INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI
SHORT ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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SHORT ABSTRACT

Northeast India has long been considered a significant region for archaeological research. The geographical setting, biodiversity, diverse ethnic culture, ancient settlement, and traces of migration play a crucial role in creating a dynamic landscape of Northeast India. Assam and Meghalaya are crucial regions for archaeological research in Northeast India. However, most of the research in the region has been limited to site-specific studies. The present study area of Digaru – Kolong river valley is located in the foothills of the Meghalaya plateau and is surrounded by several archaeologically potential regions, such as North Cachar Hills, Khasi, and Garo Hills. Sarutaru and Marakdola are the only reported and excavated sites in this region. The reports of accidental findings of artifacts are widespread throughout the region, which further indicates the potentiality in terms of archaeological research.

The present study has attempted to understand the past settlement, material culture, and archaeology of the Digaru – Kolong river valley. The research locates the trajectory of settlement, subsistence, and chronology of the communities inhabiting the study area. It traces the research question of any dialogical relationship with the neighboring archaeological sites. This study has used the method of archaeological reconnaissance surveys, test pit excavations, ethnographic surveys (mainly from non-participant observation and unstructured interview methods), and scientific or laboratory analysis methods. It is further anchored in the literature

related to the discourse in Northeast India, claiming archaeological, ecological, and ethnographic studies. The artifacts have been analyzed by their morphological features and scientific methods to understand the raw materials, mineralogical compositions, and chronology. The scientific methods utilized are XRD, FTIR, Thin-section petrography, particle size analysis (sieve and hydrometer), Ph. measurement, titration, and AMS dating.

The study has successfully located several findspots, and based on exploration planning and accessibility to the region, it has been divided into five zones. The artifacts recovered from the study area were ceramics, stone celts (axe, adze, shouldered, and tanged celts), charcoal, and megalith monuments. Artifacts have been recovered from the surface as well from the test pits. Evidence from the archaeological reconnaissance indicates that the study area is archaeologically rich and has traces of past settlements. The ethnographic results further enhance the significant role of the socio-cultural memory of the ethnic communities towards archaeological sites and artifacts. Analysis of the artifacts demonstrated that the raw materials for tools and ceramics were acquired locally. The settlement pattern and subsistence of the region resemble the Neolithic lifestyle. However, the AMS dating results demonstrated that the sites and artifacts are associated with post-Neolithic settlements or historical periods. There is evidence of inscription writing, sculpture making, iron tools, and stone celts parallelly, suggesting human imprints in different forms. Thereby, the study depicts the region as archaeologically rich, and this work helps to build a broad regional sequence in the Assam – Meghalaya foothills. On this basis, it is recommended that further research and large-scale excavation be needed to understand the material culture, archaeology, and occurrence of Neolithic celts in the region at strata dated to the 10^{th} century AD. In this process, the present study situates a reference base for understanding the settlement, material remains, chronology, and archaeology of the Digaru – Kolong river valley.