

**International Seminar on
Assamese Culture & Heritage**

07th July 2018

**Centre for Heritage Studies
University of Kelaniya
Sri Lanka**

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Message from the Vice Chancellor University of Kelaniya

It is an honour for me to write these words as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Kelaniya for the International Seminar on Assamese Culture and Heritage - 2018 of Centre for Heritage Studies, University of Kelaniya.

As a leading higher educational institution, University of Kelaniya is organizing National and International Conferences under various themes as we always encourage the exposure to new knowledge.

In this context Centre for Heritage Studies plays an important role by organizing an International Conferences, International Seminars, National Workshops, and International and National Lecture Series.

This International Seminar provides an impressive opportunity to sharing knowledge on Assamese Culture and Heritage. I wish to congratulate the Director of Centre for Heritage Studies, the Deputy Director of Centre for Heritage Studies and the organizing committee of the International Seminar on Assamese Culture and Heritage - 2018 for their notable efforts towards this event.

Professor D. M. Semasinghe
Vice Chancellor
University of Kelaniya



**Message from the Deputy
Vice Chancellor
University of Kelaniya**

It is indeed a great honor for me to offer this message for the International Seminar on Assamese Culture and Heritage - 2018 organized by the Centre for Heritage Studies, University of Kelaniya.

The Centre for Heritage Studies plays an important role to develop and share new knowledge among scholars by organizing Conferences, Seminars, National Workshops and Lecture Series.

Therefore, I am sure that the International Seminar on Assamese Culture and Heritage - 2018 will be an ideal platform to expose knowledge.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the Director and the Deputy Director of Centre for Heritage Studies, and the organizing committee for their successful effort of organizing this important International Seminar.

Senior Professor Lakshman Senevirathne
Deputy Vice Chancellor
University of Kelaniya



**Message from the Dean Faculty of
Social Sciences
University of Kelaniya**

It is a great pleasure to offer my congratulations as the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, for the International Seminar on Assamese Culture and Heritage - 2018 organized by the Centre for Heritage Studies, University of Kelaniya.

This is an ideal platform for the researchers to share their knowledge on Assamese Culture and Heritage. Therefore, I am sure that the International Seminar on Assamese Culture and Heritage - 2018 will be a remarkable landmark on studies related to this theme.

I would like to make this an opportunity to pay my heartfelt wishes to the organizing committee of the International Seminar on Assamese Culture and Heritage - 2018.

Professor A. H. M. H. Abayarathna

Dean

Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Kelaniya



**Message from the Dean Faculty
of Humanities
University of Kelaniya**

It is a great pleasure to offer my congratulations as the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, for the International Seminar on Assamese Culture and Heritage - 2018 organized by the Centre for Heritage Studies, University of Kelaniya.

This is a vital opportunity for the researchers to share their knowledge on Assamese Culture and Heritage at an International Platform.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the organizing committee of the International Seminar on Assamese Culture and Heritage - 2018.

Professor Patrick Ratnayake

Dean

Faculty of Humanities

University of Kelaniya



**Message from the Director Centre for
Heritage Studies
University of Kelaniya**

I am delighted to write this message for the International Seminar on “Assamese Culture and Heritage” which is possibly taking place for the first time in Sri Lanka. The seminar consists of academic sessions, a cultural show and a field tour which we are all enthusiastically waiting for. I warmly

welcome our local as well as international participants for this event.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to members and volunteers who helped us in this great task of organizing the event. Our sincere gratitude goes to authors and invited speakers for their participation as well as their intellectual presentations on Assamese culture and heritage. I would like to especially thank Prof. D.M. Semasinghe, Vice Chancellor of the University of Kelaniya whose leadership helped the organization of this conference. I would also like to thank Emeritus Professor J. B. Disanayaka our Keynote Speaker of this International Seminar.

Assam is one of the rich cultures in North-Eastern India and has similarities to Sri Lankan culture. The most striking feature of both countries is tea estates which transformed natural landscape to cultural landscape with many new features. Thick rain forests, hilly terrains as well as wild elephants are some other similarities of Assam and Sri Lanka. The mighty Brahmaputra River and its tributaries have made Assam a different world which Sri Lankans would be delighted to know. The present seminar helps us to understand this wonderful land of Assam and compare it with Sri Lanka in historical and contemporary perspectives.

Professor Anura Manatunga

Senior Professor/ Department of Archaeology

Director/ Centre for Heritage Studies

University of Kelaniya

University of Kelaniya



The University of Kelaniya has its origin in the historic Vidyalankara Pirivena, founded in 1875 as a centre of learning for Buddhist monks. It was one of the two great national centres of traditional higher learning, heralding the first phase of the national movement and national resurgence.

With the establishment of modern Universities in Sri Lanka in the 1940s and 1950s, the Vidyalankara Pirivena became the Vidyalankara University in 1959, later the Vidyalankara Campus of the University of Ceylon in 1972 and, ultimately, the University of Kelaniya in 1978.

Today, the University of Kelaniya is one of the major national Universities. It is located just outside the municipal limits of Colombo, in the ancient and historic city of Kelaniya, on the north bank of the Kelani River. It has two major campuses, seven locations, six faculties and four institutions.

The University of Kelaniya has pioneered a number of new developments in Higher Education. It was one of the first Universities to begin teaching science in Sinhala, and also the first to restructure the traditional Arts Faculty into three separate Faculties of Humanities, Social Sciences and Commerce and Management. It also has several unique Departments not generally found in the Sri Lankan University system and some Kelaniya innovations have been adopted subsequently by other Universities. These include the Departments of Industrial Management and Microbiology in the Faculty of Science; Departments of Linguistics, Fine Arts, Modern Languages and Hindi in the Faculty of Humanities; and Mass Communication and Library and Information Sciences in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

In Keeping with its historical root, the University is one of the national centers of excellence in Pali and Buddhist Studies and related fields. It has long

established and well-developed Departments of Pali and Buddhist Studies (incorporating chairs in Buddhist Civilization and Buddhist Philosophy), Sanskrit, Linguistics, Philosophy, Sinhala, and Hindi, as well as the Postgraduate Institute of Pali & Buddhist Studies. Kelaniya also maintains close links with the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka (whose Vice-Chancellors have often been drawn from the University of Kelaniya Faculty). Thus, the University of Kelaniya forms the centre of an academic complex, specializing in modern developments in traditional disciplines. It also retains a close link with its mother institution, the Vidyalandara Pirivena, whose Head is also the Chancellor of the University.

At the same time, the University of Kelaniya has a modern and multi-cultural structure and perspective, with the Faculties of Science, Medicine, Social Sciences and Commerce & Management and a strong base in modern languages, including the teaching of Chinese, English, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Russian, Tamil, and Modern Linguistics. Presently engaged in extensive restructuring as it enters the 21st century, the University of Kelaniya looks forward to a new phase in its 125-year history of development.

(<http://www.kln.ac.lk/>)

Centre for Heritage Studies

The Centre for Heritage Studies of University of Kelaniya is an interdisciplinary Centre which brings together researchers and students from a variety of academic as well as professional disciplines such as Archaeology, History, Fine Arts and other Social Sciences and Humanities.

The Center for Heritage Studies disseminates knowledge through research, field tours, workshops, lectures and International Conferences, “Hands on Heritage” workshop series and Heritage Lecture Series while working hand-in-hand with heritage stakeholders to protect the past and secure the future. The Centre was re-established in September 2017 out of the former Centre for Asian Studies.

Among the potential research pursuits identified by the Centre are folk archives, folk songs and poems, vernacular languages, religious heritages, live heritage, heritage families, patriots and patriotic heritage, maritime heritage and culture of small islands, estate sector, migrant labour, East West encounter, household archaeology and cemetery studies

International Seminar on Assamese Culture and Heritage

07th July 2018

Programme

- 9.30a.m. - 9.35a.m. Lighting of the Traditional Oil Lamp
- 9.35a.m. - 9.40a.m. University Anthem
- 9.40a.m. - 9.50a.m. Welcome Address by **Professor Anura Manatunga**
Director, Centre for Heritage Studies,
University of Kelaniya
- 9.50a.m. - 10.00a.m. Address by **Professor N. P. Sunil-Chandra**
Chairman, Research Council, University of Kelaniya
- 10.00a.m. - 10.10a.m. Address by **Mr. Aditya Ray**
Group Director,
The Capital Maharaja Organization Limited
- 10.10a.m. - 10.20a.m. Address by **Ms. Rajashree Behera**
Director, Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre
- 10.20a.m. - 10.30a.m. Address by **Senior Professor Lakshman Senevirathne**
Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Kelaniya
- 10.30a.m. - 10.40a.m. Address by **Professor D. M. Semasinghe**
Vice Chancellor, University of Kelaniya
- 10.40a.m. - 11.00a.m. Keynote Speech by **Emeritus Professor J. B. Disanayaka**
University of Colombo
“A Glance at Assam Culture”
- 11.00a.m. - 11.05a.m. Vote of Thanks by **Ms. Nadeera Hewawasan**
Deputy Director, Centre for Heritage Studies,
University of Kelaniya
- 11.05a.m. - 11.10a.m. National Anthem
- 11.10a.m. - 11.40a.m. Refreshments

Session No. 01

Venue : **Board Room, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Kelaniya**

Chairperson : **Senior Professor Upul Ranjith Hewawitanagamage**
Department of Hindi, University of Kelaniya

Rapporteur : **Ms. Nadeeka Rathnabahu**
Senior Lecturer, Department of Library & Information Science, University of Kelaniya

- 11.40a.m. - 12.00p.m. The enthralling musical heritage of Assam (From pre-historic to contemporary period)
Hiranmayee Das Gogoi
- 12.00p.m. - 12.20p.m. The Alluring and Immemorial Practice of the Art of Khol in Barpeta Satra
Manoj Kumar Das
- 12.20p.m. - 12.40p.m. Deodhani: A greatest ritual of kamakhya
Dr. Anjali Mishra
- 12.40p.m. - 1.00p.m. Oil India Limited: Discovery to incumbent
Anosuya Das
- 1.00p.m. - 1.15p.m. Discussion & Chairpersons' Comments
- 1.15p.m. - 2.15p.m. Lunch

Session No. 02

Venue : **Board Room, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Kelaniya**

Chairperson : **Ms. Bindu Urugodawatta**
Deputy Director, SAARC Cultural Centre

Rapporteur : **Ms. Apeksha Embuldeniya**
Department of Social Statistics, University of Kelaniya

2.15p.m. - 2.35p.m. The legacy of Assam
Sanjeevani Widyaratne

2.35p.m. - 2.55p.m. Use of Neural Networks in archaeology: preservation of Assamese manuscripts
Arundathie Abeysinghe, Aditya Abeysinghe

2.55p.m. - 3.15p.m. Early history of tea plantation in Assam and Sri Lanka: An antiquarian approach
Anura Manatunga

3.15p.m. - 3.35p.m Golden Thread Glorifying Assam
Dr. Gitanjali Goswami

3.35p.m. - 3.50p.m. Discussion & Chairpersons' Comments

3.50p.m. - 4.20p.m. Tea

Session No. 03

Venue : **Lecture Hall, Department of History, Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Kelaniya**

4.30p.m. - 5.30p.m. Cultural Programme

Sattriya Dance Performance

Anosuya Das

Khol Playing

Manoj Das

Assamese Modern Song

Devina Saikia

Bihu Dance

Orgha Goswami

Assamese Song

Hiranmayee Das Gogoi



Keynote Speaker

Emeritus Professor J. B. Disanayaka



Prof. J. B. Disanayaka is Emeritus Professor of Sinhala, University of Colombo and the former Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, He held the post of Senior Professor of Sinhala at the University of Colombo and was the Senior Fellow of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) University of London. He was awarded honorary degree D. Litt by the University of Colombo and the highest presidential title *Deshamanya* by the government of Sri Lanka. A linguist by profession, Prof. J. B. Disanayaka occupies a prominent place among the Sinhala scholars in contemporary Sri Lanka.

Hiranmayee Das Gogoi



Hiranmayee Das Gogoi, from Assam, India is the founder of Kamrupa, a socio-cultural organization. This organization is working for the preservation and the spread of awareness, especially for the younger generation about the ethnic culture of Assam. Including the aspect of arts, she is also working on the ethnic clothing of the State. During her tenure, Hiranmayee organized many cultural shows to promote the classical art form of Assam like Borgeet, Ojapali by giving them a platform for more exposure. This organization is helping the experts and artists to showcase their art in a bigger light. She is a regular writer of topics related to music. She has accomplished and successfully researched on a lot of topics related to cultures and music. She is a master of vocal music and a regular performer of classical and contemporary music. She served as a teacher in various institutions and university level and guided many students in their research work related to Assamese music.

The enthralling musical heritage of Assam (From pre-historic to contemporary period)

Hiranmayee Das Gogoi¹

Abstract

Music is the language that breaks all barriers and divisions of a human society. Assamese music is as old as the epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Since then, Assamese music has come a long way, the present form of music of this state can be said to have acquired as a result of a historical development. Along its journey through the sands of time, music of Assam has adopted and assimilated the cultural sentiments and aspirations of different ethnic groups that has migrated and inhabited Assam from time to time. The vibrant festivals of the state are the prime occasions of singing these songs. Some of the varieties are verbal and passed down from mouth to mouth by common people which render day to day life chores. This is a form of folk culture, though few of the practices are slowly dying and disappearing due to modern lifestyles. On the other hand, some varieties are preserved in manuscripts and some of them have classic characteristics.

The domain of Assamese music is as vast and deep as an ocean. This study delves only an inch of it and has presented just a few elements of it. Assamese songs can be divided into three categories: folk, classical and modern. All domains are not equally flourished now due to the popularity of Western and Bollywood music. It brings threat to folk and classical forms of music. This study will help in linking the elements of music from prehistoric times to the contemporary period and bring in the attention of the people towards it.

Key words: *Assam, Musical Heritage*

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Manoj Kumar Das



Manoj Kumar Das is an exponent Sattriya artist in Khol Vadya and also instruments including Dholok and Tabla. He is from Barpeta, Assam in India and graduated from Madhab Choudhury College. He was trained under the guidance Satrabhusan Jagannath Bayan (Chief Bayan of Bhima bayan Bansha) in Barpeta sattria and for Tabla completed a Diploma in Bhatkhande Sangeet vidhyapith, Lucknow. He is also recognized as an artist of All India Radio and has received the "NATIONAL YOUNG ARTIST SCHOLARSHIP AWARD" from Ministry of Culture, government of India. He Performed Khol Bayan in various places in India and also published many literary works and a book named- KHOL- BIDYA (PART-I) in 2015. It is a book with an objective of helping the present generation with both theoretical and practical aspects. The second part of the book is in progress and will be published soon. Presently he is working on a Research Project "Exploration and Documentation of the Notation of Khol Rhythm traditionally been offered before the Altar in Barpeta Satra for last 432 Years" under ICH, Ministry of culture, Government of India.

The Alluring and Immemorial Practice of the Art of Khol in Barpeta Satra

Manoj Kumar Das¹

Abstract

Barpeta Satra, established in 1583 AD by Mahapurush Madhav Dev, is a prominent place of worship for the Vaiashnavites of Assam. A vast auditorium Rangiyal Griha was also built in the vicinity of the Satra at the time of its inception. In this Rangiyal Griha religious and mythological dramas, devotional songs and related musical instruments have been rehearsed and performed relentlessly for the last 434 years. In the later periods, some portions of these art forms were made part of the daily prayers. To ensure continuity as well as regularity and standard, certain clans residing in places adjacent to the Satra were entrusted with the responsibility of carrying out the task of exercising and preservation of original forms. These clans are still bearing the said responsibilities.

Out of the above mentioned art forms, Khol is a Satriya percussion leather instrument and it plays an essential role in the whole business, as, it is indispensable in Borgeet (devotional song), Satriya Classical dance, and Bhaona (Satriya drama). As the knowledge and instructions of playing on Khol is being handed over orally, from generation to generation, there is very little written information and scholarly exploration. Modern documentation has also not been done in this regard.

In the recent years, the present researcher has made extensive attempts to describe and record the notations of this performing art, so as to establish its heritage, riches, uniqueness and also to help preserve it for future learners who need to have the proper guidance about the pure form. In this present paper, attempts will be made to present before you a brief description of the performance of this instrument, though similar to some other Indian percussion instruments, can claim its uniqueness.

Key words: *Khol, Notation, Satra (Vaishnavite place of worship)*

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Dr. Anjali Mishra



Dr. Anjali Mishra was trained in Kathak by the great guru Pt. Barman Lal, who is a renowned dancer in the Raigarh court. Also, she could further through her strength in dancing by few other doyens such as Professor Mandwi Singh (Vice Chancellor, IKS University, Khairagarh), Dr. Jyoti Bakshi (Former Head, Kathak dance), Dr. Chetna Jyotishi Byohar (Former Director, Kathak Kendra, New Delhi), Guru Surendra Saikia (Kathak Kendra, Lucknow) and Guru Meena Singh (Bhopal). She has been performing and instructing students for many years. Currently, she is carrying the post of Lecturer in the Department of Indian and Asian Dance, University of the Visual and Performing Arts, Colombo, 07. She has got many national and international awards, grants, and she is serving her duties in Sri Lanka for Indian classical and folk dances. Furthermore, she has participated in national and international seminars, workshops, training programs, and about 15 publications in international journals.

Deodhani; A greatest ritual of kamakhya

Anjali Mishra¹

Greatest festival in Assam of kamakhya, named as deodhani. Three days deodhani festival dedicated to the goddess kamakhya. Goddess kamakhya is famous for supernatural powers. It is a unique way of worship of serpent goddess kamakhya. Deodhani dancer's festive attire is like their respective deities.

It believes who is take part of this festival, they get super natural powers. In this modern and full of technology basis world, people believes about rituals and they are connecting them to scientific reasons and sprituality.

Key words: *Deodhani, Assam, Rituals, Kamakhya, Dance*

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Anosuya Das



Anosuya Das is a student of Mass communication at BFIT Dehradun. She was born and brought up in Duliajan which is a small township for employees of OIL India Ltd as her father is working as General Manager of this industry. Anosuya Das is a dance performer and choreographer of classical and contemporary dance forms. She has written many articles in different aspects of Assam and presented research papers in international seminars. She worked as a core member of the organizing committee of BFIT in different festivals. Her dance troupe won many prizes including the V fest dance competition by Channel V.

Oil India Limited: Discovery to incumbent

Anosuya Das¹

Abstract

Petroleum industry in Assam is helping folk to maintain their heritage and helping people to connect with modern era. Oil is one of the most important minerals that the world needs today for industrial progress. Assam is the first state in India where oil was discovered in its dense jungles and had set up the first oil refinery in Asia. Assam contributes largely to the economic development of the country. In 1866, Oil Seepage was observed in Digboi during the construction of Dibrugarh-Ledo Railway Line. This discovery came on the heels of industrial development. The first well was completed in 1890 and in 1893 the first refinery started at Margharita, Assam. The Assam Oil Company was established in 1899 to oversee production. In 1901, Digboi Refinery was commissioned supplanting the earlier refinery at Margharita. At its peak during the Second World War the Digboi oil fields were producing 7,000 barrels per day. At the turn of the century, however as the best and most profitable uses for oil issues were being debated, India was seen not as a producer but as a market, most notably fuel oil for cooking. As the potential applications for oil shifted from domestic to industrial and military usage, this was no longer the case and apart from its small domestic production, India was largely ignored in terms of oil diplomacy and even written off by some as hydrocarbon barren. However, British colonial rule laid down much of the country's infrastructure, most notably the railways. In 1909, IBP was incorporated as the Indo-Burma Petroleum Company Limited in Rangoon and in 1942, the corporate office of the petrochemical company was shifted to Calcutta, India. In 1928, Asiatic Petroleum Company (India) started cooperation with Burmah Oil Company. This alliance led to the formation of Burmah-Shell Oil Storage and Distributing Company of India Limited. Burmah-Shell began its operations with import and marketing of kerosene. On 24th January, 1976, the Burmah Shell was taken over by the Government of India to form Bharat Refineries Limited. On 1st August, 1977, it was renamed as Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited. At present, two large industries Oil India Ltd and ONGC are playing a crucial role in the production of Oil and Natural Gas.

Keywords: *Assam, incumbent, Oil Industry, Petroleum*

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Sanjeewani Widyarathne



Sanjeewani Widyarathne is working as an Education Promoting Officer at National Museum, Colombo. She has a Bachelor of Arts Degree (BA) in History (second class upper division) from University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. Further, she has Postgraduate Diploma in Archaeology with Merit Pass, Postgraduate Diploma in Museology and Master of Arts Degree in Archeology (MA) from Postgraduate Institute of Archeology, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. She also has participated at the 21st General Conference & 22nd General Assembly of the International Council of Museum (ICOM) 2007 Vienna, Austria and Intensive Course on Museology, National Museum of Ethnology & Lake Biwa Museum (JAICA – Japan International Cooperation Agency) Japan 2011. Apart from that the researcher has completed Certificate course on “Inclusive communication of persons with Disabilities”, (Sign language, Braille Methodology, Mobility & Direction) conducted by the National Secretariat for persons with disabilities.

The legacy of Assam

Sanjeewani Widyarathne¹

Abstract

Northeastern India is one of the most ethnically diverse regions of the world. The region shares its border with Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Assam is one of the eight states in the Northeast Region of India and serves as the gateway to the rest of the seven sister and one brother states (Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram and Sikkim). Assam comprises three main geographical areas: The Brahmaputra Valley, the Barak and the Karbi Plateau.

The historical account of Assam begins with the establishment of Pushyavarman's Varman dynasty in the 4th century in the Kamarupa Kingdom which marks the beginning of Ancient Assam. The Kingdom reached its traditional extent from the Karatoya in the west to Sadiya in the east. This and the two succeeding dynasties drew their lineage from the mythical Narakasura. The Kingdom reached its zenith under Bhaskara Varman in the 7th century. Bhaskaravarman died without leaving behind an issue and the control of the country. The fall of the kingdoms and rise of individual kingdoms in the 12th century marked the end of the Kamarupa Kingdom and the period of Ancient Assam. In the middle of the 13th century, Sandhya, a king of Kamarupa moved his capital to Kamatapur.

The last of the Kamata kings, the Khens, were removed by Alauddin Hussain Shah in 1498. But Hussein Shah and subsequent rulers could not consolidate their rule in the Kamata Kingdom, mainly due to the revolt by the Bhuyan chieftains, a relic of the Kamarupa administration and other local groups. Soon after, in the beginning of the 16th century Vishwa Singha of the Koch tribe established the Koch Dynasty in the Kamata Kingdom. In the eastern part of the erstwhile Kamarupa Kingdom, the Kachari and the Chutiya Kingdoms arose, with some Bhuyan chiefs controlling the region just west of the Chutiya Kingdom. The founder of the Chutiya Kingdom Birpal formed his first capital in Swarnagiri in 1187. In the tract between the Kachari and the Chutiya Kingdoms, a Shan group led by Sukaphaa, established the Ahom Kingdom.

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As such, 16th century is crucial in the history of the medieval period because of the consolidation of the Ahoms in the east, the Koch in the west and the growth of Ekasarana Dharma of Srimanta Shankardev. The rivalry between the two kingdoms resulted in the former allying with the Mughals and the latter with the Ahoms. Most of the 17th century saw the Ahom-Mughal conflicts in which the Ahoms held the powerful Mughals at bay and epitomized in the Battle of Saraighat of 1671. After many ups and downs, it led to the downfall of Kamrup.

In 1824, the First Anglo-Burmese War broke out. The British attacked the Burmese garrison in Assam and by 1825 the Burmese were expelled from Assam. Thereby, the British were able to conquest and consolidate their rule in Assam. After the British took control of the region, the name Assam was extended to the province that was then much larger than the Ahom Kingdom, though unclear of the origin of the name Assam among the competing theorists.

Symbolism is an important part of Assamese Culture. Various elements are being used to represent beliefs, feelings, pride, identity etc. Tamul Pan, Xorai and Gamosa are the best symbolic elements in Assamese Culture. The *jaapi* is a traditional conical hat from Assam. It is worn as a status symbol by Assamese royalty and nobility. There are several important indigenous traditional festivals in Assam. Bihu is the chief indigenous festival and the most celebrated festival among all.

Assam is synonymous with legacy of historical ruins, natural beauty, teeming wildlife, immaculate tea gardens and warmth which makes it the gateway to the northeastern states.

Keywords: *Assam, Culture, Historical ruins*

Early history of tea plantation in Assam and Sri Lanka: An antiquarian approach

Anura Manatunga¹

Abstract

Tea is the most prolific item of the shared heritage of Assam and Sri Lanka. The tea plant is indigenous to Assam where it grows in wild and is used as a drink by locals from time immemorial. However, the cultivation of tea in Assam as a Cash Crop was initiated by the British in 1830's with the help of Chinese expertise. They formed the Assam Tea Company in 1839 which is the first Indian company that dealt with tea manufacturing and exportation. Tea seeds were introduced to Sri Lanka, then Ceylon from Assam in 1839 and planted in Peradeniya Botanical Gardens as an experiment along with some plants from Botanical Gardens of Calcutta. The first tea estate in Sri Lanka was initiated in 1867 at Loolecondera near Kandy. During the next few decades, tea cultivation developed as the main export item of Sri Lanka replacing coffee which died due to a leaf disease. In 1900, there was approximately 380,000 acres of land under tea plantation in Sri Lanka mainly in the Central Highlands of the Island. The present research is an antiquarian approach into the early history of tea plantation in Assam and Sri Lanka in a comparative perspective. Deforestation of virgin tropical forests, recruitment of labour force, techniques of plantation, early machinery and factories, transportation, export and several other aspects of tea plantation in Assam and Sri Lanka will be surveyed in this research.

Keywords: *Antiquarian approach, Assam, Ceylon, Sri Lanka, Tea, Nineteenth Century*

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Arundathie Abeysinghe



Arundathie Abeysinghe is a graduate of the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. She has also read for a Postgraduate Degree in International Relations. She is a veteran journalist and has worked in three mainstream newspapers in Sri Lanka: *The Island*, *Sunday Observer* and *The Nation* as a News Reporter, Feature Writer and Senior Editor. Her research papers are mainly focused on tourism – sustainable tourism. She has served as a Lecturer in

English and Journalism at the University of Colombo and in several institutes in Sri Lanka. At present, she is working as a Lecturer at the Sri Lankan Aviation College of Srilankan Airlines. She worked as a Visiting Lecturer in English at the Presidential Secretariat and also worked in the Editorial Board of the Research and International Media Unit of the Presidential Secretariat, Sri Lanka.

Aditya Abeysinghe



Aditya Abeysinghe is a graduate in Computer Science and Software Engineering (Double Major) from Edith Cowan University, Australia. He achieved Gold Medals in his second and third year of his Bachelor Degree. He has presented a many research papers at International Conferences. He voluntarily supports for the activities of Center for Heritage Studies of the University of Kelaniya. At present, he is working as a Demonstrator at the

Computer Center of the University of Kelaniya.

Use of Neural Networks in archaeology: preservation of Assamese manuscripts

Arundathie Abeyasinghe¹, Aditya Abeyasinghe²

Abstract

Historical documents are engraved as manuscripts ranging from palm leaf manuscripts, metal carvings to paper manuscripts. These manuscripts reveal significant information about yesteryear. Although, there are thousands of such manuscripts, the majority of them are not in good condition. Assam has one of the most ancient and largest collections of manuscripts. Assamese manuscripts are bound up with Srimanta Sankardeva (15th–16th century Assamese polymath) as well as his Neo Vaisnavite Movement as the manuscripts were the medium of transmission of the ideals of this religio-cultural movement. At the same time, Assamese are grateful to Sankardeva and his successors for manuscripts which displayed Assamese culture. This saint-scholar, poet and playwright wrote his compositions on these manuscripts. Assamese consider these manuscripts as objects of veneration. Over the years, manuscripts, especially those in print are prone to decay due to various reasons such as climate (light, heat, dust and humidity), pest attacks and theft. At present, Information Technology (IT) is used for preservation of cultural heritage including preservation of manuscripts, the primary source of historical information. Current methods include use of hyperspectral imaging and Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to preserve and scan images to digital format. However, current technologies lack the capability to convert a manuscript to a digital artifact due to improper character identification methodology. As such, Artificial Neural Network (ANN) can be used for classification as well as pattern recognition functions. Therefore, this research paper introduces use of an ANN to identify sections of manuscripts obtained from the Assam region.

Keywords: *Archaeology, Artificial Neural Networks, Manuscripts, Optical Character Recognition*

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Dr. Gitanjali Goswami



Dr. Gitanjali Goswami is an independent researcher from Guwahati, Assam, India. She completed her M.Sc in Anthropology from Gauhati University, Guwahati, Assam. Subsequently, she completed her Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology from Gauhati University, with Junior Research Fellowship from Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi. The researcher was earlier involved in various research works like –Reproductive and Child Health, a Project by TALEEM Research Foundation under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India, New Delhi, 2nd National Leprosy Elimination Project under Indian Institute of Health Management Research, Jaipur and sponsored by World Health Organization and Human Resource in Call Centres of Bangalore, a research conducted by National Institute of Mental Health (NIMHANS) and Department of Psychology, Bangalore University which was sponsored by NASSCOM. She has a good numbers of research papers, both at national and International level.

Golden Thread Glorifying Assam

Gitanjali Goswami¹

Abstract

The silk industry in India is quite famous from time immemorial with respect to analyzing the human culture, civilization, customs and traditions. Among all the different types of silk, the natural golden colour silk known as “Muga” is one of the most recognized and beautiful which Assam has been traditionally producing from ancient times. There are references of Assam silk in the records written by Hiuen Tsang, where he has written about the use and trade of Silk, in Kamrupa during the rule of King Bhaskar Varman. Production of golden Muga silk is unique and at present 20,000 hectares of land is used for it. Muga production received great importance from the Ahom Dynasty under whose reign Muga culture became popular and also an integral part of the socio-economic life of Assamese people. Royal and senior class people were able to afford and wore clothing made of that silk. Muga was a royal statement back then and was kept to show off the status of the family or person who owned them. Queens personally were involved in training people to weave silks including Muga. One of the main materials to be exported during Ahom Dynasty rule was Muga silk. The objective of this study is to show that Muga is one of the best known silks in the world in terms of durability and beauty and how it holds a very important place in the hearts of Assamese folk. It is the pride of the Indian State of Assam.

Keywords: *Assam, Assamese, Muga silk*

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Field Tour

Date - 08th July 2018

Location - Ratnapura and Suburbs

New Vithanakanda Tea Factory

New Vithanakande is situated near Ratnapura, in the heart of the low country planting district of Sri Lanka. According to the historical background of this tea factory initial construction had being undertaken in the early 1940's and brought into production during the year 1947 by the late Punchi Bandara Herath Pilapitiya. With his demise in the year 1954, this concern went through usual family management transitions and in the year 1981 it was taken over under a sole proprietorship by Navaratna Pilapitiya, the youngest son of the founder. He is the present Chairman / Managing Director of New Vithanakande Tea Factory (Pvt) Ltd. Since then it has been going through continuous improvements and modernization. From an average of around 1500 lbs. of green leaf intake per day in 1981, it has now peaked to an average 22,000 kgms. of green leaf intake per day turning out around 140,000 kgms. of made tea monthly.

(<http://newvithanakandeteas.com/>)



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Mr. P.E. Vanderpoorten

Ratnapura Saman Dewalaya

Saman Dewalaya is located on the Ratnapura-Panadura highway 2kms from Ratnapura town. This *dewalaya* has been dedicated to God Saman considered as one of the guardian gods of Sri Lanka. This *dewalaya* has been originally constructed during the period of Dambadeniya Kingdom and restored during the period of King Rajasinghe of Sithawaka. This is a famous *Dewalaya* in Sri Lanka and there is a well-known annual pageant.



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- **International Seminar on Thai Culture and Heritage** 19th March 2018

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Lecture No. 01 04th October 2017
The Significance of Sinhala Language as a Heritage
by Professor Sandagomi Koparahewa

Lecture No. 02 20th October 2017
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Lecture No. 03 14th February 2018
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