
Use of Archaeology for Living Issues

Alok Kumar Kanungo¹, Prashant Kumar Singh¹, Alino Sumi¹ and Sheersha Barik¹

¹. Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar, Palaj, Gandhinagar, Gujarat – 382 055, India (Email: kanungo71@gmail.com; singh.prashant327@gmail.com; alinosumi06@gmail.com; sheersha1999@gmail.com)

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Introduction

In the context of capacity-building in higher education and research a range of initiatives have been put in place by the Government of India. One such scheme introduced by Ministry of Education in 2019 has been 'Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC)' with prime aim to train manpower in India on the current trends of research, introduce collaborative teaching in the subject in which we have not taken lead, and host workshops in collaboration with the leading experts of the world. IIT Gandhinagar was awarded with 10 SPARC fellowships and one of those has been on Indigenous Cultural Heritage as a Facilitator for the Sustainable Development Goals (SPARC/2018-2019/P1274/SL). As an output of this project an international workshop on 'Unsettling Archaeology' was organised by the Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar (Gujarat, India) and Flinders University, Australia, in collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), at IIT Gandhinagar from 26th to 29th September, 2022. This workshop focused on the use of archaeology for living issues, with an aim to expose a selected group of students and early career researchers with the need of contemporising archaeology: inferring past for present. This did host a conversation between the leading experts of the field and students and faculties of the subject. The end result is envisaged not as the collection of papers or proceeding but a valuable resource book on the subject to be useful for anthropological syllabi.

The concept of "Unsettling Archaeology" from being an expert-oriented field to one representing the stewardship of Indigenous communities toward their cultural heritage is a recent and welcome development. The thought process behind floating this idea is the inclusion of Indigenous communities as stakeholders in the preservation and development of heritage sites and to make a culturally informed model of sustainable development that is sensitive to cultural heritage.

The theme of the workshop reflects interdisciplinarity and covered five major sub-themes: 1. Archaeology and Global Futures, 2. Archaeology and Wellbeing, 3. Archaeology and Heritage, 4. Archaeology and Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and 5.

Archaeology and Sustainable Development Goals. First three days were meant for live presentations and last day was reserved for online discussions on future of the themes. Leading scholars (Figure 1) of the field from different parts of the world presented their research, gave insightful talks and interacted with future directions.



Figure 1: Participants at the workshop, 26.09.2022

THEME 1: ARCHAEOLOGY AND GLOBAL FUTURES

This theme caters to the emerging and ongoing landmark studies which are systematic, holistic and inclusiveness of Indigenous Peoples and their representation in the future.

**Speaker - Larry J. Zimmerman, Indiana University – Purdue University, USA,
Title - Archaeology as a Tool to Raise Self-respect and Wellness**

Prof. Zimmerman started the lecture by posing the question raised by Bruce G Trigger in *Archaeology at the crossroads*: “what's new?” that “Is archaeology in serious trouble or does it stand on the threshold of brilliant new accomplishments?”. He further elaborated on the question by arguing that archaeology will not evolve until it is decolonized. Drawing on the literature of over 40 years focused on decolonizing archaeology, he made a case for the understanding and significance of the term unsettling in the field of archaeology. Further, he discussed how the unsettling of archaeology can lead to the evolution of the discipline that can be useful to communities and can play a significant role in public policies.

Speaker – Dorothy Lippert, Smithsonian Institution's Natural History Museum, USA, Title – Repatriation is not a Metaphor

Dr. Lippert opened the talk by describing the significance of the word ‘repatriation’, which has been used as metaphor, its history and background. Repatriation is being

used as a metaphor for engagement with tribal communities and she recognised that a thorough understanding of this idea is a way to respect the cultural heritage of indigenous communities. She briefly described her experiences working at the Smithsonian institution's Natural history Museum as a repatriation officer and her role in identifying and repatriating the funerary remains of the native American Indians to their respective communities. She then discussed different field methods which are used in the field of Indigenous archaeology and discussed the role of digital repatriation, its effect on decolonization and the shortfall of digital repatriation. She ended on a positive note hoping that that repatriation should actually take place and not just metaphorically.

Speakers – Claire Smith and Gary Jackson, Flinders University, Australia, Title – Developing an Interpretive Theoretical Agenda that Integrates Indigenous Worldviews

The talk started with the acknowledgment of the traditional owners of Australia and the speakers paid their respect to the indigenous people, their culture and their elders past and present. They described the overall aim of the three projects on which they were working in Barunga in the Northern territory of Australia which are focused on the learnings from the aboriginal people's living heritage. The aim, in their words, is to reorient archaeology to become a more overt tool to support indigenous wellbeing and self-determination and to address Indigenous calls for archaeology to reflect the actual wants and needs of an aboriginal community. The attempt is to reframe archaeology by "Rethinking" on how the indigenous epistemologies ontologies and axiologies are understood, valued and accommodated within the past and present archaeological theory and practice and to "reorient" archaeology to encourage the research questions that are driven by the social, economic and human rights challenges faced by indigenous communities.

THEME 2: ARCHAEOLOGY AND WELLBEING

This theme acknowledges the contribution of archaeologists and heritage professionals' new and imaginative ways to understand the relevance of heritage to wellbeing and quality of life; and the mechanism by which this is achieved.

Speaker – Dr. Kellie Pollard, Charles Darwin University, Australia, Title – Reinventing the "Other" in Archaeology: Other Ways of Knowing about the Past, History and the Present are Legitimate to Indigenous People around the World: Perspective on an Australian Indigenist Approach

Dr. Pollard discussed her project "Indigenist Archaeology: New ways of Knowing the Past and Present". The project aims to explore how Indigenous Australian worldviews can transform archaeological practice and understandings of the past. Archaeological research practice has typically relied on Western science, theories and interpretive frameworks. As an alternative approach, this project will try to develop a new epistemological conceptualization for how archaeology can be practiced. Based on

surveys and interviews with six aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory and South Australia, and using Indigenous theories and concepts, the project will identify and explore how aboriginal ways of knowing (epistemology), being (ontology) and doing (axiology) can be integrated into a new model for archaeological research that we call "Indigenist Archaeology". The speaker also mentions that as co-researchers acquiring research skills that could set them up as community based consultant researchers in the longer term for diverse viable research consultancy opportunities from commercial interests and state and Commonwealth agencies.

Speaker - Dr. Tilok Thakuria, North Eastern Hill University, India, Title - Community Response and Reaction: A Case study on Stone Jars of Dima Hasao, Assam

Dr. Thakuria explained the geographical location of his study area and the challenges faced for archaeological fieldwork in the hilly area. He discussed the Dima Hasao district in the state of Assam which is bounded by Meghalaya, Manipur and Nagaland. He focused on the stone jars and their origins, where five sites have been recognized with their unique observation and interpretation. They did a detailed study of the jars with their origin and the place where it has been found with the number of jars found from each site. The team is trying to understand the importance, ownership and the cultural significance of the stone jars. In recent years a few more sites have been discovered, taking the total to 11 sites.

Speaker – Dr. Rongsenzulu Jamir, Delhi University, India, Title - Tradition vs Transculturation: A Narrative Interpretation of Wooden Post Erection among the Bhils of Chhota Udepur

Dr. Jamir discussed the wooden post erection among the Bhils of Chhota Udepur and compared it with examples of Lotha Nagas Y-shaped posts, Kima post among the Garo of Meghalaya as memorials to the dead, the Tlaisun clan of the Chin Hills of Burma as memorials to dead chiefs, Seluphan post for commemorative purposes among the Mizo and the famous wood henge builders of England incorporating multiple purposes. He further discussed the different discourses about wooden posts present in the literature ranging from the green conscious champions to forms of monotheistic religions regressing into animisms and polytheism. Further, he discussed the rituals involved like cleaning of the spot and the surroundings and the sacred area generally consists of several wooden posts, either in rows or as a standalone section. He carried out his fieldwork in the Zoz, Gathiya and Ambala villages of Chhota Udepur.

Speaker - Dr. Prasant Kumar Singh, IIT Gandhinagar, India, Title - Discreet Charm of Objects with an Anthropological Take of Two Contemporary Personalities

He started the talk by describing a science fiction movie '2001: A Space Odyssey' to show how things inspire opposite emotions in human societies and then elaborated about the need for an archaeo-anthropological study of contemporary society. He

argued that the contemporary phenomenon of consumerism and suicide bombings have a common genealogy and can be traced back to the period described as Axial age in history. Further, he spoke about the advancements made in the archaeology of Dementia where heritage objects are used as therapeutic mediums to alleviate the sufferings related to old age and nervous disorders.

THEME 3: ARCHAEOLOGY AND HERITAGE

This theme is a subject of continuous enhancement initiatives on place, cultural identity and preservation of the past. This key discipline also aims to valorise underrepresented heritage.

Speakers: Prof. Sarit Kumar Chaudhury, Dr. L.P. Monia and Nokkai Wangsa, Rajiv Gandhi University, India, Title – In search of lost cultural tradition: Handmade earthen potteries of Apatani Nokte and Wanchos of Arunachal Pradesh

Prof. Chaudhury spoke about the traditional knowledge system of Handmade earthen pot making among the communities of Apatani, Nokte and Wanchos of Arunachal Pradesh. He detailed how this pot making technique has survived from ages and in what ways, this technique epitomised the aesthetic as well as technological development of these communities that live and thrive amidst all the change happening elsewhere. He discussed how these communities are sovereign for their needs and develop almost all the things they use, the most common example being 'pottery' which served a dynamic functional purpose right from the beginning of the Neolithic period. He concluded the talk by outlining the sustainable approach that should be followed to make these age-old traditions thrive, in spite of technological interventions and innovations.

Speakers – Dr. Larilin Kharpuri, Martin Luther Christian University and Gardinia Nongbri, North Eastern Hill University, India, Title – Living Megalithic Culture- Descriptive Study of the Ossuaries among the Khasis in Ummat and Sohbar villages, Meghalaya

Dr. Kharpuri introduced the discussion of megalithic culture in the Indian Context - megaliths dated before 3000 BCE till about 900 CE. The meanings and reasons for erection of stone structures are varied; studies have provided diverse insights into the socio-political, economic and ideological life of prehistoric societies. The speaker highlighted that in the Khasi Jaintia context, the stone structures are mainly classified on two criteria viz., morphology and functionality. She discussed *Mawniyam* (religious), which consists of a set of triliths or standing stones called *mawshynrang* or male stones and dolmen (table stone) or *mawkynthei* (female stone). These are further divided into *Mawlynti* or *Mawkjat* - erected halfway on the way to deposit the bones, *Maw Umkoi* - purification stone for unnatural deaths, *Maw Klim* - stone of adultery, to remove the bond of marriage, and so on. The speakers discussed the different clans in the study area and elaborated on the dying practice which is called *Thep Mawshyieng/ Mawbah*.

Speaker – Dr. Arun Kumar Reddy, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, India, Title – Evolving a Sustainable Collaborative Mechanism for Management of Built Heritage of India: The Case of ‘Adopt a Heritage Project’

The speaker discussed the background of the project which is an adoption of a monument scheme of Scotland “Caring for Local Heritage” which was initiated in the year 1991. It is a leading independent charity work to inspire people to discover, explore, care for and enjoy Scotland’s archaeological heritage. He elaborated on the stated objectives of NCF that is to generate and utilize funds for conservation, maintenance, promotion, protection, upgradation and development of monuments protected or otherwise. The speaker shares few of the observations on Adopt a Heritage Project. Firstly, when compared with the objectives of NCF, there is significant overlap in the approach and desirable outcomes. Then importance is given to the tourist amenities and tourist experiences rather than Local/Communities participation in preservation and conservation of the heritage. He argued for streamlining of existing projects/schemes of various central/state ministries to make comprehensive policy in matters of heritage consumption and conservation for future generations.

Speaker - Prof. Ravi Korisettar, National Institute of Advanced Studies, India, Topic - Robert Bruce Foote Sanganakallu Archaeological Museum and Public Outreach Archaeology

Prof. Korisettar spoke on public outreach archaeology and measures to save material culture with proper systematic documentation. He deliberated on the lack of cultural resource management policy in India, where existing acts and policies are implemented and attentively pertains to historical sites. He also emphasised on museums as a medium to not solely display and store antiquities, but being dynamic places of learning and engagement. Without which, the effectiveness of the museum is absolutely null and void. Furthermore, museums should move from being static to continuously engage communities and reflect their diversity.

Speaker - Desiree Renee Martinez, Cogstone Resource Management, USA, Topic - Protecting the Honuukvetam Pimuu’ve: The Pimu Catalina Archaeology Project

The Pimu Catalina Island Archaeology project (PCIAP) that was conceived in 2007, collaborates with members of the Tongva community to conduct research to dispel the imagined cultural history of Pimu. She spoke about the project that also provides information and advice to the Santa Catalina Island Conservancy on how to protect the cultural resources entrusted to its care. The primary aim of the project, as described by her, was on Indigenous peoples' proactive participation or consultation in research. The project not only included the community, but also worked with them on the research. The project was guided by the people in the community. It is not so much about the artefacts as it is about the relationship. Native Americans graves protection

and repatriation act ascertains the return of ancestral remains and cultural items to tribes and from 2013-2016, PCIAP helped the Catalina Island Museum update their inventory and facilitate repatriation.

Speakers - Prof. Supriya Varma, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Prof. Jaya Menon, Shiv Nadar University, India, Topic - Heritage and Communities: Challenges for Archaeologists in South Asia

The MANDU project is an interdisciplinary project focusing on society-environment interaction in relation to water management, climatic variability and the making of the built environment in both urban and rural contexts during the medieval and early modern period. They threw light on the timeline and history of Malwa region and the various dynasties that ruled the region. She further reported the desertion of the Mandu plateau that took place between the early 18th and 19th century. In 1841, 10-12 people were reportedly living in Mandu and by 1844, the number increased to 150 (A Bombay Subaltern 1844). Resettlement of the Mandu plateau from the early 19th century was largely by religious mendicants. In 1823, Ram Mandir was established and Jain Temple in the mid-20th century. Furthermore, both the speakers addressed the question of beneficiaries from tourism-related development.

Speaker - Dr. Sunil Gupta, Ghent University, Belgium, Topic - Archaeology and Heritage: The Idea of an Indian Oceaness

The speaker stressed the maritime importance of the Indian ocean and spoke about the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG), a part the twenty-three-member state Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), that has recently called for 'a stronger Indian Ocean Research environment' for fostering a culture of 'Indian Oceaness': a call for social and cultural cohesion of the disparate IOR. The main concern, according to the speaker, with the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) revolves around economics and security and the dimension of culture is not really addressed. Usually culture is equated with tourism, which means attraction for monumental sites like the Stone Town of Zanzibar or the Churches of Goa. This notional regard for culture has kept out a rich scientific record of the Indian Ocean past from the public as well as from policy. So, he argued for a need to bring out the rich archaeological record of the Indian Ocean past into the public domain so to spread awareness about the common Indian Ocean heritage fostering the sense of an Indian Oceaness. This will then allow the rooting of culture in a scientific foundation and do away with the notional sense of culture which prevails at both the public and the policy levels.

Speaker - Ravi Kant, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, India, Topic - Life and Society in Buddhist Tradition: Archaeology, Text and Travelogue

The speaker stressed that to understand Buddhism, it is required to understand how Buddha was focusing on the pragmatic ways of living and demonstrate it from his philosophy and practices. He spoke about Buddha acquiring his philosophy by socialization where he engaged and observed people and tried to create a way of living

which can be accepted by common people. The speaker also argued that Buddhist transition is an Indigenous tradition and Buddha gave his teaching in 'Pali' which was a local language at that time. Buddhism has always created a space to accommodate different cultures, language, traditions, art etc. in it. He further narrated the philosophy of Buddhism as contained in texts like *Tripitak: Vinaypitak, Sutta Pitaka, Abhidhammapitaka: Scriptures of Buddhism* (pitak means a wooden box in which different manuscripts has been collected) and also how different travellers from China and Tibet have written about the Land of Buddha.

THEME 4: ARCHAEOLOGY AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

This theme explores the past by combining two sources of knowledge: Archaeology (with its theories and methods) and Indigenous Knowledge systems (non-Western ontologies, practical know-hows and experiences). These two perspectives allow the production of richer, plural and better-informed narratives of the past.

Speaker - Prof. Kishore K. Basa, Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University, India, Topic - Archaeology and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in India: Problems and Perspectives

In an attempt to establish a linkage between Indigenous knowledge systems and Indian archaeology, the speaker presented the paper that aimed at raising some problems and perspectives. To begin with, he problematized the concept of Indigenous and Indigeneity in the Indian context; he argued that in the case of USA, Canada and Australia, clear distinction exists between Indigenous population and settler population but in India, it is difficult to get such clear division as migration and population movement has taken place in various phases in historical period. Therefore, either the term 'Indigenous' is not appropriate or even if used, its connotation is not the same in India as in the west. In Indian context perhaps it is more useful to use the term 'traditional' knowledge systems (TKS), although the term 'traditional' is also not full proof. He also discussed other concepts like ethnoarchaeology and autoethnography and noted their shortcomings in the present context. He stated that, following Chang in autoethnography, it should be archaeological in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretive orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation.

Speaker - Dr. Simadri B. Ota, Archaeological Survey of India, India, Topic - Anthropology as Archaeology: Views of an Archaeologist from Indian Perspectives

The speaker started with emphasising the need for understanding the cultural dynamics of a community and detailed how Anthropology and Archaeology both have interest in past cultural dynamics. Archaeology has somehow mastered over in knowing past cultural dynamics in respect of mostly tangible components; whereas Anthropology per se deals mainly with intangible aspects of culture while looking into cultural transformation of a community in the past. However, the speaker insisted that

there is lack of coordination among anthropologists and archaeologists for a syncretic understanding of cultural heritage that includes both tangible and intangible objects. Idiocentric conflict and superiority complex between anthropologists and archaeologists that are probably responsible for giving rise to a semantics play between them in using the term -"Archaeology of Tribals" and advocated for more understanding on each other's part for the betterment of the discipline and also for the community.

Speaker - Prof. K. Rajan, Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology, India, Topic - Archaeology and Water Management System

Prof. Rajan started his talk by stressing the importance of water management as an indispensable component of the society in the semi-arid zones. Its importance is further realised in the agro-pastoral economy where entire activities of the society stem from agriculture and its subsidiaries. He reflected the importance of collection, preservation, regulation and distribution of water through different mediums in agricultural driven societies. Prof. Rajan elaborated on the water conservation techniques undertaken in Pudukkottai and attempted to highlight the significant features of the Indigenous water management system applied in tank irrigation based on archaeological, inscriptional and literary sources that survived for a millennium. Further he highlighted the presence of water tanks in the regions of Tamil Nadu and their records in the Sangam literature.

Speaker - S.K. Aruni, Indian Council of Historical Research, India, Title - Indigenous Knowledge system for selection and laying out of Urban cities in Pre- colonial period in Karnataka

Dr. Aruni dealt upon the process of urbanization in Karnataka vis-à-vis traditional knowledge in town-planning from the ancient period to the beginning of colonial period. He used the works of European, particularly the Dutch, Portuguese & British artists who have sketched medieval period towns and landscapes and these documents serve as valuable sources for understanding of layout and/or extent of towns of pre-colonial period. He spoke about the archaeological excavations in parts of Kanataka like Hampi and Srirangapatna and archaeological remains of urban settlements found in these places. He made references to the ancient Kannada literature that have given us a hint of the nature and character of the various types of urban towns and cities. He spoke about the different classifications of the urban towns and cities like temple towns, capital towns, provincial towns and commercial towns and looked for traditional patterns in them.

Speakers - Dr. Bérénice Bellina, French National Centre for Scientific Research, France, Oliver Évrard, Research Institute for Sustainable Development, France and Sorathach Rotchanarat, Fine Arts Department, Thailand, Topic - Engaging with the Urak Lawoi Sea Nomads on Krabi Maritime Heritage: A Community-based Archaeological and Ethnographic Project

The speakers talked about the aim of Lanta Bay Project (LBP) that is to document both the ancient and contemporaneous maritime cultural landscape engaging some of its present-day social groups, and in particular the Urak Lawoi. The Thai-Malay peninsula and the Malacca Strait witnessed the development of cosmopolitan trading port polities throughout its history. Some of the questions addressed in their talk were: How can we "use" the Indigenous Knowledge Systems to understand the local history (archaeology being part of this? How can our work contribute to sustainable development's objectives? For Academic disciplines: to develop new frameworks to locate and interpret ancient remains and historical events, enriching historical reconstructions and methodological developments, and reconstructing a more complex historical narrative. They opined on the need for valorisation of the local knowledge that can lead to their empowerment (Sustainable Development Goal 10), and improve minorities' negotiating power.

THEME 5: ARCHAEOLOGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

This theme recognises heritage as being of historical, social and anthropological indicators of fundamental concept of sustainability. It envisages leverage of Indigenous communities' voice, knowledge and heritage to achieve targets of sustainable development.

Speaker - Prof. Sonya Atalay, University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA, Topic - Place-based Archaeology and Repatriation: A Community-based Participatory Research Approach

Prof. Sonya began her address with an Anishinaabe greeting and then set the context for her topic by highlighting the important role that Indigenous peoples and their knowledge plays in today's world using the Sustainable Development Goals. Indigenous knowledge provides essential ways to achieve the sustainability goals in the form of ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies and it is now being recognized that Indigenous knowledge has the potential to understand long-term environmental shifts, resource management and the interconnection between cultural and natural systems. Sharing the story of the Skywoman from Turtle Island, Prof. Sonya showed how Indigenous stories are the carriers of knowledge. The story provides us instructions for the future and highlights the need for creating a new world. She spoke about the need to create a new research world with new ways of doing community-based participatory research. She concluded that the aim should be to braid Indigenous knowledge with conventional science, not to exploit indigenous knowledge.

Speaker - Dr. Madhulika Samanta, Archaeological Survey of India, India, Topic - From Coal to Collaboration: Archaeological Investigations in the National Power Capital Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh and Sustainable Development

Dr. Madhulika gave a background of the Singrauli area where their study began in 2017-18. She explained how the area that provides coal to the whole country does not get anything in reciprocity. She stated how The Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) Amendment Act 1957 is financially more important for the government than the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological sites and remains act 1958. Dr. Madhulika shared how they found sixteen hillocks with similar encasing of bricks which were swastika shaped stupas in Boudha Danda in the Sanjay National Reserve Forest. Although they found inscriptions and sculptures from the Gupta period, the locals did not find this work useful and did not believe that they could fight against the coal miners. She noted that with the intervention of the media, the site soon became an important part of the Madhya Pradesh tourism circuit. Dr. Madhulika concluded this case of Singrauli by highlighting how archaeology can become a very important tool once it is recognized, beneficial for both the coal miners and the community in the case of Singrauli.

Speaker – Dr. Oishi Roy, Bihar Heritage Development Society, India, Title – Heritage Walks – A Medium of Education

Dr. Roy's talk revolved around the heritage awareness initiatives taken for the students and locals of Patna about the history and architecture of different monuments in and around the city of Patna. The emphasis was on the architectural style and suggestions for including selected monuments in the heritage list and measures for protection as social and cultural identity. She talked about the architectural style and heritage of Patna College (est. 1863) which is the mother of NIT and Patna Science College. The campus reflects different styles of colonial architecture with the main administrative building originally being a Dutch factory and also an opium and saltpetre storehouse built in the 17th century. The other parts of the building were constructed subsequently during the British regime. She also discussed the future prospects of the initiative to involve a greater sphere of schools and colleges and to introduce the concept of heritage walks outside the boundary of Patna.

Speaker – Dr. Alok Kumar Kanungo, IIT Gandhinagar, India, Title – Nagas and Megaliths: A Knowledge System

Dr. Kanungo discussed the antiquity of Megaliths in Naga Hills, continuity of Megalith Traditions, and the technology adopted to detach megaliths from natural formations. He discussed the materials which the first inhabitant holds. Out of a few material cultures which are not displaced to the museums in the west, one is the megaliths. These materials hold immense emotional and cultural value to the Nagas. Then he spoke about how Nagas used the megaliths for fortification with their traditional tools; and mortuary megaliths to make graves which are ubiquitous in most of the villages; megaliths used for sitting platforms to commemorate heroes and not commoners. He argued that there was functional utility of megaliths which are still preserved and their knowledge on rocks are not limited to megaliths; but for several other purposes like pottery making. Further he mentioned about the stone pulling ceremony of the Angamis, where the men and women are dressed in their traditional costumes and

jewellery signifying their identity and sacredness to a community event of what is called Naga.

Speaker – Dr. Alino Sumi, IIT Gandhinagar, India, Title – Artisanal Salt Production among the Nagas

Dr. Sumi spoke about the Indigenous method of salt production in the Naga hills. She emphasised on how humans followed animals for food and salt licks, naturally occurring salt deposits, and the trails that animals created became roads for humans to make salt for themselves. Due to which people started eventually settling and creating settlements, cities and nations. Hence, salt became essential as it is intertwined with food which we eat and its medicinal properties for health and development of civilization. Her study area is Matikhrü village in Phek district of Nagaland and predominantly inhabited by Pochury Nagas along with several other communities which practice this artisanal salt making. She also discussed the proscription and anathemas in the salt making process, which includes impermissibility of menstruating and pregnant women. She also elaborated on how the practice of salt making can be used as a rationale to understand the cultural relations of the Nagas.

Speaker – Dr. Fabian W. Marbaniang, Martin Luther Christian University, India, Title – Preserving the Art of Pottery Making through Community Engagement at Larnai, Meghalaya

Dr. Marbaniang's presentation was based on observations and the experiences with the communities of Larnai, Meghalaya. The major highlight was the practice of the pottery in Larnai, the efforts of engaging the community of potters in the preservation of the crafts and the slow progress in the process of awareness and engagement. The geographical location and demographic structure and the population involved in pottery making occupation was discussed followed by the significance of pottery in Larnai. The Larnai became the traditional center of pot making because of its strategic location which is close to the Sung valley as this valley is known to be the main source of clay. He talked about the traditional knowledge and skills of the elderly women in Meghalaya which is passed on from generation to generation and these women belong to three blood lines – Pyrtuh clan, Shadap clan and Lamare clan. The speaker outlined the interventions needed to facilitate this skill in the form of small-scale industry and support the potters.

Speakers – Dr. Shahida Ansari, Deccan College Post-Graduate & Research Institute and Mrinmoy Ghosh, Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health Institute, India, Title – Interplay of archaeological Numismatics and Heritage Sustainability, Narratives of Care

The talk revolves around the understanding of archaeological numismatic i.e. the conceptual and practical blending of numismatics with mainstream archaeological framework. They tried to locate 'Symmetry' in archaeology through an object oriented approach and explained the circulation of coin as 'Subordinate Social Agency' and locating its various social affordances, functionality, materiality, thingness, the network

of association, and embedded social memory. Understanding the term agency into an archaeological interpretation provides clarification to fathom the shift in material culture and past human association with materiality. There are five commonly implied agency approaches- Collective agency, Individual intentionality, Practical rationality and social struggle, Rational Actor, Unintended Consequences of Social Struggle. The speaker elaborated on why symmetry is needed because human and non-human should not be regarded on a distinct ontological plane.

The fourth day, **29th September** was an online colloquium of all resource persons to discuss the current realities, limitations and future directives of the subject i.e., community representatives and ownership of their traditional knowledge as the foreground.

Cultural Immersion Activities

The workshop included field visits to two important places in the vicinity. First one was to the Dandi Kutir Museum (Gandhinagar) which is built on the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi followed by a visit to the famous Adalaj Stepwell (Ahmedabad) which represents the fine sense of Indian architectural work in 15th century CE. To give a glimpse of local cuisine and cultural immersion, a special dinner was organized on the first day on 26th September at Vishalla, Ahmedabad.

Stakeholders and Experiential Learning

This four-day workshop involved three days of in person academic presentations, one day of online discussions and two field trips, that covered veritably all aspects of the study of for whom do we study and who has the intellectual rights. These ranged from the fundamentals to the rights of the indigenous people and modus operandi of how to study a non-egalitarian society and at what length, in our positionality of modern day science per se. Valuably, the talks also included detailed introductions and extended examples of engagement with the Indigenous communities around the world.

The experts and participants were from six countries including the United States of America, France, Belgium, Thailand, Australia and India. It was gratifying to see that participants represented 20 universities, research institutes, laboratories, museums and state departments. The participants had been selected on the basis of prior interest in the subject, and the workshop has equipped them to embark on diverse research projects of their own. This workshop proved to be unparalleled as the participants were exposed to current research trends, heard, met and brainstormed their queries with the eminent personalities of the subject from India and abroad, who have excelled in their fields and today are role models to emulate.

Lessons and Centrepieces

Collectively the papers convened the challenges of studying the past through the perspectives of indigenous people, respecting their knowledge and belief system in vivid detail. Considered together they provided the best possible introduction and

training to engage with the variable and dynamic meaning of cultural objects, traditions or events in time and space which differs from community and region. Nevertheless there are certain universal meanings and interpretations of nature.

Succinctly, all participants acquired holistic learning and approaches to interpret the past by immersing themselves in its pursuit for four full days. The lesson has been that we might be studying the material culture of the Indigenous communities in our quest to understand the past, but we are mere mediators until the indigenous communities lead this field and intellectual rights on interpretation of material culture always remains with them.