Summary Comment

The present study has been an attempt to contribute in the understanding of the archaeology of the West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh through a combined approach of archaeological, ethnographical, ethnoarchaeological investigations and also anthropological documentation.

The West Siang district is mainly populated by the Adi-Galo tribe. The earlier investigations in this region have not yielded much substantial data on archaeological remains. As mentioned earlier in the whole state there is only one prehistoric site, Parsi Parlo in Kurung Kumey district which was excavated by A.A. Ashraf way back in 1990. The excavation was limited in nature. Hence, understanding of the archaeological remains and antiquity of the region cannot be explained from this meagre data. Further, according to surveys undertaken up till now and as presented in the present study, archaeological remains in Arunachal Pradesh are not as copious as in most of the other parts of the country. The archaeological remains of the region are very scanty and fragmentary.

Arunachal Pradesh is a mountainous region with undulating hilly terrain, rugged topography and is covered with dense forest. The climatic conditions, dense vegetation, high
precipitation and seismic activities do not only make access difficult but also hamper and destroy any possible archaeological records. Heavy rainfall and the acidic nature of the soil prove detrimental to the preservation to archaeological remains cultural material in their proper context. Due to heavy rainfall throughout the year the green coverage completely covers the visibility of the archaeological remains. These phenomena change the landscape and destroy or displace any possible archaeological remains. According to Y.A Raiker, these factors have made Arunachal archaeology a jungle archaeology. Hence, only during accidental instances like ploughing, landslides or during construction works the artefacts occasionally appear. Thus the archaeological record of the North-East region poorly reflects the actual material culture of the people who lived.

For a region like Arunachal Pradesh, looking for artefacts or sites cannot be much of a fruitful endeavour than studying the contemporary society and the folklore.

Despite all the above mentioned obstacles, fieldwork was conducted in the region and the results have brought out certain interesting facts with bearings on the archaeology of the region.

Villages like Bam, Gori, Nigam, Nyodu, Bagra, Doji, Logum Jini of West Siang district of central Arunachal were explored to unveil the archaeological potential of the region. However, no major archaeological sites, artefacts or assemblages were encountered but subsequent explorations and chance findings have revealed sporadic findings of artefacts, basically celts. The evidence of 15 stone tools found from the Doje and Logum Jini villages certainly tells that there is a scope of unravelling of the cultural material from different parts of the research area.
To add up to the archaeological understanding of the region, the Adi-Galo tribe was studied with an ethnoarchaeological approach. This dissertation is a comprehensive work on the Adi-Galos. The detailed study of the Adi-Galo settlement patterns, subsistence strategies, religious practices and social organization provide invaluable insights for understanding the past human adaptations in this region. It helps in understanding of adaptation strategies to a particular environment and ecology as well as aspects of site formation and preservation processes in archaeological record. The data generated from the study augmented our knowledge of use and variation in material culture.

The ethnological study of the present work has clearly depicted important factors which may help archaeologists to take into account while undertaking research of prehistoric societies, especially in areas as the North-East India where ecological condition plays a major role in site formation process.

Further, this work is also an attempt to further the knowledge of human behaviour as indicated by material behaviour.

As described in the chapters above, the material culture of the Adi-Galo, the tribe under study, consists mainly of organic materials such as bamboo, wood, cane and other biodegradable substances like leaves and gourds which are highly perishable but can be acquired at low energy cost but there is no trace of survival of such remains even after one season or a year.

For the construction of dwelling house, granary and deerv (community hall), the Adi-Galo mainly use perishable materials like bamboos, bamboo reeds, woods, leaves which leaves
hardly any trace in archaeological records to understand the settlement pattern of the Adi-Galos. The walls and the floors of the houses are not plastered. The roof is made of thick layer of leaves. The houses are made on stilts. The pillars of the houses are usually not pushed into the ground but fixed on flat block of stones to avoid being infected by the insects especially white ants. This kind of house survives for 15-20 years. When the house is deemed not fit to live anymore, the house is demolished. The wood and the bamboo of the old house is used as fuel and the rest of the remains being biodegradable do not survive. As the pillars rest on stones, rarely one can find post holes in such kind of settlements. Only the stone slabs if they are not reused or have been subjected to displacement due to human activity or due to landslide then it can be observable. The site of their dwelling house may move from one place to another place within the region. Hence, the settlement is not for a long duration where substantial non-perishable cultural material could accumulate. As a result of such practices, the material culture does not get reflected in the archaeological record.

The main subsistence mode of the Adi-Galo tribe is agriculture, basically shifting cultivation. The equipment needed are simple and made out of perishable material. To cut down big trees, iron implements like axe and dao are used. The processing of the grains are basically done by hand. The grains are stored in baskets made of bamboo and cane.

Food processing of the Adi-Galo tribe is very simple. Either they are roasted, smoked, steamed or boiled. Bamboo tubes are used for steaming rice, vegetables, meat and fish. Food is generally eaten over leaf. Bamboo tubes are also used for carrying water. Matured gourds are used as containers for drinking purposes.
This kind of information and documentation of ethnographic findings from this region is a good example of understanding human cultural remains and its absence in such an environmental condition and economic practices. The investigation carried out gives a close picture of the potential archaeological remains in such kind of situation.

Archaeologists often draw conclusions based on the survived material remains such as stone tools, iron implements, pottery and others and attributes a certain culture or cultural chronology to a particular group under study, for example the aceramic culture, or ceramic culture or iron culture and others. Nevertheless, this present study raises the question on such definition and attribution to any prehistoric or protohistoric society. For a society like the Adi-Galo, who are acquainted with pottery, iron and other more sustainable and advanced materials, yet, choose to use the perishable organic materials; it would be highly bias to judge their culture if we solely look at archaeological records, as there is hardly any remains in such context. For instance it would be wrong to reach to a conclusion about the Adi-Galo ways of consuming food as being raw meat eaters, or eating only roasted animals because no ceramic or metal vessel could be found in archaeological records, as they do cook in bamboo tubes but unfortunately bamboo tubes do not get preserve and once used its disposed of and after some time leaves no remains at all.

Drawing on the ethnographic data, archaeologists can formulate hypothesis to understand the archaeological records. It can provide us with major clues on the formation process of the archaeological record. The Adi-Galo ethnoarchaeology not only allows us to understand site formation processes of the region but also allows us to devise a model for humid subtropical subsistence and settlement strategies and shows how these strategies fit with
environmental fluctuations. It also enables us to gain some insight into how non material culture is reflected in material object.

1998, Dr. Dilip Chakraborty in his book “The Issues in Eastern Indian Archaeology” pointed out that the non-publication of excavation reports has long been a bane of East Indian archaeology and the same applies for the state of Arunachal Pradesh too.

Apart from that no work is done on palynological, archaeobotanical and archaeozoological information about North East India. Even the most rudimentary information about the archaeology of Arunachal Pradesh is lacking. This may be partly due to the environmental reasons as noted by many authors who worked in this region.

Therefore, more scientific multidisciplinary studies have to be undertaken to get a comprehensive understanding of the past cultures of the region and the area needs to be further explored.