



Traditional Seed Preservation Practices in North East

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Why in News?

Ao and Sümi Naga communities in Nagaland follow practices passed down through generations, **Traditional Seed Preservation Practices**, preserving seeds from successful harvests for successive cycles.

- Traditionally agrarian, the Ao and Sümi Naga communities practise **jhum or shifting cultivation**.

Note: Seed preservation refers to the **intentional act of storing seeds from plants for future use**. It involves collecting, storing, and maintaining seeds under specific conditions to ensure their viability and ability to germinate when planted.

- The goal of seed preservation is **to safeguard genetic diversity**, conserve plant species, and maintain agricultural productivity.

Who are Nagaland's Ao and Sümi Naga Communities?

- **Ao Naga Community:**
 - The Ao Naga tribe predominantly resides in Nagaland's Mokokchung district, stretching from Tsüla (Dikhu) Valley to Tsürang (Disai) Valley.
 - Believed to have originated from Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Myanmar, the Ao Nagas are part of the Naga tribes descending from Mongoloid ancestry.
 - Within the Ao tribe, two racial groups, **the Mongsen and the Chongli**, constitute distinct segments.
 - The Aos **became the first Nagas to adopt Christianity** and Western education.
- **Sümi Naga Community:**
 - The Sümi Naga people are another indigenous community in Nagaland known for their unique cultural practices and strong agricultural heritage.
 - They celebrate various festivals like **Tuluni, Ahuna, and Tsükhenye**, often centered around agricultural cycles, accompanied by traditional dances, songs, and feasts.
 - Similar to several other Naga tribes, the Sümi Naga traditionally practiced jhum or shifting cultivation, cultivating crops such as rice, millet, beans, lentils, pepper, and tobacco.

What is Shifting Cultivation?

- Shifting cultivation, **locally called 'Jhum'**, is a widely practiced system of crop cultivation among the indigenous communities of Northeast India.
- The practice, also known as **slash-and-burn agriculture**, is when farmers clear land by slashing vegetation and burning forests and woodlands to create clear land for agricultural purposes.
- This provides a very easy and **very fast method of the preparation of the land for agriculture**.

- The bush and the weeds can be removed easily. The burning of waste materials provides needed nutrients for the cultivation.
- It gives a family its food, fodder, fuel, livelihood and is closely linked to their identity.
- Because of cutting of forests and trees, this practice leads to soil erosion and may also affect the course of rivers.

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