been spending a considerable amount of time, finance, and labor since 1974, was established in 1991. A short excerpt from an interaction with the chairman and owner T.Dongzaki Gangte of the museum during field work in 2015 reveals the beginning of the museum:

“Upliftment of the tribe and civilization is very fast. All things we have got were thrown away or it was vanished without caring so for preserving, keeping all the things, the old things, if I do not preserve, if I do not collect, all will have vanished and it cannot be found again. So I have collected these things from 1970 but I do not have any place or house to keep the things it was like garbage. For this, I applied for funding from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and they have sanctioned not a big amount to satisfy the extension of the building. I have applied again for another installment for renovation. In the first installment, I could not utilize during the financial year because of some things, so to say if I advertised to the newspaper some unauthorized body may demand percentage or they may stop my work... The second installment, I did not receive. The first construction was only ground floor without any wall exposed to the rain and sun... so I borrowed some amount to keep the objects, which are also not up-to-date. The completion is in need for some time. For collection, there is no cooperation from the public...in some places in advance countries or some other parts they brought the valuable things and old things of the ancestors they deposit to the museum but here it is not like that. There is no support from the public... Despite depositing to the museum if an old coin is found they expect a big amount... all objects in the museum are collected by me some even I purchased. I have collected old things mainly from these areas...I have also put old and advanced lifestyle things in the museum because if I keep only old things local people will not be interested...to attract children I have varieties of dolls and amusement parks within the complex so that when a visit to museum children not only sees the doll and play but learn something new about the culture...”. (Personal communication, T.Dongzaki Gangte 2015)

The prime focus and objective of the Museum is to preserve, conserve and promote the Art and Culture of the different communities inhabiting Churachandpur District. Although small, the museum has a compound for a Children Park and the collections range from ethnographic to World War II collections. It displays a telescope used by Watkin Roberts, a Welsh missionary who, as one of the first Christian missionaries to the region, was responsible for the conversion of the locals to the Christian faith. The museum also has leather cannons used during an uprising against the British. It has a collection of old photographs depicting feuds within the tribe. It also has a collection of various traditional currencies used by the Zo people.

An interesting exhibit of the museum is the projection of the Biblical stories and the history of the coming of Christianity among the communities. Rare collections include kerosene-run refrigerator, charcoal-run oven, rare books, prototype laptop models, and computers. The museum represents the replica of a traditional house in simple dioramas, woodcrafts, dolls, costumes and ornaments, musical instruments, agricultural implements, and basketry. A unique feature of the museum is the representation of folktales and mythology through posters and dioramas. Overall, the museum attempts to place human civilization since its beginning, community life, colonial collections, and ethnographic collection of the community, early education and Christianity, and the socio-cultural scenario of the region. The museum thus is an informative space for the understanding of the people and culture in one hand and fulfilling its objectives on the other.

### **Tribal Museum and Research Centre, Sagolband Bijoy Govinda Akham Leikai, Imphal**

Tribal Museum and Research Centre, Sagolband Bijoy Govinda Akham Leikai, Imphal (Figure 24) a private museum with its humble beginning in 1987 was set up with the primary objective to study, research, and document the lifestyle, cultural practices, and traditions of the tribes of Manipur which are more prone to neglect. Other objectives include the collection and preservation of both antique conventional objects used by several communities of the region, publications to highlight the research findings, which include general observations on the transitional cultural changes, and social implications and of the tribal society in their true perspective. It is with deep regret and great loss that Mr. Y Gyaneshwar, the owner of the museum with a humble and visionary personality in the museum movement of Manipur passed away on 18 April 2016, a month after this researcher visited the museum. A brief personal interview with Late Mr. Y Gyaneshwar encapsulates the mindset of the people on his personal collections:

“During my visit to villages and fieldwork, my friends and neighbors would laugh at me for bringing baskets, wooden crafts and old discarded objects but today the Governor of the State visited my place and that was my greatest honor and a moment to be cherished...and I would like the young generation to collect as much as possible of old objects and document every aspect of the tribal community.”

From a modest beginning, the museum today houses an impressive collection ranging from basketry, arms and agricultural implements, musical instruments, utensils, and household wares of wood and bamboo, potteries, costumes, ornaments, and headgear from different communities of Manipur Nagas. In collaboration with other National Museums, the Museum organized a workshop on “Totem Art, Wood Carving, and Pottery”, a workshop on headgear

and costumes of Manipur and indigenous musical instruments of Manipur, and published two series of the booklets - *Know Your Manipur (Vol- I and II)*.

### **Peoples Museum, Kakching**

Another important private initiative museum is the Peoples Museum. Kakching (Figure 25a and 25b) which developed out of personal collections. The collections housed in a compact building include ethnographic objects, stone tools, arms and weaponry, coins, ornaments, musical instruments, and World War II collections. During interaction, the proprietor of the museum outlined a few of the setbacks of the museum:

- Most collections are mainly out of personal hobby and awareness to conserve and preserve cultural objects.
- Lack of funding and assistance from the public and government agencies.
- Need for extension of the building and infrastructure.
- Require support and awareness by the government and the general public on the role of museum education

### **Tripura**

Tripura State Museum, Ujjayanta Palace and Tribal Museum-cum-Heritage Center, Khumulwng, Tripura, were chosen for this study. The collections in these selected museums are mainly ethnographic in nature and represent the communities of the State. It is interesting to note that these museums showcase the lifestyle, arts, culture, tradition, and utility crafts, besides the customs, practices of various communities; furthermore, an endeavour to understand the cultural diversity and offer visitors an opportunity to perceive the indigenous knowledge and the aesthetic patterns at its possible best. Besides the above museum, there are other museums, which are listed below in Table 17.

**Table 17:** List of Museums, their collections and mode of display, Tripura

Sl. No.	Name of the Museum	Museum collections	Mode of Display Technique	Total No of Collection (approx)
1	Tripura State Museum Ujjayanta Palace	Sculptures, terracotta, coins, copper & stone inscriptions, bronze images, textiles, oil paintings, sketches & drawings, tribal	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, 3D Models & fibre glass & terracotta panels, interactive	600

		ornaments & musical instruments, art & craft objects, folk articles, 3D models & panels of fibre glass & terracotta etc	kiosk	
2	Tribal Museum cum Heritage Centre, Khumulwng	Oil canvas paintings related to traditional life and culture, display of folk musical instruments of all communities, books on tribal life and culture, basketry works, fishing traps, traditional weaving implements, dress & ornaments, dioramas with models of community	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, 3D Models & fibre glass	500
3	Tripura State Tribal Museum	Dress & Ornaments, life sizes models, dioramas, paintings & photos; cane & bamboo crafts, musical instruments, fishing traps, maps etc	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, 3D Models & fibre glass, interactive kiosk	300
4	Havali Museum	3D models & dioramas of the community, sculptures, photos, pottery, bamboo handicrafts, maps etc.	Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, 3D Models & fibre glass	100
5	Doll Museum	Varieties of dolls	Glass fitted case	50

### **Tripura State Museum, Ujjayanta Palace**

Tripura State Museum, Ujjayanta Palace (Figure 26) is both a historical and ethnological museum formerly known as Tripura Government Museum established in 1970 at Agartala city. The Museum was later shifted to the Heritage Building constructed in 1901. The collections and exhibition cover the lifestyles, arts, culture, tradition, utility crafts, customs, and practices of the communities of Tripura and other groups of Northeast India. The State

museum at Ujjayanta palace (Ujjoyonto Prashad) covers an area of 1 sq km designed and built by Sir Alexander Martin of M/s Martin & Co. of Calcutta for the then King Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya (see *New Indian Express.com* 24 September 2013). The architecture is in Greek sculpture style laden with beautiful flower beds with water pools and fountains providing a rhythm and balance to the building. The palace has three domes; the floor is well tiled with wooden crafted works of the doors, while the ceilings give a standard view from inside. The Royal Palace was occupied as the Assembly of the Tripura Government, which was later declared as a heritage building and inaugurated by Vice President of India Mohammad Hamid Ansari as Tripura State Museum Ujjayanta Palace on September 25, 2013 (see *Firstpost.com* 2013). The compound of the palace resembles the Mughal Garden adorned with beautiful flowers, pools, and water fountains that attracts visitors. At first glance from outside the museum is a perfect place for hangouts for both the young and the old. There are around 20 (twenty) Galleries (Figure 27a and 27b) in all and in between the corridor, it has a good number of items displayed. The first and the foremost gallery is the Introductory gallery representing generally the tribes, pujas, dance forms of Tripura, the developmental progress in Tripura, land and the people, mountains and rivers, flora and fauna, the communities of Tripura, development of Bengal culture, Old Tripura depictions and an LCD displaying the Pujas and festivals of Tripura. The Geology, Anthropology and Forest gallery, depict bamboo – a natural resource of the region, oil and natural gas, water resources of Tripura, stone tools and fossils, and the forest wealth of Tripura. The three archaeological galleries represent the archaeology of Tripura. Exhibitions include an archaeological map of Tripura, coins, copper plates, stone inscriptions, and terracotta figurines bronze sculptures, sculptures of gods and goddesses, etc (see Table 18).

**Table 18:** List of Museums, their collections and mode of display Tripura State Museum, Ujjayanta Palace

Sl. No.	Galleries	Collection/ Details	Mode of display Technique	Total No of Collection
1	Introductory Gallery	Representing generally the tribes, pujas, dance forms, developmental progress in Tripura, land and the people, mountains and rivers, flora & fauna, the communities of Tripura, development of Bengal culture, Old Tripura depictions and an LCD displaying the Pujas and festivals of Tripura	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, 3D	

2	The Geology, Anthropology and Forest gallery	Depicts the bamboo as a natural reserve of the region, oil and natural gas, water resources of Tripura stone tools and fossils, forest wealth of Tripura	Models & fibre glass & terracotta panels, interactive kiosk	10,000
3	Archaeological Gallery- I, II, III	Archaeological map of Tripura, coins, copper plates, epigraphy, terracotta figurines, Bronze sculptures, sculptures of god and goddess, etc.		
4	General photo gallery	The theme “Enchanting Natural Beauty of Northeast India” represents the various natural scenic beauty of the region through hang ups photography		
5	Tagore and Tripura gallery	Tagore and the development of Tripura, Rabindranath Tagore literature and the Tripura kingdom, the sojourn of Tagore at Tripura, Rabindranath Tagore and Tripura, Royal palace and Thakur Bari, and the backdrop of the play “Visarjan”		
6	Community Gallery- I, II, III	Diaromas of the Bengali culture of Tripura, the Jamatias, the Halam, Molsom women, the tea tribes of Bhils, Santhals, Mundas, and Orangs, musical instruments, textiles, dress and ornaments, basketry, various fishing trap, pictures and diaromas with mixed themes on Manikya dynasty, Ancient Tripura and eastern part of Bangladesh, South East Asia, the Neolithic culture of Assam, Dimasa (Kachari) Kingdom, INA movement in Nagaland and Manipur, Kamarupa Rajya, Koch Rajya, Sutiya Rajya, the Sariaghat war, depictions of Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, and the Ahom kingdom		
7	The Royal painting gallery	Life-size portraits of the rulers, coronation of Maharajas		
8	Others	Canons of the Bengal Sultan Hussein Shah & Statues outside the compounds		

A general photo gallery with the theme “Enchanting Natural Beauty of Northeast India” represents the various natural scenic beauty of the region through photography. Another

feature of the museums are the embroidery works and craft collections, arranged along the passage corridor keeping the gaze of visitors engaged while proceeding to the next level of the palace for galleries. The emphasis on Rabindranath Tagore is within one gallery *Tagore and Tripura gallery* with themes such as, Tagore and the development of Tripura, Rabindranath Tagore literature and the Tripura kingdom, the sojourn of Tagore at Tripura, Rabindranath Tagore and Tripura, Royal palace and Thakur Bari, and the backdrop of the play “Visarjan”.

The Community Gallery is the hallmark of the museum comprising three galleries - Gallery I, II, and III displaying through objects and diorama where both tangible, as well as intangible heritage are well executed. The depiction of community folktales (Figure 28) - *Kok-Ta-Sadi*, The Hornbill, A Justice in the Jungle, the Ring that Speaks are classic examples of representing the intangible heritage of the region. Community gallery - I present dioramas that offer a glimpse of the Bengali culture of Tripura, the Jamatias, the Halam, Molsom women, the tea tribes of Bhils, Santhals, Mundas, and Orangs. The Community Gallery-II exhibits musical instruments, textiles, costumes and ornaments, basketry, and the various fishing traps used in the region. The Community Gallery - III has blow-up pictures and dioramas with mixed themes on the Manikya Dynasty, Ancient Tripura and the eastern part of Bangladesh, South East Asia, the Neolithic culture of Assam, Dimasa (Kachari) Kingdom, the INA (Indian National Army) movement in Nagaland and Manipur, Kamarupa Rajya, Koch Rajya, Sutiya Rajya, the Sariaghat War, depictions of Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, and the Ahom kingdom. Further, the gallery represents the communities of Reangs, Garos, Chakmas, Mogs, Uchai, Lushais, and Chaimals. The Royal painting gallery collections are mostly of the Royal family of Tripura that were donated by them along with life-size portraits of the rulers. Some of the paintings represented are the coronation of Maharaja Bischandra Manikya (1862), the coronation of Birendra Kishore Manikya, the queens, and the princess of Tripura, the royal lineage are depicted too.

The museum plans to include a sports gallery and Bangladesh India War gallery, which will be of great importance from a historical perspective. Overall, the museum represents the community through objects, arts, and dioramas, a very educative experience that provides meaning and better understanding of the state, which is otherwise unaware by the public. A secular spirit of religion (Figure 29) is well depicted which shows and expresses the freedom of religion practiced by the communities that represent the State. The identities of each community are well represented where the museum as an institution is carefully executed in understanding the region. The early museum history reveals a controversy over a

state proposal to rename the palace as the State Museum Tripura. The tussle rose between the government and indigenous community that went to the extent of candlelight rally showing resentment by the community. Headlines on various dailies too brought to light the issue, such as “Tribals protest of Tripura palace”, “Tripura government relents to mass protests against re-naming of palace” (see Anurag 23rd September 2013 rediff.com), “Tripura museum to retain the name of Ujjayanta Palace” (see *Times of India* 24th September 2013), and “History finds royal quarters.” (See Sekhar Datta 20th September 2013 *The Telegraphindia.com*). In the aftermath of the rally and protest, the government decided to retain its old name and promised to erect a statue of the Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya in the premises of the Palace. This demonstration shows the participation of communities in the museum whose identity is well preserved and is an example of consultation and negotiation in representing the community and further, is a two-way exchange of exhibiting the community and the context of the society.

### **Tribal Museum -cum- Heritage Center, Khumulwng**

Tribal Museum-cum-Heritage Center, Khumulwng (Figure 30) is another important museum in Tripura. The prolonged movement of the indigenous people gave birth to Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council to empower the indigenous people to govern themselves and bring about all-round development for the people, to protect and preserve their culture, customs, and traditions. Interestingly, the Tribal Museum cum Heritage Center, Khumulwng, was a long - unfulfilled demand of the community, which was finally fulfilled, with the creation of the Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council. Considering the communities' long-term plan, the establishment of the Center was the initiative under the twenty-five (25) point's package for tribal development undertaken by the State Government. The museum is housed in a two-storied gallery entirely dedicated to represent the nineteen (19) communities of the State. The galleries includes models of various traditional huts, jhum cultivation related to life and culture of the original inhabitants of Tripura, model of couples from all the nineteen (19) communities, oil canvas paintings on traditional life and culture, display of folk musical instruments of all communities, collection and display of books on tribal life and culture, display on the history of communities of Tripura. The museum has attempted to positively represent the communities in all its possible limits. The representation of a collective identity that is a common theme in Northeastern Museums is present and attention is given to articulate the major communities of the region and hence sub-groups/communities are poorly projected. The technique for projection and representation is

through models, and dioramas; while cultural objects dominate the original collections. Appreciating the tribal arts, the museum also contains an impressive collection of tribal art motifs that depicts the life and culture of the communities. Judging from an overall standpoint, the museum possesses great potential for future museum-related research.

### **The Tripura State Tribal Museum**

Located within the premises of the Tribal Research and Cultural Institute (Figure 31), the museum was conceived with the intention of promoting tribal heritage and culture. To engage the visitors, the entry of the museum has wall photos that portray the rich and diverse arts and crafts of Tripura's tribal communities. Casting a spell on the visitor through colorful visuals, the wall introduces the 19 tribal communities of Tripura. Through life-size dioramas, the museum showcases the colorful dances, costumes and rituals of the Tripura tribes. The exhibition is conceptualized to provide a glimpse of the social structures, belief systems, languages and traditional occupations of each of these communities. Along with the dioramas, collections include traditional musical instruments, ornaments, fishing and hunting implements, textiles as well as household utensils made of wood and bamboo. Interactive kiosks within the gallery take the visitor beyond the museum's four walls and into the life of the tribal communities through an enthralling combination of short films and vivid imagery. The kiosks present a captivating account of the weaving and bamboo craft traditions practiced by Tripura's tribal communities, encouraging and enticing the visitor to explore these crafts by travelling throughout the state and taking in its lush, serene beauty first-hand.

### **Havali Museum**

One of its kinds in Northeast India, Havali Museum in Agartala (Figure 32) was converted from Havali in the old city. Facing the Fourteen Goddess Temple, the museum was thrown open to the public in June 2012 (see museum brochure). This museum exhibits maps, models and other articles that help visitors obtain a glimpse of the significant and ethnic values of the area. The display themes range from early political maps of Tripura to the present, the daily life of the communities, flora and fauna of the region, architectures, handicrafts, basketry, the restoration works of the Havali, old pictures of the palaces, religious practices of the people, sculptures etc. Concisely, the museum partially represents the State offering reliable information on the royal architecture and the community in general. The museum is located in extensive surroundings, which enhances its aesthetic value from the outside. Considering

the collection and mode of display, however, the museum contains less objects but a considerable number of large photographic representations.

## Meghalaya

Like the other Northeast states, the State museum is at the apex with other districts, private and organizations museums. There are around fourteen (14) museums in the state representing the region, based on various themes. These themes are mainly based on the community, history, art, religion, military, flora and fauna etc. that provides a holistic understanding of the people through museums. The state has two unique landmark museums representing Northeast India- the Don Bosco Museum at Mawlai and the Butterfly Museum, Shillong. Besides, the state offers a variety of museums, which are promising, adding new perspectives to the growth of museums in Northeast India (see Table 19).

**Table 19:** List of Museums, Their Collections and Mode of Display in Meghalaya State

Sl.No.	Name of the Museum	Museum collections	Mode of Display Technique	Total No of collection (Approx.)
1	William Sangma State Museum	Dress & Ornaments, Flora & fauna, weapons section, bamboo & wooden craft; Dioramas representing communities, portraits and musical instruments	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, 3D Models & fibre glass models, interactive kiosk	3000
2	District Museum, Jowai	Dress & Ornaments, weapons, bamboo & wooden crafts and musical instruments, agricultural implements, brass works, photographs, potteries	Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging	200
3	District Museum, Tura	Dress & Ornaments, Dioramas, 3D Models representing communities, musical instruments, prehistoric tools, potteries etc.	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, 3D Models & fibre glass models	450
4	Wankhar Memorial Museum of Entomology, Shillong	Varieties of Butterfly collections	Showcase, Table Showcase	1600

5	Air Force Museum, 7 <sup>th</sup> Mile Upper Shillong	Jet fighters, Helicopter, models of aircrafts, missiles, history section of the Indian Air Force, portraits of the Air Chief Marshalls, uniforms, medals, maps, separate show cases for each Northeast State displaying ethnographic items, musical instrument of communities etc.	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, 3D Models & fibre glass models, open air display	300
6	Manekshaw Museum, Happy valley, Shillong	Memorabilia associated with Field Marshal Sam Hormusji Framji Jamshedji Manekshaw, numerous personal items such as hats, belts, uniforms, and archives of old photographs, trophies award	Showcase, Table Showcase, Open Display, Hanging	200
7	Rhino Heritage Museum, Shillong	Maps, old photographs, Khasi archery equipments, weapons	Showcase, Table Showcase, Open Display, Hanging	120
8	Ever Living Museum, Mawshbuit East Khasi Hills	Ethnographic objects of Khasi, Jaintia & Garos, few collection of stones, fossil & wood, orchid garden	Showcase, Table Showcase, open air	100
9	Geological Museum, Geological Survey of India, Nongrim Hills	Rocks, minerals, and fossils from millions of years ago, samples are mostly from in and around north-east India, multi- disciplinary geo- scientific, geo- technical, and geo- environmental objects	Showcase, Table Showcase	-
10	Don Bosco Museum of Indigenous Culture, Mawlai	Blow up photos and maps of the neighbouring countries, cultures and religion, people, mission & mytrdom, history of Christianity, cultural	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, 3D Models & fibre	3000

		profile of the Northeast, prehistoric illustration, stone tools, musical instruments, utensils, weapons, ornaments, housing styles, and languages etc	glass panels, interactive kiosk	
11	Oriens Cultural Historical Documentation Centre Museum, Mawlai	Old Photographs, Bibles, religious symbols, maps, dress and ornaments, shields, bow and arrows, head gears, swords and machete ( <i>dao</i> ), 3D Models of fibre glass, coffin of Khasi king, animal trophies	Showcase, Table Showcase, Open Display, Hanging, 3D Models	200
12	Zonal Anthropological Museum, Mawlai	Lifestyle, culture, customs, and traditions of the three major matrilineal communities of Meghalaya, namely the Khasis, the Jaintias & the Garos	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display,	-
13	Brookside Bungalow Rabindranath Tagore Museum, Shillong	Personal belongings and memorabilia of poet and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, including his queen-size bed, looking glass, handwritten scrolls and writing desk artworks, paintings	Showcase, Table Showcase, Open Display, Hanging	50
14	The Museum of the Zoological Survey of India, Shillong	Wide array of birds and butterfly specimens indigenous to the area, rare collection of flora and fauna, educational exhibits. Depiction of evolutionary narrative as exemplified by the models of apes swinging over artificial trees next to their less-evolved cousins, a python skeleton etc.	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, 3D Models	-

### The William Sangma State Museum

The William Sangma State Museum, Shillong is an ethnographic museum (Figure 33a and 33b) established in 1975, It was opened in 1976 to preserve and conserve the rich traditional heritage of the people of Khasis, Jaintias, and Garos in particular and other communities residing in the State in general. The collections and exhibitions (see Table 20) include lifestyle, customs, and traditional practice, ethnic tribal handicrafts, archaeological objects, flora, and fauna of the region. The museum was named after the famous social and political activist Captain William Sangma who demanded a separate State of Meghalaya; so influential was Captain Sangma that his name also related to other institutions and prominent landmarks. Ever since its inception, Museum authorities are striving to achieve certain aims and objectives (see Marak 2004):

- to serve as a research institution for intellectuals where records of civilization are stored.
- to afford opportunities to Universities and college students.
- to endow the common people with a better idea of the rich traditional culture of the Khasis, Jaintias, and the Garos.

**Table 20:** Galleries, collections and mode of display William Sangma State Museum

Sl. No.	Name of the Museum	Museum collections	Mode of Display Technique	Total No of collection (Approx.)
1	William Sangma State Museum	Dress & Ornaments, Flora & fauna, weapons section, bamboo & wooden craft; Dioramas representing communities, portraits and musical instruments	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, 3D Models & fibre glass models, interactive kiosk	3000
2	District Museum, Jowai	Dress & Ornaments, weapons, bamboo & wooden crafts and musical instruments, agricultural implements, brass works, photographs, potteries	Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging	200
3	District Museum, Tura	Dress & Ornaments, Dioramas, 3D Models representing communities, musical instruments, prehistoric tools, potteries etc.	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, 3D Models & fibre glass models	450

4	Wankhar Memorial Museum of Entomology, Shillong	Varieties of Butterfly collections	Showcase, Table Showcase	1600
5	Air Force Museum, 7 <sup>th</sup> Mile Upper Shillong	Jet fighters, Helicopter, models of aircrafts, missiles, history section of the Indian Air Force, portraits of the Air Chief Marshalls, uniforms, medals, maps, separate show cases for each Northeast State displaying ethnographic items, musical instrument of communities etc.	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, 3D Models & fibre glass models, open air display	300
6	Manekshaw Museum, Happy valley, Shillong	Memorabilia associated with Field Marshal Sam Hormusji Framji Jamshedji Manekshaw, numerous personal items such as hats, belts, uniforms, and archives of old photographs, trophies award	Showcase, Table Showcase, Open Display, Hanging	200
7	Rhino Heritage Museum, Shillong	Maps, old photographs, Khasi archery equipments, weapons	Showcase, Table Showcase, Open Display, Hanging	120
8	Ever Living Museum, Mawshbuit East Khasi Hills	Ethnographic objects of Khasi, Jaintia & Garos, few collection of stones, fossil & wood, orchid garden	Showcase, Table Showcase, open air	100
9	Geological Museum, Geological Survey of India, Nongrim Hills	Rocks, minerals, and fossils from millions of years ago, samples are mostly from in and around north-east India, multi-disciplinary geo-scientific, geo-technical, and geo-environmental objects	Showcase, Table Showcase	-
10	Don Bosco Museum of Indigenous Culture, Mawlai	Blow up photos and maps of the neighbouring countries, cultures and religion, people, mission & mytrdom, history of Christianity, cultural profile of the Northeast, prehistoric illustration,	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, 3D Models & fibre glass panels,	3000

		stone tools, musical instruments, utensils, weapons, ornaments, housing styles, and languages etc	interactive kiosk	
11	Oriens Cultural Historical Documentation Centre Museum, Mawlai	Old Photographs, Bibles, religious symbols, maps, dress and ornaments, shields, bow and arrows, head gears, swords and machete ( <i>dao</i> ), 3D Models of fibre glass, coffin of Khasi king, animal trophies	Showcase, Table Showcase, Open Display, Hanging, 3D Models	200
12	Zonal Anthropological Museum, Mawlai	Lifestyle, culture, customs, and traditions of the three major matrilineal communities of Meghalaya, namely the Khasis, the Jaintias & the Garos	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display,	-
13	Brookside Bungalow Rabindranath Tagore Museum, Shillong	Personal belongings and memorabilia of poet and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, including his queen-size bed, looking glass, handwritten scrolls and writing desk artworks, paintings	Showcase, Table Showcase, Open Display, Hanging	50
14	The Museum of the Zoological Survey of India, Shillong	Wide array of birds and butterfly specimens indigenous to the area, rare collection of flora and fauna, educational exhibits. Depiction of evolutionary narrative as exemplified by the models of apes swinging over artificial trees next to their less-evolved cousins, a python skeleton etc.	Showcase, Table Showcase, Dioramas, Open Display, 3D Models	-

The galleries include costumes and ornaments, flora and fauna of the region, weapons, bamboo, and wooden crafts, the village life of various communities through dioramas, the dance forms, weapons, archaeological objects, and portraits of famous local and colonial arts, musical instruments. The museum advocates mainly the three communities - Khasis, Jaintias, and Garos, in general, representing the past through ethnographic collections outnumbering relations between contemporary and other attributes of the communities. It is but surprising to

note that Meghalaya although regarded as one of the most studied prehistory of Northeast India, still fails to have a prehistoric gallery of its own.

### **Don Bosco Museum of Indigenous Cultures, Mawlai, Shillong**

The Don Bosco Museum of Indigenous Cultures (Figure 34 a, 34 b & 34 c) one of the landmarks in India, as well as Northeast India, shows cultural artifacts of various tribes of the Northeast of India. The museum exhibits stored in a seven-storey building has at least twenty (20) galleries (see Table 21) that showcases the costumes, musical instruments, utensils, weapons, ornaments, traditional house architectural styles, languages etc. from the Northeast region. Apart from the collections, a unique visitor’s experience is the food gallery that provides authentically prepared recipes belonging to tribal groups from the region. The museum in its entirety provides a vivid understanding of the region from the various components of the exhibition.

**Table 21:** Gallery Collections and Mode of Display Techniques of Don Bosco Museum of Indigenous Culture, Mawlai

Sl. No.	Galleries	Details of Gallery/Collections	Mode of display Technique
1	Our Neighbors	Showcases the neighbouring countries surrounding North East India – Nepal, Bhutan, China (including Tibet), Myanmar, and Bangladesh. The touch screen kiosk provides basic information on each country.	Showcase, fibre glass panels, illustration charts, photo exhibition, 3Dmodels, Dioramas, Open Display, Hanging, Blow up, interactive kiosk, wall plaques, LCD
2	Mission and Culture Gallery	Divided into Section I,II,III & IV with each theme on encounters of different cultures and church, services of the Church in education, healthcare, higher and technical education, publication, formation of Associations; sowing of the word of God, youth ministry, formation of religious congregations, dioceses, in the Northeast region and Meghalaya, illustration of the Khasi and Garo mythology, pioneers of the early mission	
3	Introductory and Prehistory Gallery	Demographic composition of North East India, bio-cultural evolution of man through different stages, descriptions that bears no contradiction between evolution and creation, stone tools from the region	
4	Language Gallery	Displays charts showing the languages of the world – Asia, India and North East India	
5	Land and Peoples Gallery	Exhibits the topographical and human richness of the North East, 3D models of tribal faces, and the countless differences as well as similarities among communities of North East India	

6	Fishing Hunting and Gathering Gallery	Traditional artifacts used for fishing, hunting and gathering from Northeast India.
7	Basketry Gallery	Introduces the importance of bamboo in the material culture of most tribes, baskets of various household items like plates, saucers, spoons and combs, as well as agricultural and fishing utensils, dress, headgears and rain shields
8	Music and Instrument Gallery	Wind instruments, stringed instruments, Percussion Instruments, single membrane drums, Double membrane drums from across the region
9	Religion and Culture Gallery	Wall plaques displaying the relationship between culture and religion, illustrations of Behdeinklam festival celebrated by the Jaintias of Meghalaya
10	Weapons Gallery	Weapons used amongst the different tribes of India's North East, spears, ceremonial weapons, swords, bow and arrow, cross - bow, shields
11	Costumes and Ornaments Gallery	Traditional attires from India's North East, Traditional attire of festivals, official ceremonies, or during church services, ornaments, head gears
12	House Pattern Gallery	Plaque of the North East with different styles of traditional houses with topography, 3D miniature models of Traditional houses across the tribes of North East India built in various forms, shapes and styles
13	Art Gallery	Collection of rare paintings and artifacts from the States of the North East
14	Agriculture Gallery	Display and illustration of main techniques of agriculture in the region; plough cultivation, shifting cultivation and wet-rice cultivation, various traditional agricultural tools
15	Alcove Gallery	Consist of ten(10) Alcoves on various themes- the sacred groove Mawphlang, East Khasi Hills; traditional weaving of Bodo Assam; Loktak Lake of Manipur, Manipuri Dance, Apatani amidst paddy field; Garo hut, Garo Hills ; Garo tree-top hut, Garo Hills; typical tribal hut of Tripuris; Mizo village, bamboo transportation, Garo Hills
16	Photo Gallery	Rare black & white and colour photos of the region on various aspects
17	Traditional Technology Gallery	Exhibition of various traditional crafts found among the tribes of North East India; displays of pottery making, brewing of rice beer, basket making, weaving, blacksmith and goldsmith, wood carving, leather making and cane making
18	Others	Skywalk, Northeast Space Centre, community information, coffee house, traditional food gallery, Museum shop

The museum is a one-of-a-kind initiative by the Salesians of Don Bosco in North East India to create expert facilities for the preservation and promotion of the region's numerous

indigenous cultures, India in particular, and indigenous cultures worldwide. The museums primary goals, mission, and vision are as follows:

- **Exhibition of Cultural Artifacts:** The Don Bosco Museum of Indigenous Cultures' (DBCIC) exhibition of cultural artifacts thematically arranged floor-wise into different galleries along with excellent paintings depicting various aspects of the cultures of North East India forms the first and most visible part of DBCIC.
- **Study and Research:** DBCIC organizes study and research on themes connected with the indigenous cultures of North East India.
- **Culture Related Publications and Activities:** Publications on Culture and related topics constitute the third aspect of DBCIC. Within a short span of years, DBCIC has brought out 12 publications and successfully organized several workshops, courses and seminars on various themes.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Besides the publications and culture-related activities, visitors to the Don Bosco Museum can access knowledge on indigenous cultures with the help of multimedia facilities such as touch screens, plasma panels, computer presentations and documentaries.
- **Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures (DBCIC)** is committed to realizing this vision through a serious commitment to issues related to people and their cultures through: museum tours, research, publications, training, animation programmes and developing a museum-concept in education.
- Every visit to DBCIC should result in increasing “cultural intelligence and cultural transformation.” It is hoped that DBCIC will provide an ongoing education so that it becomes “a powerful catalyst for strengthening the bonds that unite people.”

### **Wankhar Memorial Museum of Entomology, Shillong**

The Butterfly Museum (Figure 35) is a unique private museum established in 1973, owned by the famous Wankhar family of Shillong. An interaction with the owner of the museum brings out the history of the museum:

Mr. S.K. Sircar a naturalist, a pioneering entomologist from Kolkata married a Khasi lady Mrs. Rosily Wankhar. His love for wild orchids, birds, animals, butterflies, moths, beetles, and insects, as a hobby opened a mass and varied collections to the world of entomology. Most of the species collected are worldwide and Indian subcontinent, particularly from parts of Northeast India, Khasi, and Jaintia Hills. These species have been collected from the 1930s, which were preserved and stored properly. The collection increased vastly and during those years with limited space in the house, it was not displayed

to the public. Interestingly to note that Mr. Sircar sent his eldest son Mr. D. Wankhar to England and Germany in 1967-68 to gain more knowledge in the field of entomology. By then, in the year 1973, the museum was opened to the public; since then attracting tourists, scholars, designers, and students both from national as well as global (Personal communication with Ms. Rozalin, 2015)

The museum is now managed by Ms. Rozalin's granddaughter. It is India's only known museum devoted to moths and butterflies, and it houses a diverse collection of approximately 1600 species of butterflies and moths from around the world. Colorful insects and other indigenous species from the surrounding areas are also on display at the museum.

From the above field observation of the three States of Northeast India, most of the museums can be characterized as ethnographic in nature while the collections are also of multiple varieties representing the communities. Focusing on the display technique, we see a change for new generation audiences for better interaction and experience, for example, in the Don Bosco Museum of Indigenous Cultures. Further, we also see the creation of museums based on the social, economic and political development, which are interesting, and aid in understanding the representation in the museum space; for instances, the Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council and the creation of Tribal Museum-cum-Heritage Center, Khumulwng. Along with the State museum, there are various district, community, and private museums, which play a significant part in conserving heritage at the grassroots level. On the district museums, the districts in most of these states are demarcated based on the community. For example, in Manipur, the Senapati District comprises communities such as the Poumai, Maram, Thangal, and Zeliangrong along with other minority groups; Ukhrul District by the Tangkhuls, while the valley districts comprise the Meiteis. In Meghalaya likewise, the Garos, the Jaintias, and the Khasis too are separated by district boundaries. Most of the district museums fall within the umbrella of the State Museum or Art and Culture Directorate, Government of Meghalaya. These museums are the custodians of the community heritage within the district. In comparison to the State Museums, these museums are compact and small with precious collections from the interior, which are now at present lost and in disuse in daily life. At such a juncture of globalization and fast-changing societies, these museums have attempted to preserve the tangible and intangible heritage of target communities. Besides, other museums in this part of Northeast India are the private and tribal institutions, which equally promote and support the museum movement not only within the state but also in Northeast India as a whole.



Figure 20a: Ethnography Gallery collections state museum Manipur



Figure 20b: Ethnography Gallery collections state museum Manipur



Figure 21: Natural History collections- Medicinal plants, Varieties of rice, species of woods



Figure 22: Children's Gallery State museum Manipur



**a**



**b**



**c**



**d**



**e**



**f**



**g**



**h**

Figure 23 a-h: (a) Director & Owner of The Tribal Museum, Zogam Art and Cultural Development Association Churachandpur (right) with the scholar, (b) Representation of the progress of civilizations, (c) Model of a tribal House details, (d) A scene of community tiger hunting, (e) Depictions of Biblical Story on David and Goliath, (f) The guide and the mode of museum display, (g) A model representing the art of blacksmith, (h) collections of Dolls and Barbie to attract children in the museum.



Figure 24: Late. Mr. Y Gyaneshwar, the owner of the museum (top) and some of the collections on display, Tribal Museum and Research Centre, Sagolband Bijoy Govinda Akham Leikai, Imphal





Figure 25b: Display of collections Peoples Museum Kakching



Figure 26: General View of Tripura State Museum, Ujjayanta Palace



Figure 27a: Display techniques and collections from various galleries Tripura State Museum, Ujjayanta Palace



Figure 27b: Display techniques and collections from various galleries Tripura State Museum, Ujjayanta Palace

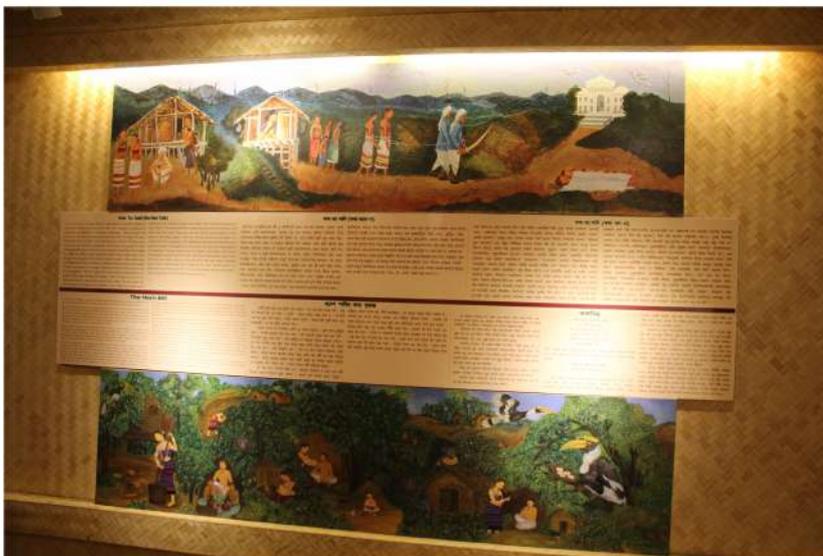
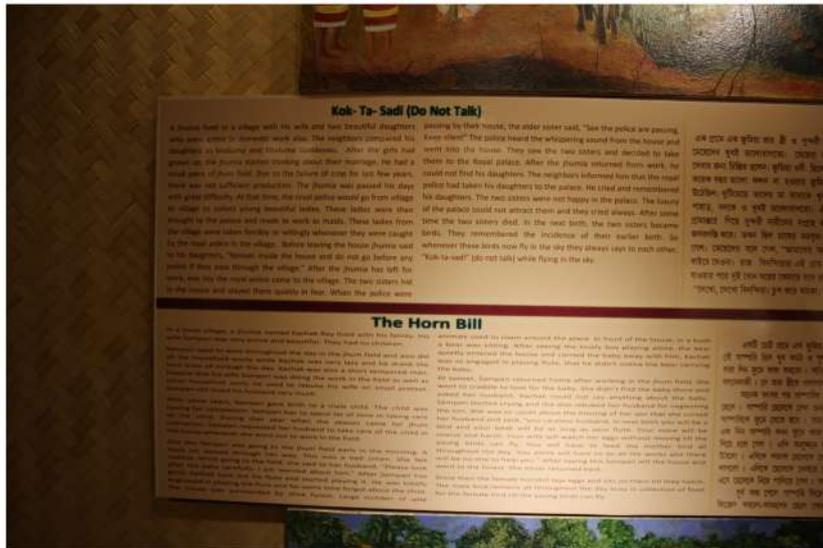


Figure 28: Depiction of folk tale Kok-Ta-Sadi (do not talk) and The Hornbill, representing the intangible heritage of the region Tripura State Museum, Ujjayanta Palace



Figure 29: The Secular spirit of Tripura State Museum, Ujjayanta Palace



Figure 30: Exhibition of collections and museum building view (top) Tribal Museum -cum- Heritage Center, Khumulwng



Figure 31: Display of objects and representation of community and entrance of the museum (top), Tripura State Tribal Museum, Tribal Research and Cultural Institute



Figure 32: Display of objects collection and representation of community through 3D models in Dioramas and hang-ups photos, Haveli Museum Tripura

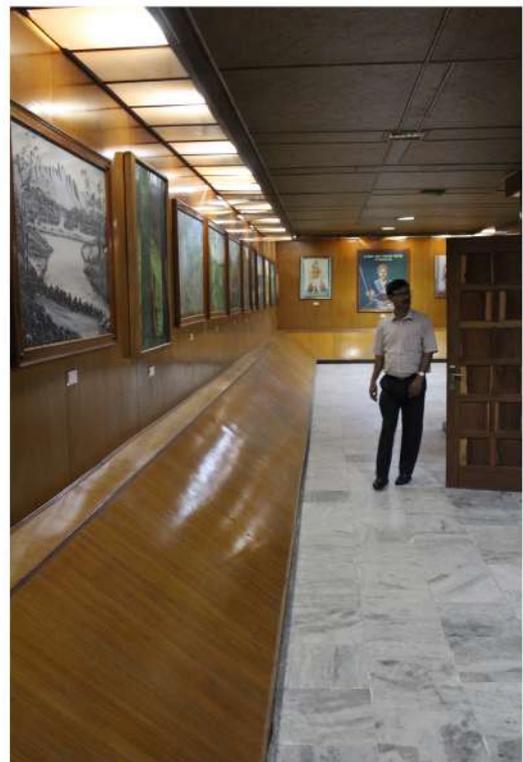


Figure 33a: Display technique and representation of communities through various collections William Sangma Museum Meghalaya



Figure 33b: Display technique and representation of communities through various collections William Sangma Museum Meghalaya



Figure 34 a: Museum building and display technique the Don Bosco Museum of Indigenous Cultures Mawlai Shillong



Figure 34 b: Collections and dioramas representing communities on exhibition Don Bosco Museum of Indigenous Cultures Mawlai Shillong



Figure 34 c: Naga collections on display, Museum shop and Indigenous food gallery (bottom) Don Bosco Museum of Indigenous Cultures Mawlai Shillong

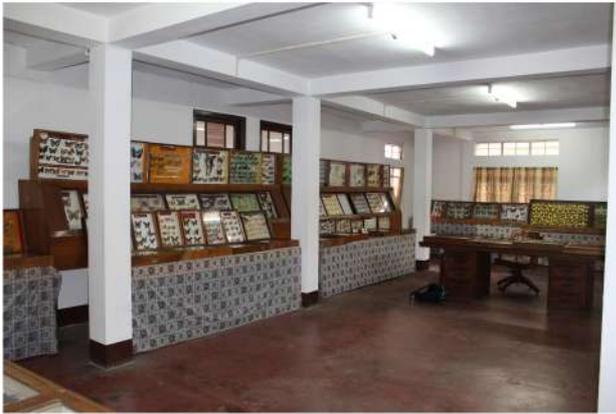


Figure 35: Collection and exhibition Butterfly Museum/Wankhar Memorial Museum of Entomology, Shillong

## **CHAPTER-5**

### **REPRESENTATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN MUSEUMS OF NAGALAND**

Museum and management of heritage in Nagaland is at a nascent stage even though the concerned department had attained its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In the past, the region was regarded as an anthropological museum, because of its rich and diverse cultures, and a place for anthropological research and collections. Various agencies are responsible for playing a role in conserving the heritage of the state. Among these, museums play a vital role in conservation and preservation, and represents collections through various means, and as an institution for promoting and educating diverse communities. The current chapter defines the status of museums in Nagaland from different perspectives: -their functioning, representation, conservation, educational role and promotion of heritage, community/local museum initiatives and sustainable museums for development. Because Nagaland is given a special reference, the chapter covers certain sub-themes - people and culture, construction of cultural identities among Naga communities, history of colonial collections, history of State museums and their representation of communities and the role of District/ local community museums.

A brief account of Nagaland State, its land and people is essential for understanding the museum space and the culture represented. The word 'Naga' is a generic term that refers to a group of over thirty tribes inhabiting not only Nagaland but also a portion of the hilly regions of the states of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Some Naga tribes are also found in the northwestern part of Myanmar bordering India as well. In Myanmar, these Naga tribes are mostly from Sagaing division and Kachin states. In Manipur, Nagas are mostly inhabited in the districts of Chandel, Ukhrul, Senapati, and Tamenglong. The Tangkhul in Ukhrul district, the Tamenglong district by Zeliangrong and Kharam Nagas dominate the Ukhrul district of Manipur. The Maos, Thangals, Marams and Poumais dominate the Senapati District, while eight Naga tribes are found in Chandel and Senapati District; they are Anal, Chote, Chiru, Maring, Moyon, Tarao, Monsang and Lamkang. In the three districts of Manipur - Bishnupur, Chandel and Senapati districts, the three Naga communities - Koirengs, Chirus and Chotes are sparsely distributed in these districts of Manipur. In Assam, a few Naga communities are found, namely Zeme, Rongmei and Rengma. In Arunachal Pradesh, three Naga communities are found; they are identified as Tangsha, Wancho and Nocte. The

Naga communities living in Myanmar are Konyak, Para, Moyon, Tangkhul, Pangsha, Hemi, Hkalak, Htangan, Yimchunger, Rangpan, Pangaw, Khamniungan, Shangpuri, Lainung and Pyangoo (see Tohring, 2010 and Devi and Singh, 2015). The Nagas are the most dominant ethnic group of the State of Nagaland. The other ethnic groups are the Kuki, Garo, Mikir and Kachari. According to the 2011 census, the recognized major tribes of Nagaland are Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chang, Khamniungan, Konyak, Kuki, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sangtam, Sumi, Yimchunger, Zeliang, Kachari, and Garo. Apart from these major tribes, there are various minor sub-tribes, for instance - Tikhirs, Chirrs, and Makuris, and Lungpfurr among the Yimchunger.

There are notable works and accounts on the Nagas from medieval texts of neighbouring states and from the colonial era. Such works that were re-written and produced by regional and local scholars occupied the literature of the Nagas for long decades. Oral sources and migration theories have their way to explain the origin and migration of such a vast community. In recent years, reproductions of the colonial and regional writings have been questioned and readdressed involving multidisciplinary studies on the question of Naga migration and origin (see Nuh and Wetshokhrolo, 2002; Jamir and Ao 2005; Kumar, 2005; Lotha, 2007,2008; Oppitz et al., 2008; Jamir and Vasa, 2008; Stockhausen, 2009; Temjenwabang, 2012; Thong, 2012; Wettstein, 2012, Jamir et al., 2014a). On the etymological controversy of the term 'Naga' the origin of the name, Naga - a non-native derivation, imputed by non-Nagas and mired in archaic mystery - continues to mystify both natives and non-natives alike. Many have attempted to decipher the meaning, variously linked to the words such as 'young man', 'warrior', 'snake', 'naked', 'hill people' (see Butler, 1847; Hutton, 1921; Verrier Elwin, 1961; Horam, 1975; Phukan, 1989). According to Nienu (2015) "opinions expressed concerning etymological and racial origins and connections are as diverse as there are authors writing on the subject. Indeed, these problems continue to present some of the most challenging issues in Naga Anthropology" (Nienu, 2015, p. 81). At such a juncture when the search is in progress, the understanding of the origin, migration and formation of identities need a discursive and careful analysis of the communities from every possible perspective. There are various theories, myths, legends, and other oral sources in search or explanations of the roots of origin and migration of the Nagas. Each explanation has its shortfalls and points to be noted. Given such a situation, even though in its initial stage, the study of prehistory is playing a significant role in connecting the dots of the region. The present Naga identity is represented by a collective identity on grounds of having certain common traditions, customs, culture, language, myths and beliefs. Abraham

Lotha (2008) puts “classification and demarcation on the Nagas from the historical context projecting with elaborate references and interpretations and marks colonial classification of tribes, tribes and their relationship, migration of tribes, clan system, morungs, head hunting, feast of merits, Naga nationalism and argues that the differences between the Naga tribes are not distinct and rigid as they are made out to be” (Lotha, 2008, pp. 47-55). Before the advent of British rule, the primary units of identity among the Nagas were the clan, family and village. Each village had its own culture and often its own religion, besides dialects. It was only after colonial contact with the Nagas that such structures of the society were experimented with for the benefit of their studies and administrative control. For example, the classification of Angamis and the Eastern Angamis, the demarcation of political boundaries according to their administrative convenience etc. It is clear that they not only classify the groups but also have corrupted names of places based on geographical locations, which do not conform or correlate with the meanings of the community.

Post-independence saw the construction of identity towards a new trend whereby communities constructed identities not only based on linguistic similarities but also according to their shared interest in recent times. Although this is just a minuscule example, this rigid system adopted from predecessors prior to independence has its own legacy on how identities continue to be constructed and represented in post-colonial times in Nagaland. Another similar instance of such a case is the formation by a conglomeration of communities, a common practice in this part of the region. Some few examples are the Pochury (*Sapo, Kuchu and Khwiry*), the Chakhesang (*Chakruma, Khezhamas and Sangtam*), the Yimchunger (*Tikhirs, Chirrs, and Makury, Lungpfurr*), and the Zeliang/ Zeliangrong (*Zeme, Liangmai, and Rongmei*) communities drawing their respective appellations from the prefix or suffix of small sub-groups. In such circumstances, the suppression and the unheard voices of the minority groups experiences are common. The conglomeration of communities during colonial times and thereafter during post-independence is reflected not only in the society but also their representation in museums.

The long years of British colonialism, Christian proselytization by American Baptist missionaries, and forced incorporation into the Indian Union have left clear indelible marks on the Naga people. It is clear from the historical development, for instance, the Nine (9) Point Agreement 1947, the infamous meeting of Nagas and Nehru the then Prime Minister of India and U Nu Prime Minister of Burma, as a guest in 1953, which led to 16 Point Agreement and the birth of Nagaland as new state. While the political situation in Nagaland remains highly volatile, and pervasive, today, most of the Nagas are confessed Christians and

have been forced to live within the federal states of Northeast India, while the other Naga groups continue to remain in parts of Myanmar after the demarcation of the international borders.

Revisiting the history of Northeast India, the current boundaries can be traced from historical development. Such understanding of pre-colonial boundaries of the region can be seen in the works of Baruah, 1985; Kabui, 1991; Thant Myint-U, 2001; Oinam, 2008. The first- Anglo War and the Treaty of Yandabo 1826 negated Burmese influence in Assam, Cachar, Jaintia and Manipur. The treaty showed the extent of the Burmese empire, which is important to understand Northeast India before pre-colonial times. Further, according to the International Boundary Study No. 80 – May 15, 1968, Burma – India:

In 1837, the Patkoi Range was accepted as the boundary between Assam and Burma, being delimited without benefit of a treaty after British annexation of Assam, Cachar, and Jaintia. In 1894, the Manipur - Chin Hills boundary was demarcated, and in 1896 Col. Maxwell redemarcated the Pemberton - Johnstone area, placing thirty-eight pillars on the ground. These are referred to by number in the 1967 agreement. The Lushai Hills - Chin Hills boundary was demarcated in 1901 with minor alterations in 1921 and 1922.

The Government of India Act separated Burma from India by defining the former as “...all territories which were immediately before the commencement of Part II of this Act comprised in India, being territories lying to the east of Bengal, the State of Manipur, Assam, and tribal areas connected with Assam...” “Burma shall cease to be a part of India...” After World War II, both Burma and India (as well as Pakistan) gained their independence from the United Kingdom. No Burma - India boundary was specified in the independence acts; resolution of the border was left to the newly independent governments. (International Boundary Study No. 80 – May 15, 1968, Burma – India, pp. 6-7)

From the above paragraph, we can draw two important observations on the Nagas. First, past settlements of the Naga population and the present artificial boundaries within the Indian Union. Second, such events, treaty and truce exposed the Nagas to the outside world. For example, the aftermath of the treaty gave the British Administration contact with the Nagas, then the introduction of Christianity, missionary activities, and two World Wars not only exposed the Nagas to the world but also drastically changed every aspect of life. It was during these long decades that the term ‘Naga’ was well established and used as a common identity comprising extensive major and smaller sub-communities. After Indian Independence, we see that the literature on the Nagas was based on reports and accounts, which were exclusively the outsider’s views (Mackenzie, 1884; Johnstone, 1896; Allen, 1905; Clark, 1907; Hudson, 1911; Hutton, 1921a, 1921b; Mills, 1922, 1926, 1937; Haimendorf, 1939). Among these groups were the colonial administrators, the ethnographers, and missionaries whose reports and writings are living witnesses of the past of this region.

The second phase of works on the political history, society and culture of the Nagas can be implicitly seen in the writings of scholars from both mainland India as well as Naga scholars (see Verrier, 1961; Alemchiba, 1970; Gosh, 1979; Ramuny, 1980, 1988; Sen, 1987; Singh, 1987; Sardespande, 1987; Hokishe, 1988; Piketo, 1992; Bendangyabang, 1998, 2004; Vashum, 2000; Jamir, 2000). Further, in recent decades topics on the tangible and intangible culture of the Nagas have captured the interest of researchers at home and from outside in understanding more of the Nagas, for example, Oppitz *et al.* 2008; Joshi and Kunz, 2008; Von Stockhausen, 2014; Nekha, 2014; Nienu, 2015; Longkumer, 2015; Aier, 2018; Nagi, 2018 etc.

Apart from reports and documentation on the Naga lifestyle, a huge collection of Naga art and craft material was collected during the colonial and post-Independence periods. During all these decades, the academic discourse missed the crucial issue of the collection of objects from the Naga Hills. As a result of the growing museum movement in the West, and the increasing curiosity of the European public, it was the spectacular ritual life, a complex social organization and the artistic and aesthetic appeal of Naga material culture that attracted the attention of European ethnographers and collectors, who, in the course of years to come, were commissioned by various European museums to travel to India and acquire extensive collections on Naga material culture. Such exhibitions and literature by the western world also popularized the name 'Naga' and tags such as 'Naked Naga', 'Head Hunters' that became popular to outsiders (see Thane 1882; Smith, 1925; Hutton, 1928; Mills, 1937; Randle and Hughes, 2003; Haimendorf, 1946, 1969, 1976). As Thong (2012) states, "the term 'headhunter' is a colonial representation which has been in use almost synonymously with the Nagas for well over a century and continues to exert negative psychological ramifications on contemporary Nagas" (Thong, 2012, p. 376). This is similarly evident from the collected material objects and fieldworks published, and from exhibits of exotic themes on the Nagas, for instance, "Naga a forgotten mountain region rediscovered," and also from the Naga exhibition in Basel and Zurich (see Dollfus and Jacquesson, 2009), "Two basket enthusiasts get an up-close look at the Naga Head-takers basket" (see *The friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum*, Oxford Newsletter, 2014, p.9). Furthermore, an example of a history of collection is extensively paraphrased from a media press release titled, "Naga: A Forgotten Mountain Region Rediscovered 22. 08. 08 – 17. 05. 09" (Museum der Kulturen, Basel):

"The Berlin collection dates back to Adolf Bastian (1826 – 1905), the founding father of German anthropology, who was one of the first to conduct research among the Naga in 1878/79, in what was then known as the Assam District. The Munich collections goes back to the year 1911 when the

German anthropologist Lucian Scherman (1864-1946) visited various Naga tribes on the Burmese side of the border. The collection is exceptional because of its special regional focus. The Basel are more recent but cover a longer time span: in 1936/37 the Basel museum commissioned the German anthropologist Hans-Eberhard Kauffmann (1899-1986) to put together a collection of ethnographic objects from the Naga- Hills District in Assam. Shortly later, in 1939, the museum purchased a small collection from the Basel anthropologist Paul Wirz (1822-1955) who had travelled in the Naga territory the year before. Finally, in 1989, the museum der Kulturen acquired a unique Naga collection owned by the Czech- Indian anthropologist Milada Ganguli (1913-2000). Being an Indian citizen, she had the exceptional privilege to travel to the Naga territory several times between 1963 and 1992, during a period when the area was officially strictly closed to visitor. Hers is therefore the only representative collection of the Naga objects from the roughly 50 year period following Indian Independence (1947)” (source [www.mkb.ch/naga](http://www.mkb.ch/naga)).

In recent years, investigation on Naga collections and objects have been carried out by both Indian and international scholars (see Ganguli, 1984, 1993; West, 1985, 1992, 2001, 2011; Joshi, 1990; Jacobs, 1990; Kanungo, 2007, 2014, 2016; Macfarlane and Turin, 2008; Schicklgruber, 2008; Von Stockhausen, 2014; Oppitz et al., 2008; Heneise, et al., 2014) . The studies are mainly done on Naga collections housed abroad, which are remarkably important in understanding the representation of Naga cultural identities through material cultures. A pioneering effort among a local scholar’s work can be found in Walling’s (2014) work, which attempts to represent the role of local museums in the preservation of cultural heritage in Nagaland. The question of representation of identity in the museum at home has lost its genuine context, and is rather simply a house that represents the constructed identity, which has its roots in a pre-colonial and colonial past of the region. A careful observation on the display of collections, policies, and representation will aid to explore how communities and their cultural identities are places within such spaces left for visitors.

### **Types and List of Museums in Nagaland** (Table 22 & 23)

The State Government – State Museum, World War II Museum and the Heritage complex at Kisama, District Cultural Office-cum-Museum / Library and the two site museums- Khezakheno and Chungliyimti, both Naga ancestral sites, includes in the list of the first category.

**Table 22:** Categories of Ownership, Nature of Museum Collections in Nagaland

Sl. No	Categories of Ownership	Nature of Museum	List of Museums
1	Central Government	Ethnographic	NEZCC Museum, Dimapur
2	State Government	Multipurpose/ Ethnographic	State Museum, Kohima II Museum, Kisama

3	District Cultural Office under State Government	Ethnographic and Heritage sites	District Museum Phek; Khezakheno and Chungliyimti archaeological sites
4	Village Organizations	Ethnographic	Community museum run museum at Mopongchuket village, Sungratsu village, ToupHEMA village, etc.
5	Private Trust	Ethnographic/ WWII collections	Chumpo Museum, Dimapur; BK Sachu WWII collections, Kohima Village
6	University and College	Multipurpose	Salesian College Museum, Dimapur

The second categories are funded by the State government and others-Ministry of Tourism, Department of Art and Culture but are maintained by local communities-Ungma village community Museums under Mokokchung District, Mopongchuket village Community Museum under Mokokchung District (Figure 36), Khonoma community museum (Figure 37), ToupHEMA community museum under Kohima (Figure 38), Shangnyu and Chui village Local Museum in Mon District. Likewise, the other districts have their own local community museums preserving the cultural heritage of their community.

**Table 23:** List of Museums in Nagaland

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Ownership	Museum Category
1	State Museum Nagaland	State Government	Multipurpose Museum/ Ethnographic
2	Chumpo Museum, Dimapur	Private	Living Museum
3	NEZCC Museum, Dimapur	Central Government	Ethnographic Museum
4	Nagaland Police Archival, Chumukedma	State Government	Military Museum
5	Salesian College Museum, Salesian College, Dimapur	Salesian College	Ethnographic Museum
6	World War-II Museum, Kisama	State Government	Military Museum
7	ToupHEMA tourist Museum, ToupHEMA village, Kohima	Private /Village community	Ethnographic Museum
8	Tribal Museum Khezakheno, Phek	Private Organization	Ethnographic Museum
9	Heritage Museum Khonoma, Khonoma, Kohima	Private Organization	Ethnographic Museum
10	Zapami Heritage Museum, Zapami village ,Phek	Private /Village community	Ethnographic Museum
11	Mimi community Museum, Mimi village, Kiphire	Private /Village community	NIL
12	District Museum, Phek	State Government	Ethnographic Museum
13	Library -cum- Museum, Mopongchuket Village,	Private /Village	Ethnographic Museum

	Mokokchung District	community	
14	Library -cum- Museum, Sungratsu Village, Mokokchung District	Private /Village community	Ethnographic Museum
14	Library -cum- Museum, Longkhum Village, Mokokchung District	Private /Village community	Ethnographic Museum
16	Community Museum -cum- Library, Mulongyimsen village, Mokokchung District	Private /Village community	Historical Museum
17	Tribal Museum, Longsa Village, Mokokchung District	Private /Village community	NIL
18	Archaeological site Museum, Chungliyimti Village	State Government	Archaeological site Museum
19	Archaeological Site Museum, Khezakheno Village	State Government	Archaeological site Museum
20	Archaeological site museum, Kachari Ruins, Rajbari, Dimapur	Archaeological Survey of India	Archaeological site Museum

The third categories of museums, with less initiative undertaken so far within the region are private and university/ college collections. An excellent example of a private museum is Chumpo Museum (Figure 39), located in Dimapur District, the architecture was designed in a way of a living museum, attached with good collections of library facilities. The last categories are those collections maintained by colleges and universities. For example, the Department of Geology, Nagaland University collections, even though a compact room, has a good collection displaying the various rocks and minerals of the region and outside; the Department of History and Archaeology, NU, that contain a few collections of artifacts from departmental excavation which are neatly displayed in a small store; Salesian College Dimapur; the Department of Anthropology, Autonomous Kohima Science College, have collections that are mainly for class room teachings and references. All collections in museums across Nagaland are generally anthropological, ethnological, geological, various art works of brass and woodcrafts, sculptures, World War II collections, replicas of sculptures and few archaeological artifacts. Except in the World War II Museum, the displays in museums include a vast collections of materials ranging from costumes, ornaments, textiles, weapons, arms, wooden art works, musical instruments, ceramics, to brass works and in some cases are set up with dioramas displaying the cultural life of various communities.

### **Nagaland State Museum Kohima**

The Nagaland State Museum Kohima (Figure 40) evolved from the 1960s as an institution, previously known as the Naga Institute of Culture (Figure 41) which later came to be known

as the Directorate of Art and Culture in 1970 which annexed the State Museum. The initial purpose was to research Naga life, culture, and to bring forth a State Museum and a Research Library (see <http://artandculture.nagaland.gov.in>). Unlike the 18<sup>th</sup> century cabinets of curiosities within which museums revolved around at that time, the Nagaland State Museum was established as an annex of the Directorate of Art and Culture to research, represent, preserve, and conserve the cultural heritage of the Nagas. On tracing the historical development, there are no separate museum code of ethics and policies from its parent body that is Department of Art and Culture. A museum code of ethics and policies is in dire need in the present context and must essentially be outlined bearing the vision for the future. Undoubtedly, the State Museum possesses an excellent collection of the communities residing in various part of the region and is playing a significant role in the promotion of Naga culture, preserving identity and culture, exploring ways to unite the Nagas, and educating the younger generation and scholars. In the present century, the museum, as an institution is not a mere storehouse of collections and displays. Therefore, without an appropriate cultural policy and legislation catering to the museums in Nagaland, the above vision cannot run its course or accomplish its vision, ultimately resulting in the commodification of culture and identity.

The present research on museums in Nagaland has encouraged an understanding of the identities of communities in a museum environment and the role that museums play in educating the public on such representation of identities. Visit to the State Museum and observations on the representation of identities through displays has helped address some fundamental questions –how are communities agglomerated and represented as a collective identity within the display space? Who were the people identified and what were the criteria for its classification? What are the materials or images on displays and collections that provide links to community identities?

In the context of the State Museum, the collections, objects and displays are the main identifier or markers of identity. To date, what has been presented in the State Museum of Nagaland does not reveal the full story of the museum's origins. Visitors to the museum view the exceptional collections and are directed to general information concerning the region's traditional lifestyle of the past. Research on identities in this region needs a more critical understanding as very often; scholars rewrite the constructed identities by outsiders. In addition, what is reflected in the society and government policies, eventually affects the nature of representation in the museum galleries. Thus, with scanty financial support and limited professional training, the museum is struggling to sustain itself on one hand and on

the other, fulfilling the commitment to preserve cultures. Although the mission of the museum may be different from other museums, the issues, challenges, and the changing role of museums in recent decades, the exhibition space of museums needs to be redesigned.

The State Museum of Nagaland possesses collections representing the major tribes of the State through various themes. At present, the museum has no particular separate theme galleries for collections. However, the collection can be categorized as under: ethnological collections, painting gallery, textile collections, and indigenous bamboo wall on display, wooden sculpture collection, costumes, ornaments, headgear and jewelry collections, and archaeological park (see Table 24). After much consultation, two new galleries were included, the archaeology gallery (Figure 42), and the indigenous games and sports gallery (Figure 43). As the data on the exact number of collections are unavailable, it is estimated that about 3000 collections are housed in the State Museum, Kohima. To demonstrate its cultural uniqueness, the State Museum has maintained its classic Naga characteristics and recreated an atmosphere and ambience that traditional culture and nostalgia preserved in museums are detached from the views of contemporary Naga society. This representation of collective identity has helped generate an exotic ethnic image that satisfies the expectations of visitors to the museum.

**Table 24:** Galleries/ Section, Nature of collection and Mode of Display Techniques, Nagaland State Museum, Kohima

Sl. No	Section/ Gallery	Collections	Community Represented	Mode of Display Technique
1	Ethnological collections,	Wooden panels decorated with human and animal motifs, traditional wooden beds, wooden containers, potteries, traditional musical instruments, agricultural implements, fishing equipment, bird traps, beans ( <i>entada gigas</i> ) used as shampoo, comb, jewellery box, match box, Hairpiece, warrior hair-pin, smoking pipes (terracotta and metal), sculptures of bone; stone, wood, and brass, varieties of machetes ( <i>daos</i> ), cross bow and arrow; varieties of spears, shields, walking sticks, decorated wooden posts	Konyak, Ao, Angami,	Open display, glass fitted showcases
2	Painting gallery	Photographs of pre- and	Rengma, Chang,	Hanging, staple/

		post-Independence India, Nagaland	Zeliang, Angami, Lotha	pasted on walls
3	Textile collections	Traditional wears of both men and women	16 communities of the State	Hangings, wrapped on simple 2D models
4	Wooden and Brass sculpture collection	Varieties of sculptures, depicting of women men and child	Konyak, Angami	Open display, glass fitted showcases
5	Ornaments	Cane and orchid stem hair-band, earrings, conch shell, casket and scabbard, boar tusk- choker, ivory, brass, lead and copper armlets, spike armlets, beads necklaces, beaded waist band/ griddle; <i>naome</i> a warrior pendant; bracelets, bangles, spiral bangles, brass- choker.	16 communities of the State	Glass fitted showcases, worn on 3D models
6	Headgear	Varieties of head gears and coronet	Models representing all Naga communities usage	Glass fitted showcase with a wooden sculpture ornamented with head- gear
7	Dioramas	Themes on -Phom damsel in her traditional outfit; Yimchungru traditional art of producing and weaving textile; Sumi- a rich belle posing in her fineries, Man in dancing costume; Konyak blacksmith work; Chakhesang – craftsman weaving a bamboo basket; Rengma man at work wearing traditional rain proof made from palm ; a Naga Kitchen ; Crossbow for Hunting and warfare, Khamniungan lady sets out to field for work ; Sangtam women carrying water in elongated bamboo tubes; Lotha woman husking paddy on a pounding table; An Ao woman in her rich traditional outfit to attend festival, Rengma women busy in her <i>jhum</i> field; A map of Nagaland with miniature traditional architecture of the various Nagas groups	Representation of the various Naga communities	Dioramas
8	Indigenous bamboo wall on display	Varieties of bamboo wall designs and matting technique	Naga	Fixed on walls
9	Donations&	Personal belongings of Dr.	Ao Naga	Glass fitted

	personal collections	Imkonglibla, President of Naga Peoples Convention; traditional costumes donated by Lambert, SDO, Mokokchung, 1933-1935		showcase
10	Archaeological Collection	Neolithic celts, charm stones, archaeological site map of Nagaland, excavated artefacts from Chungliyimti, Phor, Mimi caves etc.- items on display includes pottery, ground stone tools, bone tools, jar burials	Naga	Open and glass fitted table showcases
11	Indigenous games section	Akikiti, Akhetsu kukakeu, Naga kene, Otso Chenta, Naga-go Carting, Kara tsung/jangtok,	Each games representing the major communities of Nagaland	Painting, open display, glass fitted table showcases
12	Archaeological park	Traditional village gate of Angami; Makara Gargoyle Bihar 10 <sup>th</sup> century A.D, unlabelled replicas of lintels and figurines of Hindu goddess; <i>Badze</i> a sitting platform; mermaid with fountain etc.	Hindu, and Angami	Open-air
13	Others	Within the complex, the museum has a life-size Log drum; life- size mithun ( <i>Bos frontalis</i> ); World War II objects, stone slab with foot prints of a Manipuri prince; Unlabeled Photographs with frames	Naga, Konyak, and others	Open-air

Although the collections are informative enough to understand, the traditional culture within the context of a modern society,-in its first step, the collections require a sequential gallery for each varied item. While the labels on display play an important role in museum interaction, it needs further careful research and study of the collection as objects are significant markers or identifiers of communities. If unattended, random labels and descriptions may misguide museum visitors and such examples are apparently common in the State Museum. Thus, based on recent research and studies on Naga pottery, cultures, and societies, the displays need further re-exhibition. A label on potteries in the State Museum is drawn to illustrate this case (Figure 44):

Variety of Naga pottery: Initially this trade was pursued only by few families in a handful of villages, using several kinds of shaping sticks resembling a paddle, a mass of pounded clay was fashioned into various shapes of pottery.

The label is indicative of a need for a research-oriented description on the pottery as Naga potteries are well studied from various perspectives. As these material displays are identifiers as well as signifiers of the community and culture, the representation is of great importance. To cite, again an example (Figure 45):

An Ao lady in her rich traditional outfit on her way to attend a festival;  
The art of pottery, without using the potter's wheel.

At first sight, the display itself shows two different groups of the Ao community, and the representation is misleading since it is taboo in most of the villages to carry out works during festivals. Further, on close observation, use of terms and the manner of description referring to representation needs careful attention within the display. In sum, the classifications to address cultural identity of communities are mainly through the maximum use of costumes and ornaments.

Besides such representation, the other question on representation of community is the agglomeration of smaller groups to larger cultural groups, for example, the Pochury, Chakhesang and Zeliang communities. Since material objects are the signifier or markers of the community's cultural identity represented within the museum space, it is important to note the sub-communities attached or integrated to larger recognized communities represented. For example, the motifs or designs of a traditional shawl or ornaments may vary within small agglomerated groups of a particular tribe. However, what appears to be essentially represented in the museum is the item or object that represents the larger tribe and not the unique motifs specific to each sub-group. For instance, among the Pochury Nagas Men's Shawl, the three sub-groups have different motifs and symbols, while representing in museum space the more commonly used or decided by the apex organization of the community, the shawls are on exhibitions. Such examples are also with other communities on the display of textile grammar of the Nagas. Textiles among the Naga have motifs, symbolism, colour, and other attributes, which compose the textile grammar, which is important as a signifier of clan and community at large. This textile grammar may vary even within the same communities. Among the Ao Nagas, for example, the lower wrap of women varies within three groups – the Chungli, Mongsen and Changki speaking group, further the clan among these three groups has differentiated motifs and symbols, which by looking at the wrap can identify the woman's clan. However, again today we have a common dress code for women, modified and decided by the women's apex body to represent the so-called traditional clothing. Besides clothing, the other aspect of an identity signifier is the ornaments of both male and female. The design, symbolism, motif and colour vary within communities

and among the clans. Restrictions, earned and entitlements among the clans and individuals form important attributes in signifying the identity of the group and individual. In such a context, the semiotics of the people and the object represented in a museum space needs more attention to avoid misleading the audience.

The State Museum Nagaland is as old as the parent department, the erstwhile Naga Institute of Culture, has been in the service of the community, representing the fourteen major tribes and providing an educative role by offering glimpses of the diverse cultural features of the Nagas while at the same time, representing the collective identity of the Nagas through its innumerable collections. There are around 7,000-8,000 collections in museums around Nagaland, out of which the State museum owns around 3,000 specimens, and there are a few thousands in museums across Mainland India. It is estimated that more than 50,000 Naga objects are in the possession of 43 public and private museums in the United Kingdom alone (for details, see Kanungo, 2014). There are also number of Naga material cultures in other European and American nation museums which has not been accounted for in any publication data base. The history of such huge and extensive collections begins from the 19<sup>th</sup> century – from administrators, anthropologists, and missionaries, and in recent years, private collectors, illicit antiquity traders and tourists. A new dimension towards study and research of Naga material culture from overseas' collections is not a new trend and the communities from whom such objects originate are eventually displayed in museums and in various publications, which leaves the visitors to consume the 'outsider' narratives and interpretations. However, in Nagaland, the true function of the museum is still under-developed, and there is no research on museum sectors undertaken thus far. The idea and concept of museums in Nagaland and its practices are not as promising as compared to that of other parts of the world. The State museum, which aims at preserving the identity and promotion of a community's culture, is unable to address the significance of the socio-cultural and historical changes in the region. Separate galleries remains wanting in order to display the vast cultural wealth and historical data of the region, following a planned scheme of development that systematically outlines Naga history and culture from the earliest times to the present and the role of neighboring states and countries to the region's history. For instance, galleries on pre-colonial Naga history to the introduction of Christianity, its colonial legacies, Naga participation in the two World Wars, the Naga National Movement; Folklore and Myths etc. can be charted within a historical perspective to allow a deeper understanding of the complexities and the significance of culture and society, thus making museums livelier and more engaging. Additionally, simple and important aspects on museological practices

should be followed in describing and representing the objects and collections. The use of proper labels and phrases, description of the communities after detailed research along with the display to avoid misleading audiences. Not all visitors visit for the same interest and purpose. Keeping in mind the present context, the functioning, representation, conservation, educational role, and promotion of heritage, and sustainable museum development should therefore be readdressed and redefined.

### **World War- II Museum, Kohima**

Interpretations of military war history in museums have become significant and is challenging. The respect, sentiments attached to a nation during a war, and to accurately tell the story through the museum are important issues. Museums serve many purposes, but two important ones are to educate and to entertain (see Witcomb, 2011). Discussing and analyzing wartime violence adhered to a museum's educational purpose to educate, however, did not always work, as well as for entertainment. Therefore, the focus in exhibits had been on displaying positive images of the conflicts in order to allow the museum to be inclusive to all (see Vandervelde, 2014). On a visitor's, experience in museums, according to Straughn and Howard (2011), "The newest institutional priorities for museum interpretation were to facilitate dynamic, dialogic experiences that will ignite visitors' imaginations, ideas, and emotions and encourage self-reflection and social engagement" (Straughn and Howard, 2011, p. 52). Barton Harker and Margaret Vining (2011) in their volume *Military Museums and Social History*, maintain that exhibitions in military museums have undergone a major shift, from simply displaying artifacts to using them to tell stories and marks:

"Through much of the 20th century, military museums continued to mount arcane displays of war-related objects and static chronological exhibitions of military material with little or no interpretation... Even today, as any regular visitor of military museums will testify, such practices have scarcely vanished, though they are far less pervasive than they once were...With the advent of the new military social history approach in the 1960s to 1980s significant changes were made, allowing for more interpretation within exhibits. The new military social history approach stressed "the common soldier, the experience of war, and the place of the armed forces in society" (Harker and Vining, 2011, pp. 41-58).

It is now more than 70 years since the Second World War ended. In Nagaland, those who felt the tremors of the war remember the event as the 'Japanese War', which was later famously known as the Battle of Kohima. There are extensive works (Slim, 1956; Campbell, 1956; Rooney, 1992; Allen, 2000; Graham, 2005; Edwards, 2009; Dennis et al, 2010; Keane, 2010; Lyman, 2010 and 2011; Swinson, 2015; Karnad, 2015) carried out on the Battle of

Kohima by various scholars and veterans who had witnessed the war. Among the Nagas, the war veterans and the people who took part and witnessed the war are an important source of the survivors living testimony. On such testimonies and narratives in recent years, there have been works carried out by local scholars (see Shurhozeli, 1992; Kire, 2010; Khrienuo, 2013, 2014 and 2019; Chasie and Fecitt, 2017; Metha, 2018; Rhakho, 2019; Nagi, 2019) that demonstrate an understanding of the “insider’s view” of the Japanese War or the Battle of Kohima. Perspectives from which the war was observed and the multiple meanings attached to the war experiences have varied during the post-war decades. Such dynamics of memory are the result of a complex process in which perspectives are negotiated, often with faltering steps, cries from the heart, feelings of injustice, new insights, and a great deal more which all are strongly rooted in memory that many value deeply. One of the possible ways in which this historical experience is remembered is from the representations in war museums.

The Second World War ended in 1945 and led to a new beginning globally. Ever since the war, the Naga Hills, in general, have progressed towards a new era. Of such experiences, the pain, anguish, unimaginable loss, the concept or idea of nationalism among the Nagas, the role of Nagas, and their support extended to the two nations Britain and Japan form an important testimony in understanding the role of Nagas during the II World War. Such experiences and accounts, in recent years, can be seen in the works of local and Indian scholars on the Naga participation (see Mankekar, 1967; Bareh, 1970; Yonuo, 1975; Nibedon, 1978; Ghosh 1982; Kathar, 1991; Bendangangshi, 1993; Tajenyuba, 1993; Atsongchanger, 1994; Sanyu, 1996; Chandrika, 2004; Neivetso, 2005; Iralu, 2009; Keri, 2019; Rakho, 2019). An overview of such historical accounts and narratives has countered the one-sided narrative of the war and post-war society of the Nagas.

The ongoing post-war conciliatory gestures from the British and Japanese governments are commendable. The Japanese government initiated the search for the remains of former Japanese service members under the Japan Association for Recovery and Repatriation of War Casualties (JARRWC). These teams have been covering the Burma, Manipur and Nagaland regions as part of a search operation. In addition, initiatives are undertaken by the Japanese government and people-to-people contact between Japan and the people of Nagaland, and Manipur since 2017 has been an impactful policy (see *Nagaland Post*, 2019; [www.nenow.in](http://www.nenow.in), 2019; [www.decanherald.com](http://www.decanherald.com), 2019; [www.thewire.in](http://www.thewire.in), 2019). The Kohima Educational Trust/Kohima Educational Society which was founded by the British Kohima war veterans have been consistently offering monetary help towards the education of Naga students besides other commendable activities ([www.kohimaeducationaltrust.net](http://www.kohimaeducationaltrust.net) &

www.veteransfoundation.org.uk). The Burma Campaign Society is committed to restore friendly relations between Japan and the United Kingdom through sharing of information, imparting education and mutual sympathy. Over the years, many war veterans and their descendants of the Burma Campaign have visited Kohima and Imphal, to honor the sacrifice of the forgotten soldiers and express sincere gratitude to the local inhabitants for their service during the War.

The set-up at the Naga Heritage Village, Kisama, the II World War Museum (Figure 46, 47 and 48) are efforts to present as best as possible, a true image of the historic battle that took place at Kohima from April 4, 1944, to May 1944, between the invading Japanese 31st Division and the defending British 2nd Division and Allied Forces. A pamphlet states that the museum that was completed, and inaugurated in 2008, holds a collection of artifacts from the time of the battle, models, and an extensive collection of visual panels that explore and explain the context, events and outcomes of the battle. The collection is augmented with audiovisual presentations that give an insight into the battle and bring to life the memories of some of the survivors who lived through the conflict. Acknowledged as the fiercest battle that took place anywhere during the Second World War, the Battle of Kohima marked the end of World War II, when the Japanese plan to march to the Indian mainland through Kohima was foiled effectively. On display are relics of arms and various equipment used by both sides during the long siege of Kohima.

From close observation of the II World War Museum Kohima, one can conclude that it is a one-sided historical exhibition. War is an expansive, wide-ranging and complex issue that affects people's lives in a variety of ways and to different extents. Linenthal (2001), with reference to the space within war museums, maintains that, "...to include such a subject within a finite exhibit space is a difficult task; however, museum professionals have utilized many different methods and approaches to accomplish this with varying degrees of success, as shown through current literature on the subject" (Linenthal, 2001, p. 200). The Museum glorifies two nations at war with each other in the Battle of Kohima. Nevertheless, the question that remains here is the representation of the locals who participated in the war sandwiched between the involvements of two powerful nations. Scholars are of the opinion that the war opened the eyes of the Nagas, which contributed to the development of the consciousness and rise of nationalism, however, the aggression and the darker sides of the conflict are unrepresented where the Nagas participation is neglected throughout the museum's exhibits. Therefore, it would be appropriate to witness some portraits of war survivors who participated and witnessed the War be displayed in the museum space. Yet

again, the museum must find appropriate ways to link and integrate both society and the armed forces during the war. However, the answer to how successful this initiative can be accomplished is far from clear. In addition, the museum can incorporate both positive and negative narrative accounts, depending on how it is employed and to what extent the design, and presentation of exhibits about war is utilized for visitors' experiences. A balancing act must be incorporated to create an effective war exhibit that exposes visitors to the horrors of war without overwhelming or offending the society at present.

### Community Initiatives in Preserving Heritage

The State Museum represents the people of the state, while the District Museum represents the community residing within the respective Districts. Besides the two types of museums, another important category that is emerging in recent years is the Community Museum in villages across Nagaland. The concepts behind such museums are the awareness of the locals to preserve the past heritage and to boost rural tourism. Few of the museums sampled in the present study includes (Table 25) ToupHEMA Tourist Museum, ToupHEMA Village, Kohima District; Heritage Museum Khonoma, Khonoma Village, Kohima District; Zapami Heritage Museum, Zapami Village, Phek District; Mimi Community Museum, Mimi Village, Kiphire District; Library-cum- Museum, Mopongchuket Village, Mokokchung District; Library-cum-Museum, Sungratsu Village, Mokokchung District; Library-cum-Museum, Longkhum Village, Mokokchung District; Community Museum-cum-Library, Mulongyimsen Village, Mokokchung District and Tribal Museum, Longsa Village, Mokokchung District.

**Table 25:** List of Community Museums in Nagaland

Sl. No	Name of Museum	Village	District	Nature of collection
1	ToupHEMA tourist Museum	ToupHEMA	Kohima	Ethnographic
2	Heritage Museum Khonoma	Khonoma	Kohima	Ethnographic
3	Zapami Heritage Museum	Zapami	Phek	Ethnographic
4	Mimi community Museum	Mimi	Kiphire	No collection
5	Library-cum- Museum	Mopongchuket	Mokokchung	Ethnographic
6	Community Museum- cum- Library	Sungratsu	Mokokchung	Ethnographic
7	Tribal Museum	Longsa	Mokokchung	No collection
8	Community Museum- cum – Library	Longkhum	Mokokchung	Ethnographic
9	Community Museum- cum- Library	Mulongyimsen	Mokokchung	Historical Museum
10	Community Museum	Mokokchung	Mokokchung	Ethnographic
11	Tribal museum	Khezakheno	Phek	Ethnographic

A visit to such museums offers one a chance to interact with the locals on the collections and understand the collection closely. Most of such museums are run either by the village community or by student organizations. Amid of globalization, urbanization and modernization, the cultural value of ethnographic materials have become least important and instead has simply become a thing of the past. Modern ones today substitute objects, which were once regarded as items of a high valuable possession, bearing symbolic and aesthetic qualities, identity etc. Instead of such ethnographic objects becoming a primary source of information on the society, the values of such objects has been greatly ignored. Such initiatives are the need of the hour that in future will emerge as an important source. These museums can be viewed as the museum from the grassroots, playing a crucial role in safeguarding both tangible and intangible heritage at its best.

### **Zapami Heritage Museum, Pfutsero Sub-division, Phek District**

An exceptional example of such a museum is the Zapami Heritage Museum Pfutsero sub-division of Phek District (Figure 49 and 50). Apart from the museum as a repository, the village itself is a living museum where one can visualize the village settlement, the traditional houses and other structures related to burials, and the rich megalithic culture. Such a cultural landscape is very rare in most parts of rural Nagaland today. The museum with its humble beginning was the outcome of the unique historical experiences of the village, which as a result had produced a rich cultural heritage. The main objective of the museum was to collect objects from the community and deposit them in the museum for preservation, documentation and exhibition. It was the need of the hour considering the fast-perishing nature of the materials, and the lack of public awareness on the value of the objects, and the past traditional knowledge associated with such objects since time immemorial.

The museum is compact and have most of the materials associated with the community. Collections are mainly ethnographic in nature along with few World War II collections. This mixture of collections clearly gives the audience an idea of the communities' experience of the Great War. A connection with the ancestor's historical account is projected through such representations. The main collections are put into themes and sections-

- Weapons, Mementos of War and Friendship Treaties
- Pottery
- Loin and Cotton Loom Technologies

- Dress and Ornaments
- Weights and Measures, Traditional Blacksmith Technology
- Rice Husking Tools and Technologies
- Wooden crafts, which includes, rice pounding tables, rice beer vats
- Basketry crafts of various daily use from granaries to small size baskets
- Hunting trophies and bucranium
- Musical Instruments
- Agricultural implements
- World War II collections
- Dioramas and 3D models representing lifestyle of the community

The use of native language and English equivalent for labels of the objects and the extensive explanation in the museum booklet are important features of the museum. In comparison to other such museums, most rural museums do not have such elaborate booklets or guidebooks, let alone brochures. Another important aspect is the use of local materials for the interior design that resembles and offers a traditional environment to the museum collections. This is in stark contrast to most museums, where such displays are generally fitted with polished tile floors and glass fitted interiors, which further distracts the ambience and beauty of the object. In sum, the museum has proportionally represented the ethnographic collections within the heritage space of a museum.

### **Other Community Museums**

In addition to the community museum at Zapami, there are other minor museums such as the Library-cum-Museum, Mopongchuket village, Mokokchung District, Library-cum-Museum, Sungratsu village, Mokokchung District, and the Community Museum-cum-Library at Mulongyimsen village, Mokokchung District. The main concept of these museums is to conserve, preserve and promote the past heritage of the village. Some of the interesting collection includes – clothing and ornaments, utilitarian items, currencies, wooden crafts and local technologies. Presentation of the historical accounts of the village through photos and paintings are common. Since these villages are the epicenter of the spread of the Christian Mission, emphasis on the projection of Mission works are well- defined. To cite an example, the community museum at Mulongyimsen Village (Figure 51) contains some important collections of the first missionaries to the region. A tour around the museum offers a glimpse of the series of historical events beginning with the coming of Christianity and thereafter, the

challenges to establish the Mission activities in the Naga Hills. Connected to the museum, a pilgrimage tour for visitors is also organized on the route taken by the first missionaries from the plains of Assam. It is interesting to note that awareness of rural communities on past heritage has given rise to such museums in these parts of Nagaland.

In spite of such progress, ironically, misappropriation of funds, meant for the construction of museums are rampant. Due to this reason, in some cases, even though buildings are installed, the museums are empty without any collections. During fieldwork, interactions with the person in-charge and caretakers of such museums apprise one on some of the problems they encounter, such as, funding to maintain the museum, and extension of the space, acquisition of new objects and the lack of government support. However, besides their shortcomings, community museums continue to play a part as agents in representing the cultural identity of the people at the grassroots, further bonding stronger relationships between the community and museums in an effort to preserve the heritage of the past for future generations.

### **Private, Government and other Institutional Collections**

In the present category of museums, they are basically small museums but play a significant role in educating and conserving past heritage. University and college collections such as Salesian College, Dimapur, and other departmental collections in the university make efforts to display their collections even though at a small scale. Such collections are imperative because it creates awareness in students and gives hands-on experience using cultural objects. The purposes of such collections is mainly directed towards classroom teaching. The Chumpo Museum in Dimapur, North East Zone Cultural Centre (NEZCC) in Dimapur, and the Heritage Village at Kisama and Archives etc. are a few of such notable examples.

### **The North East Zone Cultural Center, Dimapur**

The North East Zone Cultural Center (NEZCC), Dimapur is another agency, which not only collects and documents tangible materials but sets up databases for intangible heritage. The Centre has a compact museum within the office complex presenting the complex culture of the Nagas as well as the neighbouring States (Figure 52). The institutions cover the folk arts, performing arts and other traditional art form practiced by the people of the region since ages, identifies the commonalities in the various cultural elements, and provide a forum for interaction of the various cultures of the region. One of the major functions of the Center is also to encourage documentation of the various art forms of the folk and tribal music and

dances, and establish support mechanisms for the art forms that are fast disappearing. Through this Center, the rich composite culture of the country is also projected through the prism of local cultures and identities.

### **Kisama Heritage Village**

The other example of a heritage complex is the Kisama Heritage Village (Figure 53), the venue famous for the Hornbill Festival. The complex represents architectural replicas of the major communities of Nagaland, which is open throughout the year. However, the village comes to life with exciting activities only during the ten-day long festival organized by the Department of Tourism, Government of Nagaland, beginning from 1<sup>st</sup> to 10 December each year. The festival projects the varied cultures of the community from traditional to modern Naga lifestyle, a mixed flavor mainly focusing on the commodification of culture (see for example, Figure 54). Besides, the heritage complex has also become an important space for representing the cultural identities of the region. The festival supports the preservation and conservation of the old cultural traditions and values but at the same time, provides an opportunity and a platform for the commercialization of communities' cultures. To promote such events within the Districts, the Government of Nagaland has been promoting Mini Hornbill festivals during the community's traditional festival. For example, the annual Tsungremong festival of the Ao Naga is held in August and is celebrated within the umbrella of the Mini Hornbill festival and so is the case with other Naga community festivals held in various districts of Nagaland.

### **State Archives, Kohima, Nagaland Police Archives, and Naga Archive Research Centre**

Besides, festivals and open-air exhibitions, the State has at least three repositories that are worthy of mention. These institutions have unique collections, which are of great importance as the collections represent the past historical records of the region. Firstly, the State Archives Kohima offers a data bank for the collection and digitization of old reports relating to the colonial administration in the Naga Hills, and other important archival materials of the region.

Secondly, the Nagaland Police Archives in Chumukedma, Dimapur, at the Nagaland Police Training Centre (Figure 55) houses a repository of old archival materials, a display of the development of arms and ammunition of the department, and the officer ranks since its inception, and the achievements of the department in various fields. On occasions, the museum plays an active role by participating during the Hornbill Festival at the Heritage

Village Kisama and holding exhibitions for the public. Such initiatives demonstrate the keen interest of the Police Department towards not only upholding and enforcing the law, safeguarding society, and ensuring the security of its people, but also a commendable initiative in preserving the past heritage of the police department. Overall, the archive is simple, yet, it has a well-defined concept of what the particular department aims to convey to the audience.

Thirdly, a Centre that merits mention is the Naga Archive Research Centre (NARC) at Toulazouma, Dimapur. A repository of the historical documents on the Naga Political movement and armed struggle are amongst the major collections. They include documents from political and religious events of the Nagas from the earliest to at least a century. Against all odds, the Centre has a well-executed representation of the true Naga historical accounts from the collections. Furthermore, an important initiative of the Centre is the digitization of the documents, a pilot project directed towards a positive outlook in preserving the rich literary heritage of the Nagas.

### **New Museum Proposal: the Case of Nagaland**

In recent years, there has been a gradual rise in proposals towards the construction of various heritage complexes and museums in Nagaland. Although such proposals approved at the level of the concerned Ministry ensures the increasing concern towards the preservation of the region's heritage, the extent of misappropriation of funds in such major building projects and the nature of their implementation seem to raise further concerns. For instance, an excerpt of the Government of India, Ministry of Culture, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi; Dated: 29 September 2017; Minutes of the 17th meeting of the Expert Committee held on 29.09.2017 under the "Museum Grant Scheme" held on 31.08.2017 for the year 2017-2018 is given below (Table 26):

**Table 26:** Minutes of the 17th meeting of the Expert Committee held on 29.09.2017 Government of India, Ministry of Culture, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi; Dated: 29th September, 2017. Under the "Museum Grant Scheme" held on 31:08.2017 for the year 2017-2018 for Nagaland

Sl. No	Name of the Society/ Organization	Proposal	Project Cost	Committee remarks
1	Charity Welfare Society, Khezakheno Village, Phek	Charity Welfare Society submitted a proposal for setting up a Museum amounting to Rs. 5.78	5.78Crores	Physical inspection of the society was carried out by officers from Ministry of culture. The team visited the

	District, Nagaland	<p>Crores under the Museum Grant scheme for construction of New Museum at Phek, Nagaland. The Society states that the proposed museum will be an ethnographic museum. The Museum attempts to present a panoramic view of the socio-cultural life and heritage of the Nagas vividly depicted through the anthropological, ethnological and art galleries and open-air display. The Museum will showcase the varied artifacts, traditional attires of the Naga tribal People including Headgears, Ornaments, Log Drum, Stone statues, Naga Mask, bamboo basket etc. costumes and lifestyles of the Chakhesang Naga tribe. These displays will provide a glimpse into the rich cultural mosaic of the Chakhesang Nagas which is unique even among the other tribes of the North East.</p>		<p>site of the proposed museum and verified the art objects that are to be displayed in the proposed Museum. Recognizing the unique collection of the organization, the team has recommended for financial assistance for setting up a new museum. The financial status of the Society is also sound and the Society is financially eligible to run the museum. The organization has also made presentation before the Expert Committee of their proposal. The Expert committee has considered the proposal and observed that the estimated cost of the project is too high in terms of the number of artifacts and proposed area of the Museum. Keeping in view these facts, the Expert committee has recommended Rs. 1 Crore only for the proposal.</p>
2	Tesophenyu Light Bearer Youth Club, Post Box No. 287, Kohima, Nagaland	<p>Tesophenyu Light Bearer Youth Club, Post Box No. 287, Kohima, Nagaland submitted a proposal for setting up a Museum amounting to Rs. 7.78 Crores under the Museum Grant Scheme for construction of New Museum at Tseminyu Sub-Division in the district of Kohima. The Society has stated that the proposed museum will showcase the live- size cultural tools, weaponries, traditional attires, traditional games and activities that was practiced during ancient days which otherwise had</p>	7.78Crores	<p>Physical inspection of the Society was carried out by officers from Ministry of Culture. The team visited the site of the proposed museum and verified the art objects, which are to be displayed in the proposed Museum. Recognizing the unique collection of the organization, the team has recommended for financial assistance for setting up of new museum. The financial status of the Society is also sound and the Society is financially eligible to run the museum. The organization has also made presentation before the Expert Committee of their proposal.</p>

		<p>been disappearing by the passage of time. The proposed museum will be a treasure house of a rare collection of articles belonging to the different tribes of Nagaland. The museum will truly ignite minds and be an apt of Naga Cultural heritage of Rengma Tribe. The Society mentions that they have a land area of 150.00 ha. and more than 1344 exhibit for the proposed museum.</p>		<p>The Expert Committee has considered the proposal and observed that the estimated cost of the project is too high in terms of the number of artifacts. Keeping in view these facts, the Expert Committee has recommended Rs. 1 Crore only for the proposal.</p>
3	<p>Naga Traditional Museum Society Khel, Khonoma village, Kohima, Nagaland</p>	<p>Proposal of Naga Traditional Museum Society, Nagaland has submitted a proposal for setting up a Museum amounting to Rs. 8.00 crores under the Museum Grant Scheme for construction of New Museum at Khonoma village, in the district of Kohima. The Society states that the Naga Traditional Museum will be established for displaying the artifacts related to different Naga Tribe's Culture. The main aim &amp; objective of the Museum would be to bring development and display the history and tradition of their forefathers.</p>	8.00 Crores	<p>Physical inspection of the Society was carried out by officers from Ministry of Culture. The team visited the site of the proposed museum and verified the art objects which are to be displayed in the proposed Museum. The team has stated that the Society has land measuring 53.70 acres and 450 artifacts which are unique. The artifacts are related with tradition, culture and living style of different Nagas Tribes. The items includes statues made from wood and brass, ornaments made from beads, thread and brass, dresses made by thread and beads, ornaments made from wood, bangles and armlets of iron etc. Recognizing the unique collection of the organization, the team has recommended for financial assistance for setting up of new museum. The financial status of the Society is also sound and the society is financially eligible to run the museum. The organization has also made presentation before the Expert Committee of their proposal. In the instant case, the Society was registered last year (2016). However, keeping in view of the unique collection, the</p>

				<p>organization has been granted relaxation of this condition.</p> <p>The Expert Committee has considered the proposal and observed that the estimated cost of the project is too high in terms of the number of artifacts. Keeping in view these facts, the Expert Committee has recommended Rs. 1 Crore only for the proposal.</p>
4	<p>Vikehie Welfare Society, PB No. 685, Viswema village, P. O. Jakhama Kohima, Nagaland</p>	<p>Vikehie Welfare Society has submitted a proposal for setting up a Museum amounting to Rs. 6.5299Crores under the Museum Grant Scheme for construction of New Museum at Jakhama village, in the district of Kohima. The Society states that the proposed museum will attempt to display a panoramic view of the sociocultural life and heritage of the Nagas- vividly depicted through the anthropological, ethnological and art galleries and the open- air display. The museum will showcase the varied artifacts, costumes, and lifestyles of the Naga's Tribes. The main aim &amp; objective of the Museum would be to bring development and display the history and tradition of their forefather. The museum will truly ignite minds and be an apt for Naga Cultural heritage.</p>	6.5299 Crores	<p>Physical inspection of the Society was carried out by officers from Ministry of Culture. The team visited the site of the proposed museum and verified the art objects which are to be displayed in the proposed Museum. The team has stated that the Society has land measuring 200 x250 sq.ft.and199 artifacts which are unique. The Society has also stated that they are in the process of collecting more than 500 artifacts from different villages. The artifacts are related to the tradition, culture and living style of different Nagas Tribes. The items includes ornaments, mekhala (women folk) and shawls (men and women), wooden chair, clay cattle, bamboo basket, bamboo tube, horn of bulls, shields of mithun, musical instruments made by bamboo, guns, shield made from animal skin, etc. of 16<sup>th</sup> to 18th centuries of Naga Tribe. Recognizing the unique collection of the organization, the team has recommended for financial assistance for setting up of new museum. The financial status of the Society is also sound and the Society is financially eligible to run the museum. The organization has also made presentation</p>

				<p>before the Expert Committee of their proposal.</p> <p>The Expert Committee has considered the proposal and observed that the estimated cost of the project is too high in terms of the number of artifacts. Keeping in view these facts, the Expert Committee has recommended Rs. 1 Crore only for the proposal.</p>
5	<p>Needy People Society, H Q House No. 181, Salangdem Ward, Mokokchung, P.O.- Mokokchung, Nagaland</p>	<p>Needy People Society, has submitted a proposal for setting up a Museum amounting to Rs- 6.44025 Crores under the Museum Grant Scheme for construction of Luyong Village Tuli town Museum, District Mokokchung, Nagaland based on the tribal and local culture related materials including gateposts, statues, pillars, ceremonial drum, textiles and dress materials, ornaments, weapons and antiquities. The Society has stated that the proposed museum will exhibit the rare collection of articles of different tribes which portrays the history and traditions of the Nagas. The Naga architecture, social hierarchy and custom and culture will be displayed in this proposed Luoyang village Tuli town Museum.</p>	6.44025 Crores	<p>Physical inspection of the Society was carried out by officers from Ministry of Culture. The team visited the site of the proposed museum and verified the art objects which are to be displayed in the proposed Museum. The team has stated that the Society has land measuring 500 x 500 sq. ft. and 250 artifacts which are antique, rare and valuable. The financial status of the Society is also sound and the Society is financially eligible to run the museum. The organization has also made presentation before the Expert Committee of their proposal.</p> <p>The Expert Committee has considered the proposal and observed that the estimated cost of the project is too high in terms of the number of artifacts. The Society was directed to produce/submit the list of all members on 31/8/2017 which they did not adhere to. A discrepancy was noticed in the number of objects/exhibits which is reflected as 185 in the summary and 250 in the report by the MoC officials. It was also noted that the claimed foot fall top in the proposed museum is a remote possibility. The proposed 9300 sqm built up space for 185 exhibits is incomprehensible. Keeping</p>

				in view these facts, the Expert Committee has recommended Rs. 1 Crore only for the proposal.
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The above proposals are suggestive of the communities' awareness of the importance of the region's cultural heritage. Further closer observation of the proposal seems to suggest that museums are proposed mostly along the lines of identity. It is true that Nagaland has its own unique cultural diversities based on tradition, language, and materiality. With each district established with their respective District Cultural Office and in some cases, attached to District Museums under the State Government, such museums too need special attention covering extensive themes. It is only possible to run a museum with financial aid, but the sustainability and availability of human resources and experts are equally important. Thus far, a museum study, as a professional course and discipline, has not been introduced in the school or college curriculum in Nagaland. If such is the academic credence given to museum studies in Nagaland, with such approval of museums, what is the future of the objects collected for the future generations? Because there is no genuine or world-class museum in the region compared to the extent of funding proposals approved, there are certainly doubts on the actual implementation of such proposals. Therefore, with the lack of State Museum policies and code of ethics, such practices will continue to go unchecked.

### **Museum Networking, Administration and Sustainability**

The observation of exhibitions in the museums of Nagaland is useful for understanding how layers of time are connected to history, and how each exhibition projects distinct representations of time, corresponding to different ways of establishing the relation of the present with past and future. Networking in museums is an important aspect as it is for entrepreneurs and businesses; it covers administrative functioning social media, technology, and links to local, national and global institutions. In actuality, sustainable museum development depends largely on networking. According to the 2011 census there are 11 (eleven) districts and 1,428 villages. Each district, except for the newly formed districts, is set up with its own District Cultural Office (DCO)-cum- Museum/ library. The other categories are those of village community museums, private museums, and university and college museums. The pyramidal structure of the museum shows the Department of Art and Culture at the apex in administrating the museums of the Government and the District Cultural Office. Considering the administration, staff and experts in museums and related areas of

Nagaland (see Table 27), the Museums and heritage sector are still poorly manned with limited expert staff.

**Table 27:** List of Positions, Designation, Educational Qualification, and Expertise in the Department of Art and Culture as of 2020 (Source: <http://artandculture.nagaland.gov.in>)

Sl.No	Designation	Educational	Expertise	Division of units
1	Director	M.A.	Sociology	
2	Addl. Director	B.A		
3	Deputy Director	M.A.	Anthropology	
4	Deputy Director	P.U.		
5	Deputy Director	B.A.		
6	Assistant Director	B.A. (Hons.)		
7	Assistant Director	B.Sc.		
8	Assistant Director	B.A.		
9	Assistant Director	M.A.	History & Archaeology	
10	Registering Officer	M.A.	Sociology	
11	Librarian	M L.Sc.		
12	Investigator	B.A	Diploma in Archivist	
13	D.C.O (District Cultural Officer). Mon	B.A.		
14	D.C.O. Kohima	B.A.		
15	D.C.O. Mokokchung	B.A.		
16	D.C.O. Zunheboto	B.A.		
17	D.C.O. Phek	B.A.		
18	D.C.O. Wokha	B.A.		
19	D.C.O.	B.A.		
20	Cultural Officer	B.A.		
21	Curator	B.A.		
22	Research Officer	B.A.		
23	Guide Lecturer	B.A.		
24	Registering Officer	BA (Hon)		
25	Planning Officer cum Ref. Librarian	Ph.D. L.Sc.		
26	Deputy Librarian	M.Sc.		
27	Archivist	MA	Diploma in archival Studies.	
28	Art Executive	B.A.	Diploma in fine Arts	Specialist Service
29	Art Expert	Matriculate		Specialist Service
30	Art Curator	M.A	Art & Asth	Specialist Service
31	Senior Artist	B.F.A.		Specialist Service
32	Registrar	Matriculate		Ministerial Staff
33	Superintendent	MA		Ministerial Staff
34	Superintendent	Matriculate		Ministerial Staff
35	Astt. Superintendent	P.U.		Ministerial Staff
36	Astt. Superintendent	P.U.		Ministerial Staff
37	Editor	M.A	Sociology	Nagaland District Gazetteers Unit
38	Compiler	B.A.		Nagaland District

				Gazetteers Unit
39	Superintendent	B.A.		Nagaland District Gazetteers Unit
40	Stenographer	P.U		Stenographer
41	Stenographer	B.A		Stenographer

Sustainability is the dynamic process of museums, based on the recognition and preservation of the tangible and intangible heritage of museums responding to the needs of the community. To be sustainable in their mission, museums must be an active and attractive part of the community by adding value to the heritage and social memory (ICOM, 2011). In recent years, there has been a diversion towards the views of museums where the traditional practice is associated with the collection, display, and preservation, focusing on heritage having little bearing on consumer orientation. On the other hand, new views, without discarding the traditional, are adding more activities, attracting more consumers, thus justifying what the museum is and likewise its benefits. Considering the case of Nagaland, the strength with its diverse heritage and opportunities, sustainable development is yet to be noticeable. For instance, the revenues from the State-run museums, leaving aside the accounts of local community museums, except from entry tickets and photography, seem to show no improvements as evident from the following:

Year-2013-2014 March: Museum entrance ticket and photography= Rs 1, 75,000

Year-2014-2015 March: Museum entrance ticket and photography= Rs 1, 66,565

Year-2015-2016 March: Museum entrance ticket and photography= Rs 1, 05,631

Year-2016-2017 March: Museum entrance ticket and photography= Rs 1, 65,910

Year-2017-2018 March: Museum entrance ticket and photography= Rs 2, 16,740

Year-2018-2019 March: Museum entrance ticket and photography= Rs 2, 05,390

Year-2019-2020 March: Museum entrance ticket and photography= Rs 2, 35,570

(Source: Annual Administrative Report Department of Art and Culture, 2013-2020)

To be sustainable, museums should have the four pillars of museum sustainability-Museum and community (social), Museum and moveable cultural heritage (cultural), Museum and Revenue (economic), Museum and planet earth (environmental). Of these pillars, museums in Nagaland needs more focus on revenue. Although with its strength and opportunities, museums in this region are small and almost unknown with meager financial and human resources. Consequently, they attract little investments resulting in a vicious cycle that needs a systematic solution by completely reforming their management principle applied in the past. With the presence of both built and archaeological heritage, besides museums and

archives, Nagaland does not appear to be faring too well as compared to other regions in India. Two important open-air heritage sites are Khezakheno and Chungliyimti, which are protected under the Department of Art & Culture, and State Museum. Both the sites, according to oral narratives, represent the origins of most of the Naga communities before their migrations to the present locations. Besides, the state has one each archaeological as well as historical sites under Archaeological Survey of India, Kachari ruins in Dimapur and Damant Memorial in Khonoma village, Kohima. Attempts had been made in the past decades by archaeologists to bring about a project plan for the effective management of heritage in Nagaland, however, it went unnoticed. Such implementation of heritage management will ultimately boost revenue on one hand and aid in the conservation of heritage in the long term.



Figure 36: Community Museum, Mopongchuket village, Mokokchung District



Figure 37: Heritage Museum, Khonoma village, Kohima District



Figure 38: Touphema Tourist Museum, Touphema village, Kohima District



Figure 39: Chumpo Museum, Dimapur



Figure 40: Nagaland State Museum, Kohima



Figure 41: Naga Institute of Culture, Kohima



Figure 42: Excavated artefacts on display, the Archaeological Gallery, State Museum, Kohima



Figure 43: Display of various Naga indigenous games, Indigenous Games Section, State Museum, Kohima



Figure 44: Naga Potteries on display, State Museum, Kohima



Figure 45: Representation of two distinct Ao Naga group in single dioramas with description labels



Figure 46: World War II museum, Naga Heritage Village, Kisama



Figures 47: Local visitors to WW II museum during Hornbill Festival (2017)



Figure 48: Representation of the Allied and Japanese forces in the Battle of Kohima



Figure 49: Signage by the approach road to Zapami village, NH 29 and view to the entrance of the museum



Figure 50: Few of the collections on display, Zapami Heritage Museum



Figure 51: Collection of Early Missionaries to the Naga Hills, Community Museum, Mulongyimsen Village, Mokokchung District

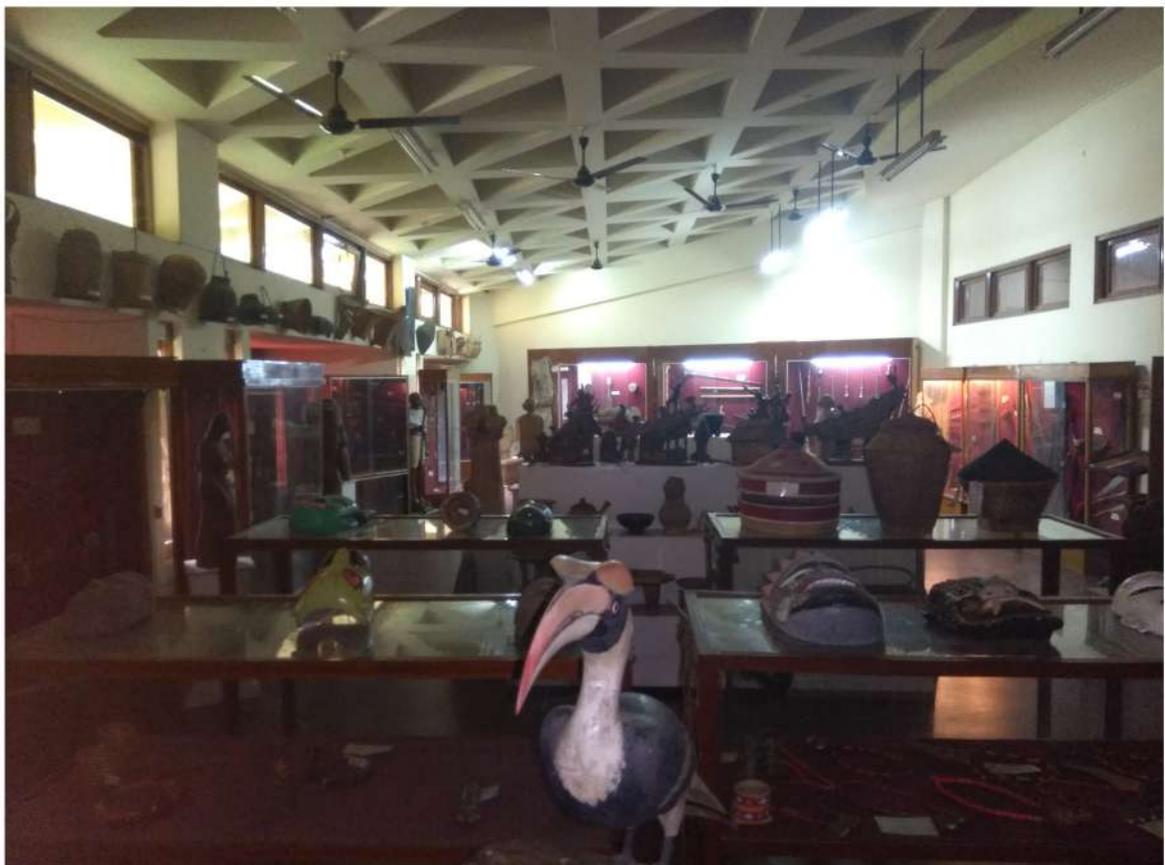


Figure 52: Collections on display in the North East Zone Cultural Centre (NEZCC) Museum, Dimapur



Figure 53: Ethnographic objects on sale during the Hornbill Festival, Naga Heritage Village, Kisama

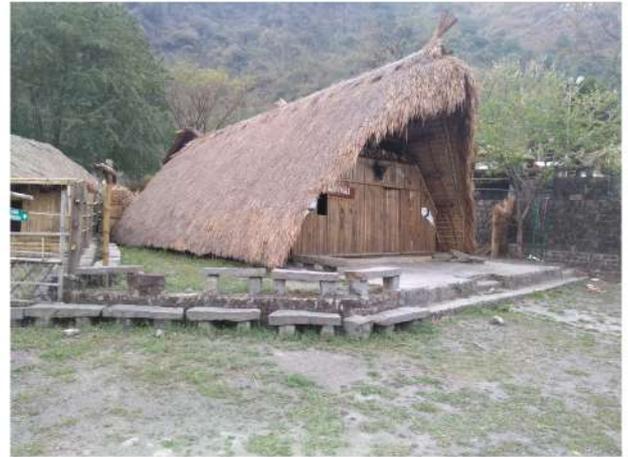


Figure 54: Representation of traditional architecture, Naga Heritage Village, Kisama



Figure 55: Collections on display at the Nagaland Police Archives, Chumukedima, Dimapur.

## **CHAPTER-6**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Research and inquiry on museums are characterized by a constant evolution on the subject matter and by the involvement of new ideas and disciplines that try to pour more values to the rest of the literature on institutions. Museum, museology, new museology, representation and cultural identity is the foundation of this research area, and these approaches has proved museums to be the primary medium to communicate and preserve our past. The collection and management approach has been considered for years as the most appropriate tool for supporting the resource issues of museum. However, this viewpoint has not been totally accepted by museum practitioners who judge these instruments as distorting the real nature of museums and their societal role.

The present study does consider that museum needs to be directed with instruments that face the museum representation, networking, and sustainable problems according to what the society presents. However, the traditional collection and management approach is here considered insufficient for managing museum issues. Museums are active members of the present society that is constituted by a multitude of challenges the museum must deal with. The present study thus adopts a new perspective that has not yet been confronted. The study suggests a new perspective on museum management by considering the types and categories of museum, the culture represented as the fundamental variable, and the museum managerial issues of the region that comprises, and the unexpected findings. Therefore, the main perspective of the study is the presentation of the debate between the main research streams on museum and the museum practice issues.

This chapter builds on the preceding, which provided important and thorough perspective for the analysis of every single museum. Two different categories of assessment have been made to understand the individuality of each museum broadly in Northeast India, and in more detail, as a case study in Nagaland State Museum system. Observation has primarily been directed towards representation of cultural identities with a view to describing and analyzing, as well as comparing and contrasting museums and considering the role of each museum space. The discussion draws attention to the museums from Northeast India, in general, and narrows down to details on the museum scenario in Nagaland.

### *Material culture, cultural identity, and inclusive museum*

Material culture, in addition to linguistics and other characteristics of cultures, is the defining feature of the Northeast India region in terms of cultural identities. The moving wheels of Northeast India's museums are such attributes of material culture. Presentation and musealisation of such collections convey a powerful message since it represents the past and present contexts of the regions and communities. The basic objective of museum visits might vary depending on age, gender, interest, and qualifications. Many presume that museums are primarily used as a venue for leisure, entertainment, and informal knowledge transfer. However, with the changing role of museums in modern times, this premise has become obsolete. Collection has to be constantly interpreted and reinterpreted in order to extend knowledge about the collected objects. Museums have always been tightly tied to objects, and it is through such connections that we learn about who we are, where did we come from, and what society was like in the past. As a result, developing broader techniques of display is critical. It is a well-known truth that a museum is defined by its collection; nevertheless, in today's world, such museums are unable to provide historical dimensions. As a result, museums in multicultural communities face challenges concerning how to offer things with a new significance while interacting with visitors. Some museums have succeeded in inviting such a dialogue with their communities or their representatives, by relating them to the objects on display. Such initiatives have aided the interpretation of objects from museum collections, for instance, the exhibition and publication on *Traditional Dress of Meitei* in Manipur State Museum, Zapami Heritage Museum, and Pfutsero sub-division of Phek District, where the village communities' exhibitions are as result of the community initiatives. In addition, the archaeological collection, exhibition, and publication of the State Museum Nagaland in consultation with specialists, and the publication of volumes for ethnographic collection in William Sangma State museum, Shillong are few such further examples. A visit to such museum, judging from the quality of visit, has become important, in particular, the type of visitors who understand museum as a place of dialogue. Thus, finding answers to innumerable questions encourages visitors to think and enable to understand what has seen or experience through in the museum.

Museums in Northeast India not only reflect the changing concept of the society in their social and historical contexts, but also indicate the current contradictions of transition of the generations. Museums of the region mirrors the cultural practices of their community, including identity construction, ethnic boundaries, and community politics. This contesting force shapes the cultural representations across museums in Northeast India. Each museum

represents and functions as a cultural symbol and demonstrates cultural uniqueness, maintaining its classic traditional culture, which are detached from the present society. On the other hand, representation of such cultures through collections within the museum spaces of Northeast India has generated exotic experiences to the visitors from the insiders and outsiders audience.

From the available data, museums in Northeast India are classified into categories but such museums are mostly ethnographic in nature. Besides ethnographic objects, the other material culture includes archaeological objects and art collections. These museums display the importance of the biography of object approach. Such approach has most commonly been applied to ethnology and archaeological collections that revolves around the makers of the cultural objects, the collector and exhibitors, and the audience. Generally, the area where people assemble is the space between objects and their respective interpretation labels. These interpretation labels provide information to the larger audience. In this conception, museum becomes an important space for seeking relationship between the specimens on display in conjunction with the society and the community under consideration. The main agent in this cycle of museum representation and interpretation is the material culture, which draw relationship between community to community, object to object, and between object and community. In this relationship, the standpoint of observing is not only on the objects alone but also involves the community's tradition and institutions. Thus, material cultures in museums of this region have become a central theme to understand its communities.

In this regard, the current research on museums reveals that the museums breaking away from the nineteenth century is barely noticeable. Museums have experienced a process of varying degrees of openness and accessibility to the public during the nineteenth and the twentieth century's as well as now, in order to broaden their audience. The museum has become more receptive to new social systems in order to express and disseminate knowledge through its various themes and exhibits. The emphasis on the object has shifted in this case. Although there is an obvious focus from museums of the Northeast Indian region in regards to collection and exhibitions, the use of digital and electronic interpretation and understanding of material culture access to the public is limited. Since object, themselves are mute, many collections in museums have insufficient associated literatures to sustain detail study. This indicates that the museums under investigation should use material sources of knowledge in such a way that encourage multitudes of interpretation by encouraging community participation. At its initial developing stage of museum interpretation and other technicalities, the Don Bosco Museum of Indigenous Cultures, Mawlai, Shillong can be taken

as an example of how to portray and interpret material culture. However, such concepts and models necessitate financial assistance, which is a disadvantage for the museums of the region.

What is evident from the study is the understanding that each museum in Northeast India has developed their own approach towards incorporating and representing communities through collections and at the same time are in search of how to transform relations between the audience and museums more effectively and appropriately. The diverse cultural identities of communities are either a point of departure within the exhibition or a relevant aspect in the narrative as a whole, as the museum exhibitions demonstrate. The displays imply a strong emphasis on the diversity of communities in several ways. It is therefore clear from the displays that such narratives expressed through items incorporate a wide range of cultural identities.

The State museums in Northeast India, with its array of rich material culture, aim to portray its communities holistically. However, there is a need for museums of the region to pay more attention to their own approaches and evolve new ways of thinking i.e., the interaction and engagement between collections and the community, in terms of respecting communities and reaching out to them. As a part of the new museology movement, museums should be primarily concerned with community needs and development, and be integrated into the society around them (Kreps, 2020, p. 12). For instance, a museum networking system connects the museum with individuals, organizations, and communities who possess more knowledge and connections to the museum collections than the managerial staff and curators. In addition, such networking will not only lead towards object orientation of the museum but will allow understanding the historical narratives of the past and present communities. Despite the difference in perspectives, the State museums acknowledge that they not only regard the respective communities but also help in community building, which is a vital part of the museum's social relevance. Furthermore, the practices of museums show that their focus is directed towards their own social value and bond with their respected social groups. For example, the State Museum Nagaland exhibition revolve around the various Naga communities, likewise, the district museum in this part of the region focuses on communities that resides within their respective jurisdictions. This demonstrates that the creation and concept of museums, particularly in Nagaland, are based on what political, social development and historical experiences exist within a group.

Further, the relation between museum and objects and the museum display offer a meaningful discourse. As creativity and use of objects completes the exhibition narrative, it

makes effort to tell a story of the State, District, or community, to draw a connection to the present, and to represent the states and their communities. In this direction, the paintings, photographs, dioramas and panels representing individuals/communities with object accompanied by personal stories, which are commonplace in all museums, form another type of objects. These observations show the meaningful combination of the tangible and intangible narratives. For example, the dioramas with 3D models and placement of object with photographs and paintings in the background are common in State museums. Based on the case studies, what is revealing is that most museums are characterized by permanent exhibition and limit their outreach programmes, such as, off-site exhibition for engaging community participation or organizing special exhibition within the museum. In such respect, the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS) or National Museum of Humankind or Museum of Man, Bhopal, can be role model for the regions of Northeast India where combined participation of the communities and object- oriented exhibition are organized on a weekly or monthly basis. Such activities provide a wider meaning of the object and the history of communities and other aspects associated with the present museum practice.

The connection between representing communities and objects also lies in the museum collection. It is evident from the case studies that State museums are aware of the fact that their museum collection is not wholly inclusive and hence does not well represent the minority communities. The reason provided to this disparity is because of the vast division of ethnicity identities in the region. The other issue is the absence of policy on inclusive museum, community projects both long and short terms are the evident result for not representing the sub or minority groups. Another factor is the cultural policy towards the museum of the States, which are influenced by governmental choices. Cultural policies include promotion of museums, but the absences of inclusive museum participatory are apparent in the present museum practice, which therefore demonstrates the negligence in the growth of museums. However, on the contrary, cultural policies fill the gap by incorporating long and short- term participatory project of the communities outside the museum policies and activities. Such project activities include documentation of tangible and intangible forms of heritage, which also constitutes one of the museum objectives. If such inclusive and participatory projects are collaborated with the museum and other cultural sectors, the true essence of understanding the community and collection can be achieved and on the other hand, the sustainability of the museum. What is important to note is the current collection policy of museums in Northeast region that fails to make reference to inclusive

representation, while the policies aims to be inclusive by prioritizing different communities recognized by the States today.

The case study across museums of Northeast reveals that museums are in search for the most effective display of the object, which are permanent exhibitions, yet give less privileges to expand their efforts in accumulating new heritage or on the lesser represented communities within the museum space. Perhaps the most fruitful chance for museums in expanding the inclusiveness of representation through their museum collections is the re-evaluation of its existing policies. Subsequently, for an over- all development of the museum practice, there is a dire need for restructuring museum departments. Conversely, the relationship between museums and their communities must change alongside the function of museums. For instance, the creation of a separate Directorate for Museum in Assam is an exemplar that may be adopted by other States of the region.

Therefore, linking all the practices, policies, roles and intentions of museums under study, the present study seeks to address questions relating to how cultural identities are represented and connected to the idea of museum, how cultural identity is constructed and represented in museum settings, the role museums play in current cultural process, identity representations, and museum inclusiveness and participatory nature. It is clear that representation of major communities and community relevance are accomplished through exhibitions. The issues of agglomeration of minor communities into major communities as discussed in the preceding chapters are not particularly accomplished through exhibition. In other words, inclusive representations of sub/minority communities' social relevance are not achieved through exhibitions alone. Observations shows that the directorial staffs of museums are well aware of the importance of the engaging minority communities; however, they have been avoided in museums, primarily due to the historical development and denial of other communities within society. In such a context, the question is whether museums have limited themselves within the limits of their own region, to communities that are recognized and on present-day heritage. Further, considering the use of exhibitions by the museums in terms of inclusiveness and participation there are almost no noticeable efforts to engage visitors. The exhibitions show that museums in the case studies are behind in the present day in their focus of participatory aspect of museums and at the same time lack of community participation in organizing and forming of exhibitions.

### *Museums, management, and cultural identity*

The study notes that in Northeast India today, there is a large-scale emergence of museums, which are credited with rich repositories. These include the District museum, the village community museum, Tribal Research Institute museums, the University and College museum and museums under private and civil societies. It is evident from the collection and exhibition that such museums attempts to integrate the social relevance of museums at the grass root level. Such museum connects the missing dots between the State museum and the communities, and an effort to create a dialogue. The District museums are a branch of the State museums, which are located in District Head Quarters under the government of the respective States. The collection and exhibitions represented are the heritage of the communities residing within the districts. What is revealing in the present study is that Assam and Arunachal Pradesh has the maximum number of district museums, while the other states contains less number in comparison to the number of Districts within the States (Table 3 & 4). However, States having fewer districts dominated by tribal institutes, museums and others, maintain their collections under District Cultural Office, for example Nagaland.

Observations from the district museums in Northeast India confirms that museums are still based on traditional concepts, simply perceived just as a building meant to collect, preserve and exhibit. While the attention is directed towards its wide array of collections on display, museums on the contrary fail to project its participatory role. Although district museums, on occasions, organizes competitions for colleges and schools and celebrates important international occasion, long and short term projects on museum development and community engagements are essentially absent. Interactions with curators and in-charges of these museums, reveals that while further development plan for museums are proposed, financial constraints remains the primary obstacle. In addition, the other common problem is the limitation of space although museums have rich collections.

Most District museums investigated under the present research displays collection and exhibition, which are focused mainly in monitoring evaluation of the visitor's reaction and response. It is common to maintain visitor's book, but such comments or review by visitors visiting the museum are not been taken seriously. Furthermore, few museums even aim at being visitor friendly and interactive. Most museums are not accessible to visitors with special needs. For example, there are very few that offer museum brochures and modern- day facilities like museum shops. It was also observed that museum facilities such as audio guides, touch screen computers, narrative labelling, which can enhance visitors experience of the museum environment are not given due importance. Besides, most District museums have

no functional websites for correspondence and dissemination of information. Most District museum also lacks basic amenities such as functional toilets. Facilities that enhance interest in the collection such as library, photocopier or research aids, and documented materials are minimal and found only in few cases.

On museum innovation and redesigning, which are important in the promotion of museum, the focuses are mainly on infrastructural needs. Only few museums have made any efforts towards renovation in the recent past. The focuses on restoration are mainly on infrastructural needs, leaving out the crucial elements of planning and design as technical requirements of museums. It is also observed that very often-curatorial requirements are placed low on the list. The study also suggests that most museums have less staff members and the roles for its operation are generally simple. The roles assumed by the staffs are the Director or Head In-charge and few employees. Most museums have no specific designer, educator, conservators or interpreters. The above draws upon the pyramidal structure of a museum department in Northeast and in Nagaland. The direction of functioning and administration of museums are headed by bureaucrats, who are skilled manager of any affairs with advanced training in administrations. Although such staffs maybe efficient in policy formulations and promotion for overall development of museums, but while dealing in related areas of museum managements, such officials may fail to provide insights for the lack of knowledge of the changing trends of museums and their diverse settings. The Government museums in the present case study demonstrates a huge administrative setup with various functions and operations, the requirement of staffs, level of their qualifications, distribution of task to perform, and the end result expected of their performance etc. It is clear that such an elaborate system needs to be well understood from the perspective of both theory and practice along with respective separate departments. No doubt, such initiatives will need time, and resources, both human and financial resources for restructuring the system; however, learning and drawing examples from other states within the country and other parts of the world, the goal is achievable. In other words, development of such advanced museums took numerous years of experiment, and is regarded as world-class museums today.

With reference to Community museums in Northeast India, they are an emerging trend, and such museums have been responsible for displaying and preserving the local cultural heritage of respective region. Such museums are community driven, stemming from the interest and passion of individuals and village/panchayat bodies. In many instances, the founder is the person-in-charge. The ownership of the museums extends to include NGOs, for example student bodies, and the collective village communities. Some institutions such as

Universities and Colleges have adopted similar trend and own their own repository of collections. These museums have mostly been established to exhibit the cultural and historical resources. The focus is often on the native community culture and history, with a target on heritage preservation for the promotion of culture and tourism. On the other hand, museums in universities and colleges across Northeast India comprise of collections meant for classroom teachings where collections are housed mainly from field surveys and small-scale excavations. It is evident from the visit of such museums that efforts are made to engage students and encourage young people to donate and visit the museums. The exhibitions tends to suggests that they are not simply meant to remain as static collections, but attempts have been made to adopt museum basic practices such as labelling of artefacts, opening an accession register and invite interpretations to the collections. It is also interesting to note that some of these museums have museum guidebooks interpreting their aims and objective of the museum, and a detailed description of the objects on display. In addition, these museums also show new themes on collection and exhibitions, for example, the Butterfly museum Shillong, which houses a unique theme to showcase man's place in nature, and to display the ecology of other living forms.

Except for the university and college museums, which are confined to their premises, community museums are located mainly in interior rural villages. Such community museums are found on the premise of preservation of heritage and promotion of rural tourism. Furthermore, on the management and technique employed for exhibitions, what is apparent is that such practices are still traditional, and most museums run behind the present museum practices, particularly in the use of electronic media for promotion and communication to a larger audience. Starting with social media, museums are gradually turning media savvy in present times. Such ideas should be incorporated so that visitors' experiences are improved and they can witness both ways of participation. What is also evident is that in terms of the social demography of the old, youth, and rural populations, the old and the rural populations are the least in terms of usage or museum visits. The other issue observed from the interaction with owners of the museum suggests was that funding is one the major constraints for further development of the museum. What is also emerging from the field survey data is the rise of new community museum proposals under state and central government schemes in recent times. The reasons for the surge of such new museums are directed towards the preservation of ethnographic objects, and other historical collections within the village jurisdiction. Such proposals originate mostly from registered societies with no planned objectives on the subject of museum and museography. It has been observed that such

proposals are nevertheless implemented and museums become functional but in the long-term, such community museums become stagnant thus, leaving the collection as the central focus and the main function of the museums were greatly ignored. While it is clear from the Government policies that aimed to support financially in opening new arena/space for preservation and promotion of culture, it is also important from the community standpoint to adopt sustainability of the museum. In this case, community museums have failed to understand the connecting practice of museum and museography. Thus, the need of the hour is not to check the establishment of new museums but focus on both short and long-term research-oriented programs to promote museum from grassroot level should be encouraged. This category of museum therefore represents the community with a holistic approach, and a space with exhibitions that fill the gaps of the district and state museums at the apex.

#### *Museum Code of Ethics and Communication*

The museum code of ethics, and guidelines for practice have been adopted by museum professions since the beginning of the twentieth century to systematize and regulate best practices. Across the globe, ICOM (International Council of Museum) at the international level has developed a museum code of ethics, likewise the Museum Association in UK, the Australian Association of Museum, American Alliance of Museums, and the Canadian Museums Association have their own museum code of ethics. Every individual and organization joining the ICOM internationally agrees to respect the ICOM Code of Professional Ethics. In India, there exist such museum Code of ethics under the Constitution of India and a series of laws enacted to preserve and protect the natural and cultural heritage of the country. Given below are some of the enacted laws:

- Article 49: Protect monuments, places and objects of artistic or historic interest declared to be of national importance.
- The Ministry of Culture provides financial assistance under the Scheme ( Museum Grant Scheme) to the State Governments and Societies, Autonomous bodies, Local Bodies and Trusts registered under the Societies Act, for setting up new Museums.
- The Indian Treasure-Trove Act, 1978
- Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904
- The Antiquities (Export Control) Act, 1947
- Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972
- Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

- The National Portal and Digital Repository for Indian Museums (under the Ministry of Culture, launched for digitization of the collections of Museums).

Besides the central government laws and constitutional directives on heritage, the State governments also have their own set of laws and guidelines. Such laws and plans are under the Department of Cultural Affairs/Art and Culture. It has been observed that the department has its own objectives for the promotion and development of museums; however, there are no specific museum codes of ethics. The State museums have their own set of objectives - to promote and preserve the rich heritage, to undertake research and publication, collections and documentations, which in theory are generally common initiatives. Conversely, the objectives defining the code of ethics are one-dimensional in the present-day museum practice. It is to note that India has a number of museums and we see a surge in new museums in recent years with no proper definition of a museum code of ethics. The administration of museums suggests multiple ministries that hold charge of museums. But not all museums are administered by the Ministry of Culture; some are run without government support but by handful of people under a board of trustees. The museums sectors in India follow the ICOM code of Ethics, which is very vital, but the question arises on whether the code of ethics addresses the cultural traditions of the country. Such issues make it evident that the code of ethics is much needed for sound ethical judgments in all areas of work in order to uphold transparency and trust between museum and society.

Taking into consideration the ICOM and other Association Museum Code of Ethics, the observation from the case studies suggest that less attention has been noticed in the museum code of practices. Nevertheless, museums have their own set of objectives, which mostly do not incorporate inclusive participatory museums. While these issues were discussed in the preceding chapters, the current discussion adds more light on the code of practices within the area of research. In support of the above, the other areas that require attention includes, museums and the education system, museum revenue, museum digital and social networks, museum collaboration and research, and museum equality.

### *Museum and its Education System*

From the museums examined in the present study, there are hardly any museums that have devoted education departments or teams. As has been discussed in the preceding chapters, museums are generally not part of the educational system. While we see college and school students visiting museums, however, museum outreach programmes meant for attracting wide range of institutions/organizations and the education mission of museums are rare. It is

only on special occasions such as the Celebration of Museums International Day, Independence Day and other important events that museums in Northeast India organizes competitions directed towards a positive attitude for museum engagement. To set a role model, the region can also learn from the Government of Bihar, which provides financial assistances to all schools to enable students to visit museums. On the inclusion of museum studies in the curriculum of academic institutions, hardly any colleges or universities provide core subjects on museum practices even though there is a surge in the number of museums in recent times. As a result, most museum staffs due to the lack of staff development programs face problems with the changing practice of the museums. What is realized from the present study is that few colleges and universities have department museums, but knowledge of their curriculum and access is limited. Museums as a holistic development for communities should not only confine their focus to collections and exhibitions, but also conduct outreach programmes to schools, colleges, and universities for a more engaging experience and learning situation for the students.

#### *Museums and Revenue*

Museums are mainly under three categories of ownership- the government, the community and NGOs and private Trusts. The maintenance of government museums are funded by the government, and covers staff salaries, renovation, purchase of collections, organizing temporary exhibitions, publication of research on collections etc. Besides funding from the state and central governments, the main revenue earned are from the museum entrance fees, and photography fees. What is observed is that one of the two important sources of internal revenue generation, in particular, the museum shop and cafe are still not very popular among the government-funded museums in Northeast India. However, contrary to government-funded museums, private museums have facilities that have become an important source of revenue. Such facilities includes museum shops, cafes, and amusement spaces within the museum premises, for example, the Don Bosco Museum for Indigenous Culture, Mawlai, Shillong, where visitors can experience traditional cuisine of the region and at the same time, purchase various books and other items. Smaller museums, for instance, the Kakching Peoples Museum, Manipur, the Tribal Museum, Zogam Art and Cultural Development Association, Churachandpur, Manipur, and the Butterfly Museum, Shillong have less revenue generation. Overall, the reasons of concern is the lack of funds for building the basic infrastructure or sometimes the lack of initiative by the concerned museum heads. Museum sectors across India have access to funds from the Ministry of Culture, New Delhi, for new

schemes for opening and maintenance of museums. Since there are other heritage and cultural sectors, and at the same time, there exist a large number of museums that are under the Ministry, not all museums benefit from this funding assistance. Besides the Ministry of Culture, the other funding agencies like the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the Ministry of Tourism also boost the museum sector financially. Such funding scheme is offered once in five to ten years or more, which are mainly directed towards renovation works. Thus, museum revenue sources for internal sustainability have become crucial for museums to maintain and offer consistent service to visitors.

### *Museums, Digital and Social Networks*

During the course of this research, it was found that the internal and external communication policies and guidelines are not accessible in the public domain of most museums of the region. However, most museums deal with communications through the administrative team rather than engaging in a dedicated communication team, staffed with specialists trained in the latest communication strategies and best practices. A museum communicates with visitors through various medium, one of which is social networks where it invites individual to participate actively. The significance of social networks has been proved an important source of communication in recent years on many aspects of social, cultural, and political life of society. For this reason, museums around the world have chosen new projects to present and exhibit on social media to attract the public to actively participate in museum activities. For example, National Museum of Humankind/Museum of Man, Bhopal; National Museum, Delhi etc, are active in exhibiting the museums through social media platforms.

The importance of social network and digital is recognized by most museums. However, most museums do not have a digital strategy. Even though the presence of most museums are available in tourism and travel websites, and Society and Organization websites which offer general ideas of museums, very few museums have websites or an online presence. However, in recent years, some museums have turned to social media to attract visitors to their museums, for example, the Facebook page of the Assam State Museum, Guwahati. Most museums are not actively marketing themselves beyond their small local audiences. Museums that do have websites are either independent museums or under the directorate departments. These websites are more like contact information pages. The purposes of these websites are generally intended to provide the location, timings of the museum, and in few cases, basic information about the collection. They lack the dynamic nature required to attract and engage the contemporary online viewers. Inventory systems

used in most of these museums are out-of-date and convey superficial information of their collections. On digitization of collections, most museums especially State museums have adopted digitization. However, during the course of this research, it was found that digitization of museum collections was observed to be non-existent in most museums of the region.

From the above perspectives, it is important to note that museums need to acquire knowledge and expertise in digital engagement to attract more audiences in the virtual world. Museums have limitless opportunities to promote their collections and exhibitions not only to local but global audiences through digital channels. Museums can engage diverse audiences by taking advantage of the growing use of the internet globally. Further, such steps would exploit new commercial opportunities for museum sustainability and a new experience for the audience. This would also improve museum participation beyond the one-sided dimension of museum practice.

#### *Museum Collaboration and Research*

What is also apparent from the present research is that museums mainly focus on collections and exhibitions. The awareness on the importance of partnerships, and collaborations with other national and international museums are few. Collaborating with other museums or partnership of any kind is a relatively new idea in museums and very few museums have looked at it seriously and consider it relevant. Only a few museums have formed some type of partnership at a local and national level with other museums and even fewer museums have any international collaboration. In the case where partnerships and collaborations are involved, they are mostly undertaken to conduct some kind of training, participation in seminars, workshops, symposiums in collaboration with other organizations. Most museums are also not research-oriented, and have few publications, besides their guidebooks on galleries.

Visit to international museum collections and exhibitions have seen participation from State museums of the region. However, such visits on behalf of the museum have produced fewer dialogues on museum research development. Further, policies on restitution of collections from international museums are not implemented in most of the museums. National and international scholars have produced excellent research on the collections of the region (for example, Naga collections in western museums), and have voiced their interest for collaboration, but less effort is paid by the concerned department. The claim of cultural objects from western museums in recent years has become an important issue in museum

practice. Restitution and repatriation, museum collaboration, and partnership would play pivotal role in this context. In a world of diminishing resources, museums have much to gain by collaboration with individuals, institutions, and organizations in public service and public education. Looking to the future and considering the nature of our global society, collaboration has a new urgency and a new promise. Museums cannot operate in isolation in a world of shifting boundaries. Collaboration today has expanded possibilities for ensuring that museums use their collections, programs, and resources effectively. Thus, taking such measures would benefit museum research in short and long- term and promote transparency, trust and new dimensions for museums and society.

### *Museums for Equality*

The term ‘museum’ is being redefined which can be seen in the proposal by ICOM in Paris, in 2019, which states, “Museums are democratizing, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artifacts and specimens in trust of society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people.” The proposal is yet to be voted for acceptance, but the definition correlates clearly on museum equality. Equality in the museum context correlates with diversity and inclusion, which is the core theme of present museum theory and practice. This correlation suggests that the role of museums is sensible and responsible with a crucial role in disseminating knowledge of the society through exhibition in public dimensions. This sensibility should come from museum directors, curators and staff. Based on such policies on museum equality, museums can help in improving ability, opportunity and dignity of those who are disadvantaged based on their social identity.

Even in spite of Article 14, 15 and 16 of the Constitution of India that underlines the right to equality, yet there is no provision for museum spaces on equality. The case studies from the museums suggest that such sensible policies on museum equality are not present for both staffs and the museum. The study area being marked by diverse ethnicity and culture and the presence of different genders, underprivileged children, juvenile homes, orphanages homes and special disabilities communities, many of the museums have not made a strong enough commitment in dealing with such communities in the museum space. In this direction, for instance, most museums have no accessible facilities for disabled communities. Furthermore, on display techniques, most museums have no themes on children to build

interest in museums. Usually museum display and exhibition are beyond the reach of children. It is also noticed that most of the museums do not have policies for equality.

#### *Other challenges of Museums in Northeast India*

Museums of government, community/local and private from Northeast India are striving to collect, preserve, and exhibit and promote the diverse heritage of the region. In looking at the functioning of the museum institution, there are numerous challenges that they face. Such challenges have been brought to light in the previous chapters. The following areas describe some of the challenges faced by museums in Northeast India:

1. Museums from the current study have often shown museum with celebratory, positive images but are silent on various issues, for example, the histories of inter-community conflicts, struggle for nationalism or social issues like violence against women, etc. Museum infrastructure/buildings are easy to establish with various objectives and orientations, but how to move towards contacting the public is very much absent in museums of this region. Declining financial resources often force the reduction or the elimination of public programs, and indications are that public service has not been fully incorporated in museums' missions. Such, allocation of funds, the absence of museum-mindedness of the public and communities put together, if checked, museums will become more democratic institutions, and provide a tool for communities to represent, discuss, display, and archive their heritage.
2. Museum professionals have not adequately recognized that virtually every decision, from collecting and exhibition policies to public relations, architectural design and security arrangements, shape their institutions for public service and educational mission. Most staff and trustees in museums do not have the capacity to be part of the museum, and the voice of the community is not widely heard in museum decision-making.
3. Museums have few models of organizational structures and exemplary programming that encourage and expand their educational role for their institutions. They are further restricted by the absence of a body of professional literature, lack of contact with the broader field of education, and limited availability of training for staff members and volunteers.
4. Most museums, except private and community museums, are under parent department of the state government. There are no Directors in most of the museums. The need for a separate Directorate for Museums is important for overall development of the

museum sector. To cite an example of Northeast India, Assam has the only Directorate of Museums, which shows far more freedom in performance than the other states in Northeast India. Such a separate directorate would transform the vision and mission of museums into reality in the long and short- term projects of the museum.

5. In connection with the previous is the absence of a degree of autonomy of the museum. Most museums are controlled by government appointed staff. Such employees are recruited through State Public Service Commission or deputation from other departments. Such staffs have no curriculum background on museology, which are crucial issues in terms of museum practice. These museum directorates with a degree of autonomy can play a significant role in the selection process of the staff.
6. On the contrary, there are other institutions who document and preserve the intangible heritage of the region by documentation and community participation. For example, the North East Zonal Cultural Centre, Dimapur (NEZCC) are performing excellent work with a mission and policy towards preserving intangible heritage. Owing to the rich intangible cultural heritage within the region (and collections associated with such exhibitions), for example intangible arts like storytelling, dance, drama etc, have been neglected by most museums, and are not executed within the museum space.
7. The region shows no specialized institution on museum studies or museology. Few universities and college offer museology in their curriculum, which are optional papers, and in most cases, these are included in sub-units within a course. Further, in schools and secondary level even though heritage subjects are a part of the syllabus, most institutions neglect museum visits. Given this situation, with only few institutions, the end result is insufficient museum professionals to fill the museum staff posts at the growing number of museums in the region.

### *Museums and its Challenges in Nagaland*

It is understood that the National Museum is for the nation, while the state museum represents the state; the district museum projects the local community that constitute the district. Parallel to this understanding, museums in Nagaland represent the state in the state museum, communities residing in districts in the district museums, and at village level, we have the community local museums representing the village. Besides, the region also has private museums and other heritage complexes, which exhibits dimension of various themes. These museums show the pyramid structure of the museum from the grassroots. From the

investigation, it is noticed that there are three types of collections associated with museums in Nagaland: first, the ethnographic, which dominates the museum galleries; secondly, the historical collections, for example, the World War II collections; thirdly, the Christian missionary collections, and local history, and finally the personal memorial collections and the living museums.

Data from Nagaland museums show that the State Museum has the highest collection of objects. Observation of exhibitions in the museum is useful, in understanding how layers of time are connected to history, and how each exhibition projects distinct representations of time, corresponding to different ways of establishing the relationship of the present with the past and future. The State Museum which started its institutional journey much closer to the ethnographic museum focuses mainly on the ethnographic collection. Although, the art and photo galleries have projected a few historical narratives, the justification on the broader historical prospect is absent. The museum display and the policy on collections still follow the old school of museum practices. Change is evident from the recent addition of the Archaeological and Indigenous Games gallery. There are other aspects, however, that can be included within the museum spaces, for instance, themes on historical collections is much needed to connect the ethnographic/ traditional life exhibition and modernization of the society.

On representation of communities, the State Museum's effort in exhibition can be noticed. The museum represents all the major communities of the state using cultural objects, dioramas and 3D Models. On how sensibly the museum deals with collections and the community is not seen to be present. The museum's primary focus is on the number of collections and exhibitions, which only deals with the major communities of Nagaland. In addition, the exhibitions are based on the lines of the formation of communities within the State. This clearly reflects that the representations of minority communities are absent. Besides, the historical issues on the agglomeration of communities and their further formation of major communities have not been well projected. For example, the exhibition of the Pochury, Chakhesang and Zeliang communities in the State museum are as a result of merging two or more groups into recognized major communities. Objects on exhibitions tend to show a common representation of these merged communities, but traditionally, the object may convey different meanings within each respective community. For example, a display of a shawl or ornaments may represent a common cultural identity, but in reality, all groups that were merged together will have their own distinct textile names and their semantics. Furthermore, the variations within the community are not observed in the exhibition. To

further draw an example, the exhibition of pottery, headgear and spears to mention a few, represents the Naga. Such objects are, however, the signifier of the communities' cultural identity wherein an object may have different meanings for different communities, as for instance, the earthen pot that may have various functions and symbolic meanings from one community in comparison to another. Likewise is the case similarly with the headgear and spears on display that may denote different symbolic meanings.

The inclusivity and equality of the museum's role has not been well understood in the across museums of Nagaland. Most museums have no policies on museum equality and inclusivity. The focus of the museum is mainly on exhibition of objects. Owing to the presence of diverse communities, culture and traditions in Nagaland, museums must follow the path of inclusivity and equality, which are its present practices. There are various attributes on the concept of museum inclusivity and equality for museum professionals as well as society. In this connection, it is observed that although most museums have a keen interest in adapting to the new practice, not all seems to be well in practice; for example, the lack of facilities and policies for physically challenged communities within the museum space. In addition, minority groups and other major communities do not seem to be part of the exhibitions such as the Garos and Kukis who are part of the non-Naga indigenous tribes of Nagaland and the Jain, Muslim, Nepalese of Nagaland who comprise of minority communities.

It is observed that the factors for this inflexible characteristic of the museum representation of communities are as a result of the long history of colonialism, post-Independence and the formation of Statehood under the Indian Union. It is evident that during such a long journey of historical development, the wave of conversion to a new religion and globalization, has led to the emergence of a new outlook of the society. The past situation has resulted in the representation of museum and heritage institutions. An example of such a contesting issue is the placing and naming of Rani Gaidinliu Memorial Museum. The long paper wars on local media and other social media platforms on identity, culture, and religion of this well-known personality who had been involved in India's war for independence demonstrates how the museum as a platform plays a vital role in reflecting the community. The issue was the product of a long historical difference between the communities, which the museum failed to address reasonably in accordance with the code of ethics. In contrast to such dilemmas, what can also be argued is that if a museum in the West has the authority to display Naga ancestral skulls and other Naga materials, the subject of naming and placing a person associated with Indian freedom struggle and Naga history in a

museum remains a critical unresolved controversy that needs further rethinking. By modifying museum policies to promote equality and inclusive museum, it is apparent that the museum fosters trust in society and as such, the museum is expanding to provide audiences with new dimensional experiences. In this regard, the museum as an institution should not always play safe by simply restoring, maintaining, and displaying the material objects. Rather, museums should promote contentious subjects while adhering to the code of ethics in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the communities and society for equality and inclusion in museums.

In most museums, creativity and design are static, straightforward, and conventional. Over time, museum promotion requires innovation and design, not just by including additional galleries and exhibition space, but also by keeping curatorial and visitor enrichment goals in mind. Of the museums visited, only a handful of museums had made any effort towards refurbishment in the recent past. Among the majority, restoration work is focused on structural needs, leaving out critical parts of planning and design that are technical requirements of a museum. Curatorial requirements were frequently considered after structural construction was completed. Engagement with the curator and owner of the museums, regarding renovation, growth, and maintenance, reveals that this is an important part of most museum's future plans.

From the data analyses, it is clear that most museums are ethnographic museums, which reflect the past society through material culture. Within the region, we also witness the gradual emergence of local community museums and smaller private museums. Another concern in Nagaland's museums is the lack of a training centre for museology and museography, as well as an inclusive museum practice. Furthermore, the limited scope of heritage and museum studies in school, college, and university curricula is a subject of concern. The public's lack of knowledge on the importance of history and museums is one element that is hindering the museum sector's long-term viability. To address these concerns and challenges, museums must place a greater emphasis on leadership, such as guidance and vision, rather than management and service. The capacity to deal with planning, staffing, and organizational concerns, as well as the necessary knowledge, talent, and passion connected with excellent leadership should be adopted by all museums in Nagaland. Such reform concepts would ingrain museum culture in human resources and direct them towards new museology, which is urgently needed.

## **Conclusion**

Cultural and environmental diversity abound in the northeastern part of India. Because of the territory's ethnic diversity, cultures and traditions, the region has been a source of inspiration since colonial times. In addition, the region's flora and fauna are valuable assets. As a result of its natural resources, the area has been actively marketing tourism. A large number of tourists from other parts of the country as well as international tourists visit the region's diverse cities and rural areas. Northeast India has a long history of struggle and turmoil within the states due to ethnic uprisings, political rights struggles, inter-communal disputes, state and district border disputes, and so on. Despite all of these challenges, Northeast India is gaining national recognition for its growth, development, and cultural richness. The region has around 150 museums, including site museums and Science centres, some of which are run by the central and state governments, while others are run by communities, non-governmental organizations, and private trusts. The museum houses mostly ethnographic collections, archaeological objects and sites, historical items, while art galleries are less in number. Also on display are scientific exhibitions, natural history - flora and fauna, geological collections and few tribal and contemporary arts. Besides, the region also has heritage complex and theme parks.

In this thesis, I examined how museums in Northeast India deal with multiculturalism in their permanent collections as well as temporary exhibitions. The second part of my research examined how communities' cultural identities are portrayed in larger contexts, such as the "New Museology" and Northeast India's cultural policy towards museums. The theoretical framework and museum case studies combined to create a clear picture of the linkages that museums in Northeast India make between exhibitions, community representation, and the social and cultural relevance of museums. It has become clear that museums see and make evident connections between concept and practices, and that there exist similarities and differences in their approaches.

The main foci were put on themes like representation, material culture, cultural identity and inclusive participation. A general understanding of museums was given to Northeast India and specifically focused on Nagaland, because this is a diverse hub of communities as well as cultures. In addition to a discussion on the development of museums from an international, Indian and the Northeast region contexts, emphasis was put on the presence of large diverse communities both major and sub-groups in Northeast India and specifically in Nagaland state. The presence of such diverse communities is important for our concept of representation of cultural identities in museums and relates to changes that require incorporation in museums, according to the New Museology. The 'New Museology'

(alongside also Postcolonialism) sought for a new attitude from museums towards the public. This can be related to the strong presences of multi- ethnicity of the region where artificial boundaries and identity is being questioned.

The present study also sought to question how the museum as an institution, representing a particular region, group, community or culture, engages and tackles museological theories and practices in its discourse, policies and activities, and how such situating contexts are reflected in museums. Further questions are addressed, such as, what are the representations and interpretations of collections and how are they represented? What are the roles that museums play in the current cultural process and identity? Chapters 2, 4, and 5 relate to such queries by categorizing the museums, cultures represented, and the display and exhibition techniques, accounting for the background of the states in these case studies. Such analyses address the cultural policy of the region for museums, which are continuously influenced by governmental choices. What the cultural policy has shown is that museums are mostly influenced by the debates on cultural funding. Another fact that recurred was the contradiction in cultural policy -the government advertises, promotes museums, and asks museums to attract more visitors but museums seldom get the funding from the government to fulfill the policy. Hence, cultural policy and the historical development in the society is strongly connected and reflected in the museum representations.

Museums also often collaborate with communities, mostly through delivering basic information of the object and collection. It is debatable whether this is the type of partnership that the “New Museology” actually aims to achieve. What can be noticed is that, in keeping with the “New Museology” and postcolonial standpoints, the museum frequently handles sensitive histories through thoughtful approaches. Most museums in the region lack this degree of sensitivity to equality and inclusiveness. This also calls into doubt the museums authority, as the curator can no longer decide on the exhibition narratives. In such an environment, the use of community sources and the relationship between museums and their communities is in need of a paramount shift.

Concerns on chronological and thematic order of the exhibits, text and information provided to the public on collections and the prehistoric cultures represented, difference of observation in the orientation of the collection and the cultural context, the use of dioramas, relevance of academic discourse in museum representations were examined. Such themes were the focus in Chapter 3 with the case study of museums and prehistoric archaeology of Northeast India. It became clear that museums are well aware of their archaeological collections and are always striving towards exhibiting them in museums. The Chapter brings

to question the prehistoric chronology of the region in some museum exhibitions. The imaginary creation of the past, the depiction of gender equality in the prehistoric past, the use of dioramas to project prehistory are simply imitation of archaeological textual sources without questioning their content and their relevance to Northeast India. This suggests that museums are not well informed in terms of the scientific value of archaeology; instead, they seem to be lost in a vacuum without reaching out in the public domain. Search for the past is supported by strong theoretical and applied disciplines in interpreting the data and such analysis is reflected in academic discourses. These, dialogues and debates should be reflected in museum practice for consumption by the public. In this context, the idea of “informed museum”, “museum equality and inclusive” and “knowledge creation” which are concepts of the New Museology are essential to counter commodification of a mythical past and a move towards active arbiters and interpreters of the past.

In retrospect, the historical growth of museology theory and practice has been active in the publication and dissemination of theoretical knowledge in museology and museum theory throughout the past four decades. Contributors come from Anglophone and Francophone museum theory, which are the powerhouses of museology, as well as European scholars from outside Anglophone and Francophone countries and other regions. All of the previously mentioned ideas and concepts, wherever applicable, are applied in the current research. This centre of power, however, must be questioned using a reflexive method (for example, indigenous museology/museum). Since then, museum practice has evolved to include non-European authority in the process of defining reality representation, for example, by involving indigenous peoples in institutional processes or recognizing their own viewpoints in displays. In this regard, questions are posed to museums in Northeast India regarding how and what theoretical stance and relevant praxis have been in use in museum practice. Such a lack of concern in its practice strongly shows that there is a significant gap between academic museum studies and museum practice in northeast Indian museums. Curators and museum employees receive museum training and work in museums, but they rarely have time to read current literature or make modifications, or update according to current global practice. Therefore, one of the chief concerns we need to work on is narrowing down this gap - there is a risk that museum studies may become a self-referential academic discipline with little impact on museums of the region.

Like any other research, the current study too is not free from its limitations. The essential data has been gathered from a multitude of sources. Whatever data was made accessible by museum curators and private owners has been examined and discussed in the

present research. Because the numbers of museums are continually rising, the data covering the museums of the region are based on museums that were functional up to 2018. The research is primarily concerned with reflexive approaches, thus allowing one-self to be self-reflexive on various issues concerning museum representations. In terms of museum studies in Northeast India, the region has more room to explore new ideas, such as indigenous museology, and the questions of restitution and repatriation, which are all part of postcolonial museology.

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