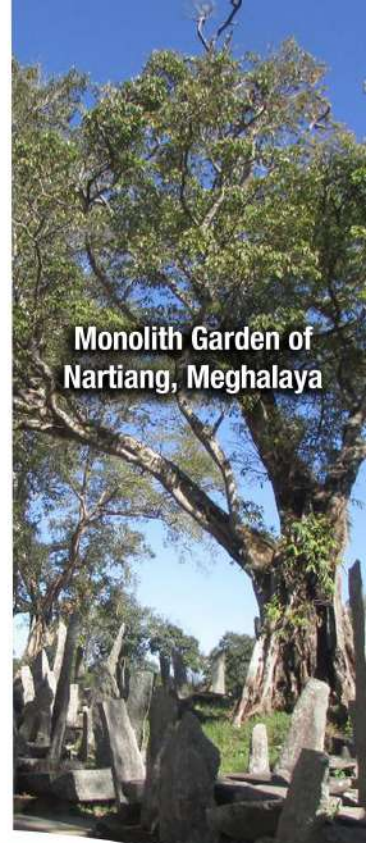




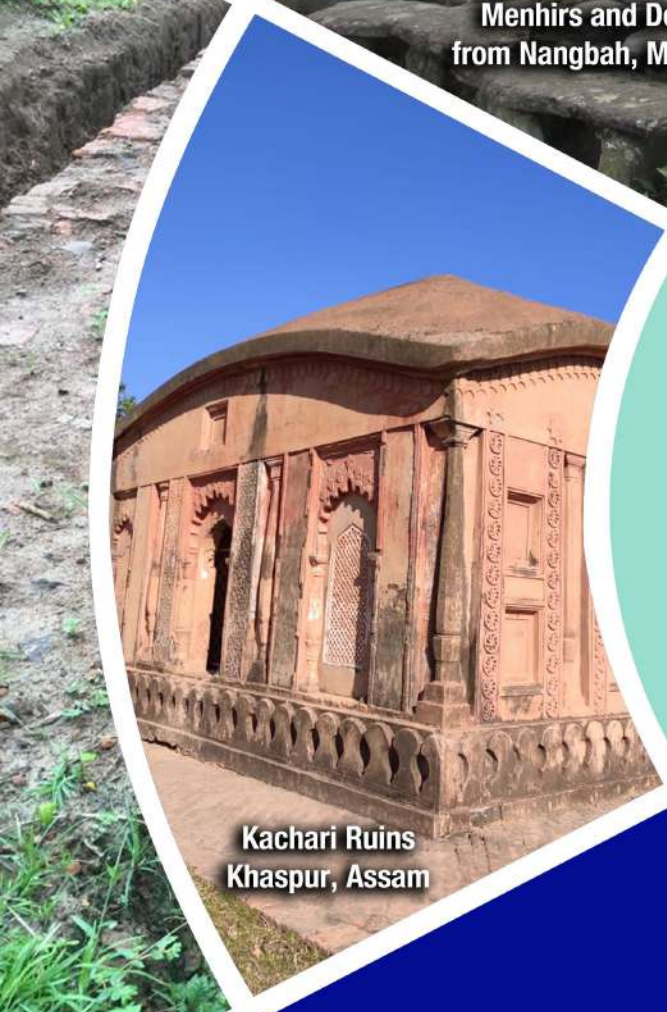
**Chaityagriha, Buddhist Stupa  
Boxanagar, Tripura**



**Monolith Garden of  
Nartiang, Meghalaya**



**Menhirs and Dolmens  
from Nangbah, Meghalaya**



**Kachari Ruins  
Khaspur, Assam**

# Anveshan

অন্বেষণ



ROYAL GLOBAL UNIVERSITY  
GUWAHATI

**A Biannual Student e-research Magazine  
Department of History**

**“A VOYAGE INTO THE UNEXPLORED PAST”**



**Da-Parbatia ruins  
Tezpur, Assam**

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## Acknowledgement

The journey with *Anveshan* has been memorable for us with constant support and encouragement that we have received from many corners. We, at the Department of History, wish to express our deepest gratitude to the following persons for the support, motivation, and the trust that they have bestowed on us:

1. Dr. Ashok Kumar Pansari, Chancellor, The Assam Royal Global University.
2. Prof. (Dr.) S. P. Singh, Vice-Chancellor, The Assam Royal Global University.
3. Ms. Angira Mimani, Registrar, The Assam Royal Global University.
4. Prof. (Dr.) A. K. Buragohain, Chairperson, Academic, The Assam Royal Global University.
5. Prof. (Dr.) Pradip Jyoti Mahanta, Dean I/C, Royal School of Humanities and Social Sciences, The Assam Royal Global University.
6. IT Department, The Assam Royal Global University.

## Coordinator's Note

A casual talk eventually is taking a concrete shape. The idea of publishing a departmental e-magazine at once caught our imagination and we shared the idea with the students. They too readily agreed to the idea. The love for the subject which is common to all of us worked wonders and we all geared up for the task. Seeing the enthusiasm of the students, we decided to make it a student magazine. That way they will be initiated to the world of research and history.

Our idea is to bring forth the local history of the region and popularise it. Emphasis will be put on the hidden and often marginal histories of the region. In addition, we also seek to familiarise the uninitiated with historical studies about a region that they inhabit. With these aims in view, we all set to work. The students were asked to explore their neighborhood in search of local and micro-histories. The magazine was thus christened *Anveshan*, meaning exploration. A voyage shall be taken twice a year into the world of past exploring lesser-known facts of history. With the projected aim and belief, we, hereby, are publishing the first issue of *Anveshan*.

Putting together this issue of *Anveshan* has been a nice learning experience for us. We are aware of the possible mistakes and errors in this journey, and we seek to constantly improve on those. It is also decided that one semester will be given charge of each issue of *Anveshan*. Accordingly, the M.A. Third semester has got the responsibility this time.

We hope, *Anveshan* will cater to the needs of its readers, and the society at large.

Sincerely,

Dr. Susmita Hazarika

Coordinator,

Department of History, RSHSS,

The Assam Royal Global University.

## Editors' Note

It is heartwarming to bring forth the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition of *Anveshan* before the readers. The inculcation of passion for creative thinking and writing amongst the students is one of the major objectives set by the students of History Department, RGU. History is all about the past and keeping that in our mind, we have named it *Anveshan*, which simply means 'Exploring the Past'. *Anveshan* has been a step towards it and it has served as a great platform to vent out students' passion for writing and encourage original thinking within them.

This E-magazine is jam-packed with local histories and exploring some places, myths and legends and various historical narratives which you might have heard but never thought of looking through. This edition features some worthwhile articles that will enhance your knowledge about exploring the past and it also makes interesting reading.

We would like to express our deep sense of gratitude to RGU and its faculty members for giving an opportunity to the budding writers/poets to express their creativity and talent. Let their words be worthy. We will wait for your encouraging response in this venture. Finally, from the entire team of *Anveshan*, we wish everyone a happy reading.

Thank you.

Saniya Singh

Shamulailatpam Nivash Sharma

M.A. History, 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester,

The Assam Royal Global University.

## Content

Editorial Board

Coordinator's Note

Editors' Note

<i>Tso Tawo</i> , The Magical Spirit Stone of Khezakhonoma	1-2
History of U Kiang Nangbah, a Freedom Fighter from the Jaintia Hills	3-5
Tattoos in the <i>Konyak</i> Society	6-8
<i>Gamocha</i> And Its Significance in The Assamese Society	9-11
Socio-Political Struggle and Transition to Statehood: Nagaland	12-15
Madan Kamdev: The Khajuraho of Assam	16-18
Devananda <i>Satra</i> And the Festival of Mathani	19-22

## ***Tso Tawo, The Magical Spirit Stone of Khezakhonoma***

By,

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The Nagas are an amalgamation of indigenous groups of people belonging to Indo-Mongoloid race, who inhabit the North-eastern hills of India, in the state of Nagaland that is home to 16 major tribes and many other minor/ subtribes. Like many other tribal histories, the Naga history too is significantly shaped by a plethora of myths and legends. These age-old myths and legends are seen to have fashioned the then prevailing pattern of beliefs and practices as cultivated by the ancestors. The story of origin too differs from tribe to tribe. These stories have survived till today as a practice of oral tradition and community memory.

Among many stories of how the Naga tribes came to settle in the present land the most prominent one is that of the 'The Magical Spirit Stone' of Khezakhonoma. A common story of origin history is shared between the Angami, Sumi and Lotha Naga tribes. As the narrative goes, *Tso Tawo*, a magical Spirit Stone, lies at a village named Kendma (presently Khezakhonoma in the district of Phek). The legend is primarily identified with a flat rock and is associated with a host of popular beliefs like being inhabited by a spirit.

It is believed that *Koza*, the foremost ancestral forefather and his wife had three sons. *Koza* and his wife possessed a great stone which had the property of doubling anything which was placed on it. Hence the couple dried their grains and farm produce upon the magical Stone. Thus, food was plenty, and no hard labour was required to feed the *Koza* family. They simply had to lay the grains in the stone which doubled it. One day the parents saw the three brothers fighting over the stone. Fearing bloodshed among the brothers the parents decided to destroy the power of the stone by setting it on fire. They broke eggs on the stone, covered with brushwood, laid faggot, and burnt it. A loud sound like a thunder

occurred and the stone got split in two parts. This incident set the benevolent spirit of the stone free, and the stone came to lose its magical powers.

Realizing the outcome of their greed and fight, the three brothers made their peace and set on their ways to three different directions. In the community legends, the three brothers are identified to be the ancestors of the three tribes, Angami, Sumi and Lotha. It is believed that in the course of time, various phases of migration took place. Thus, Khezhakeno is considered as the ancestral home to most of the present Naga tribes from where the different tribes of the Nagas dispersed and migrated to various parts of settlements in various hills of North-Eastern India. The myth of origin reflects an attempt of the three Naga to retrace its place of origin and place itself in association with other Naga tribes.



Image: *Tso Tawo* stone.

The village Khezakhonomaat is presently inhabited by the Chakhesang tribe. With the effort of the village council, the *Tso Tawo* stone has been preserved along with other historical monuments relevant to the village narrative and is opened to tourism as well.

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## History of U Kiang Nangbah, a Freedom Fighter from the Jaintia Hills

By,

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The tribal communities in India have been largely ignored, especially in the north-eastern states. The tribes have not seen many qualitative changes in their lives since independence. Therefore, it is no surprise that very few people know about the once illustrious Jaintia tribe in Meghalaya, and one of the greatest tribe leaders U Kiang Nangbah, whose martyrdom is commemorated on December 30. The Jaintia are a tribal ethnic group from Meghalaya who make up about 18% of the state's population. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Jaintia Kingdom was annexed by the British East India Company to become part of Assam province. It was said that he was a child at the time when the British annexed the Jaintia Kingdom in 1835. Though very young in age at the time of annexation, he was greatly disturbed by the highhandedness policies of the Britishers. The spirit of patriotism was inspired in U Kiang Nangbah by these developments and by the daring life story of his maternal uncle, U Ksan Sajar Nangbah, who fought against the British at a place called Chanmyrsiang.

During these periods U Kiang Nangbah became fully aware about the policies and plan of the British to impose authority on the Jaintias. However, the anti-British feeling started when the British India Government attempted to impose taxes and interfered with the custom and religious activities of the people as an attempt of the British to impose authority and make the people "submissive to the authority" and to "acknowledge the supremacy of the British government". During this time, the Jaintia tribes had chosen Nangbah as their leaders who vowed to drive the British out their land.

In the year 1860, the British imposed a house tax on the Jaintias. This was when the tribals broke out in rebels under the leadership of Nangbah. In 1859, public pronouncement of this imposition was made by Manik Pakyntein a *darbar* held at Mynkoi Pyrdis. U Kiang

Nangbah gave a befitting reply in the *darbar* and said, "Natives do not pay taxes to the foreigners". In the same year, many more taxes were imposed which includes Income Tax and duties on trade and other commodities despite the people of Jaintia had made it clear that they would not pay any forms of taxes imposed by the foreigner. Later, the British also asserted their power by setting up a police station in 1855 near the cremation ground of the *Dkhar* clan resented by the people. Religious intolerance also grew rampant with the establishment of missionary schools, and police were disrupting local festivals. The act of the British officials made the Jaintia people rise in arms to protect their land and people.

The Police led by Sukri, a Khasi police officer from Jowai confiscated all the weapons that were meant for the festivals and burned them before the very eyes of many people that had gathered to witness this traditional dance. The act of religious intolerance carried out by the British officials made the Jaintia to rise in arms and protect their land, customs and religious. The government officials and missionaries influenced the people to believe that the sanctity of their sacred grooves known as *Khloo Landoh* was nothing but a superstition.

At this juncture, U Kiang Nangbah signalled a revolt and attacked a British Thana and set fire to its arsenal. They built barricades, stockades, stored grains and manufactured weapons and firearms. Guerrilla attacks with bows, arrows, swords, and shields, paralysed the British administration as the attackers would swiftly escape to the jungles of Myngkrem, Myntdu and Myntwa. The attacks spread to Mynso, Shanpung, Raliang, Nartiang, Borato, Mookaiaw, Sutnga and other places of Jaintia Hills. To counter them, the British conducted a full-scale military operation against U Kiang Nangbah and his men.

While the revolution was going on, Nangbah fell ill and taking this as an opportune moment, U Long Sutnga, a key member of his team, informed about the place and condition of U Kiang Nangbah to the British. The British captured him on December 27, 1862. He put on mock and was sentenced to death within three days of his captures, before the very eyes of the troops and the locals, to send a message that any resistance to the British rule would not be tolerated and would be suppressed with an iron hand. He was hanged on December 30, 1862.

When U Kiang Nangbah climbed the scaffold, he told his weeping countrymen by saying “Look at me, when I die, if my face turns westward, the country will never be free from the bondage of the foreign yoke, but if my face turns eastward my country will be free again after 100years”. Kiang’s memorable words were rather doubtful. Its freedom in a real sense of his prediction. This is a million dollars question yet to be solved.

The life of U Kiang Nangbah was all through a guiding star to self-scarifying labour of great men. His determination is a source of strength with unparalleled supreme sacrifice for one goal, “The achievement of Freedom”. Life to him is never a comprise whatever the cause who did not take that as a defeat but as a fulfilment of Ideals.

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## Tattoos in the *Konyak* Society

By,

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The *Konyak* Nagas are one in every of the easily recognizable Naga tribes. They are the largest of the 16 tribes inhabiting Nagaland, India. The *Konyak* Naga come with a long history of headhunting and is known as the “*face tattoo tribe*” to the outside world. Tattoo, which springs from the Polynesian word “*tautau*” means to strike. Etymologically, the meaning of tattoo is not that different from that of the *Konyak* Nagas. In *Konyak* language it is called “*tatu*” or “*huhtu*”. The word *ta/tangta* refers to body and “*tu*” means pricks in the *Konyak* language. Tattoos for the *Konyak* people was like wearing a uniform. The various tattoo designs distinguished members of a particular group, a village, clan or individual. It was a way of identification for them. It also displayed the distinction and excellence between a warrior, a common man and an individual of aristocratic clan from other clans, an unmarried girl from a girl who is betrothed. The *Konyaks* believed that, the skull of a person had all the soul force of a being. This soul force is strongly associated with prosperity, fertility, personal life, crops and for the benefit of the village. Hence, the tattooing art of the body and the face within the *Konyak* culture is strongly related with headhunting.

For men, tattoos and head hunting were linked. The highest achievement for the *Konyak* men was to take on the enemy head and bring back to the village and before the *Angh*. In this way the warriors got the deserved facial tattoo which symbolised their courage and strength. The number of collected heads determined an individual’s identity, reflected in the decorative facial tattoo patterns. On the other hand, tattoos for the *Konyak* females marked their physical journeys. Tattooing was confirmation of the coming of age of transition from one stage of life to the other that announced their place in the society of

sexual maturity, marriage ability and marital status. It was mandatory for a *Konyak* girl to get the indelible stain on her body. Tattoos for women reflected their cycle of life events like marriage, becoming a mother, etc. For the females there were two groups (a) *Anghyas* (Queen) (b) *Penhyas* (Commoner). Tattoos done on *Anghyas* can be easily identified as it is done on their knees and arms. While the *Penhyas* tattooed on their calf in a zigzag pattern. An elaborate ritual, tattoos were made all over the body like face, neck, chest, arms, legs and even around the belly button of women. It was carried out primarily by female tattoo artists, referred to as *Anghyas*, and the art was passed onto the young women of the tribe by their mothers. The first stage of tattoo is done in groups and it depends on the status and achievement of a person. The second stage is done at marriage able age. The last and the third stage is a tattoo done on the neck or face of a person to identify himself as a warrior in the village. The tattoos are done on chest, arms, face, hands and on legs. The first mark signifies the maturity of the person and the second mark on the arm signifies marriage able age. Tattoos done on front leg and thighs signifies that the girl is already engaged for marriage. A selected tattoo, design for instance, was the privilege of only the queen while another design signifying a tiger was the symbol of the chief of all the village chiefs, Angh (King). Commoners were not allowed to have or possess the special tattoos on their bodies.

The tattoos were also believed to ensure a safe passage into the afterlife. The *Konyaks* believed that tattoos made the deceased recognizable to the ancestors in the afterlife. Tattoos for the *Konyaks* represented valued relationships and connections. It is believed that among the *Konyaks*, the facial tattoos were compulsory for getting the head of an enemy. They believed that if they die and are not marked with these tattoos, their souls do not get food and drink, or they would be tormented by spirits in the afterlife. For the *Konyaks* tattoos continued to serve and work in the afterlife because they were conceived as not being bound to human flesh or the body itself. In the sense, certain tattoos seemingly had a “life” of their own. Spiritual tattooing was similarly configured, because it bound human selves and nonhuman (animal) entities through intimate relationships. The “tiger familiar spirit” tattoos (*shahnyu yaha*) were worn on the backs of *Konyak*, Chen Naga

*Pongvin Anghs*. They represented powerful spirit companions of the tiger and leopard. These emblems were hereditary and passed down among male relatives in particular families.

There are three different tattoo groups within the Konyak community, *shen- tu* (face tattoo), *tangta- tu* (body tattoo) and *kong-tu* (nose tattoo). A tattoo, or *tu*, was drawn by pricking the skin with a rattan thorn; the pigment used was tree sap called *ying tee* collected from the kong tree (red cedar). *Shen-tu* was mainly rewarded to male warriors who brought the head of an enemy. No one else could have tattoos on their face. *Tangta- tu* (body tattoo) signified a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood while for the women it reflected their cycle of life events like marriage and becoming a mother.

Headhunting and the tradition of tattooing was linked to one another, and therefore the abolition of the practice of headhunting by the British Raj in 1935, rang the death knell of the ritual and practices of tattooing as well. It was the advent of the coming of the American Baptist missionaries, in the late 19th century that pushed the traditions further away. Everything that is good also incorporates a downside. While Christianity, and the work of the missionaries, gave access to education and allowed the *Konyaks* to meet the outside world, it failed to enforce the need to preserve the culture. The rapid changes brought about by the various processes of modernization engulf the *Konyaks*, therefore there is a need to preserve what is left of the older traditions, before it all recedes into collective amnesia.

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## ***Gamocha* and its Significance in the Assamese Society**

By,

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The *Gamocha* (*Gamusa/Gamosa/Gamosha*) is one of the most easily recognizable cultural symbols of Assam forming an integral part of almost all socio-religious ceremonies. This small piece of cloth has high esteem and wide usage in Assamese society and is quite secular in its nature as its used equally by all in Assam, irrespective of their religious or ethnic background.

The literal meaning of the *Gamocha* is “something to wipe the body with” (“*Gaa*” means “body” and the word “*Musa*” means “wipe”). However, interpreting the word *Gamocha* as the body-wiping towel would be misleading. The word *Gamocha* is also believed to have been derived from the Kamrupi word *Gaamasa* (Gaama+ Chadar), i.e the cloth used to cover the Bhagavad Purana at the altar. Basically, it is a white rectangular piece of hand-woven cloth of cotton or silk of around 2 feet in width and 5 feet in length with red woven patterns or motifs on two sides and long stripes on the long border. The traditional *Gamocha* woven in handlooms is offered as *bihuwaan* during Bohag Bihu to dear ones and to the guests. There are different varieties of *Gamocha* woven for religious and auspicious occasions. There are various other symbolic elements and designs traditionally in use, which are now only found in literature, art, sculpture, architecture, etc. or used for only religious purposes (in occasions only). The typical designs of Assamese-lion, dragon, flying-lion, etc. are used for symbolizing various purposes and occasions. At par with *Gamocha*, there are beautifully woven symbolic clothes with attractive graphic designs being used by different cultural sub-systems and ethno-cultural groups in Assam as well. In November 2019, the *Gamocha* received the Geographical identification tag.

Traditionally, there are two types of *Gamocha*:

1. The *Uka Gamocha*, which is the plain kind, generally used daily to wipe sweat or dry the body after bath.
2. The *Phulam, Gamocha*, which is decorated with floral motifs to be gifted as a memento during festivals such as Bihu.

According to the usage, there are different types of *Gamocha*:

1. *Paani Gamocha*
2. *Tamul Gamocha*

Another kind of *Gamocha* mostly used in lower Assam is called "*Anakata*". This types of *Gamocha* is taken out from the *Taatxaal* (handloom) without cutting. It is generally used on special occasions like marriage etc. Though it may be used daily to wipe the body after a bath (an act of purification), the use is not restricted to this.

*Gamocha* is used in various ways. For instance, it is used to cover the altar at the prayer hall or cover the scriptures. An object of reverence is never placed on the bare ground, but always on a *Gamocha*. *Gamocha* is also used by the farmer, fishermen or hunter as a waistcloth (*tongali*) or a loincloth (*suriya*) or *Gamsa*. One can easily see the extensive use of *Gamocha* in the Bihu dance, where male dancers wrap it around the head with a fluffy knot. Moreover, it is hung around the neck at the prayer hall (*Naamghar*) and was thrown over the shoulder in the past to signify social status. *Gamocha* also occupies a great place in the community life of the people, as guests are welcomed with the offering of a *Gamocha* and *tamul* (betel nut). *Gamocha* is offered to as a gift during *Bohag Bihu* and is referred to as *bihuwaan* in this case.

One can therefore very well say that the *Gamocha* symbolizes the indigenous life and culture of Assam. Historian Dr. Leela Gogoi has mentioned the usage of *Gamocha* during Ahom days. There is also reference of *Gamocha* from the days of Srimanta Sankardeva. Noted colonial historian Edward Gait's *A History of Assam* mentions that in 1739 a *Gamocha* used to cost 6 paisa. Cultural historians say the *Gamocha* came to symbolize



Assamese nationalism in 1916 when the *Asom Chatra Sanmilan*, a students' organization was formed, followed by the *Assam Sahitya Sabha*, a literary body. The *Gamocha's* graph as a symbol of protest rose during the anti-foreigners Assam Agitation from 1979 to 1985. The extremist United Liberation Front of Assam too used the *Gamocha* with 'revolutionary' motifs. The *Gamocha* staged a comeback as a political statement with the protests the Citizenship (Amendment) Act from mid-December 2019. Thus, the *Gamocha* not only reflects the rich cultural life of Assam but is also a symbol of the Assamese identity.



## Nagaland: Socio-Political Struggles and the transition to Statehood

By,

Vitsonu Sophie

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In early Naga society, the tribes adopted different polity to look after the villages. The *Semas* and *Konyaks* followed monarchical form where the Chief was the head and his first born was to become the next chief. The Ao's followed gerontocracy form of polity where elders were the head of the village and the *Angamis*, *Lothas*, *Rengmas* and others followed democratic form of polity. Thus, the Naga society in the pre-British era was an independent one where every village consisting of different tribes functioned on their own. Also, Naga society was a patriarchal one, and women did not take part in warfare, politics etc, although they held an important figure in resolving feuds. The Women folk practiced the *Pukrelia* tradition in which they ran in the middle of a fight and open their *Mekhela* to shame the warriors and stop the violence.

After defeating Burma and signing of the *Treaty of Yandaboo* the British took over Assam, Manipur, Cachar, and Jaintia under its jurisdiction.<sup>1</sup> The British wanted to open a direct route from Manipur to Assam via the Naga Hills which led to the first expedition of the British to the Naga Hills.<sup>2</sup> Since the Nagas were isolated for so long, they considered the British expedition as intrusion. The intrusion led to the growth of group consciousness among tribals and the formation of alliances among villages. Thus, began the Anglo-Naga war from 1832-1880<sup>3</sup>. The British conducted about ten military expeditions in the Naga Hills between 1835 and 1851. Due to continuous confrontations both parties suffered tremendously and so they signed the policy of Non-intervention where the British would

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<sup>1</sup> Khamo, Akhale Vizol, *Towards a Better World: Biography of Vizol*, Dimapur: Heritage Publishing House, 2016, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.60-61.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61.

not interfere in the hills and the tribals would give up its trade relations with the plains<sup>4</sup>. However, as the British officials wanted to build friendly relation with the Nagas and to settle disputes within the Naga Hills, it led to the termination of the policy and the formation of Naga Hills District in 1866<sup>5</sup>.

Westernization of Naga Hills started with the coming of Christian missionaries. They converted the tribals gradually into Christianity. The Ao tribe was the first to be converted. Supongmeren was the first Ao to be baptized by Dr. Edwin W. Clark of American Baptist Mission at Sibsagar (Assam).<sup>6</sup> As some villages were still not ready to accept the westernization, a lot of inter-village feuds, raiding and bloodshed took place. Many villages began to seek British protection and in return paid revenue. The British Government finished off all uprisings and brought the Nagas under one political jurisdiction. The Christian missionaries were also given the responsibility of educating the tribals as the Britishers were trying to bring about changes not only in political aspect but in socio-economic as well. The first Mission school was opened at Molungyimsen by Mrs. Mary Mead Clark in 1878. American missionary C. D. King also opened schools in Chumukedima. After taking over the administration, the British Government started collecting tax as income. They now imposed Rs. 2 as house tax. The once independent ruling villages were now restricted<sup>7</sup>.

The spread of Christianity led to abandonment of old traditional customs and practices, one being the practice of head hunting. In many villages, the Christian converts were chased out of their villages as they accepted the Western culture. With the introduction of education, we saw the emergence of the educated elite groups who were preferred over the uneducated. Money became the cause of stratification in the society. The educated ones having white collar job i.e., Government job had more access to money which gave them

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<sup>4</sup> Bareh, Dr. H., *Gazetteer of India, Nagaland, Kohima District*, Government of Nagaland, 1970, p.31.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>6</sup> Linter, Bertil, *Great Games East: India, China and the Struggle for Asia's Most Volatile Frontier*, New Delhi: Harper Collins Publication, 2012, p.51.

<sup>7</sup> Bareh, Dr. H., *Op. cit.*, p. 167.

more power and higher status in the society. The uneducated and non-Christians were considered as not fit for white collar job.

Nevertheless, the Church played a big role in the awakening of tribal identity consciousness among people. Since the British introduced a single written form of language, every tribe began to write Bibles, hymns, books, grammars in their dialect. Since each tribe now had their own dialect scripts, they became aware of their identity<sup>8</sup>. The Tribal Church Associations formed by different tribes united the tribes residing in different regions like the *Konyaks* residing in Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Myanmar. They all came under one single Church Association. These tribal associations were responsible for the development of tribal consciousness.

The Naga elite groups then formed organizations such as the Naga Club, Naga National Council (NNC) and so on to convey their political grievances. As the British rule was coming to an end, they started dividing the Indian sub-continent into two nations i.e., Hindustan and Pakistan. The Naga National Council appealed to the British Government not to include the Naga Hills District in either of them, but the British did not pay any heed to the request. So, they appealed to Mahatma Gandhi who supported them as he himself did not promote domination.

With that the Nagas declared independence on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947. However, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru did not agree with Gandhi.<sup>9</sup> He assumed that the Nagas did not reach the standard to seek for independence. However, Naga National Council was not ready to back down as it wanted an independent Naga State and rejected the offer of having an autonomous status within India. During his visit to Kohima to discuss about the issue, Nehru blamed the Nagas for the humiliation he faced and send military operations to

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<sup>8</sup> Linter, Bertil, Op.cit., p.53.

<sup>9</sup> Keyho, Mr. Biseto Medom, *My Journey in the Nagaland Freedom Movement*, pp. 12-14.

invade the Naga villages.<sup>10</sup> The Indian troops assaulted the Nagas daily. The Nagas were forced to obey their orders.<sup>11</sup>

By 1954, the situation became worse and many NNC workers were compelled to go underground and even the monthly newspaper of NNC 'Naga Nation' was banned.<sup>12</sup> As violence between the Indian troops and underground Nagas became intolerable and India was being portrayed to the foreign countries as going against Gandhi's principle of non-violence, Nehru sent his advisors to have a talk with the educated Nagas. The educated Nagas i.e., the moderates were influenced by them and organized Naga People's Convention to oppose the violence conducted by the NNC. At the Third Naga People's Convention held at Mokokchung the Sixteen Point agreement was passed. It was also agreed that the Naga Hills- Tuensang area was to be brought under the Indian Union and called as Nagaland. With the passing of the Thirteenth Constitution Amendment Bill, 1962 which gave Special Provision to the State of Nagaland; the State of Nagaland was finally inaugurated on December 1, 1963.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp.15-16.

<sup>11</sup> Linter, Bertil, Op. cit., p.73.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp.71-72.

## Madan Kamdev: The Khajuraho of Assam

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Madan Kamdev, an archaeological site that dates to the 10th and 12th century AD, is situated at Baihata Chariali, in the district of Kamrup in Assam. It is one of the popular places of heritage and considered as one of the most beautiful temples ever to be built in Assam. Madan Kamdev is a fascinating open-air museum with preserved and unpreserved monuments and archaeological remains all around. There is also a formal museum that displays artifacts uncovered from the hillside.



Image: Sculptures at Madan Kamdev.

Kamdev or Madan is the Hindu God of Love, and according to folklore, he had incurred the wrath of Lord Shiva for disturbing his *tapas* and was turned to ashes. But on the advice of his wife Parvati, Lord Shiva restored Kamdev to his original form. The site where Kamdev regained his original form came to be known as 'Kamarupa' (in Assamese). Kamdev reunited with his wife Rati, on a hillock, where he built a temple to Lord Shiva. It is this

very temple that we know today as 'Madan Kamdev'. The temple has beautiful carving of dancing nymphs and fairies, Gods, goddesses, demons, and griffins, animals, flowers, and men and women. Steeped in an erotic carpet of sculpted stone and the erotic iconography has given it the nick name 'Khajuraho of Assam'. Further underlining its erotic nature is the ruined *garbhagriha* (sanctum sanctorum) of a medieval temple. It houses a large stone idol of Shiva and Parvati in an intimate embrace or *Alingan* posture. Among the ruins are also broken parts of huge pillars covered with flowers and cosmic figures; a six-headed Bhairava; a four-headed Shiva; and statues of the Sun, Ganesh and Vidyadhara, the latter celestial beings who are believed to possess great wisdom.



Image: Sculptures at Madan Kamdev.

In 1977, the Directorate of Archaeology, Assam, recognized the significance of the Madan Kamdev temple complex. Thereafter, scores of sculptures and structural components of the temple were unearthed. Excavations at the site reveal the ruins of at least 24 temples, large and small, all of which were covered in dense foliage for centuries. The sculptures they found consisted of Surya, Ganesh and Vidyadhara, in addition to niches and pillars decorated with statues of men, women and animals, and molded blocks. The most striking artifacts unearthed were three monolithic models of temples of the North Indian *Nagara* style. Roughly 1 meter tall and known as *Angashikhara*, these models had been used to decorate the base line of the temple's dome. Archaeologists determined that the other objects salvaged from the site too belonged to the Madan Kamdev temple complex and that the way in which the ruins lay scattered suggested that the temples had been destroyed by an earthquake.



Images: Sculptures at Madan Kamdev.

Madan Kamdev is not only an archaeological wonder; it is also an Eden inside the green forests of Dewangiri hill. The scenic beauty and chirping birds around the ruins of temples make it heavenly. The river Madankuri flows below the hill and a vast swampy land extends to the Gopeswar hill on the west.

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## Devananda Satra and the Mathani Festival

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The *Satra* is one of the prominent religious and socio-cultural institutions of Assam which was formed in the wake of the Neo- Vaisnavite Movement initiated by Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva in the 15<sup>th</sup> century CE. With the passage of time various *Satras* were established across the length and breadth of Assam by the disciples of Sankardeva with due patronage initially from the Koch Kings and later on from the Ahom Kings. *Satras* are institutional centres associated with the *Ekasarana* tradition of Vaishnavism. These centres are generally independent of each other and under the control of individual *Adhikaris* or *Satradhikars* (head of the *Satras*), though they can be grouped into four different *Sanghatas* (orders). People irrespective of their religions, caste, communities, creed, etc are included as disciples of the *Satras* from whom taxes, and other religious duties are extracted.

One of the prominent *Satra* is the Devananda *Satra*, located in the Darrang district under Mangaldai sub-division in the small town of Bordoulguri. This *Satra* follows the Brahma *Sanghati*. It is believed that a traveler and scholar named Ramananda Bramhachari who hailed from Kannauj under the guidance from Damodardeva established this *Satra* in 1625 AD. Initially this *Satra* is known by different names like *Barsatra*, *Brahmasatra*, etc. However, later it came to be known as Devananda *Satra*. One of the unique characters of this *Satra* is that there is no concept of *Satradhikar* and all the rituals and customs associated with the *Satra* are performed by the ‘Gohain Bhakats’. All the ‘Gohain Bhakats’ hold the same kind of role and position in the workings of the *satra*.

Various religious festivals like *Lakhmi Puja*, *Janmastami*, *Tithi of Damodardeva*, etc. are celebrated in this *Satra*. In addition to this *Mathani* is one of the unique festivals associated with the Devananda *Satra* which is celebrated on the *Sankranti Tithi* between the Assamese

months of 'Ahin' and 'Kati' (mid-October). It is believed that this festival is celebrated in this Satra from the last 450 years. This festival is celebrated for three days with immense joy and events like *Dadhi-Manthan* and *Samudra-Manthan* are performed through dance-dramas.

On the very first day of the festival *Ankiya Nats* (dance-drama) are staged depicting the stories related with the childhood of Lord Krishna and his mother Yashoda's *Dadhi-Mathan* (yogurt churning) On the second day, the events of *Samudra-Manthan* as depicted in the *Bhagawat Purana*, *Mahabharata* and the *Vishnu Purana* are dramatized. Although this festival of *Mathani* is celebrated during the Assamese festival of Kati Bihu, but in the real sense it has no connection to the festival of agriculture. With support and cooperation from local people the 'Gohai Satradhikar' (head of the Satra) and the *bhakats* (monks) of the *Satra* are able to organise this festival over the yaers without government aid or any kind of donations by corporate sector. During the reign of the Koch Kings, this festival was popularized among the masses.

Some popular "pods" (stanzas) recited or sung during the performances of *Samudra-Manthan* and *Dadhi-Manthan* is listed below:

1.

*Ghiur bati loi, o Krishnok mata goi*  
*Aha hokhi aha bhai dodhi mathu goi*

2.

*Oi hokhi oi bhai hokhiye horiye kune ponthe goila*  
*Moitu obhagini dekhibe napailu sokhyu jolomoh bhoila*

3.

*Bhal sonde mothe guwalor jhi*  
*Mothonir pak lagi utholila ghee*

*Yashoda sundari mothon thou*

*Krishnai kande kulat lou*

*Kinu Yashodar mothibar mon*

*Krishnai kande, nidye ston*

In the *Mathani* festival, to perform the *Samudra Manthan* a huge stage is constructed in the middle of the field. In the eastern side of the stage a shelter is constructed where the event of *Samudra Manthan* is performed. In the field, a circle of approximately 90ft is created where in the middle, a pit is also dug, and an earthen pot is placed there. The *Mathani Stambha* (pillar) is placed inside the earthen pot. In all directions of the main pillar, four small pillars are also placed in 6ft each. A long rope of approximately 50 ft. is tied in the middle of the pillar in such a way that when pulled from both the directions, the pillar can move which helps in the representation of the performance of *Samudra-Manthan*. A mixture of curd, milk, clarified butter and honey which together is called *Panchamrit* and rice powder is tied above the *Mathani Pillar* which symbolizes *amrita*. The above mentioned digging of the earth represents the sea, the circle represents Lord Vishnu, the pillar represents the *Mandar Parvata* (mountain) and the rope represents the snake *Vasuki*. The actors play the role of *Devas* (god) on one side and as *Asuras* (demon) on the other side. Devotees after the performance take home pieces of the rope which they believe cures various diseases. People from various parts of Assam come to witness this event of *Samudra-Manthan* during *Mathani* festival.

Thus, in the conclusion it can be said that the Devananda Satra brought about an ethic integration and spiritual upliftment through an innovative mode of religious conduct based on indigenous elements of the region. This institution tried to remove various superstitious believes and practices which prevail amongst the people. The *Mathani* festival is one of the most popular festivals performed in this Satra which attracted people from all over the province and thereby created a bond of unity among its disciples as well as the neighbouring people.

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