

Organisation and Management of Cultural Heritage Collections in Manipur: A Study

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Abstract: *Cultural Heritage collections constitute important information resources of the society playing a significant role in preserving the rich cultural and historical heritage of a society. They are also the powerful media for transferring our literary, linguistic, artistic and cultural heritage from one generation to the generations to come. Such invaluable resources reflect many dimensions and aspects of the land, people, culture, custom, religion, administration, cultivation, festivals, horoscope, etc of a society. They are found mostly with the private custodians, museums, archives, libraries and archaeological institutions. The study on such collections has also become an important area of research in Library and Information Science today. The present paper is an attempt to study Cultural Heritage collections available in Manipur on certain specific areas taking into consideration museums, archives and archaeological institutions located in Manipur.*

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Museums, Archives, Archaeological Institutions, Manipur

1. Background

Cultural Heritage collections are found to be covered as an important area of research in Library and Information Science since recent past. Such collections contribute a lot towards preserving our old heritage for the generations to come. Nature and types of collections, their organisation and management, preservation and conservation techniques, digitization, accessibility, usability, etc. are some of the focus areas of studies. They are the invaluable collections playing an important role in preserving the rich social, cultural and intellectual heritage of the society. They are usually fragile in nature and their organisation and management require special care. A number of researchers have carried out many studies across the world to survey their availability, organisation, management, preservation and conservation for the future, etc. In Manipur there are a good number of such collections in the possession of the private custodians/individuals and organisations like: libraries, archives, museums, archaeological centres or institutions and other privately run archival libraries and personal collections. All aspects of the society, social, political, economic, culture, history, etc. are reflected in such manuscripts and other specific collections of rare nature. They really constitute the rich heritage of the state which reflect many dimensions and aspects of the land, people, culture, custom, religion, administration, cultivation, festivals, horoscope, etc.

They are found mostly with the private custodians. Museums, archives and archaeological institutions of the state have been playing an important role in the conservation and preservation of these valuable resources. These resources need to be preserved for the posterity. How these invaluable collections are procured, organised, managed, preserved, conserved and accessed, etc. need to be assessed for different purposes. In this connection, based on the findings of a just concluded research (Binoy Singh, 2012), the present paper attempts to understand the

management, organisation, conservation and preservation of such invaluable collections available in archives, museums, and archaeological institutions of Manipur.

2. Cultural Heritage Collections in Manipur

In Manipur, Cultural Heritage collections of varied nature are found mostly in the private custodians and other public institutions. The custodians use to keep such materials as sacred entity but with less care. Such materials are not allowed to use anytime when a scholar wants to use the same. There is no sufficient knowledge about the conservation and preservation of such collections with the modern techniques mostly in all the private institutions. All Cultural Heritage materials were kept mostly in the original form. It is also clear that the cultural heritage materials of Manipur have almost all the subjects related to science, social science, humanities and literature, astrology, creation, fine arts, genealogy, predictions, religion and philosophy. It is in fact a mirror through which one can see the material and the cultural heritage of the society and civilization. Cultural Heritage are mostly in private collections or at the hands of local Heads. Manipur State Museum and Some private museum have been doing commendable jobs to collect and preserve these cultural Heritage materials for the future generation.

These cultural heritage material are the uncommon and excellent objects of the society. These materials are mainly potteries, musical instruments, agricultural instruments, armour and armory, ornaments, furniture of the ancient king, cloths of the ancient kings, queens and also their children's, coins, and gold chains, photographs, paintings, stones, metals, animal skins, paper, medals, animal skulls, fauna and flora and ancient time measuring instrument, etc. These are also one of the most important component rich cultural heritages of the society. They are the image of our ancient society and help to find out the civilization of the ancient period. Study of the availability, organisation,

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management, conservation and preservation techniques used for such invaluable materials by different museums, archives and archaeological institutions of a particular region is of really an interesting aspect.

3. Past Studies

Some of the available literatures related to the proposed study are being reviewed here under certain aspects to have a thorough knowledge on the subject to be studied.

Preservation and access techniques have been studied by Gaur (2011) discussing the institutional and individual efforts in the fields of preservation in India. Certain important issues about the Copyright Act, 1957 concerning cultural heritage and terms of copyright, Information Technology Act, 2000 and digital preservation legal issues, modern concepts of preservation and access have also been discussed in the study. Ibohah Singh (2010) in a study highlighted the preservation of manuscripts in digital format and need for developing digital archives. He also mentioned about the role being played by the librarians, archivists and writers in preserving the manuscripts. Role of librarians, archivists and writers in preservation of national heritage has been discussed by Oliga Chanu (2010), exploring the new ways to preserve our heritage. On the other hand, Ngurtingkhuma (2010) studied the challenges for the Libraries on preservation of national heritage for the next generations. Shelly Singh and Madhuri Devi (2010) studied about the role of university librarian in preservation of knowledge and information resources using information and communication technology.

They discussed about the digital preservation which is considered to be the more constant and ongoing attention than preservation in other media. They also highlighted the factors which deteriorate digital information and how to preserve the same digital information. Ithoi Devi (2010) studied the role of Manipuri writers in preserving rich national heritage through personal collections, highlighting the significant role of librarians, archivists, curators of museums and private custodians in preserving different documentary and other forms of heritage. Role of librarians in preservation of rare collections in the colleges of Manipur have been studied by Nanda Singh(2010). On the other hand, developing collections in the college libraries of Manipur towards preservation of national heritage has been studied by Rajeshwori and Tampakleima (2010) discussing about the growth and development of the college libraries along with their functions, student strengths and activities. They also suggested some points to make improvement of the collection development system of college library. Study made by Sunil and Kumar (2009) focused on Preservation of Library materials mainly of the non- book materials giving an idea of how to conserve library materials and discussing the importance of library for research, references and recreation. Khumanleima (2010) studied the role of preservation of National heritage discussing the responsibility of libraries for the preservation of recorded materials for the growth of society. While studying about the role of public libraries for preservation and conservation of cultural heritage, Giridhari Singh (2009) highlighted the public library system in north east region identifying the

importance of library legislation considering the library as an agency for the society for the transmission of culture and cultural change through communication. Preservation of archival materials in digital era has been studied by Zabeen Ahmed (2009) discussing about the importance digital preservation, process and limitations of the same. She highlighted the process of preservation its advantages and disadvantages mentioning the importance of archival preservation, collection of documents and their preservation process.

4. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are:

- a) To survey the availability of Cultural Heritage collections in different museums, archives and archaeological institutions of Manipur;
- b) To understand the different types of collections of these institutions;
- c) To know the nature of Cultural Heritage available in Manipur; and
- d) To know the nature of collections, mode of display, mode of organisation, preservation and conservation and their services.

5. Methodology

The study has been conducted by adopting the following methods and procedures.

- a) Both primary and secondary data has been collected for the study.
- b) The institutions and organisations dealing with Cultural Heritage have been considered as the major sources for data collection.
- c) The publications mainly current literature and other related documents have been scanned and consulted.
- d) The custodians of the museums, archives, and archaeological institutions under study have been interviewed.
- e) Simple statistical techniques have been used for analysing the data.

6. Institutions under Study

The present study has taken into account 18 institutions of Manipur which are dealing with manuscripts and other specific collections. This constitutes the sample size of the study which comprise of museums, archives and archaeological institutions. The institutions so covered in the study include the following:

6.1. Museums

- a) Manipur State Museum, Imphal
- b) I.N.A. War Museum, Moirang
- c) Manipur Biological Museum, Iroisemba
- d) Manipur University Museum, Canchipur
- e) Living Museum, Sekta
- f) Kangla Museum, Kangla
- g) Mutua Museum, Keishampat
- h) R.K.C.S. Gallery, Keishampat
- i) LangthabalKhaubum Museum, Langthabal

- j) Peoples Museum, Kakching
- k) Zo- Gam Tribal Museum, Churachandpur
- l) Tribal Museum and Research Centre, Sagolband

In case of archaeological Institutions, only the state run State Archaeology, Kanglahas been considered.

6.2. Archives:

Under archives, only government run Manipur State Archive has been covered.

6.4. Others

Under this category, Manipur State Kala Akadami has been taken into consideration.

6.3. Archaeological Institutions

7. Ownership of the Institutions

The pattern of ownership of these 18 institutions is shown under table -1 & figure -1 below:

Table 1: Ownership of the Institutions, N=18

Institution	Ownership				Total	Remark
	Govt	Private	Semi -Govt.	Departmental		
Museum	5	6	1	3	15	62.50%
Archive	1	NA	NA	NA	1	12.50%
Archaeological Institution	1	NA	NA	NA	1	12.50%
Others	1	NA	NA	NA	1	12.50%
Total	8 (44.44%)	6 (33.3%)	1 (5.55%)	3(16.67%)	18	100%

Source: Computed from returned questionnaire

The government agencies comprising of all the categories of institutions under study are highest 8 (44.44%) among others. It is also understood that 6(33.3%) private, 1(5.55%) semi government and 3 ((16.67%) departmental museums are also covered in the study. There are no other institutions other than museums in these categories.

Figure 1: Showing the ownership of the Institutions

8. Nature of collection and its size

The nature of collection and its size in different institutions under study are shown under table 2 below:

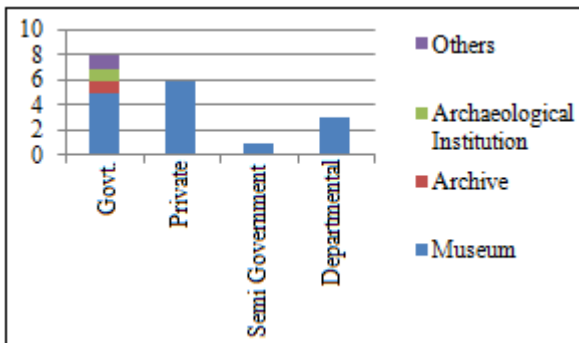


Table 2: Nature of the Collection, N=18

Sl. No	Name of the institutions	Types of collections	Total Collection
1	Manipur State Museum	Coins, Manuscripts, Rare Materials, Instruments, Arm and Armoury, Potteries, Dresses, Clothes, Paintings, Ornaments, Natural things etc.	10, 000
2	Living Museum Sekta	Potteries, Pots	24
3	I.N.A. Moirang	Photographs. Coins, arm and armour, hand book, hand bills, helmate, oxygen mask, amulets, binoculars, hand grades, gun, gun powder, poison bottles, empty cartridges and parts of tank etc.	200
4	Manipur University Museum Manipur University	Books, Rare Materials, Coins, tribal Music Instruments, Ornaments,, weaving Implements etc.	More than 200
5	Mutua Museum, Keishampat	Manuscripts, Rare Materials, Potteries, Peintings, sculpture, Instrument, Bhudist elements etc.	3060
6	Langthabal Museum, Khoupum	Customer items of Kabui tribes, ornaments and Utensils etc.	More than 50
7	Zo- Gam Tribal Museum, Churachandpur	Customary items of churachandpur Tribes and Armoury items etc.	More than 1450
8	Tribal Museum and Research Centre Sagolband	Pottery, utensils, basketery, Arms and Armoury, Diorama, Musical instrument, Dress and ornaments etc.	200
9	Peoples Museum, Kakching	Coins, Dresses, stones, armour, sculptures, Manuscripts	1200
10	Kangla Museum, Kangla	Photos, Rare documents, Coins, Instrument.	109

11	State Archaeology Kangla	Rare Materials, Artefacts and Tools	More than 1000
12	Manipur State Archive	Manuscripts, Books	13,376
13	Manipur State KalaAkadami	Books, Manuscripts	18,000
14	Department of Anthropology, D.M.College of Science	Coins, Instruments,, Sculpture, Natural things, cultural related items	550 more than
15	Geological Museum, Department of Earth science, Manipur University	Fossils(Invertebrates)Plants, Minerals, Coil, Rocks, ore etc.	245
16	Manipur University Department of Anthropology Museum	Fishes, Pottery, Thangol, Hunting,, Basket, Items, Dresses and Ornaments	More than 200
17	R.K.C.S	Paintings, Crafts, sculptures, Vintage Hollywood Poster, Rare stamps, rare Photagrphs, culture	More than 500
18	Biological Museum, Iroisemba	Rare Materials, Birds etc.	More than 41

Source: Computed from returned questionnaire

The nature and types of collections ranges from coin, Armour and Armoury, Musical Instruments, agricultural instruments, Potteries, Photographs, Paintings, clothes, War Instruments, Ornaments, Natural things, pots, books, manuscripts, fossils, skull, Stones, sculptures, artefacts, tools, baskettery items, crafts items, hunting items etc.The Manipur State Museum has 10,000numbers of collectionswhich include coins, manuscripts, specific materials, instruments, dresses, utensils, ornaments and natural objects. Living Museum, Sekta has collection strength of only 24 items which include mostly potteries and pots. The I.N.A. War Museum, Moirang has the collections of 200 items comprising of the photograph, coins, arms and armoury and other instruments. Manipur University Museum has a total collection of 227 items which include books, specific materials, coins, musical instruments, ornaments and weaving implements. Manipur State Archaeology has a collection of more than 1000 items. These collections usually include the specific materials, artefacts and ancient tools. Mutua Museum, Keishampat has a total collection of 3060 which include manuscripts, specific materials, potteries, paintings, sculptures, instruments and Bhudist elements. People’s Museum, Kakching has a total collection

of 1200 items of coins, dresses, stones, armour sculptures and manuscripts. Manipur State Archive and Manipur State Kala Akadami have the collections of 13, 376 and 18.000respectively which comprise books, and manuscripts. Department of Anthropology, D. M. College of Science has a total collection of more than 550 comprising coins, instruments, sculpture, natural objects and cultural related objects. Geological Museum of the Department of Earth Science, Manipur University has total collection of 245 which includes the fossils plants and animals, coal, rocks and ornaments. R.K.C.S gallery on the other hand has total collections of more than 500 collections of paintings, crafts, poster, rare stamps and photographs. Biological Museum, Iroisemba is comprised of rare animals and birds. Further, it is seen that Manipur State Kala Akadami is one of the institutions with highest collections of manuscripts, books and pecific materials among all these institutions.

9. Mode of Collection Development

The mode of development of different types of collections is seen under table 3 and figure 2 below:

Table 3: Mode of Collection of the Objects, N=18

Mode of collection	Museums	Archive	Archaeological Institution	Others	Total	Remark
Purchase	6	1	NA	1	7	22.59%
Donation	7	1	1	NA	9	29.03%
Excavation	6	NA	NA	NA	6	19.35%
Spot Collection	3	NA	NA	NA	3	9.67%
Gift	4	NA	NA	NA	4	12.90%
Others Means	2	NA	NA	Na	2	6.45%

Source: Computed from returned questionnaire

Donation (29.3%) constitutes the most popular mode of development of collection of objects followed by purchase

(22.59%) excavation (19.35%) gift (12.90%) spot collection (9.67%) and other means (6.90%).

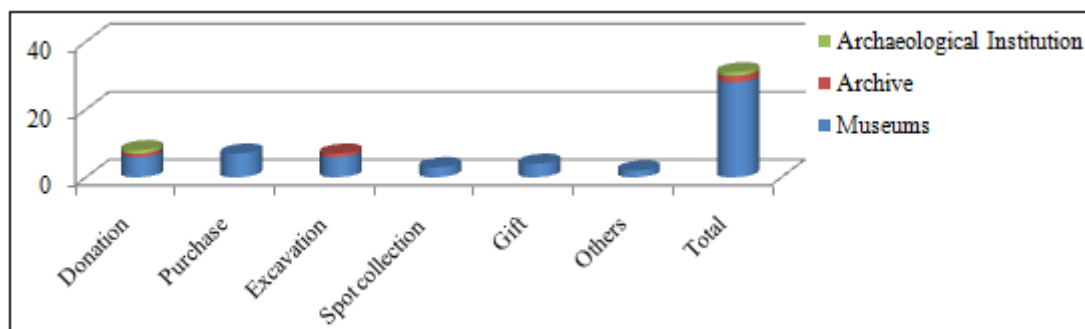


Figure 2: Showing Mode of Collection Development

These modes are quite prevalent in all the museums under study. In case of archives ,archaeological institutions and others, the collections found to be developed through purchase and donation only.

10. Mode of display of collections

Regarding display of items available in different institutions under study, it is interested to note that open display of the items is found to be prevalent among Living Museum, Sekta, Zo- Gam Tribal Museum, and Geological Museum, Department Earth Science Manipur University. Use of showcase is observed to display these items in respect of Manipur State Museum, Manipur University Museum, Tribal Museum and Research Centres Sagolaband, Kangla Museum and State Archaeology etc.The following table -4 shows the mode of display of the items.

Table 4: Mode of display of items, N=18

Sl. No.	Name of the Institutions	Mode of Display
1	Manipur state Museum	Showcase, Diorama and Table showcase.
2	Living Museum Sekta	Open
3	I.N.A. Moirang	Wooden Glass and Furniture
4	Manipur University Museum	Showcase, Board covered with Glass
5	Mutua Museum	Diorama, Group and Open
6	Zo-Gam tribal Museum Churchandpur	Open
7	LangthabalKhoubum Museum	Group Wise
8	Tribal Museum and Research Centre Sagolband	Glass covered showcase, Diorama
9	Department of anthropology D.M. College of Science	Glass Frame, Wooden Almirah, Stack
10	Anthropology Museum Department of Anthropology Manipur University	Glass Box. Table
11	Geological Museum Department of Earth Science, M.U	Open
12	Manipur state Archive	Stack, Shelf, Almirah
13	State Archaeology Kangla	Showcase

Table 5: Preservation and Conservation Techniques Used N=18

Institution	Method		Both Chemical and Traditional	Simple Method	Total	Remark
	Chemical	Traditional				
Museum	7	1	2	5	15	62.5%
Archive	NA	NA	1	NA	1	12.5%
Archaeological Institution	1	NA	NA	NA	1	12.5%
Others	1	NA	NA	NA	1	12.5%
Total	9	1	3	5	18	100%

Source: Computed from returned questionnaire

Use of chemicals only as preservation and conservation technique for the collections developed in the archaeological institutions and others is also seen. But for the archive, both chemical and traditional methods are used.

14. Nature of Users

The nature of the users of the institutions under study can be grouped under three categories:

14	Biological Museum Iroisemba	Show –Box, Glass Aquarium, Skin Board, Iron Racks, Frames.
15	Manipur state Kala Akadami	Almirah, Shelf, Stack.
16	Kangla Museum Kangla	Showcase, Diorama and Pedestal
17	People Museum Kakching	Group
18	R.K.C.S.	Wall Hanging

Source: Computed from returned questionnaire

As the table shows, use of wooden glass almirah, iron racks showcase are also found in case of I.N.A. War Museum, Moirang, Anthropology Museum, D.M.C.of Science, Manipur State Archive, Manipur State Kala Akadami, Anthropology Museum, Department of Anthropology, Manipur University etc. It is seen that R.K.C.S Gallery is the only institution, which displays valuable items through wall hanging.

11. Preservation and Conservation

Three methods are found to be adopted in preservation and conservation of various types of manuscripts and specific collections by different institutions under study. Use of chemicals is quite prevalent among the Manipur State Museum, Anthropology Museum of Manipur University, D.M.C of Science, Manipur University Museum, Tribal Museum and Research Centre,Sagolband, Manipur State Archive and Manipur State Kala Akadami.

Traditional methods are adopted by Manipur State Archive, Tribal Museum and Research Centre Sagolband, Mutua Museum, Keishampat and Manipur University Anthropology Museum.

Use of simple method is observed in Geological Museum, Department of Earth Science, Manipur University, Living Museum Sekta, Khaupum Museum Langthabal and Zo-Gam Tribal Museum, Churchandpur.

A general overview of the preservation and conservation techniques used in different institutions is shown under table 5 below:

Registered: Those who have registered to enjoy the facilities and services;

Non Registered: Those who are not actually registered but use the services and facilities; and

Casual Visitors: Those who casually and occasionally visit the institutions.

15. Frequency of visitors

Summer is the most suitable session for the visitors in all the institutions under study than the winter. The frequency of visit is found to be highest in case of Manipur State Museum (21.24%) followed by I.N.A. Moirang (11.81%), Biological Museum Iroisemba (16.8%), Kangla Museum, Kangla (0.84%), R.K.C.S (7.5%) so on and so forth. Number of visitors who visits the institutions is below the desired rank.

16. General Findings of the Study

The general findings of the present study can be summarised as below:

- Old Cultural Heritage materials of specific nature are available in Manipur that contribute towards the richness of intellectual and cultural heritage of the state.
- There are different institutions and individual custodians who possess such Cultural Heritage materials.
- Archives, Museums and Archaeological Institutions are important institutions, which have been conserving and preserving such invaluable collections since long time for the generations to come in the future.
- These institutions are of government, semi government, private and departmental by ownership.
- Various types of Cultural Heritage collections are available in the archives, museums and archaeological institutions of the state.
- The size of the collections available ranges from a few number of items to about 18,000. The variations are as per the specific nature of the objects available in Varied institutions.
- Donation, purchase, excavation, gifts, spot collections are found to be given preference by the institutions as the mode of collection development.
- Regarding the mode of display of the items available in the institutions, use of almirah, iron racks, showcase, box, diorama, etc is prevalent.
- Use of chemicals, traditional and simple methods is prevalent for conservation and preservation of the materials. More than one method is also used in some institutions.
- Three categories of users are there in the institutions who enjoy the facilities and service of the same i.e., registered users, non- registered users and casual visitors.
- In some institutions, by the specific nature of the items, open display, and wall hanging are also observed.
- Summer is found to be suitable for the visitors to visit the institutions than the winter.
- Use of modern techniques like digital preservation is not found in all institutions.

17. Suggestions and Conclusion

The findings of the study have endorsed us the need to suggest and recommend a few points as enumerated below if the invaluable Cultural Heritage collections are to conserve and preserve for the future generations:

- Collections (Cultural Heritage Materials) developed through different means by the Museums, Archives and Archaeological Institutions of Manipur need special care to preserve for the generation to come as they serve as

the intellectual, cultural and heritage of the state. Besides the prevailing methods and techniques adopted in the process of preservation and conservation of the materials, the institutions also require to find out other techniques such as digital preservation and archiving, etc.

- As stated above, these invaluable materials should be digitised for which the concerned institutions have to find out all the possibilities for having a concrete planning.

The State Government with the Directorate of Art and Culture should come out to play a pivotal role and initiative in this regard. The Directorate needs to take up the following:

- 1) Identifying and collecting Cultural Heritage collections for digitisations from various institutions and individuals private custodians.
 - 2) Launching a project for digitisation.
 - 3) Developing Institutional Repository to make available all the materials and activities.
 - 4) Archiving digitally the Cultural Heritage materials.
 - 5) Making available and accessible the digital archives for such materials World wide.
- In order to maintain a sound management system of the institutions dealing with such collections, professionally trained staff should be made available with the same. Also they should be given continuing education and training on various areas of the management of such rare collections.
 - Proper flow of fund must be ensured so that targeted objectives can be achieved in conserving and preserving the materials by the institutions.

The role of museums, archives and archaeological institutions in conserving and preserving such materials is so crucial for the generations to come in future. Manipur has always been labelled as a land of culture and is proud of its rich cultural heritage which has been reflected in various such type materials. Different institutions as stated above are maintaining and managing such materials adopting a number of techniques for their preservation and conservation. However, the latest technique of digital preservation and Archiving of such material is found to be missing in this digital era. Taking the advantage of emerging ICT based gadgets, and rich cultural heritage resources available in the forms of manuscripts and the other materials of specific nature should be digitised and same should be made available Worldwide. The suggestion and recommendation made in this concluding part of the study may be taken into consideration so that these invaluable materials can be preserved for the posterity.

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