

INDIGENOUS VOICES AND THE ARCHIVE: RECIRCULATING J. H. HUTTON'S CYLINDER RECORDINGS IN NAGALAND

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Abstract

Between 1914 and 1919, the British administrator and anthropologist John Henry Hutton (1885-1968) made fourteen cylinder recordings documenting the songs of Naga communities in the Naga Hills District, today part of the state of Nagaland in India. Little is known about the recording circumstances, as the documentation is limited to brief recording notes he sent with the cylinders to the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, which holds the collection. Hutton's publications, on the other hand, include transcriptions and translations of some of the recorded songs, but the poor sound quality makes it difficult to assign these to the published songs with certainty. This paper summarises the outcomes of a research project funded by the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives between January and March 2022, which aimed to reconnect Naga communities with Hutton's recordings to elucidate the content and performance context of the recordings, and to provide digital copies of the collection with enhanced documentation to the Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology (Gurgaon) and the Highland Institute (Kohima). Fieldwork participants appreciated the opportunity to hear Hutton's recordings, which they considered important historical documentation of Naga traditional music. Yet, most listeners struggled to identify the recorded songs, although a few were able to name and even perform some of them. The project concluded with an exhibition at the Highland Institute that featured Hutton's recordings and more recent examples of Naga traditional music. Overall, few listeners were aware of the existence of Hutton's recordings when we conducted our fieldwork in February 2022, although the recordings have been available online on the website of the Pitt Rivers Museum since 2013. Thus, I argue that initiatives of making historical sound recordings accessible online need to be supported by actions on the ground in countries of origin, to facilitate community engagement with audio collections uploaded to the web.

KEYWORDS: Naga performing arts, historical sound recordings, online accessibility, community engagement

Introduction

Northeast India is a region of immense ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity (Baruah, 2007, pp. 21 ff.). In Nagaland, one of the eight states of the region, the state government currently recognises seventeen major ethnic communities: the Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chang, Dimasa Kachari, Khiamniungan, Konyak, Kuki, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sangtam, Sumi, Tikhir, Yimkiung, and Zeliang.¹ There are further Naga communities in the Indian states of Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and in neighbouring Myanmar. Each Naga community speaks its own language, with different regional dialects that can vary considerably even between neighbouring villages. Moreover, there are many subcommunities, some of which have successfully claimed the status of being separate communities.² Culturally distinct from the peoples inhabiting the plains of India and Myanmar, the Nagas lived for centuries unaffected by external political interventions in the hills of northeastern South Asia, maintaining trade relations with the Ahom kingdom

1 All of these are Naga communities, except Dimasa Kachari and Kuki (<https://nagaland.gov.in/pages/nagaland-profile>, accessed 9 May 2022).

2 An example is the recent recognition of the Tikhir as a major "tribe", which went along with the creation of the district Shamator in January 2022, resulting in greater political influence for the community (<https://morungexpress.com/nagaland-cabinet-approves-creation-of-shamator-district-1>, accessed 9 May 2022).

in Assam and possibly beyond (Kanungo, 2002). Like the nomenclatures given to many other South Asian minorities, the term “Naga” is an exonym whose origin is unclear. Possibly derived from the Sanskrit terms *nagna* (“naked”) or *nāga* (“cobra”) (cf. Dalton, 1872, p. 42; Fürer–Haimendorf, 1939, p. 2), others argue that it may stem from the word “nagā”, used in the Ahom and Assamese languages for the Nagas (Peal, 1889, p. 91), or from the Burmese word “na–ka”, meaning people “with pierced ear–lobes” (Sema, 1986, p. 3) or with “pierced noses” (Shikhu, 2007, p. 4).

The British entered western Nagaland in the 1830s, trying to establish a route of communication between colonised Manipur and Assam, which failed due to Naga hostilities (Ketholesie, 2015, p. 55). To protect their economic interests against Naga raids on valley tea estates under British control, they conducted ten punitive expeditions between 1835 and 1851, which, however, did not have the desired effect of deterring Naga raiding. Subsequently, the British tried to control the Nagas by restricting their access to Assamese markets, which turned out to be similarly unsuccessful. Consequently, the British created the Naga Hills District as part of the Assam Province in 1866, thereby bringing under control the Angami territory of western Nagaland (Gait, 1926, p. 315). The British gradually expanded the district eastwards in the following decades and secured control over the whole territory of present-day Nagaland by the 1940s. To establish and maintain control in the administered areas, they imposed taxes and appointed village chiefs, elders, and other high-ranking individuals as *dobashis* (interpreters) who acted as middlemen between the administration and the population.³

From the 1870s onwards, British soldiers like John Butler (d. 1876) and Robert Gosset Woodthorpe (1844–1898) wrote ethnographic accounts of the Nagas (Butler, 1875; Woodthorpe, 1882a; 1882b). Later administrators such as John Henry Hutton (1885–1968) and John Philip Mills (1890–1960) refined ethnographical research of Naga communities and systematically collected items of Naga material culture, which provided “a basis of knowledge through which indirect rule could be implemented” (Jacobs et al., 2012, p. 24). The conclusions the British drew about the Nagas made them stand as elucidators of Naga culture in the eyes of the population, which reinforced the role of the British as rulers (ibid., p. 25). Naga researchers have challenged this output of British colonial anthropology in recent years, pointing out inaccuracies and misrepresentations (Wouters and Heneise, 2017, p. 4).

Invited by the colonial administration, American Baptist missionaries began to convert Ao Nagas in the early 1870s (Thong, 2012, p. 896). In the following years, Baptists established missions among other Naga communities, which set in motion the Christianisation of Nagaland. Today, nearly 88 percent of the population of Nagaland follows the Christian religion,⁴ with Baptism being the predominant denomination. The first decades after Indian independence were marked by the political and military struggle of the Nagaland National Council (NNC) and successor organisations for Naga independence, efforts that were quelled by the Indian government. To appease Naga nationalist demands for greater political autonomy, Nagaland was carved out of Assam in 1962 and became a separate state of India in 1963. The influence of Western culture and Christian

3 Charles Ridley Pawsey (1894–1972), District Commissioner of the Naga Hills District in the 1940s, called *dobashis* “the backbone of the administration” (Pawsey, obituary for Hutton, n.d., Hutton Collection, Pitt Rivers Museum).

4 Census of India 2011 (<https://censusindia.gov.in/censuswebsite/data/census-tables>, accessed 15 June 2022).

religion caused rapid socio-cultural change in Nagaland in the 20th century (Wouters, 2018, p. 3). A significant aspect of this development has been the replacement of traditional epistemologies with Western knowledge systems that are imparted to communities through school and academic education.

In Naga societies, songs have long served as a means of transmitting folk tales and accounts of life stories and historical events (Hutton, 1914, p. 478; 1921a, p. 369; 1921b, pp. 363–4), to bestow honour or express affection (Hutton, 1921a, p. 163; Mongro, 1999, p. 111), and as an accompaniment to agricultural labour, physical work, and festive dances (Hutton, 1921a, pp. 205–8; Meguo–o, 2002). Songs are often composed in archaic dialects that differ considerably from modern Naga vernaculars and are hence difficult to understand (Hutton, 1914, p. 478; 1921a, p. 195). Today, rural communities continue to perform traditional songs during their daily lives,⁵ and urban cultural associations support traditional performing arts, too. The state government, on the other hand, organises the annual Hornbill festival that takes place near the capital Kohima, featuring traditional music and dance groups from all over Nagaland. The event attracts not only Indian and foreign tourists, but also provides a space of meeting and belonging for Naga communities (Wettstein and Stockhausen, 2012, p. xiv). Yet the knowledge of traditional Naga songs is declining among the urban population, whose listening preferences tend to be oriented toward Western-imported music styles today. This is especially the case in the two largest cities, Dimapur and Kohima, which offer a lively music scene with bands performing gospel, country and western, pop, rock, heavy metal, rap, jazz, and fusion music. Many of these bands promote themselves through CD sales and online music platforms such as YouTube.

The Nagaland recordings of John Henry Hutton

J. H. Hutton was born on 27 June 1885, in West Heslerton (East Yorkshire) as son of a Church of England clergyman. After attending school in Chigwell (Essex) from 1899 onwards and studying modern history at Worcester College Oxford from 1904 to 1907, he passed the Indian Civil Service examination in 1908 and travelled to Kolkata the following year. He joined the Eastern Bengal Volunteer Rifles in Dhaka in December 1909 and was subsequently stationed in Eastern Bengal for about three years. Around 1912 or '13, he was transferred to the Naga Hills District, where he was stationed as an Assistant Commissioner in Kohima until 1914. Subsequently, he served as Subdivisional Officer in Mokokchung between 1915 and 1917, before acting as Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills District from 1917 to 1929, his headquarters again in Kohima. The government also appointed him as Honorary Director of Ethnography for Assam in 1920. Towards the end of his career, he was stationed as Census Commissioner in Delhi from 1929 to 1933. He resigned from the Indian Civil Service in 1936 and died in New Radnor, Radnorshire, Wales on May 23, 1968.

During his administrative career, Hutton minutely studied the society and culture of Naga communities and published articles on the topic from 1914 onwards (e.g., Hutton, 1914; 1915; 1920). His first two monographs, *The Angami Nagas, With Some Notes on Neighbouring Tribes* (Hutton, 1921a) and *The Sema⁶ Nagas* (Hutton, 1921b), received critical acclaim in England, as they were regarded as setting a high standard in the

5 See, for example, the documentary “Kho ki pa lü / Up, Down, and Sideways” (2017) about the songs of a community from the village Phek: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJsCbJfIcOY>, accessed 14 May 2022.

6 Nowadays, community members prefer to refer to themselves as “Sumi”.

anthropological study of the Nagas (Hodson, 1922; Haddon, 1922). J. P. Mills became Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills District after Hutton and published monographs on Naga communities as well, *The Lhota⁷ Nagas* (Mills, 1922), *The Ao Nagas* (Mills, 1926), and *The Rengma Nagas* (Mills, 1937), the former two with contributions by Hutton. After Hutton's return to England in 1936, he joined Cambridge University as Lecturer in Social Anthropology and was elected William Wyse Professor of Social Anthropology in 1937, a post that he held until his retirement in 1950. In recognition of Hutton's contribution to ethnographic research on the Nagas, he received numerous awards, including the Rivers Memorial Medal and awards from the Royal Society of Arts, the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and the Anthropologische Gesellschaft of Vienna. In 1929, he was elected president of the Royal Anthropological Institute. In addition, he was awarded the Degree of D.Sc. at Oxford and was appointed to give the Frazer Lectures at that university in 1938.

Throughout his tenure in Nagaland, Hutton collected numerous items of Naga material culture and donated these to the Pitt Rivers Museum, where they were catalogued. He also sent a large number of field photographs from Nagaland, but not all are dated. The website of the Pitt Rivers Museum lists 3,148 objects and 2,624 photographs contributed by Hutton, the majority pertaining to Naga culture, which are searchable in an online database.⁸ The Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology Cambridge also holds a smaller collection of items and photographs of Naga culture contributed by Hutton, which are also searchable online.⁹

During his tenure in the Naga Hills District, Hutton made fourteen cylinder recordings, documenting the songs of five Naga communities (Chang, Sangtam, Sumi, Angami, and Lotha). As Hutton documented the recording date of only one cylinder (no. 5, dated 12 July 1916), information on the approximate recording date of the other cylinders must be inferred from the internal records of the Pitt Rivers Museum that holds the collection. The Museum received the first two cylinders from Hutton in 1915, which were marked as damaged (nos. 1–2), and a further twelve cylinders arrived intact in 1919 (nos. 3–14).¹⁰ Thus, Hutton probably recorded the first two cylinders around 1914 or 1915 and the subsequent twelve between 1915 and 1919. This makes Hutton's recordings the oldest known sonic documentation of Naga performing arts.¹¹ The National Sound Archive (NSA) copied the twelve playable cylinder recordings to reel-to-reel tape in 1987 and its successor organisation, the British Library Sound Archive, transferred the contents of the reel-to-reel tape to CD in 2003.

The late 1980s saw the first initiative to compile the content of Western archival collections about the Nagas into a digital database and return it to Nagaland. To this end, the anthropologist Alan Macfarlane (b. 1941) directed the creation of the Naga videodisc, a multimedia resource comprising diary material, official records, digitised photographs, photographs of artefacts, and sound and film recordings from Nagaland from the colo-

7 This term is spelled “Lotha” nowadays.

8 <https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/collections-online>, accessed 8 May 2022.

9 <https://collections.maa.cam.ac.uk>, accessed 8 May 2022.

10 *Edison-Bell Phonographic Recordings in the Pitt Rivers Museum Oxford: Wax Cylinders and Permanent Recordings made from them*, n.d., presumably compiled by Thomas Kenneth Penniman (1895-1977) between 1939-1963, Pitt Rivers Museum. Another cylinder (no. 14) was found in broken condition and was patched in 1987 (Pitt Rivers Museum, Hutton Collection, CD insert). When I visited the Museum in January 2022, I found that a fourth cylinder (no. 12) had broken in the meantime.

11 The German anthropologist Hans-Eberhard Kauffmann (1899-1986) made more than one hundred cylinder recordings of Naga, Kuki, and Meitei songs in Nagaland in 1936-1937 (Kauffmann and Schneider, 1960). The Berlin Phonogram Archive holds and currently digitises the collection.

nial period up to the 1980s (Turin and Macfarlane, 2008). The videodisc included three of Hutton’s cylinder recordings. The project ran from 1985 to 1992 and concluded with the exhibition *The Nagas* (1990–1992) at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge. With the hope of making the videodisc available in cultural centres and museums of Nagaland, a player and the videodisc were given to the Chief Minister of Nagaland at the opening, but the initiative fizzled out without tangible results. Videodisc technology became obsolete, and the research team began to explore other avenues of returning the material. Sarah Harrison and Alan Macfarlane thus travelled to Nagaland in 2001, accompanied by a Naga friend, and left numerous CD copies of videodisc material in the state (ibid., p. 375). With the advent of the internet, the videodisc material was transformed into an online database in 2005, which has been accessed by Nagas in India and around the globe (ibid.).¹²

Seven years later, the *Reel to Real* project (2012–2013) made all of Hutton’s cylinder recordings accessible online. As a collaboration between the Pitt Rivers Museum, the Oxford e-Research Centre, and the British Library, the project aimed to explore “the potential for making the [Pitt Rivers Museum’s] sound recordings better understood and used within the Museum and beyond it, for the benefit both of general public and future researchers”.¹³ As a result of the project, many of the Museum’s audio recordings were made accessible online.¹⁴ Furthermore, a webpage was built that explains the background of Hutton’s research on Naga performing arts. The page features a playlist with eight of his recordings.¹⁵

The Research Project

Ethnomusicological research has shown that sound archives may remain unused by cultural heritage communities even if these are in close spatial proximity, as class divides can discourage access (Lobley, 2010, pp. 344–5). Therefore, much research on community engagement with archival sound recordings has focused on taking recordings out of archives and into communities to study their responses to the material (e.g., Toner, 2003; Lobley, 2010; Kahunde, 2012; Campbell, 2014; Poske, 2020). In times of increasing global internet connectivity, making recordings available online has become another way of promoting community engagement, as the internet seems to make recording collections accessible globally in a more equitable way. Yet, it often remains unclear to what extent online resources are discovered and utilised by the communities they are intended for. While poor internet connectivity remains an issue in remote regions, search engine algorithms based on the supposed relevance of webpages also play a role here. A Google search from India for the term “Naga folk music” thus lists the Wikipedia entry “Music of Nagaland” as the first result, followed by YouTube links to contemporary Naga traditional and fusion music, then Indian newspapers articles, academic papers, and other online resources on the topic—none of them mentioning historical sound recordings. Amending the search term to “old Naga folk music”, “historical Naga folk music”, “Naga traditional music”, or variants thereof leads to similar results. In contrast, a search using academic language (“historical sound recordings from Nagaland”) quickly leads

12 <https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/nagas/coll/4/xintroduction/detail/all/index.html>, accessed 14 May 2022.

13 <http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/reel2real/index.php/about.html>, accessed 8 July 2022.

14 <https://soundcloud.com/pittriversound-1>, accessed 8 July 2022.

15 <http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/reel2real/index.php/collections-hutton.html>, accessed 16 May 2022. All twelve of Hutton’s recordings are accessible at <https://soundcloud.com/tags/naga%20field%20recording/popular-tracks>, accessed 8 July 2022.

to Hutton's recordings.¹⁶ Issues like these demonstrate the difficulties of using the internet to make archival sound recordings accessible to non-academic audiences abroad.

I first thought of reconnecting Naga communities to Hutton's recordings in June 2018, when I visited the Pitt Rivers Museum together with two Indian colleagues from the Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology (ARCE). After completion of my PhD, I finally conducted the long-envisioned research project between January and March 2022. Funded by the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA), it connected the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, the ARCE, and the Highland Institute¹⁷ in Kohima as partner institutions. The central project aim was to reconnect community members, including descendants of Hutton's recording participants, with his recordings to evaluate their responses to the material. Using their input, we wanted to gather further information on the context and content of the recordings to enhance their documentation. Finally, digital copies and enhanced documentation would be transferred from the Pitt Rivers Museum to the ARCE and the Highland Institute to make the recordings permanently accessible to Indian and Naga communities and researchers.

The project had three phases. In the first phase (January 2022), I conducted my literature review and archival research at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge, and SOAS University of London in England. In the second phase (February 2022), I conducted fieldwork in Nagaland supported by staff of the Highland Institute, introducing Naga musicians, musicologists, students, and researchers to Hutton's recordings, documenting their reactions and responses on video. In the third phase (March 2022), I compiled the information gathered through archival research and fieldwork into a spreadsheet database that I shared with the three partner institutions. In addition, the ARCE and the Highland Institute received digital copies of the recordings. The project concluded with an exhibition at the Highland Institute (April–May 2022), which featured Hutton's recordings and more recent recordings of Naga traditional music, as well as contemporary visual art inspired by the changing soundscapes of Nagaland.

Phase 1: Literature review and archival research in England

I began the first project phase with a literature review of Hutton's publications, focusing on his monographs *The Angami Nagas, With Some Notes on Neighbouring Tribes* (Hutton, 1921a) and *The Sema Nagas* (Hutton, 1921b). While the brevity and positioning of the sections on Angami and Sumi songs in these works suggest that he regarded their performing arts as a rather insignificant part of his ethnographic fieldwork (1921a, pp. 282–7, 369; 1921b, pp. 362–70), it has to be taken into account that “the chapterisation and contents of these monographs were largely pre-set by the colonial government” (Wouters and Heneise, 2017, p. 4), who encouraged research on the ethnic minority communities of northeast India for an insightful and thereby efficient administration of the region. Thence, the structure of Hutton's Naga monographs should not be taken in consideration when trying to find an answer to the question of the extent of Hutton's research on Naga performing arts.

16 www.google.com, accessed 16 May 2022.

17 The Highland Institute is an independent research centre that engages critically with socio-political, cultural, historical, environmental, and developmental problems affecting communities in highland Asia (<https://highlandinstitute.org/about/>, accessed 21 June 2022).

A closer look at his monographs shows that he scrutinised Angami and Sumi songs and dances minutely and even attempted to derive conclusions about the mentalities of the two communities from the lyrics of their songs. For example, he closes the first part of his first monograph with a quote from a song about love and aging, to illustrate the supposedly melancholic disposition of the Angamis (1921a, pp. 39–40). Later, he quotes a song performed at the *thekrangi genna*¹⁸ to illustrate the “sentimental relations of the sexes” (ibid., pp. 173–4). In the same work, he describes festive singing and dancing in detail (pp. 205–8). The book also includes a brief discussion of different dance styles (p. 195) as well as four photographs of Angami dance groups (facing pp. 194, 196). *The Sema Nagas* (1921b) includes descriptions of communal singing and dancing (e.g., pp. 111–5, 215, 248), and two photographs of Sumi dance groups (facing p. 110). Furthermore, the song taxonomies of the two monographs indicate that Hutton must have spent considerable time studying the general characteristics of the songs of the two communities (1921a, pp. 282–3; 1921b, pp. 115–6). In some of his articles, Hutton also refers to Naga performing arts (e.g., Hutton, 1914, p. 478; 1922, pp. 67–8; 1965, pp. 27–8). Furthermore, there are many unpublished photographs of Naga musicians and dancers in the Hutton Collection of the Pitt Rivers Museum.¹⁹ Hutton also donated several Naga musical instruments to the Museum.²⁰ Overall, these facts indicate that Hutton had a considerable interest in Naga performing arts and spent a significant amount of time studying Naga songs and dances, arguably because he regarded these as an important aspect of Naga social and cultural life.

Hutton's research, like that of other administrator-anthropologists from his time, was influenced by the paradigms of evolutionary anthropology, which is reflected in the language that he uses to describe Naga societies and cultures. We find expressions that would be considered derogatory today, such as “primitive form of civilisation” (1921a, p. 37), “savage races” (ibid., p. 177), and similar terms. Unsurprisingly, his song notes also include colonial expressions and patronising statements:

The song was composed by the Lhota coolies who went as carriers on the Abor expedition that exacted punishment for [Noel Williamson's] death, and the first two stanzas run as follows, repetitions and meaningless sounds interpolated in singing being omitted[.] (Hutton, 1921a, p. 369)

Or:

A Sema song when well sung is far from unmusical, and though the melody has a monotonous effect and gives one the feeling of listening to half the verse of a song repeated and repeated without any proper finish to the tune, there is often something undoubtedly attractive and even haunting about the cadence. (Hutton, 1921b, p. 115)

18 The Angami term *genna* literally means “prohibited”. In the context of festivals, it refers to certain social restrictions that communities observe, e.g., not to work or not to receive visitors from other villages. The term is also used for the festivals themselves.

19 See, for example, Hutton's photos of an Angami man playing the monochord instrument *übo* (http://photographs.prm.ox.ac.uk/pages/1998_221_19_2.html), and of an Angami girl dressed for the *thekrangi genna* in Khonoma (http://photographs.prm.ox.ac.uk/pages/1998_221_26.html, both accessed 18 May 2022).

20 Amongst others, Hutton donated an Angami *übo*, a Chang *konkhin* (bamboo Jew's harp), and an Ao *tsangyu* (bamboo trumpet).

Hutton also refers to his cylinder recordings in his two Naga monographs. The first one includes the following footnote:

I am, unfortunately, no musician, and cannot give the notation of the singing, but one or two of the songs have been recorded on the phonograph and the records sent to the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford. These are poor illustrations of the real thing, as it has been possible only to get the effect of one or two voices on the instrument, whereas it is of the essence of most Angami singing that there should usually be a number of voices of differing qualities singing together. (Hutton, 1921a, p. 253)

This statement is significant in several ways. While Hutton acknowledges his own musical limitations, he points out that his cylinder recordings do not properly replicate the nuances of live performances (“the real thing”). In particular, he complains that his phonograph could not capture the consonance of voices with different timbres, which he considered a characteristic feature of Angami and Sumi singing (cf. 1921b, p. 114). Hutton’s complaints about the poor recording quality of his phonograph thus indicate that he regarded his recordings as inferior documentation of Naga aurality, arguably one of the reasons why he scarcely documented his cylinder recordings.²¹ A section from his second monograph, on the other hand, shows that he also applied his recordings in the field:

[I] once saw an old and, one would have thought, very hardened Sema interpreter – Khupu of Lazemi – burst into genuine tears on hearing a phonograph reproduce a song about his deceased friend Inato; the Sema is not at all the stony-hearted savage that one might suppose him to be. (Hutton, 1921b, p. 29)

Clearly, the statement reveals the racial biases that influenced Hutton’s research on the Nagas. But the account also suggests that he did not regard his recordings as isolated specimens of Naga performing arts, destined for solitary confinement in archival depositories abroad. Surprisingly, he also seems to have used them to evoke responses from Naga listeners, an approach reminiscent of modern applied ethnomusicology. Specifically, we learn that he involved one of his interpreters in listening to one of his cylinders, although it remains unclear whether this happened with the individual’s consent. Interestingly, Hutton chose for his listening experiment with Khupu a song about another interpreter, Inato from Lumitsami (d. 1915) (Hutton, 1921b, p. viii).²² This example shows that Hutton was creative in the use of his cylinder recordings, sought ways to apply them in the field, and thought about what they would mean to Naga listeners.

During my archival research in England, I surveyed several collections in England to find further information on Hutton’s recordings and fieldwork. I began with the Hutton Collection at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, which comprises Hutton’s cylinders,

21 Hutton was not alone with his critique of the phonograph. In the 1900s, debates raged among English folk song collectors about the usefulness of cylinder recordings (Yates, 1982).

22 Arguably, Hutton played to Khupu the song from cylinder no. 13, “Inato-no Likelio i-pfu-ghe” (“Inato killed and brought back the head of a Nankam girl”) (Hutton 1921b, pp. 177-8, 363, 370; <https://soundcloud.com/pittriversound-1/song-from-nagaland-assam-india>, accessed 6 July 2022).

manuscripts, tour diaries, field photographs, and correspondence. The fourteen cylinders in the collection were numbered consecutively on the lids of the cylinder boxes, presumably by Henry Balfour (1863-1939), curator of the Museum from 1890 to 1939.²³ In addition, thirteen lids carry short titles written by Hutton (e.g., no. 7: “Chang songs”, no. 8: “Sangtam”). One lid carries the note “Hutton” (no. 14), probably written by Balfour. Hutton wrote down the performers’ names by hand on two inserts (nos. 5 and 14) but only one insert carries a recording date (no. 5). None of the inserts clearly state the recording location, although we can make assumptions such as in the case of the recording on cylinder 5, for which Hutton noted down the home village of performers (Khonoma, Kohima district). Two other recordings (nos. 9 and 13) can be tentatively assigned to the village Kiyeshe (Zunheboto district), based on Hutton’s notes on the musical transcriptions of the two songs on these cylinders that his first wife Stella Eleanora (d. 1944) contributed to his second monograph (1921b, p. 370).

Of the fourteen cylinders, five and a half comprise Angami songs (nos. 1–5, and the second half of no. 6) and another five and a half comprise Sumi songs (the first half of no. 6, no. 9, and nos. 11–14). One cylinder features Chang songs (no. 7), one a Sangtam song (no. 8), and one a Lotha song (no. 10). Overall, the number of cylinder recordings thus reflects Hutton’s research focus on the Angami and Sumi Nagas. Six cylinder recordings include announcements by Hutton (nos. 4 and 6–10) and eight cylinders are accompanied by handwritten and typewritten paper inserts found in the boxes (nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 12–14). Four of these inserts comprise transcriptions, translations, and explanations of song lyrics (nos. 1, 2, 4, 13), which closely correspond to the song descriptions that Hutton published in his two Naga monographs. Apart from this, one manuscript of the Museum’s Hutton Collection²⁴ comprises part of the song lyrics of cylinder no. 10 (“The Song of Mr. Williamson”).²⁵ Strikingly, the manuscript includes lines that Hutton omitted when he published the song in his first monograph (1921a, p. 369). This omission appears significant, as it suggests that Hutton not only left out “repetitions” and “vocal interpolations” in his song translations, as he concedes (1921a, p. 283), but also sometimes whole song sections he found unsuitable for publication.²⁶ Overall, we can summarise that the poor basic documentation of Hutton’s cylinder recordings (lack of performers’ names, locations, and dates) contrasts starkly with the detail of his published song transcriptions, translations, and explanations.²⁷ From this, we can deduce that he regarded his cylinders not as significant cultural objects in their own right whose contents needed to be documented precisely, but rather as a temporary means to transcribe and translate recorded songs for his publications.

23 https://history.prm.ox.ac.uk/collector_balfour.html, accessed 5 July 2022.

24 “Eulogy song for Noel Williamson” (Pitt Rivers Museum, Hutton Collection, Box 3, folder “Hutton Misc.”).

25 <https://soundcloud.com/pittriversound-1/the-song-of-mr-williamson-a>, accessed 6 July 2022. The song is a eulogy to the British officer Noel Williamson, who was killed on 31.3.1911 at Komsing village (now Arunachal Pradesh). According to Hutton, Lotha carriers composed the song during the Anglo Abor War of 1911-12 that was conducted to avenge Williamson’s death (Hutton, 1921a, p. 369).

26 The omitted lines have erotic connotations: “The women whom you loved are bringing *rohi* [“rice beer”] and coming to meet you. Williamson, youngest of the sons of the Sahibs, quickly, quickly rise and drink[.] O women whom he loved, though you cover your heads with your garments and stamp your feet upon the earth you cannot get back Williamson your beloved.” (“The Song of Mr. Williamson”, translation by Hutton; Pitt Rivers Museum, Hutton Collection, Box 3, folder “Hutton Misc.”).

27 See, for example, Hutton’s notes on the song “Nichu Nikri” (Hutton, 1921a, pp. 173-4, 285-6).

By aligning the inserts with Hutton's publications, I realised that transcription mistakes had been made during the *Reel to Real* project in 2012 and 2013. An example is the performers' names on inserts nos. 5 and 14, some of which were transcribed incorrectly during the project. When I studied the idiosyncrasies of Hutton's hand, I spotted the mistakes that had been made in the online documentation. Thus, I found out that he jotted down on insert no. 14 the names of five Sumi interpreters who sang the song together that he recorded on this cylinder: Vikhepu, Mithihe, Nikiye, Hoito, and Hezekhu (Figure 1).²⁸ The recording thus bears testimony to the fact that Hutton involved his interpreters not only as listeners, but also as performers in his recordings.

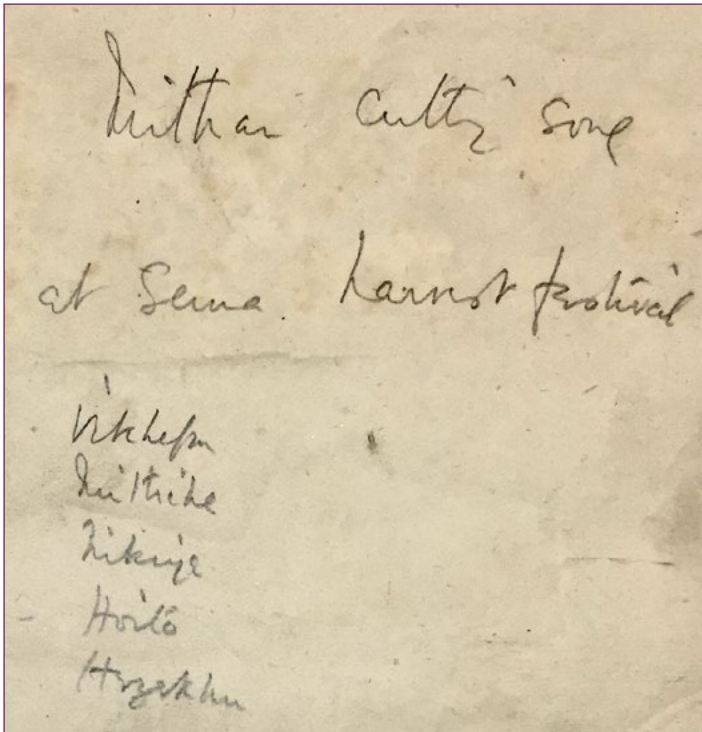


Figure 1. “Mithan cutting song at Sema harvest festival, Vikhepu, Mithihe, Nikiye, Hoito, Hezekhu”, insert for cylinder no. 14, Hutton Collection, Pitt Rivers Museum [photo: author].

In the preface of his second monograph, Hutton acknowledges the help of his interpreters in his administrative work and anthropological research:

Last, but far from least, I have to mention my Sema friends who have been the real means of my making what record I could of tribal customs – Vikhepu, Chief of the Ayemi Clan

28 Cf.: “Mithan cutting song at Sema harvest festival, sung by Vikhelpa, Huilthike, Likiya, Hoito, and Hrgekhu” (<https://soundcloud.com/pittriversound-1/mithan-cutting-song-from?in=pittriversound-1/sets/field-recordings-from-Nagaland>, accessed 22 February 2022). The Pitt Rivers Museum corrected the online documentation of the recording in the summer of 2022.

in Seromi,²⁹ Inato, Chief of Lumitsami, Khupu of Lazemi, Nikiye of Nikiye-nagami, Hezekhu of Sheyepu, Mithihe of Vekohomi, Hoito of Sakhalu, Ivikhu of Lizmi, Inzhevi of Yepthomi, Hoito of Kiyeshe, and many others, but the first five or six in particular. The first four mentioned, as well as Hoito of Sakhalu, are, alas! dead after years of the most loyal service to the Government – the others I hope have long to live, but my indebtedness for information to Vikhepu, four years my personal Sema interpreter at Mokokchung, was particularly great, and his death in the influenza epidemic of 1918³⁰ was a grave loss to the district. (Hutton, 1921b, p. viii)

The Hutton Collection of the Pitt Rivers Museum also includes Hutton's official tour diaries from the period April 1917 to March 1935, when he was Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills District and Census Commissioner in Delhi.³¹ However, none of Hutton's entries concern his cylinder recordings, arguably because he wrote the diaries in his capacity as administrator and not as documentation of his anthropological fieldwork. His entries thus deal with official matters like the demarcation of village boundaries and administrative regions, infrastructural work, payments of taxes, salaries, fees, and fines, the settling of disputes, hearings of court cases, etc.

The collection includes one letter that refers to Hutton's recordings, dated 22 October 1919. In the letter, K. M. Martindell of the Royal Anthropological Institute advises Hutton on possible depositories for his cylinder recordings, listing the India Office, Cambridge University, and the Society of Anthropology of Paris as potential recipients.³² Remarkably, the letter does not mention the Pitt Rivers Museum, which suggests that Hutton was looking for a different archive for his cylinder recordings in 1919. This, in turn, raises the question of why he would do so when he had already sent two cylinders to the Pitt Rivers Museum in 1915. Did he suspect that Balfour, then in his fifties and suffering from arthritis, had broken the first two cylinders because he did not handle them with the necessary care? Or was he perhaps concerned that his cylinder recordings would not receive sufficient attention at the Pitt Rivers Museum because of its focus on material culture? Whatever the reasons, the letter suggests that Hutton was not fully satisfied with the way his recordings were kept at the Museum. Nevertheless, he also left his second batch of recordings at the Museum, possibly because he could not find a suitable alternative during his home leave in 1919–20.

The Mills Collection and Balfour Collection of the Pitt Rivers Museum, the Hutton Collection of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge, and the Mills Collection of SOAS do not include any documents related to Hutton's recordings. Martindell's letter thus remains the only reference to Hutton's sound recordings in his correspondence, which is perhaps not surprising, considering the limited relevance he ascribed to his cylinder recordings as sonic artefacts of Naga performing arts.

29 See portrait and family tree of Vikhepu Ayemi (Hutton, 1921b, coloured frontispiece and second pedigree following p. 144). Today, the village is called "Surumi".

30 According to our fieldwork informants, Vikhepu Ayemi died in 1919.

31 The Hutton Collection of the Pitt Rivers Museum does not include any official tour diaries for the period 1914–1917 nor any personal diaries of Hutton.

32 Letter from K. M. Martindell to J. H. Hutton, Pitt Rivers Museum, Hutton Collection, Box 3, letter folder.

Phases 2 and 3: Fieldwork in Nagaland and sharing of recordings and documentation

We conducted our fieldwork in Nagaland in the second project phase. The central aim was to reconnect community members, including descendants of performers, with Hutton's recordings to evaluate their reactions to the material. We also wanted to hear their opinions on the content and performance contexts of songs to enhance the documentation. To this end, we conducted listening sessions with participants from different Naga communities, playing Hutton's recordings of the respective community.³³ During the listening sessions that took place at different locations, I was assisted by staff of the Highland Institute and interns from Kohima Science College and from different Naga communities, who supported me as subject experts, interpreters, guides, photographers, and recordists. Their support was essential for connecting with Naga communities in Nagaland and abroad.³⁴

We structured the listening sessions into three parts: First, we played back Hutton's recordings to participants without disclosing any additional information, except the community of the performers, to avoid influencing participants' responses. Subsequently, we discussed with listeners related documentation and song notes by Hutton that we believed could belong to the recording at hand. Lastly, we recorded an interview with participants about their thoughts on the recordings, documentation, and song notes, and their views on Hutton's research overall. We held most of our listening sessions in Kohima, where we could find musicians and music-interested individuals from most Naga communities. A few listening sessions took place at the Institute itself, which had the advantage of providing a controlled setting for video recordings. On the other hand, the somewhat formal surroundings clearly intimidated some listeners who hesitated to share their impressions on video. This issue was less pronounced during our listening sessions at other locations in Kohima and in other districts, although our camera set-up certainly influenced participants' responses at these locations to some extent, too. From the fieldwork phase onwards, we promoted the project via social media to support outreach among Naga communities. We posted fieldwork photos on Instagram and on the Facebook page of the Highland Institute to achieve this.^{35 36}

In the three weeks that I spent in Nagaland, we held sixteen documented listening sessions with nineteen listeners from seven Naga communities, aged between eight and seventy-eight years old. These included thirteen adults and six minors, with twelve males and seven females altogether. Most adult participants had college or university education, because the academic network of the Highland Institute was a significant source of our listeners. Most participants also had a strong musical background as professional or amateur musicians, music teachers, or music students. We usually had one participant per listening session, except on three occasions when two participants attended a session together due to time constraints. We held four sessions at the Highland Institute, nine at other locations in Kohima, two in Surumi (Zunheboto district), and one in Khonoma (Kohima district). Apart from these documented sessions, we had several informal listening sessions with staff of the Highland Institute and interns from Kohima Science College.

33 The only exception in this regard were our listening sessions at the Music Academy Kohima (see below).

34 My special thanks go to Lanuakum Aier of the Highland Institute, who greatly contributed to the success of the project.

35 https://www.instagram.com/naga_ancestral_voices/, accessed 20 May 2022.

36 <https://www.facebook.com/highlandinstitute>, accessed 4 June 2022.

To increase the regional outreach of the project, we shared links to Hutton's recordings with individuals who could not attend listening sessions in person. Towards the end of our fieldwork, we also shared links to recordings before on-site listening sessions to speed up the evaluation process of undocumented recordings. We followed this approach for Hutton's recordings of Chang and Sangtam songs. Unfortunately, this did not help much with the identification of Hutton's recording of a Sangtam song on cylinder no. 8.³⁷ We were more successful with the Chang songs on cylinder no. 7, which were evaluated with the help of Benjong Kokba, a Chang musician based in Kohima. Kokba used to perform with a traditional dance group during his student days in the Tuensang district, and is now the lead singer and composer of the Chang gospel band Onou Ngühläng ("Voice of Grace").³⁸ A few days before his listening session at the Highland Institute, we sent him the link to Hutton's recording.³⁹ He forwarded it to elders in his home district Tuensang, who then explained the lyrics of the songs recorded by Hutton to him over the phone. Thus, he could tell us the lyrics of the seven songs on the cylinder when we met him at the Institute.

We travelled to the village Khonoma as well, where we held a listening session at the house of the sixty-two-year-old farmer Krusalie Sophi (Figure 2). He was able to identify the song on cylinder no. 3, named "Hoiyi-olli" by Hutton.⁴⁰ After listening, Sophi showed us a version with slightly different lyrics that was published some four decades ago in a song anthology from Khonoma (Punyü and Yalie, 1982). He told us that the song is known under the title given to it in the anthology ("Lozorüü") and that it is still performed in Khonoma today. However, he was unfamiliar with the other song from Khonoma recorded by Hutton on cylinder no. 5⁴¹ and suggested it might be from a neighbouring village. After the listening session, we visited the Semoma Khel quarter of the village, where we asked a couple in their nineties if any of the performers' names noted down by Hutton were familiar to them, but unfortunately they were not.



Figure 2. Krusalie Sophi with intern Chathavizo Vakha, Khonoma, 15 February 2022 [photo: Khrienuito].

37 <https://soundcloud.com/pittriversound-1/sangtam-song-from-nagaland>, accessed 6 July 2022.

38 <https://www.youtube.com/c/OnouNgühlängVoiceofGrace>, accessed 15 June 2022.

39 <https://soundcloud.com/pittriversound-1/chang-songs-from-nagaland-2012>, accessed 6 July 2022.

40 <https://soundcloud.com/pittriversound-1/hoiyi-olli-angami-song-from>, accessed 6 July 2022.

41 <https://soundcloud.com/pittriversound-1/nichu-makroh-zekenyulanu>, accessed 6 July 2022.

We also travelled to Surumi, the home village of Vikhepu Ayemi (d. 1919), one of the performers of the song that Hutton recorded on cylinder 14. Before our journey, we telephoned inhabitants of the village to inform them of our arrival. We established contact with Qheniho Jakhalu (Figure 4), headman of the village, who unknown to us was Vikhepu's grandnephew. His relation to Vikhepu only became clear when we met him in Surumi, where he introduced us to his mother, Vikhepu's niece-in-law Heshevi Awomi (Figure 3). Although they knew from Hutton's monograph *The Sema Nagas* that Vikhepu had been a close associate of Hutton, they were unaware of the fact that Hutton had made a cylinder recording with their ancestor and hence astonished when they heard Vikhepu's voice on cylinder no. 14. After we had gave them a digital copy of the recording, they expressed their gratitude to us for informing us about the material. Before we left, they led us to a tree outside their house that Hutton and Vikhepu planted together as symbol of their friendship, before Vikhepu died from the Spanish flu in 1919. According to Jakhalu's accounts, Hutton spoke at Vikhepu's funeral.

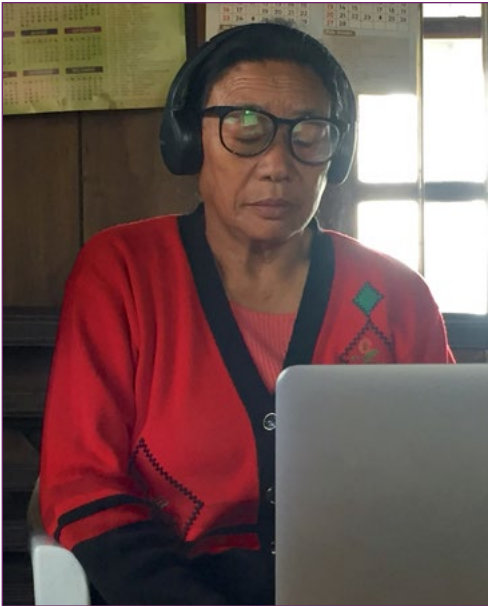


Figure 3 (left). Heshevi Awomi listening to Hutton's recordings.

Figure 4 (right). Qheniho Jakhalu with portrait of Vikhepu Ayemi, Surumi, 19 February 2022 [photos: author].

We held our final listening sessions at the Music Academy Kohima, an institution offering courses in Western classical, contemporary, and church musics.⁴² At the Academy, we held three listening sessions with adult music teachers and four sessions with music students from Angami, Ao, Lotha, Chang, and Rengma backgrounds (Figure 5). The music students were between eight and fourteen years old and studied violin, piano, and guitar. To teachers and students from communities not recorded by Hutton (Ao and Rengma), we played back his recordings of Sumi and Angami carrying choruses from cylinder no. 6,⁴³ as non-verbal work songs are common throughout Nagaland.

42 <https://musicacademykohima.com/curriculum/>, accessed 8 June 2022.

43 <https://soundcloud.com/pittriversound-1/carrying-choruses-songs-from>, accessed 6 July 2022.

Hutton's recordings were met with interest by the music teachers, whereas the reactions of the students were more ambiguous. An eight-year old violin student from a Chang family⁴⁴ found the Chang songs recorded by Hutton "weird". His ten-year old sister also could not make sense of the seven Chang songs at all. A twelve-year old Rengma guitar student giggled when she heard the carrying choruses. During her interview, she said that the recording sounded "funny". Her fourteen-year old sister found that the choruses sound "a bit ancient" and "not so much like a folk song". Others said that the recordings were "nice", or "not that bad", arguably out of politeness towards the research team. Like the listening preferences of many adult participants, the students' music tastes were diverse and included Western classical music, pop, rock, and rap, and more rarely Naga folk music. Some of them knew a few traditional folk songs or folk tales they had heard at home from their parents or on visits to their parental home villages, but this type of knowledge seemed to be incidental. The focus of their musical ambition was clearly the instrumental music courses of the Music Academy Kohima centering on Western classical music.



Figure 5. Music students listening to Hutton's recordings at the Music Academy Kohima, 25 February 2022 [photo: Kevide Lcho].

Throughout the course of our fieldwork, all but one or two listeners were unaware of the existence of Hutton's recordings when we introduced them to the material, which is remarkable as most of our participants were musicians themselves. Most of them struggled to identify the songs recorded by Hutton because they were unfamiliar with the archaic wordings of the traditional songs of their communities. This was even more so the case when the songs were in different dialects from where the listeners had grown up. The poor sound quality of the recordings certainly did not make things easier.

44 The boy had a Chang father and a Konyak mother. Contemporary Naga society is patrilineal, that is, children adopt the community membership of the father.

Yet, most listeners appreciated the opportunity to listen to the recordings, which many considered as important historical documentation of Naga traditional music. Notably, most of them refrained from criticising Hutton's song transcriptions, translations, and explanations, despite his colonial terminology and sometimes derogatory descriptions. Arguably, this reluctance to criticise was not only caused by listeners' difficulties in identifying the recorded songs aurally, but also because Hutton's writings to some extent still hold sway over minds in Nagaland today, as the first Western "scientific" account of Naga cultures that informs communities' cultural self-conception till today, despite contemporary critiques of his research legacy.

In the last week of my stay in Nagaland, I gave a talk on the project for lecturers and students at Kohima Science College. After my return to Kolkata, the third project phase began. I evaluated the information we had gathered on the recordings during archival research and fieldwork and compiled it into a spreadsheet database. After completion, I shared this database with the Pitt Rivers Museum, the ARCE, and the Highland Institute. In addition, the Museum provided digital copies of Hutton's recordings with defined usage conditions, allowing copying and further dissemination for research purposes, to the ARCE and the Highland Institute.

The exhibition

To further awareness in Nagaland about Hutton's research on Naga songs, we organised the sound exhibition *Naga Ancestral Voices: Songs, Stories, Beliefs* at the Highland Institute in Kohima, which featured his recordings and other exhibits revolving around the theme of the changing soundscapes of Nagaland. Planning for the exhibition began online in autumn 2021, as a collaborative effort involving fellows, staff, interns, and other individuals associated with the Highland Institute who were based in Nagaland, India, and abroad. Together, we were faced with the challenge of organising an exhibition that would feature sound exhibits, a first of its kind in Nagaland, where exhibitions are much rarer than in Indian metropolitan cities and hence not a significant part of cultural life. Religious, social, and community-related events like church services, family meetings, and communal gatherings play a far greater role in everyday life in Nagaland today. Furthermore, no companies exist in the state that could provide ready-made listening stations. In addition, we had the problem of attracting sufficient visitors to the exhibition venue, with the Institute not located centrally in town, but quite remotely in Kohima village, a forty-minute walk from the city centre. After deliberation, we scheduled the exhibition for 23 April through 7 May 2022, to avoid a clash of dates with Easter celebrations.

Considering the poor sound quality of Hutton's recordings, we decided to juxtapose these with more recent recordings of Naga traditional music made between 2004 and 2010 by the German recordist Thomas Kaiser, which were provided by the Ethnographic Museum in Zurich.⁴⁵ We had two sound boards built by a local carpenter to play back the recordings, each of the boards with a wooden frame, two stands and a large front panel. On the front panels, we attached vinyl prints with descriptions of the recordings. On the back of the sound boards, we attached MP3 sound players shipped from the UK, which we connected to trigger buttons on the front panel. On the sound board with Hutton's recordings (Figure 6), we printed the song transcriptions and translations from his two

45 Kaiser made the recordings before and during the research project "Material Culture, Oral Traditions and Identity of the Naga of Northeast India" (2006–2010) (<https://www.marionwettstein.ch/projects/naga-project-zurich/>, accessed 16 May 2022).

Naga monographs without major edits, to reflect the colonial context of his research through his own words. The only exceptions in this regard were cylinders nos. 7, 8, and 14, nearly undocumented by Hutton, for which we provided details uncovered during fieldwork. The second soundboard featured the recordings made by Thomas Kaiser with song transcriptions, translations, and notes provided by his recording participants, fieldwork informants, and himself. The two sound boards were accompanied by self-standing displays with background information about the studies of Hutton, Kaiser, and our team in the field of Naga performing arts.



Figure 6. Exhibition visitor listening to Hutton's recordings at The Highland Institute, 27 April 2022 [photo: Esther Kauffmann].

Apart from the two sound boards, the exhibition featured three sound recordings of Naga speakers from the Linguistic Survey of India (Grierson, 1903) provided by the British Library Sound Archive. These were accompanied by contemporary visual art revolving around the topics of Naga music, religion, and folklore, designed by the Lotha artist Mhao Aaron Odyuo of The Art Village Kohima.⁴⁶ His artworks included an oversized replica of a bullroarer, an ancient musical instrument to which the Nagas ascribed supernatural powers, and a painting based on the Bible parable of the Prodigal Son, a story that was used for recitations during the Linguistic Survey of India. To thematise the contemporary soundscapes of Nagaland, we set up a large pinboard with ephemera of modern Naga music, including band photos, CD covers, flyers, posters, and concert tickets. We advertised for the exhibition by hanging up posters in Kohima and surroundings and through social media posts. A press release ensured that local newspapers announced the event.

46 https://www.instagram.com/theartvillage_official/?hl=en, accessed 20 June 2022.

To attract visitors to the opening, we engaged the Tangkhul Naga musician and Padma Shri recipient Guru Rewben Mashangva for a performance.⁴⁷ The opening day also included a talk about the research project by the author, as well as contributions by Naga scholars and artist interviews. Connectivity issues unfortunately prevented our attempt to live stream the events of the opening day via Facebook. Nevertheless, the exhibition opening attracted a considerable number of musicians, composers, researchers, journalists, and other interested individuals from Kohima and surroundings. During the two weeks of the exhibition, we organised five workshops at the Highland Institute with students from schools and colleges around Kohima to reach out to the younger generation. These events comprised short presentations about the research project and Hutton's recordings as well as interactive elements, including a song quiz with recordings from different Naga communities and a task of sorting pictures of historical recording devices in the order of invention (Figure 7). Teachers and students appreciated the workshops as an opportunity to learn about the colonial past of Nagaland and its performing arts.



Figure 7. Workshop with students from Japfü Christian College at The Highland Institute, 29 April 2022 [photo: Esther Kauffmann].

The opening event and the workshops helped the exhibition to attract a considerable number of visitors. Although the daily footfall was not on the scale of metropolitan exhibitions in India or abroad, the exhibition and its accompanying events certainly raised awareness about Hutton's recordings and the research project in the wider Kohima region. Like our experiences during fieldwork, it became clear through our conversations with exhibition visitors that most of them were unaware of the existence of Hutton's recordings. This was reflected by the comments in the guest book, many of which highlighted the informative and educative aspects of the exhibition, apart from its creative originality.

47 <https://www.facebook.com/highlandinstitute/videos/528786898761895>, accessed 5 July 2022.

Conclusion

Although our project was rather short and its geographical scope and demographic outreach limited, it allows some tentative conclusions about the relevance of Hutton's recordings to the population of Nagaland today. Foremost, it is remarkable that most fieldwork participants and exhibition visitors were unaware of the fact that Hutton had made recordings of Naga songs when we introduced them to the material, although the recordings have been accessible online since 2012–2013. The fact that most of them did not know about his recordings is even more remarkable as most of our participants had strong musical interests and were hence more likely to know about the recordings than other listeners. We can surmise, then, that there is little awareness about historical sound recordings from Nagaland among the state population overall. Our project thus illustrates that it does not necessarily lead to community engagement in countries of origin when Western archives make collections of historical sound recordings accessible online. The results of our project suggest that such initiatives should be followed up by action on the ground in countries of origin, aimed at encouraging cultural heritage communities to engage with collections online. Organisations that have a strong community participation, such as the Highland Institute, are suitable project partners for such outreach projects abroad.

During our fieldwork, exhibition, workshops, and project presentations in Nagaland, we raised awareness about the online availability of Hutton's recordings through personal interactions, online communication, and social media engagement, sharing links with individuals who then accessed the recordings online and forwarded the links to others. These collective efforts likely increased community engagement with Hutton's recordings via the internet, although we did not have access to the streaming statistics of the Pitt Rivers Museum collections on soundcloud.com to verify this. It remains unclear if and to what extent the Museum monitors user engagement with its online collections. While large research libraries like the British Library do so on a regular basis, more research is needed on the development of efficient strategies and best practices of engaging cultural heritage communities with historical sound recordings that are available online.

Apart from this, more critical engagement with Hutton's recordings is required, particularly by Naga scholars familiar with the traditional songs and dances of their communities, to formulate a comprehensive critique of Hutton's research on Naga performing arts. With these considerations in mind, we are currently exploring avenues of exhibiting sound boards with historical sound recordings from Nagaland at a museum or research institute in the state on a permanent basis to reach larger audiences. Similarly, more research is required on the Nagaland recordings of H. E. Kauffmann once these are fully digitised, and on the Naga recordings of the Linguistic Survey of India, which are important sonic artefacts of Naga aural history that should be made accessible in Nagaland as well.

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