75th FOUNDATION DAY SOUVENIR OF THE SURVEY
NERC, MAWBLEI, SHILLONG

(I) Brief History of Establishment and its Journey:

The North East Regional Centre of the Anthropological Survey of India (An.S.I.) was established on 5th October 1953, at Shillong as the second Regional Station after the Survey’s inception in 1945. The Centre was then known as the Assam Station having a small component of staff. Ever since, the An.S.I. has been giving special emphasis on anthropological researches in the North East States namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland, being the survey area of the Centre (Tripura and Sikkim being covered by the Eastern Regional Centre, Kolkata). In April 2001 the Centre acquired its own building and campus at Mawblei, Shillong.

In conformity with the modified objectives (1984), the Survey is committed to

1. Conduct anthropological studies on people of India;
2. Continue with studies of Scheduled Tribes/Scheduled Castes and other weaker sections;
3. Reflect in its research programme the priorities set by the Government of India in regard to conservation of environment, welfare of women and children, mother and child care, development of weaker sections, physical fitness and nutritional status, and poverty alleviation;
4. Take steps to salvage and preserve cultural artifacts faced with the threat of extinction and those which even otherwise need to be preserved; and
5. Study and promote awareness of the rich and composite culture of the country and of the contribution of each community to this heritage.

With the above objectives in view the North East Regional Centre is being manned by researchers in Cultural anthropology, Physical anthropology, Linguistics, Psychology, Human Ecology and Statistics. The Centre also houses the Zonal Anthropological Museum containing a collection of 1300 rare cultural artifacts from the region. The library of the Centre is well developed with about 2000 titles and the Centre has photographic and audio documentation facilities as well.

The eight states of North East India account for 279 tribal and non-tribal communities having a total population of 45,772,188 (2011 census). This region is unique in having major linguistic families namely Tibeto-Burman, Indo-Aryan, Siamese, Chinese and Eastern Austro-Asiatic. The habitat varies from plains to the hilly terrain of the Himalayas with a rich heritage of bio-cultural diversity. A wide range of economic pursuits are also noticed in the region. The endeavour of the North East Regional Centre has been to study this cultural, biological, ecological and linguistic diversities and similarities through national and regional projects.

Since its inception this Centre undertook many research projects of national and regional importance as assigned by the Head Office from time to time. The significant among them are:


1. All India Cultural Trait and Culture Area Survey.
2. Study on Weaker sections.
3. Society and Culture among the people of Himalayan Border area: structure and change.
4. Contemporary Cultural, Social and Political Movements in N.E.I.
5. Tribes in Contemporary India.
6. All India Bio-Anthropological Survey.
7. Agrarian situation in India.
8. Linguistic Trait Survey.
9. Ethnicity, Politics and Political System in Tribal areas.
10. Genetic Structure on Indian Populations.
11. Weaving in India.
12. People of India.
17. Study on Folk, Music, Folk Art and Folk Tradition.
18. Management of Environment and Natural Resources: Study on Traditional wisdom in Tribal Societies.
20. Anthropological study of Indian Women.
21. Women Poverty and Rural Development.
22. Ecology, environment, and Human population in India.
27. Cultural dimensions of Tourism.
29. DNA Polymorphism of the Contemporary Indian Populations
30. Indigenous Knowledge and Traditional Technology
31. People of India: Bio-Cultural Adaptation and Community Genetics and Health in North East India.
33. Border Area Studies
34. Bio-Cultural Diversity, Environment and Sustainable Development (Village Study).
35. Anthropological Study on Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities.

Some of the important publications of the Anthropological Survey of India on North East India include:

2. Culture Change in two Garo villages by D.N. Majumdar, 1978.

OLD OFFICE BUILDING AT UPPER LACHUMIERE

NEW OFFICE BUILDING AT MAWBLEI

(II) List of Head of the Regional Centre with period of functioning in the Centre:

The following Officers of the Survey have been in charge of this Centre and conducted research and contributed to the development of the organization under the overall guidance of the Director, Anthropological Survey of India:

1. Dr. S. Banerjee, Research Associate (C) & Officer In-charge (OIC) 1953-1957
2. Shri. R.P. Rao, Research Associate (P) & OIC 1957-1958
4. Dr. B.B. Goswami, Dy. Director & OIC 1969-1975
5. Dr. D.P. Mukherjee, Dy. Director & OIC 1975-1976
11. Dr. R.S. Mann, Dy. Director & R.O. 1983-1986
14. Dr. (Mrs) Shibani Roy, Anthropologist (C) & R.O. 1991-1993
18. Dr. Ramesh Chandra, Dy. Director & H.O. 1999-2001
22. Dr B.Dhar, Supt. Anthropologist &H.O. 2010-2014
23. Dr. R.R.Gowlloog, Supt. Anthropologist & H.O. 2014 upto date

Dr. S. Banerjee, 1953-1957

Dr. R.R.Gowlloog 2014-till date
(III)  Academic Sections/Divisions

DNA LABORATORY

(IV)  Memorable Anthropological Expeditions/Field-work tradition:
1.  Sino-Indian Border- Border Area Studies

Age old porter track between Tibet and Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh
Mac Mohan Line – Sino Indian Border snapped during the tour

2. Traditional Knowledge System

Betel nut in bags for processing in Lamin, Dawki

Processing of Betel nut in Lamin, Dawki
(V) Remarkable Research Outcome of the Centre since inception:

The Anthropological Survey of India launched the People of India project on the 2nd of October 1985 to generate a brief, descriptive anthropological profile of all the communities of India. On them, North East Regional Centre was asked by the then Director General to cover the communities of North East under this massive project. Five volumes were published under the POI from NERC, namely,


Since its inception this Centre undertook many research projects of national and regional importance as assigned by the Head Office from time to time. Certain traditional functions like the Shad Nongkrem of the Khasi, the Shad Suk Mynsiem etc were all documented. The well known Hornbil festival of the Nagas was also documented by our office. Another memorable anthropological expedition which is worth mentioning is the Pam-Lai Iaw (the Monolith Festival) of the Jaintias of Nartiang village. This festival was celebrated after a gap of 21 years by the villagers, and NERC got the opportunity to observe and document the whole procedure.

Pam-Lai Iaw (the Monolith Festival) is a continuity of religious belief and cultural practices between the living and the dead through the worship and sacrifice of animals in and around the village of Nartiang by which it brings kin and lineage members together at the monolith garden (Kper Mawbynna). It is believed that the spirit of the ancestors having an affection and sentimental attachment should be protected. So, the practice of animal sacrifice is observed during this religious festival at different places of the village.

(VI) Zonal Anthropological Museum:

The Zonal Anthropological Museum was set up at this regional centre to document, preserve and display the social-cultural heritage of the people of this region. The Museum, plays a great role in establishing links with universe of research as well as in disseminating the findings of research. This
museum disseminates knowledge through permanent galleries and by organizing thematic exhibitions, film shows, both in urban and rural areas. All specimens displayed in the museums are collected through field research, so the cultural matrix of each specimen is properly documented. Each displayed specimen is labelled in Hindi as well as English.

Chepin Botung And Beyene,(Leather & Cane)

Kajynphong, Sleeves less Coat, Khasi, Pnar
1954, Meghalaya.
Pangchen-Pa, Horse Saddle (Iron), 2004, A.P.

The Zonal Anthropological Museum, Shillong accommodates the information on history, social organization, architecture, economic pursuits, means of transport, arts and crafts of the people of this area. The Museum has precious collection of material culture and ethnographic objects of tribes of this region along with the various ethnic objects of non tribal communities. The museum gives emphasis on depiction of bio-cultural heritage of people of this region with a collection of about 1300 rare cultural artifacts from this region. The specimens, specially the material culture are collected from Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Assam. Most of the artifacts are well preserved in the museum. Fishing implement, hunting implement, terracotta objects, agricultural implements, musical instruments, dress and ornaments are collected from the different tribal and non-tribal communities of North-East region. Display materials include photographs, maps, and charts etc. showing distribution of people including their habitation pattern. Attempts have also been made to promote and highlight this museum to the students and other visitors.

An extension of the Zonal Anthropological Museum at Ram Krishna Mission, Cherrapunjee was inaugurated on the 27th May 2010 by Swami Ishatmanandaji Maharaj. The museum there consists of twelve dioramas (Arunachal Pradesh–2, Assam–1, Sikkim–1, Manipur–2, Meghalaya–1, Mizoram–2, Nagaland–2 and Tripura–2). There are also 14 wall show cases with prominent glass doors.

Inauguration of the Anthropological Museum at Ramkrishna Mission, Cherrapunjee

(VII) Zonal Anthropological Library:

The library of NERC, Shillong is one of the special libraries where the objective is to acquire, organize and preserve all the materials falling within its scope. It has to keep abreast of the various sciences with which it is concerned. It has to feed the latest and up to date information to the researchers and others concerned who are engaged in promoting the interest of the organization from which they could develop new facts and fresh surmises.

The library at present maintains well stocked computerized books with a collection of 14,750 books which comprises rare manuscripts, course books, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, bibliographies, maps, newsletters, Survey publications, audio-visual materials, and leisure reading etc. The library subscribes to 18 International journals, 11 Indian journals, 6 magazines and 7 newspapers.
The library remains open to the public for reference and research from Monday to Friday, i.e. from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and remains closed on Saturdays, Sundays and Central holidays. The library is visited by a number of students from different colleges of Shillong, Research Scholars, Professors and ex-Professors from NEHU for consultation. For outsiders, photographic ID will be required on all visits in order to use the library.

As a storehouse of knowledge and culture, this library plays a fundamental role in society. It has rendered a magnificent service to the users by establishing contacts for the culture. It has been in existence since early times and has served as a source of information from generation to generation. It worked as a source of inspiration, education, and learning for the users engaged in developing the cultures. In a world without libraries, it would be difficult to advance research and human knowledge or preserve the world’s cumulative knowledge and heritage for future generations.

Thus, this library plays an important role not just in shaping a person’s life but it also in society and culture of the people.
(VIII) Most Memorable Occasion (Academic/Celebration):

Shri. L.P. Singh, Governor Meghalaya, 1973 Chief Guest SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATION

Arrow Shooting Then and Now
Shri. Salseng C. Marak CM, Meghalaya, 1996, GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION

Prof. T.B. Subba, 2003, GOLDEN JUBILEE

Dr. K.K.Paul, Governor Meghalaya, 2003, DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATION

(IX)  BDA Section: Old Field Notebook of a Scholar
(X) Photography Section:
Archive photographs:

Angami Naga, Kohima, Warrior Dance, 1980

Aka couple of Arunachal Pradesh, 1983

Tawang Monastery, Arunachal Pradesh

National Repository Board Meeting on Human Genetics at Shillong
One important landmark in the history of NERC was the establishment of the DNA lab. A well equipped DNA Laboratory with instruments and equipments was established in January, 2006. Dr B.N.Sarkar, Anthropologist (P) along Dr K. Das, post doctoral fellow from Head Office, Kolkata came to NERC for standardisation of the DNA Lab and also to give us a head start on the knowhow of lab work. After standardization, all the scientific staff of this Centre were involved in scanning of blood samples collected from various organizations such as schools and pathological centres. Counting both patients and students, a total of about 1000 blood samples was collected for standardization of the DNA protocol and techniques. While scanning of these blood samples, we found one rare mutation i.e. HbD Iran suspected on the basis of HPLC Hb Electrophoresis and it is confirmed by DNA sequencing analysis at DNA Lab, Kolkata.

Under the DNA Polymorphism of the Contemporary Indian Population and Phylogeny, blood samples were collected from some major tribes of North-East, like the Sonowal Kachari and Rabha of Assam, Nishi and Wancho from Arunachal Pradesh, Mizo, Hmar and Paite from Mizoram, Angami Naga from Nagaland and the Bhoi Khasi from Meghalaya. After returning from the field extraction was carried out in NERC, whereas sequencing was done in Mysore.

(XI) Land-mark Facility for Anthropological works:

Monolith Garden at Nartiang (Jaintia Hills)

Shad Nongkrem at Smit (Khasi)

Traditional Attire (Garo)
Under the project ‘Cultural dimensions of Tourism’ a team of anthropologists undertook a study regarding Mawlynnong village of Meghalaya which is an eco-tourism spot now. The village has won the status of the cleanest village in Asia, as declared by the travel magazine Discover India. It was the anthropologists from NERC who came up with the idea of introducing entry fees into the village. This was a path breaking idea and it has helped the village generate much needed revenues. The revenue generated from the collection of entry fees has become a viable source of income for the entire village. The collection of entry fees is also used in maintaining the aura and the cleanliness of the village. Mawlynnong has now become one of the major destinations in the state of Meghalaya and the pioneering work done by the anthropologist from NERC, Shillong has helped bring the village into limelight.
(XII) **Out-reach Programmes:**

The Centre has organised numerous health awareness camps in and around Meghalaya under the project entitled ‘People of India: Bio-Cultural Adaptation and Community Genetics and Health in North East India’. Camps were organised on all the sub-tribes of the Khasi viz. the Khynriam, the Bhoi, the War Khasi, the War Jaintia, the Jaintia, the Lyngngam and also the Garo. Blood samples were collected from all the groups, and lab work was carried out after returning from the field. Later, health card was issued to all the subjects who took part in the health camp. Add to this, measurements of blood pressure, testing of sugar and certain anthropometric measurements were also taken into consideration, so that all subjects will be benefited by the programme.

Another out-reach programme worth mentioning here is the celebration of the International Day for Indigenous Peoples in 2015 at Nartiang village. The celebration is worth mentioning because the whole village was involved in the preparation and the arrangement of the whole programme. Different types of dances and songs performed for different rituals and ceremonies were portrayed by them.
(XIII) Portraits and Action photographs of Tribes/Caste Communities

Tangkul Naga Lady, 1977, Manipur

Apatani woman 1973, Arunachal Pradesh

Portrait of a Khasi Boy, 1957, Meghalaya

Mizo traditional costume, 1986, Mizoram

Dafla, preparation of rice beer, 1960, Assam

Dafla Priest, Darrang, 1960, Assam
Bangni man, 1983, Bomdila, Arunachal Pradesh

Galong girl, 1963, Arunachal Pradesh