



Know Your People

Symposium

THE NAGAS



Archaeological Sciences Centre
Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar
Palaj, Gandhinagar 382355

Venue: Academic Block 1/002
Date: 15.09.2016
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Tiatoshi Jamir teaches Archaeology in the Department of History & Archaeology in Nagaland University, Kohima. His area of professional interest includes – Prehistory, Community Archaeology and Heritage Management, Ethnoarchaeology and Ethnomusicology. He has been leading the Archaeological project in the Indo-Myanmar border to trace the origin of the Nagas, jointly undertaken by the Anthropological Society of Nagaland and the Department of Art & Culture, Government of Nagaland. He is also a part of the research team that is involved in the study of camelian crafts of South Asia jointly undertaken by the School of Tourism, Kobe Shukugawa Gakuin University, Kobe, Japan and the Department of History & Archaeology, Nagaland University.

Archaeology of Nagaland: Corridor of linkage between India and Southeast Asia

The geo-polity of Northeast India is generally perceived as a corridor through which periodic migration of peoples and other cultural influences in relatively recent historical times took place. Nevertheless, how far back in time is this situation historically perceivable is what intrigued professional historians, anthropologists and of equal concern – to archaeologists of Northeast India for several decades. It is with this basic problem in mind that new excavations in Northeast India have engaged, not only to examine fresh evidence but also to rethink and contest long standing historical ideas of the region. And it is against this background that I present a summary of recent data from new archaeological excavations undertaken in Nagaland to present a scenario of the possible cultural and historical linkages beyond mere artificially created international borders.



Alok Kumar Kanungo works as Assistant Research Professor in IIT Gandhinagar. For nearly two decades he has been travelling and documenting in the field, museums and libraries, the rich heritage of the Nagas of northeast India, and the Bondos and Juangs of Odisha. He has spent considerable time in the field, living in villages and towns where these communities trade. He has worked in many areas where it is difficult to say where anthropology or history stops and archaeology begins. He has excavated the site of Kopla in Uttar Pradesh and Bhagatray in Gujarat, besides studying and documenting the traditional glass bead making areas in India.

Ornaments of the Dead among the Nagas

The Nagas are one of the most studied communities of India. However, most of the work on them starts and ends with the practice of headhunting and, in the recent past, has also focused on their colourful dress. This has led to many important facets of their life being overlooked. Some such aspects are their grave goods and, in particular, their ornaments and beads, which often tell us about their position in the social hierarchy, their gender, and the ways in which males and females are allowed to wear their ornaments after death. Ethnographic observations answer many of the puzzles which arise from archaeological finds such as these. When these artefacts are studied in relation to those of other societies and cultures in depth, the observations will give clues as to the migration routes which the Nagas took to reach their present habitats.



Vikas Kumar teaches economics at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru. He studied metallurgy at IIT Kanpur and economics at IGIDR Mumbai and the University of Hamburg. Before joining Azim Premji University, he was with the Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy at the National Law School, Bengaluru. His research interests include Political Economy of Conflicts and Statistics, Law and Development, Economics of Religion, and Indian History. He is working on a book on the relationship between development policies, identity politics, and government statistics in Nagaland.

The No Man's Land between Naga languages and the Languages of Nagaland

Nagaland is among the most ethno-linguistically diverse regions in South Asia. All Naga languages belong to the Sino-Tibetan family, but they are mutually unintelligible. Nagamese, an indigenous pidgin language with an Assamese (i.e., an Indo-Aryan) base, has emerged as the most widely used link language in the state. It is used as the medium of communication in a variety of contexts, including in mixed congregations, the Nagaland Legislative Assembly, and public broadcasting. However, Nagamese is not officially recognised and is not used in written contexts. It is not taught in schools. This paper maps the ethno-linguistic diversity of Nagaland and then examines the relationship between categories such as 'tribe,' 'language,' and 'dialect' and the factors behind the neglect of Nagamese.

