



Ao Indigenous Architecture Nagaland



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Fig. Digital Model of Arju

THE AO NAGAS AND THEIR ARCHITECTURE

The Ao Nagas, an eminent ethnic group among the Naga peoples, inhabit the scenic Mokokchung District of Nagaland, a region defined by its mountainous terrain and rich cultural heritage. The Ao Nagas' territory is nestled between the Tsula (Dikhu) and Tsurang (Disai) valleys, characterized by undulating hills, vibrant rivers, and secluded valleys. The Ao Nagas, known in their vernacular as Aoer ("those who crossed over" from the Dikhu River), are divided into six sub-tribes: Imchen, Longkumer, Longcher, Jamir, Walling, and Pongeno, each contributing to the region's cultural richness.

ARJU: THE AO BACHELORS' DORMITORY:

The Arju, central to every Khel (sub-division) of an Ao Naga village, is a crucial institution for socialization and defense. Boys aged 12 to 14 are initiated into the Arju, where they learn communal responsibilities and martial skills. The Arju fosters a hierarchical learning system with six age groups, emphasizing discipline, bravery, and mutual responsibility. Tasks range from collecting firewood to demonstrating courage through night jungle navigation. Upon marriage, members transition from active residency to mentorship roles.



Fig. Arju, building ornamentation and symbolism.

Key structures are adorned with intricate sculptures of animals and bird's native to the region. According to belief, these engravings represent their qualities, not their supernatural abilities. It is thought that carvings of creatures such as the tiger, mithan, elephant, hornbill, and python in the morning will make its members courageous and affluent while instilling fear and panic in their opponents. Tiger, elephant, and human head carvings communicated men's strength and ferocity in battle, while mithan, python, and hornbill carvings conveyed riches and beauty.

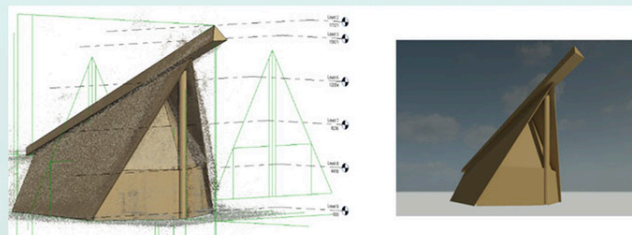


Fig. H-BIM model created with point cloud data

CONTEXT AND IMPORTANCE

The Arju House, a traditional structure of the Ao Naga in Nagaland, is a remarkable example of tribal architecture that incorporates unique art styles and geometric proportions. This structure serves as a residence and a cultural symbol, embodying the tribe's traditions, values, and aesthetic preferences.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Geometric Design and Proportions: The study revealed that the Arju House is built according to specific geometric proportions, which are believed to bring balance and harmony to the structure. These proportions resonate with the 'golden ratio', a common aesthetic standard in many ancient and modern designs, suggesting a sophisticated understanding of geometric principles.

Artistic Elements and Motifs: The house features intricate wood carvings and motifs that reflect the natural environment and cultural symbols of the Ao tribe. These elements are not merely decorative; they serve as narratives that tell stories of the Ao's history, beliefs, and aspirations.



Fig. Front Elevation



Project: Creating Digital Heritage of Representative Architectural Marvels from Each State of North East India - DST / Govt of India

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