

North-east India is a land of a spectrum of cultures. The tribal communities who number over two hundred of them, each has a unique culture and tradition. It is enough to watch a regional festival like the Hornbill Festival, in order to see the diversity of cultures in this region. For this reason, this region is known as the “anthropologist’s or an ethnologist’s paradise.” The enigmatic nature of tribal cultures and their uniqueness have drawn a lot of researchers from mainland India as well as from abroad, to make an in-depth study of these cultures. Since the colonial days, British ethnologists like Verrier Elwin, Christoph von Furer Haimendorf and many others, have written extensively on tribal cultures. Later on, non-tribal Indian scholars have also made their contribution. These writings have helped preserve the valuable aspects of many tribal cultures and if not for them, many things of the past would have been lost for good. However, many of these scholars were also inclined to misinterpret some aspects of tribal cultures. For example, many of them have branded tribal religions as polytheism or superstition. Such wrong perceptions need to be corrected in time. Since the 1960s many tribal scholars from the region have emerged who have done corrective interventions on many of the previous works. Many of them have written extensively on their own cultures and these works have helped conscientize their communities on the value and importance of culture and tradition. What we witness today is a sort of cultural revival in almost all tribal communities of North-east India. There is great interest in revisiting the past traditions and reviving traditional institutions. This is something positive which will definitely strengthen the identity and integrity of tribal communities in an era of changes and transitions.

It is in this context, that the articles which appear in this issue of NEIRA Journal are very significant. There are two articles on the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh, “*Adi marital customs: The changing perspective*” by Abang Pertin which discusses the traditional marriage customs of the Adis and also the present situation of interreligious marriage among them. The second article titled “*Association between BMI and Blood Pressure among the Adi of Arunachal Pradesh, Northeast India*” written by Gin Khan Khual is a research on physical anthropology trying to establish a connection between BMI (Body Mass Index) and BP (Blood Pressure) in the specific case of the Adi tribe. Three other articles are focussed on the Nagas of Nagaland. One article titled “*Impact of Christianity on the traditional healing practices among the Angami Naga*” by Ketousienuo Kuotsu, elaborates on the impact of Christianity on the Angami perception of diseases, their so called “supernatural causes” and the traditional method of treating these diseases. It shows how Christianity has undone many of the superstitious elements and brought about a more scientific approach to healing. The other article titled “*Traditional fermented food among the Ao Nagas of Nagaland*” by Moajungla Longkumer and B. T. Langstieh, discusses how the Ao Nagas use the traditional method of fermenting food articles for the purpose of preserving them for future consumption and how this method is still popular even today. The third article titled “*Origin, migration, settlement and identity of the Pochury Naga of Nagaland, India*” by Tsiapisa Pojar, delves into the history and origin of the Pochury Nagas with a view to ascertaining their identity and integrity. Four other articles are focussed on Manipur, one titled “*Traditional method of conflict resolution and dispense of justice: A study of the Kharam Tribe*” by Bosco Rengtankhel Jaiche which discusses on the traditional method used by the Kharam Naga of Manipur to resolve different types of conflict. The second article titled “*Religious ceremonies and festivals among the Meiteis of Manipur*” by Naorem Naokhomba Singh, is an exploration of the various ceremonies present in the traditional religion of the Meiteis known as Sanamahi and how these traditional elements still influence Meitei culture and society. The third article titled “*I love my khaini just as I love my husband: Factors influencing smokeless tobacco use among the tribal women*” by Robert Angkang Shimray, dwells on the prevalent use of various smokeless tobacco by Thangkhum women of Manipur. The study shows how the habit of consuming tobacco is influenced by ignorance about its health hazard, by a popular belief to ease toothache or get over morning sickness and as well as peer pressure. The fourth article titled “*My ethnographic diaries*” by Dr. Haokip Nemneivah, is a case study of the Kuki Nagas of Manipur of a particular village called Chavangphai. The last article titled “*Mapping the frontier: Correlating representations of Tangsa-Nocte villages in early British survey maps with modern GIS data*” by Kellen Parker van Dam, is an attempt to study the old British records on the inhabitants in the Upper Patkai region who are categorized as Naga but are known in Arunachal Pradesh by different names like Tangsa, Nocte etc. The researcher’s purpose is to revisit the old mapping with the modern GIS data system so as to provide a more credible picture while at the same time reassert the identity, history and place of these communities.

These articles throw a lot of light on the tribal communities mentioned above regarding their history, origin, identity, cultures and traditions. They are valuable for posterity and they serve as important references for further studies and researches. The readers will find them extremely interesting, informative and useful. Keeping in mind how important and necessary culture and tradition are to any community, we need to

appreciate efforts made to document them not merely for preservation, but to enable a community to progress on a sure path. Chinua Achebe has rightly remarked “when a tradition gathers enough strength to go on for centuries, you don’t just turn it off one day.” The north-east tribal communities have rich cultures and traditions which have kept them strong and vibrant for many centuries and which have stood the test of time. Therefore it is imperative to safeguard them against the onslaught of alien cultures which try to destabilize our communities. While learning from other cultures and imbibing useful and helpful values from these, we should not undermine the role of our own cultures and traditions.

- *Barnes L. Mawrie*