

Blueprint for “Documentation of “**Wood Sculpture of the Ao Nagas**” under the Scheme Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India, sanctioned under Sanction Letter No: 28-6/ICH-Scheme/54/2013-14/13682, Dated: 31st. March, 2014. /

### **1) Brief introduction of the project**

Wood carving is one of the oldest crafts in the world. If not much, few wood craftsmen are found to cater to the need of the community of the Ao Nagas in the State of Nagaland in India. They preserve the ethnic styles and designs that have been passed on from generations. However, knowledge and culture of the Naga tribes in general and the Ao tribe in particular, is limited in this area. Community doesn't seem to differentiate or care what craftsmanship is nor what wood sculpture is all about. In this situation, wood sculpture exists only in countable numbers in the state today. In Nagaland, carving is seen commonly at many entrance gates. It is a tradition and ritual for a family of good standing to have a wooden carving at the entrance of the house or walls. Most village entrance gates are seen with traditional objects of wooden carvings such as human figures, animals like mithun head, hornbill etc. All these carvings convey messages of traditions passed from generations. While the carving of mithun (bison) represents wealth, animal figures convey physical strength. However, the knowledge and skills of this art is not documented nor any research has been carried out for preservation. Without preservation of traditional knowledge and techniques, the wood sculpture as an art is fast vanishing. Lepden Jamir, an achiever in the field feels government should create infrastructure to train young artisans for imparting the ICH. He occasionally trains, employs and uses the young artisans in his projects. The transmission of traditional knowledge is also a cultural practice. The issue of preserving traditional knowledge and practices is being given more and more attention as modernization, wars and other factors reduce or eliminate the age old skills. The community surviving in possession of ICH are of the view that in spite of the focus on the works for news related purpose and tourism, no initiative worth the name has been taken to pass the ICH on to new generation of people.

## **2) Objectives**

The main objective of documenting the records is to document the works of the people who possess the knowledge and skills important to pass down intangible cultural heritage to new generations. If their knowledge is documented in the formats of demonstrative, educational, instructive manuals, the knowledge and skills of ICH shall be preserved and help the newer generations to learn the art form. The documentation will be an outcome of investigative research and data collection. The proposed areas and place of visit are public places where wood sculpture works stand, village entrance, open theatres and museums etc.

## **3) Implementation of the project**

The research shall adopt investigative method using audio visual format. Research shall target experts considered to possess original knowledge / skills. Initial research revealed a popular practice in the workmanship of Lepden Jamir. The project shall focus deeply in his works, philosophy behind the sculpture and the origins of the practice through interaction with the sculpture. Therefore, this research shall dwell in detail on his works which has gained much recognition in the state.

Audio visual technology shall be the main mode of acquisition of information as the ends is a docu format.

## **4) Time frame of the project**

|                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Shooting Interviews       | May – July 2014         |
| Meetings /Other input(s): | July – September 2014   |
| Editing and roughcuts :   | October - December 2014 |

## **5) Location**

The project is confined to the Ao community inhabited areas of the Mokokchung District of Nagaland State.

Tentative places : Mokokchung Town/ Mopungchuket/ Kisama Heritage village / Lirmen / Molungkimong

#### **6) Photos (preliminary level) related to the project/art form)**

On location still photos shall be shot with the progress of the project, for onward forwarding to the Sangeet Natak Academy.

#### **7) Conclusion**

Wood sculpture as an important ICH in Nagaland, the wood art of the Ao tribe is a popular practiced in the state. Resources obtained from various stage of the research shall form an important resource material for preservation and promotion of the art practice. The visual media form has the scope to be employed as an educational tool, reference material that helps in preservation and continuity of the knowledge of wood sculpture of the Ao Tribe. Thus, this exercise shall help in protecting in ICH of the state.

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## FIRST REPORT OF

“Documentation of **“Wood Sculpture of the Ao Nagas”** under the Scheme Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India, sanctioned under Sanction Letter No: 28-6/ICH-Scheme/54/2013-14/13682, Dated: 31st. March, 2014. /

Knowledge and skills of ICH have been oral in nature and as such intangible. Hence to get the data required as video demonstrations and interviews, many meetings have been sought and taken place for permission and appointment.

With the objective set to document the works of the people possessing the knowledge and skills considered as intangible cultural heritage in the form of wood sculpture, following are outlines of works carried out to that end:

12<sup>th</sup> May 2014 – Lepden Jamir (Mokokchung) Meeting

28<sup>th</sup> May 2014 – Lanu (Dimapur) Meeting

15<sup>th</sup> June 2014 – Lepden (Kohima) Meeting

19<sup>th</sup> June 2014 – Shooting workshop (Dimapur) Lepden

20<sup>th</sup> June 2014 – Interview (Dimapur) Workers/ Sculptors

23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014 - Lanu (Kohima) Interview

12<sup>th</sup> July 2014 – Lepden Jamir (Dimapur) Interview

24<sup>th</sup> July 2014 – Shooting works at Kohima (Lanu)

29<sup>th</sup> July 2014 – Shooting works at Mopungchuket Village, Mokokchung

4<sup>th</sup> August 2014 – Lepden (Kohima) Meeting

14<sup>th</sup> August 2014 – Mulongkimong (Shooting)

23<sup>rd</sup> August 2014 – Lirmen / Akumen Village Mokokchung District

The files attached in the mail are compressed formats of video for presentation of work progress achieved.



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Scheme for “Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India”

Form for National Inventory Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage of India

- A. Name of the State : NAGALAND
- B. Name of the Element/Cultural Tradition (in English) : DOCUMENTATION OF THE WOOD SCULPTURE OF THE AO NAGAS
- B.1. Name of the element in the language and script of the community Concerned, if applicable NOT APPLICABLE
- C. Name of the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned (Identify clearly either of these concerned with the practice of the said element/cultural tradition)
- MR. LEPDEN JAMIR (AO NAGA)
- D. Geographical location and range of the element/cultural tradition (Please write about the other states in which the said element/tradition is present  
AO COMMUNITY LIVING UNDER MOKOKCHUNG, KOHIMA & DIMAPUR DISTRICT IN NAGALAND.
- E. Identification and definition of the element/cultural tradition of the India
- (Write “Yes” in one or more boxes to identify the domain(s) of intangible cultural heritage manifested by the element. If you tick ‘others’, specify the domain(s) in brackets.)
- (  ) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage
  - (  ) performing arts
  - (  ) social practices, rituals and festive events
  - (  ) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
  - (  ) traditional craftsmanship
  - other(s) (  )
- F. Provide a brief summary description of the element that can introduce it to readers who have never seen or experienced it

EACH TRIBE UNDER THE NAGA TRIBE HAS THEIR UNIQUE WOOD SCULPTURE, HOWEVER, THE SCULPTURE WORKS OF AO NAGAS STANDS OUT AMONG SO MANY IN NAGA SOCIETY TODAY. THERE ARE FEW ARTISTS WHOSE WORKS HAPPENS TO GET NOTICED. SOME

EXAMPLES ARE THOSE AT KISAMA HERITAGE (TOURIST ) VILLAGE, OTHER TOURIST RESORTS AND WORKS IN THE MUSEUM AT KOHIMA AS WELL. OTHERS INCLUDE OPEN THEATRE AT MOPUNGCHUKET VILLAGE UNDER MOKOKCHUNG VILLAGE.

- G. Who are the bearers and practitioners of the element/Cultural Traditions? Are there any specific roles or categories of persons with special responsibilities for the practice and transmission of it? If yes, who are they and what are their responsibilities?

TODAY THERE ARE FEW ARTIST WHO HAVE THE SKILL AND KNOWLEDGE TO IMPART THOSE ASPIRING YOUNGSTERS. THERE HAVE BEEN OCCASIONAL PROJECTS MAKING NEWS IN THE STATE AS WELL. THESE SKILLED ARTISTS HIRE AND IMPART KNOWLEDGE AND TRAINING TO ASPIRANTS ON PROJECT BASIS. IN THE PROCESS, THEY ALSO GET EMPLOYMENT WHICH IS DEPENDENT ON WHETHER OR NOT THE ARTIST / SCULPTOR BAGS PROJECTS OR NOT.

- H. How are the knowledge and skills related to the element transmitted today?  
WOOD SCULPTURE WORKS ARE AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN SHOWCASING THE RICH CULTURE AND TRADITIONS . SINCE THERE IS NO LITERARY SCRIPT AND RECORDED HISTORY TILL RECENTLY, THE WOOD SCULPTURE WORKS HAVE BEEN AN ART, A COMMUNICATION MEDIA, AN IMPORTANT CULTURE AND TRADITION IN THE AO NAGA WAY OF LIFE. THEREFORE, WITH MODERN EQUIPMENTS AND MACHINERY PRESENT TODAY THE FINERY OF THE WORK CAN ONLY IMPROVE BUT THE ORIGINAL WORK MUST BE PRESERVED.

- I. What social functions and cultural meanings do the element/cultural tradition have today for its community?

TO THE WAY OF LIFE IN SUCCESS, CELEBRATION, SOCIAL FUNCTIONS AND CEREMONY AND EXHIBITIONS WOOD SCULPTURE IS A VERY IMPORTANT ELEMENT. BESIDES BEING A HERITAGE, IT IS ALSO A SUBJECT OF INTEREST IN MODERN ART STUDY.

- J. Is there any part of the element that is not compatible with existing international human rights instruments or with the requirement of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, or with sustainable development? I.e. describe any aspect of the element/cultural tradition that may be unacceptable to Law of the country or may be in opposition to practicing community's harmony with others.

NON

- K. Your Project's contribution to ensuring visibility, awareness and encouraging dialogue related to the element/cultural tradition  
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WOOD SCULPTURE OF THE AO NAGAS HAVE BEEN SEEN BUT HARDLY NOTICED. THE PROJECT IS EXPECTED AS AN

IMPORTANT RESOURCE FOR AWARENESS AND VISIBILITY AMONG THE COMMUNITY PEOPLE.

- L. Information about the safeguarding measures that may protect or promote the element/cultural tradition
- a. (Write "Yes" in one or more boxes to identify the safeguarding measures that have been and are currently being taken by the communities, groups or individuals concerned)
- i. (✓ ) transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education
  - ii. (✓ ) identification, documentation, research
  - iii. (✓ ) preservation, protection
  - iv. (✓ ) promotion, enhancement
  - v. (✓ ) revitalization
- b. Write about the measures taken at local, state and national level by the Authorities to safeguard the element/cultural tradition?

THE PEOPLE POSSESSING SPECIAL TALENTS WERE HIRED FOR SOME PROJECTS BY STATE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS IN EXHIBITIONS AND FUNCTIONS ONCE IN A WHILE. OTHER THAN THAT, THEY LACK FUND TO MAKE CREATIVE WORKS ON THEIR OWN DUE TO LACK OF FUNDING, AS THEIR LIVELIHOOD COMES FROM OTHER SOURCES.

THERE IS NO ACTIVITY KNOWN TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE AT NATIONAL LEVEL.

- M. Write about the threats, if any, to the element/cultural tradition related to its practice, visibility and future longevity. Give facts and relevant reasons based on the current scenario.
- IN ORDER TO PRESERVE WORKS MADE, AND KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL TO BE PRESERVED AND PUT TO USE, THE NEED FOR A RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION CENTRE/ SCHOOL OR INSTITUTION HAS BEEN FELT AS CONVEYED BY THE SCULPTOR. HOWEVER, IT INVOLVES CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES SUCH LAND, BUILDING AND MONEY WHICH HAS BEEN DIFFICULT TO GET AND LACK OF FUND FROM THE SIDE OF STATE GOVERNMENT TOO.
- N. Safeguarding measures proposed
- (This section should identify and describe safeguarding measures to protect and promote the element/cultural tradition. Such measures should be concrete and can be implemented to formulate future cultural policy for safeguarding and promoting the element/cultural tradition in the state)



1. FUNDING TOWARDS ESTABLISHMENT OF SCULPTURE ART CENTRE.
2. FUNDING FOR RESEARCH, DOCUMENTATION, TEACHING AND TRAINING

O. Community Participation

(Write about the participation of communities, groups and individuals related to the element/cultural tradition in formulation of your project)

PARTICIPATION FROM INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE FEW POSSESSING SKILL AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE SOCIETY HAVE BEEN POSITIVE.

P. Concerned community organization(s) or representative(s)

(Provide detailed contact information for each community organization or representative or other non-governmental organization that is concerned with the element such as associations, organizations, clubs, guilds, steering committees, etc.)

- i. Name of the entity ARTIST & SCULPTOR LEPDEN JAMIR
- ii. Name and title of the contact person ARTIST & SCULPTOR LEPDEN JAMIR
- iii. Address LOWER AGRO COLONY, KOHIMA, NAGALAND
- iv. Telephone number 9856681365
- v. E-mail N/A
- vi. Other relevant information N/A

Q. Give information of any Inventory, database or data creation centre

(local/state/national) that you may be aware of or of any office, agency, organisation or body involved in the maintenance of the said inventory etc. NON

R. Principal published references or documentation available on the element/cultural tradition

(Books, articles, audio-visual materials, names and addresses of reference libraries, museums, private endeavours of artistes/individuals for preservation of the said element, publications or websites) NON

Signature:



Name & Designation: IMNASENLA (BENEFICIARY)

Address: ODDLES BELOW SCERT  
HIGH SCHOOL COLONY KOHIMA