

DBCIC Publications apologizes for not being able to bring out this issue on time. Due to some unavoidable circumstances, this issue which was due last year, could not be brought out until now.

Culture is a reality so complex and elusive that it defies definition. That is why, there is no single complete and satisfactory definition of culture, not even that of Tyler or Kroeber and Kluckhohn. Any definition of culture can at best be contextualized to a particular place or people. Yet culture is part and parcel of us and we live and breathe it in our day to day life. It is culture that distinguishes us from animals and so the popular saying “a cultured person” meaning a civilized person. A lot of literature has been written on culture by well known sociologists and anthropologists. So much so that one thinks what else can be said about it. Yet in reality, there are varieties of culture all over the world. In fact, every ethnic group of humanity possesses its own unique culture and tradition which deserves to be studied and to be known for the benefit of mankind itself. This springs from our conviction that every culture, small though it may be, is valuable in itself and has a lot to share with others. This is the reason, why these articles found in this issue of our NEIRA Journal are of great value and will definitely benefit the readers who wish to be enriched by the knowledge about other cultures other than their own.

There are eight articles in this issue which speak of different aspects of culture of the Khasis, the Nagas, the Mizos and the Tripuris of North-east India. Each of these articles, throws a deeper insight into the beautiful cultures of the tribal communities of this part of India.

Arundhati Devi Maibam & Keisham Ingocha Singh in their article “*Anthropology of Fermented Bamboo Shoot: The Case of Andro*” speak about the cultural practice of fermenting bamboo shoot among the tribals of Manipur for the purpose of consumption. Fermenting of bamboo shoot or fish, is described as a traditional practice of preparing and preserving food among the people in Manipur. Different dishes are prepared from fermented bamboo shoot which are quite popular in the state and elsewhere.

Davina Lyngdoh Ropmay in her article “*Kinship Terminology among the Khasis*” discusses quite lucidly the distinction as well as the connection between “*kur*” and “*jait*.” The article describes at length the different kinship terminologies commonly used among the Khasis to designate consanguines and affines. The author describes how a kinship terminology de facto determines the position of a person in the kinship structure and his/her social status.

Valentina Pakyntein in her article “*Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Identity of the Lyngngam and Marngar of Meghalaya*” speaks at length the history and origin of the two communities and construction of their identity. The author focuses on the socio-political factors that involved in accepting the Lyngngam and rejection of the Marngar as a sub-group of the Khasi.

Daniel Kaba in the article “*Politics of Material Culture as a Marker of the Poumai Naga Tribal Boundary in Northeast India*,” speaks on the interesting subject of material culture with respect to the Poumai Naga tribe in Manipur. The article throws light on the meaning, significance and value of material culture in the process of cultural differentiation, boundary marking and identity of a tribe.

Natalie Jo-Anne Diengdoh in her article “*The Importance of Ka Tang Jait in Khasi Milieu*,” discusses at length about this traditional socio-cultural practice of the Khasis. It is a practice wherein non-Khasis by way of marriage, are incorporated into the Khasi clan (*kur*) through a ceremony known as “*ka Tangjait*.”

Doisiammoi Suantak in the article “*Food and its cultural meanings: An Anthropological exploration among Chakhesang Nagas*,” discusses the relationship between food and culture with special reference to the Chakhesang Nagas. The author explains how culture determines the choice of food, its preparation and consumption. Food is therefore culture-related and it forms an important ingredient in the study of culture.

Dr. Haobijam Vokendro in his article “*Re-ambushing Half man, Half tiger with the Anthropological Sniper*,” revisits the Meitei myth of the *Kabui Keioiba* (half man half tiger). As an anthropologist, he draws an interesting parallel between this mythological monster and persons in today’s society who tend to become exploitative and evil as the *Kabui Keioiba*. Through this, he offers a valuable lesson to people in today’s society.

Shajymon M. L. and Gautam Kumar Bera in their article “*Social and Political Movements in Twentieth Century Tripura*,” discusses at length the socio-political evolution that took place in Tripura under three

phases, namely, struggle against the British colonialism, struggle against feudalism and monarchy and the establishment of democratic rule in the region. The article shows how this struggle was spearheaded by the Communist Party of India (CPI) and how it was essentially a fight against injustice and exploitation of the poor tribal and non-tribal population.

NEIRA Journal is extremely grateful to these authors for the contribution they have made to this issue. I firmly believe that the readers will find them interesting, informative, educative and enlightening. North-east India is a home for a large variety of tribal communities who distinguish themselves with their rich and colourful cultures. No wonder this region is called “an ethnologist’s paradise.” The cultures of our people here are characterized by truth, simplicity and beauty. They have a lot to offer to other people in terms of value and richness. I am convinced that learning about another person’s culture is never a wasteful exercise, instead when the learning is done with an open mind and a sense of respect, it delights the intellect and calms the spirit of a person.

- Barnes L. Mawrie