

**CATALOGUE
ON
ETHNIC JEWELLERY**

OF
ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM
ASSAM INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH FOR
TRIBALS AND SCHEDULED CASTES
GUWAHATI, ASSAM

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**CATALOGUE ON ETHNIC JEWELLERY : ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM OF AIRTSC
- A PICTORIAL CATALOGUE CONTAINING PICTURES OF JEWELLERY
USED BY THE TRIBES OF ASSAM**

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MESSAGE

I am indeed extremely pleased to learn that the AIRTSC has taken the initiative to document and catalogue the ethnic jewellery displayed in the AIRTSC museum. The documentation, which is presented as a coffee table book, is bound to generate widespread interest both within and outside Assam. Viewers will appreciate the exquisite artistry and workmanship of the ornaments based on original and creative designs that reflect the culture and heritage of the various tribes and communities residing in Assam. I expect that the catalogue will be a valuable handbook for not only ethnic jewellery makers but also students and researchers, not to speak of the public at large. The institute deserves to be highly commended for this much needed initiative. Although this exercise has covered considerable ground, it has been confined to the jewellery collection in the museum, and I hope that the designs of ethnic ornaments that have missed finding a place in this volume will be documented and included in the next volume.

I wish the AIRTSC great success in all its future endeavours.


(Rajiv Kr. Bora)

Preface

The cultural artefacts of Ethnographic museum of AIRTSC reflect the rich cultural heritages of the tribes of Assam. It also reflects the colourful cultures, emotions and spirit of various tribal communities of Assam. Viewing the AIRTSCs Ethnographic museum, one is fascinated with various bamboo, cane and wooden artefacts, diorama depicting the village life of the Bodo, Dimasa, Karbi, Tiwa and Mising tribes, as well as very rare ornaments made of beads, conch, brass, silver and gold.

The artistic design of the ornaments expresses the aesthetic sense of the tribes of Assam.

The cultural objects of the Ethnographic museum were collected and preserved since 1977. Few leaflets depicting the cultural objects of various tribes were published earlier.

It is worth mentioning here that most of the cultural objects are no longer used by the tribes of Assam due to the influence of modernisation and cultural assimilation with the neighbouring communities.

Museum Catalogue - depicting the ornaments of various tribes - is the outcome of meticulous preparation and research on the part of the Curator. It is designed to help readers learn about tribal ornaments used by the various tribes of Assam.

The book is meant to reach out to scholars, educators and students, as well as general readers. Information provided in this book will be of immense help to the researchers because it is based on the authentic photos and related information on the objects.

We offer our special thanks to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India and Welfare of Plain Tribes and Backward Classes Department of Government of Assam for releasing funds for printing of this book.

The Institute is thankful to Dr. Nazmeen A.H. Anam, Curator of the AIRTSC Museum who has taken all the trouble of preparing the manuscript of AIRT&SC Museum (Jewellery) Catalogue.

Ganesh Ch. Kakati
Joint Director AIRT & SC

PROLOGUE

The Jewellery Section of the Ethnographic Museum of Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes is an exquisite section. This section houses exquisite collection of ethnic jewellery of various tribes of Assam. They are showcased in a gallery which have recently been renovated and upgraded..

Jewellery are integral part of human culture. Every social group have their own unique patterns of ornaments which they use to fulfil their sense of beauty and also religio-magical requirements. Apart from their physical values acquired through the inputs used, all these also have aesthetic values and each tribe take pride in possessing such assets. Many of the tribes also identify themselves through the use of some of their uniquely designed jewellery. The ornaments used by tribes are of various shapes and sizes having various uses. Some are in the form of rings, necklace, bracelets, anklets, armllets, toe-rings etc., while there are also cute leg-ring, elbow ring, head gear, nose ring etc. The most notable fact of these jewellery is that these are all indigenously designed and crafted with hard labour and devotion. These are all handmade and are gradually losing ground to the machine made finer ornaments.

The present volume is the first handbook of its kind, taken up by the Institute for publication. The basic objective behind this publication was to present the museum before the people who live beyond the State and side by side, the documentation of the items. All attempts have been made to corroborate facts and information relating to the design of the ornaments. In that sense this is an exclusive handbook of this museum.

Dr. Nazmeen Anam
Curator
(AIRT & SC) Guwahati

ETHNIC JEWELLERY

PLATES



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0351/ORN/
HAJ/2016

Local Name : **Sukyasara**

Eng. equivalent : Neck Piece

Tribe : Hajong

Weight : 65 gms

Length : 34 cm.

Locality : Goalpara

◆ Necklace of coins. The coins have designed silver loops at one edge for attaching with the black strand. Used by Hajong women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0343/ORN/
GAR/2016
Local Name : **Lek-Hiki**
Eng equivalent : Necklace
Tribe : Karbi
Weight : 87 gms
Length : 66 cm.
Locality : Karbi Anglong
A coin necklace, threaded with
red, black and transparent
glass beads. Used by Karbi
women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0366/ORN/
TIWA/2016

Local Name : **Shaplo**
Eng. equivalent : Necklace
Tribe : Tiwa
Weight : 120 gms
Length : 60 cm.
Locality : Morigaon

◆ A gorgeously crafted silver necklace-
ornamentally aligned in four rows with
motif work in thin silver wires. Small
motifs of even sizes are attached to
four silver strips while ends are
attached to a triangular shaped plate.
Used by Tiwa women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0336/ORN/KAR/2016
Local Name : **Lek Penkhara**
Eng. equivalent : Necklace
Tribe : Karbi
Weight : 115 gms.
Length : 54 cm.
Locality : Karbi Anglong

◆ A Colourful necklace crafted with bead of various colours and sizes including big silver beads. Used by Karbi women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0365/
ORN/TIWA/2016
Local Name : **Sikilo**
Eng. equivalent : Necklace
Tribe : Tiwa
Weight : 70 gms
Length : 32 cm.
Locality : Morigaon

◆ Combining looped coins with tubular red beads for a neckpiece with both ends of the base strands tied to a bigger red bead. Used by Tiwa Women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0388/ORN/DIMA/2016

Local Name : **Jongsam**

Eng. equivalent : Necklace

Tribe : Dimasa

Weight : 65 gms

Length : 36 cm.

Locality : Dima Hasao

◆ Several layers of black seed beads embellished with flattish pink beads and chiselled metallic beads. The necklace has a metallic spindle shaped pendant at the centre. Used by Dimasa women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0421/ORN/
HMAR/2016

Local Name : **Thlina**

Eng. equivalent : Neck Piece

Tribe : Hmar

Weight : 200 gms

Length : 90 cm.

Locality : Dima Hasao

◆ Amber beads of various shapes symmetrically woven in one thread. Note the diametrically opposite location and shape of three beads in the necklace. Used by Hmar women.



Acc No. AIRTSC/0427/ORN/
TAMA/2016

Local Name : **Bombola Prenga**

Eng. equivalent : Neck Piece

Tribe : Tamang

Weight : 180 gms

Length : 110 cm.

Locality : Sibsagar

◆ A necklace made of Rudraksh & common beads-6 red and two black with two neatly attached pieces of hornbill beads. Used by Tamang men.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0425/ORN/
TAMA/2016

Local Name : **Biru**

Eng. equivalent : Necklace

Tribe : Tamang

Weight : 100 gms

Length : 56 cm.

Locality : Sibasagar

◆ A necklace for males designed in red beads alternated with fine small metallic discs and beads. Used by Tamang People.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0344/ORN/
KAR/2016
Local Name : **Lek-Waikong**
Eng. equivalent : Neckpiece
Tribe : Karbi
Weight : 60 gms.
Length : 45 cm.
Locality : Karbi Anglong
◆ An elaborate necklace
comprising of four stands of red,
black, yellow and white colour
seed beads, threaded with
medium size red beads at an
interval of 1½ inch. Used by
Karbi women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0323/ORN/
SING/2016
Local Name : **Deo-Moni**
Eng. equivalent : Neck Piece
Tribe : Singpho
Weight : 60 gms.
Length : 64 cm.
Locality : Margherita
◆ Traditional sacred necklace
used by the Singphos of Assam.
The necklace comprises of small
disc beads of mustard yellow
colour accompanied by small
metallic beads at uniform
intervals. A spindle shaped
boar tooth pendant
accomplishes the necklace.
Used by Singpho women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0409/ORN/
RAB/2016

Local Name : **Hancha**

Eng. equivalent : Necklace

Tribe : Rabha

Weight : 245 gms.

Length : 14 cm.

Locality : Goalpara

◆A decorated metallic necklace gradually elongated towards both ends. Engraved designs include criss-cross at the centre and beautifully geometric designs towards lateral parts. Used by Rabha women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/3885/ORN/DIMA/2016

Local Name : **Chandrawal**

Eng. equivalent : Necklace

Tribe : Dimasa Kachari

Weight : 120 gms

Length : 60 cm.

Locality : Dima Hasao

◆This exotic ornament consists of four chains of silver florets. All the chains are held together on each side by a triangular smooth silver plate, which is fastened together by a hook. Used by Dimasa women in festivals.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0422/ORN/

HMAR/2016

Local Name : **Thrival**

Eng. equivalent : Necklace

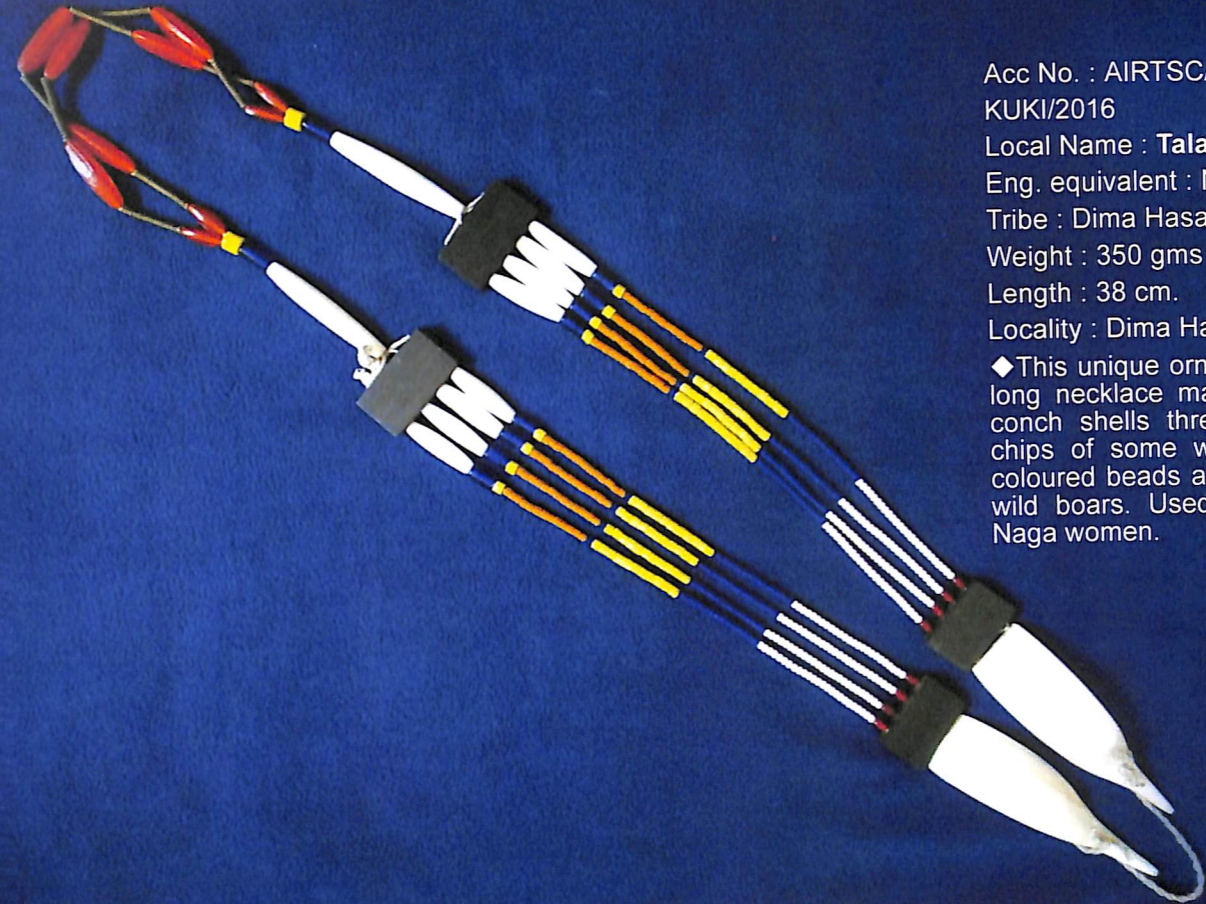
Tribe : Hmar

Weight : 205 gms

Length : 82 cm.

Locality : Karbi Anglong

◆ This ornament consist of carnelian beads of different sizes. The bigger ones are arranged in the central portion. Used by Hmar women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0505/ORN

KUKI/2016

Local Name : **Talatau**

Eng. equivalent : Necklace

Tribe : Dima Hasao

Weight : 350 gms

Length : 38 cm.

Locality : Dima Hasao

◆ This unique ornament is a long necklace made of two conch shells threaded with chips of some wood, multi coloured beads and tooth of wild boars. Used by Jeme Naga women.



(Acc No. : AIRTSC/0037/
ORN/GAR/2016)
Local Name : **Khakam**
Eng equivalent : Neckpiece
Tribe : Garo
Weight : 75 gms
Diameter : 7 cm.
Locality : Garo Hills
A circular piece of stiff
flat metal rod, adorned
with white cowries and
red wooden fringes at
the central region of the
neck piece. Used by Garo
women.



(Acc No. : AIRTSC/
0386/ORN/DIMA/2016)
Local Name : **Rangbarsa**
Eng. equivalent : Neckpiece
Tribe : Dimasa
Weight : 185 gms
Length : 75 cm.
Locality : Dima Hasao
◆ A Necklace of coins-attached
to a specially woven string
through designed silver loops.
Used by Dimasa women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0387/ORN/
DIMA/2016
Local Name : **Phoal**
Eng. equivalent : Necklace
Tribe : Dimasa
Weight : 280 gms
Length : 52 cm.
Locality : Dima Hasao
◆ A necklace of corals of
pinkish red colour - and metallic
beads-both threaded together.
Used by Dimasa women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0503/ORN/
JEME/2017
Local Name : **Tala Kang**
Eng. equivalent : Neck Piece
Tribe : Jeme Naga
Weight : 65 gms
Length : 22 cm.
Locality : Dima Hasao
◆ A necklace with
symmetrically arranged
spindle shaped carnelian
beads. Used by Jeme
Naga women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0381/ORN/
KUKI/2016

Local Name : **Palnem**

Eng. equivalent : Neck Piece

Tribe : Kuki

Weight : 168 gms.

Length : 72 cm.

Locality : Dima Hasao

◆A blue bead necklace with two small and one big carnelian beads. Used by Kuki women.



Acc No. AIRTSC/
0331/ORN/GAR/2016

Local Name : **Rigitog**

Eng. equivalent : Neck piece

Tribe : Garo

Weight : 40 Gms.

Locality : Goalpara

◆This exquisite piece is made of thin tubular glass beads of green colour, with small golden beads in between. There are 8 strands of such beads, which are attached to a metallic holder and the later is attached to a round metallic fastener.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0360/ORN/
MIS/2016

Local Name : **Dogne**

Eng. equivalent : Neck Piece

Tribe : Mising

Weight : 73 gms

Length : 28 cm.

Locality : Lakhimpur

◆A common coral necklace.

Used by Mising Men.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0383/
TIWA/2016

Local Name : **Lo**

Eng. equivalent : Necklace

Tribe : Tiwa

Weight : 125 gms.

Length : 66 cm.

Locality : Morigaon

◆Tiwa women wear this deep red colour bead necklace in common places.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0324/ORN/
SING/2016

Local Name : **Gumphro**
Eng. equivalent : Necklace
Tribe : Singpho
Weight : 87 gms.
Length : 92 cm.

Locality : Margherita
◆ Attractive double chain necklace with a decorated British coin as a pendant, is used by Singpho ladies. The necklace is embellished with thin fin-like flaps all over it.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/
0397/ORN/MIS/2016

Local Name : **Tadok**
Eng. equivalent : Neck piece
Tribe : Mising
Weight : 140 gms
Length : 40 cm.
Locality : Lakhimpur

◆ Mising people use this necklace, which comprises of 12 big silver coloured beads and 11 pink flat beads.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0353/ORN/
GARO/2016

Local Name : **Khonar**

Eng. equivalent : Neck Piece

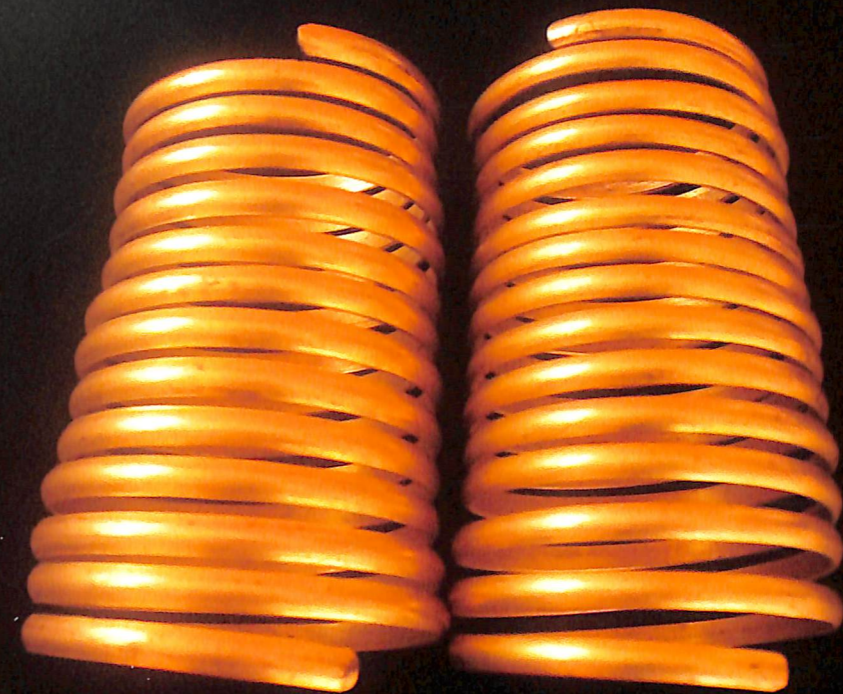
Tribe : Garo

Weight : 65 gms

Length : 16 cm.

Locality : Garo Hills

◆ A unique necklace worn close to the neck like a choker. The big silver floral pendant is attached to the semi lunar rings. Used by Garo women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0502/
ORN/THADOU/2017

Local Name : **Chao/Chaurri**

Eng. equivalent : Armlet

Tribe : Kuki

Weight : 320 gms

Length : 8 cm.

Locality : Dima Hasao

◆ Spirally coiled brass armlet, devoid of any designs. There are altogether 12 spirals. Used by Thadou Kuki females.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0498/ORN/2017
Local Name : **Nkita**
Eng. equivalent : Elbow Ring
Tribe : Jeme Naga
Weight : 340 gms
Length : 9 cm.
Locality : Dima Hasao

◆ An elbow ring made of brass, whose terminal ends are shaped as inverted lids with fine dotted designs. Used by Jeme Naga men.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0356/ORN/
HAJ/2016

Local Name : **Kata Baju**
Eng. equivalent : Armlet
Tribe : Hajong
Weight : 65 gms
Length : 16 cm.
Locality : Goalpara

◆ A unique silver armlet consisting of thirteen designed motifs which are fastened together to a triangular motif. On both the ends of the tying strings, two silver domes are attached. Used by Hajong women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0501/ORN/
JEME/2017

Local Name : **Bui-Bak-Pui**

Eng. equivalent : Wristlet

Tribe : Jeme Naga

Weight : 70 gms

Length : 44 cm.

Locality : Dima Hasao

◆ An open-end unique wristlet with minimum geometrical designs. Used by Jeme Naga women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0500/
ORN/JEME/2017

Local Name : **Bui-Bakta**

Eng. equivalent : Bangle

Tribe : Jeme Naga

Weight : 20 gms

Length : 6 cm.

Locality : Dima Hasao

◆ Brass bracelets with geometrical designs. Used by Jeme Naga women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0502/ORN/
THADOU/2017

Local Name : **Hah**

Eng equivalent : Armlet

Tribe : Kuki

Weight : 103 gms

Length : 10 cm.

Locality : Dima Hasao

◆ Heavy lead armlet without any designs on the entire body. Used by Thadou Kuki women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0401/ORN/
BODO/2016

Local Name : **Ashan Chankhas**

Eng. equivalent : Wristlet

Tribe : Bodo

Weight : 425 gms

Length : 6 cm.

Locality : Udalguri

◆ It is a pair of open-end broad wrist band used by Bodo Kachari women. The entire body of the ornament has ridge like elevation. On both the edge, there are feebly designed spirals. Similar designed wrist bands are used by other tribes also.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0499/ORN/JEME/2017
Local Name : **Npak-Pai**
Eng. Equivalent : Armlet
Tribes : Jeme Naga
Weight : 320 gms
Diameter : 8 cm.
Locality : Dima Hasao

◆ Armlet made of metallic spirals, devoid of any designs. The terminal ends are shaped as inverted funnels with lids. Fine dotted designs are present at the terminals. Used by Jeme Naga women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0380/ORN/REN/2016
Local Name : **Benpen**
Eng. equivalent : Armlet
Tribe : Rengma
Weight : 280 gms
Length : 52 cm.
Locality : Karbi Anglong

◆ An oval shaped unique ivory armlet. Used by Rengma Naga women. It is brown in colour.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0373/ORN/
TIWA/2016

Local Name : **Kharu**

Eng. equivalent : Wristlet

Tribe : Tiwa

Weight : 190 gms

Length : 17 cm.

Locality : Morigaon

◆A heavy open end bracelet
with minimal incision at both
the ends. Used by Tiwa women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0350/
ORN/HAJ/2016

Local Name : **Bagha**

Eng. equivalent : Anklet

Tribe : Hajong

Weight : 70 gms

Length : 5 cm.

Locality : Goalpara

◆It is a stiff hollow silver
anklet, whose open ends
are designed like snake
heads. Used by the Hajong
tribe.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0352/ORN/
HAJ/2016

Local Name : Gunjari

Eng. equivalent : Bracelet

Tribe : Hajong

Weight : 70 gms

Length : 9 cm.

Locality : Goalpara

◆ Stiff anklet with two rows of spines; there are short loops on one side to attach tinkles for producing chiming sound. Used by Hajong people.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0350/ORN/
TAM/2016

Local Name : **Yakhil**

Eng. equivalent : Anklet

Tribe : Tamang

Weight : 70 gms

Length : 5 cm.

Locality : Kaliabari Nagaon

◆ A stiff hollow silver anklet, whose open ends are designed like snake heads. Used by the Tamang tribe.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/03641/ORN/
TIWA/2016

Local Name : **Kata Baju 1**

Eng. equivalent : Armlet

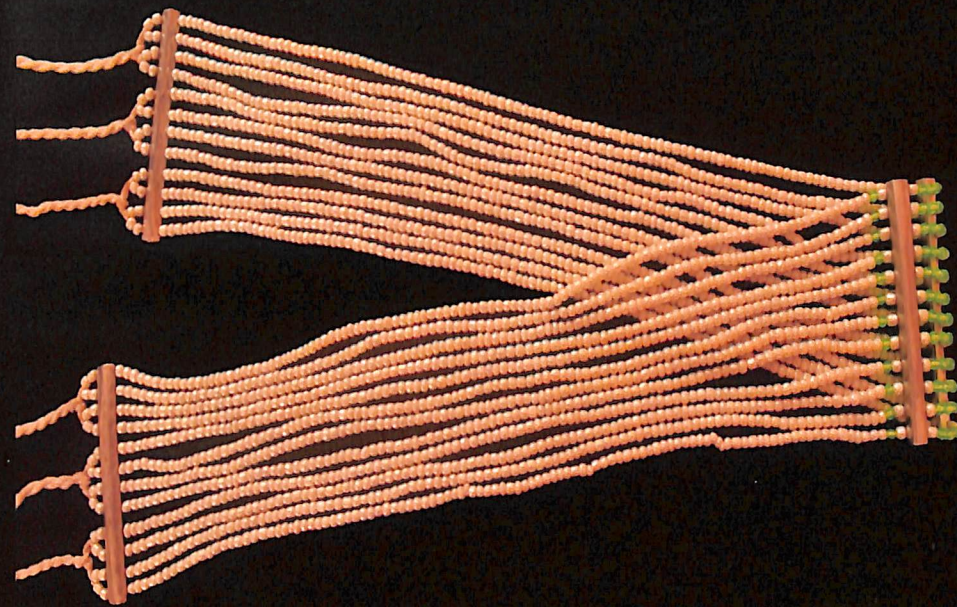
Tribe : Tiwa

Weight : 83 gms

Diameter : 6 cm.

Locality : Morigaon

◆ It is a silver double spiral armlet with a floral motif at the centre. Used by Tiwa women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0330/ORN/
GAR/2016

Local Name : **Senki**

Eng. equivalent : Belt

Tribes : Garo

Weight : 200 gms.

Length : 69 cm.

Locality : Goalpara

◆ An ornamental belt, comprising of 12 strands of white small beads, which are attached to two fine silver clips at the centre. The strands are held at two ends by two silver clips. The central part of the belt is embellished with green beads. Used by Garo women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0332/ORN/
GARO/2016
Local Name : **Sukya Sora**
Eng. equivalent : Belt
Tribe : Garo
Weight : 53 gms
Length : 60 cm.
Locality : Garo Hills
◆Coins threaded to black
cotton strands. Used by
Garo women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0320/
ORN/SIN/2016
Local Name : **Sairu**
Eng. equivalent : Ear Peg
Tribe : Singpho
Weight : 35 gms
Length : 4 cm.
Locality : Margherita
◆An amber ear peg, used by the
Singpho elderly ladies. They
believe ambers have medicinal
properties.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0203/ORN/
SONO/2016

Local Name : **Thuria**

Eng. equivalent : Ear Peg

Tribe : Sonowal Kachari

Weight : 32 gms

Length : 4 cm.

Locality : Lakhimpur

◆ An amber ear stud bordered with thin gold plates at the bottom. The upper surface is embellished with floral design in local ruby (dalimi bakhor) and gold plate. Used by old ladies as ear plug among the Assamese, Sonowal Kachari and Singpho communities.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0335/ORN/2016

Local Name : **Kenchong-Sil**

Eng. equivalent : Head Gear

Tribe : Garo

Weight : 550 gms

Length : 8.5 cm.

Locality : Garo Hills

◆ A decorative metallic hairpin, where hornbill feathers are attached in the loops on reverse side. Used by Garo women.



Acc No. : AIRTSC/0505/
THADOU K/2017
Local Name : **Skunchei**
Eng. equivalent : Head Gear
Tribe : Thadous Kuki
Weight : 1.2 gms
Length : 7 cm.
Locality : Dima Hasao
◆ A hair adornment piece
with colourful yarns,
bamboo and seed beads.
Used by Thadou Kuki
damsels.