

Chapter-2

An Overview of Angami Naga Cultural Life

2.1 Social structure

2.1.1 Village, status and property

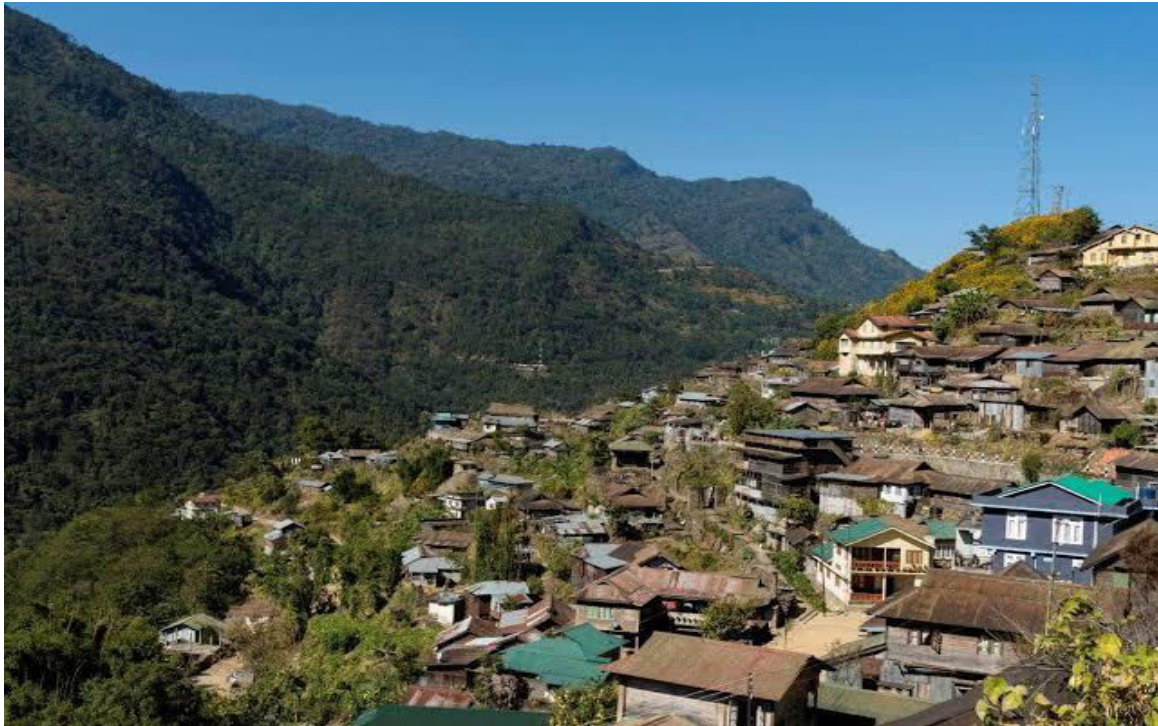


Fig 2.1 Panchali Dey, *Khonoma, India's first green village- its journey from hunting to conservation*,
26 Sept. 2020.

The Angami society is known to be rural in character. In an Angami village, the smallest unit is a family or *Kikru*. Based on the custom and tradition of the Angami Nagas, the practice of joint-family system is not appreciated and so a son immediately move out from the house of his parents as soon as he marries a woman. The son then begins to take up his own responsibility of maintaining his family. The fact that the Angami society is traditionally patriarchal proved beyond doubt that women were not given equal treatment and played a subordinate role whereas men always played a major decisive role. The father in the family serve as the head and no major decisions are taken by anyone else but him. He is the

bread earner and the heavy task of supporting or fending for the family rests on the shoulder of the father. Women are housekeepers who help and support the head of the family in all ways.

The Angami Nagas consider a lot of factors when picking a place to start a new village. The village is usually built on a hill top or on a high mount where the location is strategically safe and secured from enemy raiders. Every village is safeguarded and marked by stone walls and gates. These gates not only serve as the ultimate protection for the inmates of the village but are decorated with carvings of human heads and animals which represent strength and fortification done through significant rituals during *gennas*. The village gate is carved out of a single huge tree and it is kept shut at night to prevent enemies from attacking the villages.

Danger did not come only from outside, however. Serious fighting between clans, of which there are two to right in every village, was not uncommon. To prevent this, different clans inhabited separate khels or quarters of the village, and these were divided from one another by stone walls, deep ditches and prickly cactus fences...in Khonoma, as in other Angami villages, relationships among the clans were not always friendly and quarrels between them often resulted in violent clashes. (Ganguli 34)

The houses are constructed on surfaces that are levelled and are usually made of thatch, wormwood, bamboo and timber which are fastened with cane and bamboo thong lasting for about four to five years. There are village wells and springs available at a walkable distance and women in the village fetch water very early in the morning by carrying earthen pitchers in a basket woven out of bamboos. This basket is still in use in rural areas but many have relied upon other modern baskets for carrying things. Due to rapid urbanization, most villages have been turned into towns and sub-divisions, there is hardly any villages of the

Nagas left where the touch of urbanization has not been felt. The means of transport and communication has made it so much easier for people to keep themselves updated with the latest news. Instead of the old traditional kacha houses, majority of the Naga population have constructed concrete buildings implementing western designs. Urbanization has completely changed the face of the society at large. Women no longer carry earthen pitchers to draw water from village wells, instead of walking distances to fetch water the use of pipes to supply water has made life easier. Due to development, fields are levelled and roads are cuts and houses are constructed. These changes in the environment have not only benefitted the Nagas but on the other hand, it has affected their traditional lifestyle.

Reflecting on the folktales of the Ao Nagas, we find that this particular Naga tribe was considered to be skilled in the art of making pottery. But the present Ao Naga society seemed to have lost touch with their skills and trade of making pottery. Pottery is now considered to be an age old occupation and many have adopted the western style of living. The same can be said for the other Naga tribes affected by urbanization in one way or the other. The Angami Nagas themselves considers a woman who is unable to weave as a woman undeserving of respect but looking at the present age, the knowledge of weaving is not known among many young girls from the community itself. Despite the rapid urbanization, some areas in Nagaland like the Eastern Nagaland which still faces the problem of horrible roads condition; large number of illiterates, no much exposure to modernization etc. preserve their culture and tradition more strongly than the other Naga tribes settled in areas prone to development. These areas may be considered backward but in terms of preserving the cultural and traditional knowledge of their ancestors, they have performed much better than the other tribes.

When looking at the economic status of the Angami women in matters relating to property right, she does not inherit any ancestral property or is even entitled to it. If the only

child in the family is a daughter, the relative of the father inherits the ancestral property. This system of possessing ancestral property by immediate relative is called *Kayie*. The entitlement of immovable properties to male members in the family underwent changes with the advent of Christianity and modernity. Even so, these changes have not completely erased the issue of patriarchy in matters relating to favouring the male child over a female child on grounds of property's entitlement. A recent narrative of a man with no male child but two female children can be taken into account to explain the ground reality better on the subject of sharing property. The father of the two children divided his property consisting of land among his two daughters. Though he had no objection about dividing and entrusting his property to his two daughters, the relatives and cousins objected to it based on the statement that these two daughters are married off to men from different villages and inheriting the father's property was wrong. The church also intervened and requested for the land to be donated to the church instead of giving it away to the daughters since they lived at their husband's native places.

Pondering upon this narrative given by one of the daughter from Pfuchama village, one can simply ask as to, why this culture or practice of handing ancestral property to women is still being objected? Can we blame the customary law of the Nagas for such patriarchal behaviour? Perhaps this issue requires deeper analysis for answers. The man in the house or the husband is congratulated for developing extra marital activities. If the Angami men keep more mistresses, his status in the society is elevated. The *keshünei* (kilt) of the Angami man is usually designed with three rows of white cowries, but the *keshünei* of a married Angami man who successfully develop illegal affair with the sister of his wife or another woman wore four lines of cowries decorated on their kilt as a matter of pride to his male prowess. Such conduct has primarily sprung up from the Angami's ancestral belief that a woman or a widow

usually gives herself to a man of ability, particularly a warrior, to maintain their lineage and produce men with great warrior heart. However, according to K.S Zetsuvi,

immorality is also taken for account in respect of a man having multiple affairs with other women. Whereas, if a married woman was found to commit infidelity, she was made to undergo physical punishment even to the extent that the tip of her nose could be chopped off. Moreover, she would have to bear the social stigma of being considered an immoral woman. (Zetsuvi 21)

We must admit that this practice of having illicit affair with another man or woman is not done openly any longer and is considered to be a shame. Nevertheless, upon closely observing the society we can still find men and women having illicit affair not openly but in secret. In some cases if they are caught, the charge of meting punishment out to the man or woman depends entirely on the family members. Based on the happenings of such cases, it has been noticed that men rarely receive any punishment for committing such an act but a woman is shamed in front of the public to the extent where her hair is publicly shaved off and she is made to parade naked for everyone to see. This stigmatization of women for having illicit affair has considerably declined. The practice of extra marital affairs has lessened very much ever since Christianity was accepted among the Nagas.

The period of girlhood is spent under the parental roof and care. Learning to weave is a must for every girl which was a necessity to meet the family requirements. Among the many roles that a woman is supposed to play, motherhood forms the most important role. A woman makes her most important contribution to the society through her children. Young girls are generally prepared early for adult roles. Another important societal subject which is given due importance amongst the Angami societal conduct is that young girls are also not allowed to grow their hair before marriage. With the advent of Christianity and education,

this was completely changed. The World War II which is also called as the ‘Japanese Invasion’ was a great experience for them and they were unwillingly dragged into the art of fighting by well organized armies and the newly developed weapons which were introduced to them by the invaders.

This exposure also broke down the barriers of isolation from the rest of the world. The traditional method of vengeance and cruel punishment were replaced by the western judicial system. In the book *The Naked Nagas* by Christopher Hermendorf, he narrates about how the villagers would often rely on the British officials posted in the hills to solve petty cases. This reliance on the British officials provoked them to abandon the justice system they were following before the arrival of the westerners. The very culture of headhunting also disappeared with the entry of the British rule and the spread of the gospel by the American missionaries in the land of the Nagas. The morung system also declined and in place of this, schools began to be established. With the establishment of schools, western education came to be introduced. It brought great changes and was responsible for eliminating the ignorance and the superstitions of the Angami Nagas.

Status in Angami society according to Easterine Kire in her book *Folk Elements in Achebe: A Comparative Study of Ibo Culture and Tenyimia Culture* (2000) is regarded as something very important to the male in Angami society. Good name is also given due importance. Survival is considered a major concern of all. The ability to protect oneself and one’s womenfolk against enemy raids as well as the ability to provide food for the household are the areas where a man can prove his worth.

The concept of manliness is all about condemning the idea of idleness and cowardice but to act courageously and fiercely against anything which is likely to hamper their society...to be labelled as a woman is the greatest insult a man can suffer because it

shows that he has not aspired to perform and fulfil the conditions that will prove his manliness. When it comes to religion, the taboo factor operates very strongly in socio-religious life of the Angamis. (Kire 37-72)

2.1.2 Agriculture

The chief occupation of the Angami Nagas is agriculture. Terrace cultivation is mostly practised but there are some regions which practise jhum cultivation. Terrace cultivation also known as wet cultivation, is done by turning steep hill sides into terraces and putting up dyke walls of stones to hold the water inside. Depending on the availability of water, some terrace fields are kept flooded throughout the year. The other terrace fields having less availability of water are kept dry after the harvest season until the next rainy season. These terrace fields are hoed with spades and puddled. The seed beds of the paddy are prepared separately which is then transplanted into the terrace fields.

On the other hand, jhum cultivation is a method of cultivation where a spot in the forest is selected for growing crops. The selected patch or crop is cleared and burned, afterwhich crops are grown on the soil fertilized by wood-ash. The patch of land is then left barren for sometime as the fertility of the soil becomes exhausted. A new patch of land in the forest is selected again for the same purpose.

The present Naga society has lost touch with their land. With their encounter to the outside world, dependence on agricultural activity declined. Development in the form of building infrastructures, converting villages into towns or sub-divisions, upgrading modern system of trade and commerce etc have wiped out most of the fields. The forests are cut and cleaned, the fields are levelled and concrete buildings are being constructed. The process of agriculture was more than just an occupation. It was a social activity requiring the participation of young men and women in the art of helping one another. It was a common

practice in the olden days for young men and women of the same age to form groups known as *pele* and help each other at completing the field works. While working in the field, they also engage in singing and ululating. We can rightly say that this agricultural activity and the *pele* groups form one of the most interesting and happy phase in any youth's life because we see through many folktales and folksongs of married and unhappy women lamenting and longing for those days. This is believed to be the best stage of a man's life.



Fig 2.2 Medolenuo Ambrocia, *In Pics: Terrace rice cultivation begins in Nagaland, farmers hope for more rain.* 19 June 2021

Interestingly this formation of groups and helping in the field is still being practised in some villages but in areas close to towns, agricultural activities are no longer practised due to the disappearance of fields or shortage of water with increase in population and the environmental changes.

2.1.3 Festivals

Nagaland is known for festivals prevailing among its various communities. Festivals are expressions of the collective mind of the community in which there are outpourings of joy or sadness and fulfilment.

These are moments of special significance for a community. There may be moments of transition from one season to another, or from one stage of life to another, anniversaries of historical events, legendary day of birth or death of a hero or a community god or symbolic re-enactment of events of a religious leader or occasions for a communal work with feasting and fasting. (Dorson 159-160)

Festivals are often connected with religious beliefs, practices or life cycles and agricultural cycles like harvest and planting festivals. The celebration of festival is something that is universal. It is not only a time for celebration but is also a time for people to engage in recreation. At the same time festivals could be religious as well as secular. Among all religious denominations, calendar festivals are there. Festivals also marched through a process of interculture communication. To cite an example in this regard, with the rapid spread of Christianity in Europe, prevailing seasonal festivals went through a process of transformation. The pre-Christian population, although were willing to accept Christianity, were unwilling to let go off their traditional festivals. The Christian solution was to insert meanings of Christian on to the festivals which were old and traditional.

A secular equivalent of the patronal festival is the national celebration in many modern countries, which are organized institutionally by the state. For the people, the occasion is mainly one of respite or holiday from work and an opportunity for witnessing a spectacle. There are some festivals which are done through limited participation in which smaller, more exclusive groups have their festivals.

The central function of a festival according to Robert Jerome Smith, seems to provide opportunity for men to be merry together- to become involved in an environment embracing acceptance and conviviality if the festival includes the participation of the people in general. The celebration of festival brings the members of a community together. The sense of satisfaction and joy develop a bond between the festival participants through satisfying interactions. Therefore the festival is an agent responsible for enhancing social cohesion, for introducing individuals into a society or group and accepting them as members through shared and maintaining them as members by sharing informations. This celebration of festivals is the most solid expression of what we call collective emotions and loyalties.

Many of the festivals celebrated by the Nagas are not celebrated anymore owing to the acceptance of their new faith in Christianity and the ushering of modernism. Nevertheless some major festivals are still in practice following the modern etiquette.

Terhünyi is considered as one of the biggest festivals of the Angamis and it takes place in the month of December. The celebration lasts for ten days. This festival symbolizes love and joy and is an opportunity to thank God for the good harvest and for granting good health. On the third day of the festival, a celebration is organized in the name of the first born child of a married couple. On the seventh day, they show their gratefulness to the Supreme Power by bringing paddy and other crops which are offered to *Zievomia* or *Kemevo*. In return, the priest offers some prayers of intercession to the spirits on behalf of the givers. The festival gives an opportunity to a wealthy man to throw a grand feast known as 'Feasts of Merit'. He performs this in order to show his kindness and fellow-feelings. After this, by the side of the path the guests erect a huge stone for him leading to the village. The host of the feast is then given the opportunity to wear a specially designed shawl which uplifts his status in the society. It is believed that *Terhünyi* is for the rich and old to acquire name and fame. This feast though important is no longer celebrated.

The next important festival is *Sekrenyi* which is celebrated every year in February. This festival is celebrated to ask God's blessing for good health throughout the year. It is also known as *Phousanyi* or 'festival of purification' as the males observe a series of rituals for purifying themselves. The festival starts with *kizhie* extending to over ten days. A little quantity of fresh rice-beer called *zumho* is poured out into banana leaves and is placed in a partition wall which stands between two main rooms. The banana leaf is placed exactly at the central post of the partition wall. This act is a token of thanksgiving to the supreme power by letting him have his share first before they start enjoying the festival. Their ancestors are treated with respect by serving them with the same item of food over their graves. Most of the major Angami festivals start with *kizhie* which is an act of paying honour to spirits and ancestors.

On the first day of the *Sekrenyi* festival, the village well is cleaned by group of young boys in the village. They drain the water out of the well after which no one is allowed to use it until the next morning. By early dawn, all the males except the young boys go to the well and wash themselves and their tools or weapons. They perform this as an act of liberating or freeing themselves from illness and misfortunes and believe that every bad thing is washed down the drain along with the water they have used. After the bath, they return home and kill a healthy cock with bare hands by throttling it and observing the leg position of the cock when it dies. If the left leg is under the right leg while dying, it is considered to be a good sign. After killing the cock, fire is made and the cock is cleaned and cooked and the man consumes it like a pig, separated from the womenfolk. On the fourth day which is the *thekra hie*, the people gathers together and engages in singing traditional songs the entire day. Singing is accompanied by serving of rice beer and meat. An example of a folksong sung during the *Sekrenyi* and other important festival goes,

Zievinyü

Asu-u no hajü lhu molie

We lu Thezie junu lhurii lie

Solhi-u no tsiedo nu vor

Lievipfimia keviko huze

Zuze tuoro pouthe puora vo

(Translation)

My good friend, you are not from this land.

Your roots are from a village called Thizie

Why would a stranger such as you

Come to our village and try luring away

Our beautiful ladies to your village (Chasie, eg. A4)

The sixth and seventh days are declared as a holiday and on day eighth, the pulling of a bridge or gate ceremonies are performed and also inter-village friendships are renewed by feasting together.

Ngonyi is the next important festival held in the month of April. The number of days for this festival differs from place to place. In Khonoma, the festival is celebrated straight –on for fourteen days whereas in Kohima and Viswema village it is celebrated for six days.

Another important festival is *Thekranyi* which is also called *Kerunyi* by the Southern Angamis. The festival comes in the month of May or June. In this festival, members of a particular age group are divided based on their numbers and sent to work in different fields.

Tsiünyi is celebrated at the end of the rainy season which marks the completion of millet harvest. It is celebrated either at the last part of August or the first week of September. The number of days of observance differs from village to village. Some Angami villages call it *Chadanyi* which means the path clearing festival. During this festival, people work on clearing paths and cleaning or repairing village wells. It is also a time to remember people who have passed away and works are organized to clean up their graveyards. During this festival, a ceremony called *Thezukepu* which means 'driving out rats' is done in the village where a group of young people drives away all the mice and rats from one end of the village to the other. This ceremony is followed by a day of *genna* where no work is permitted. On this *genna* day people sing songs and one such folksong as recorded by J H Hutton goes,

Nichu Nikri

Niehu nikri va kemela nu

Tsuranumo chaza pirano

Lhumetso vapi tero gü.

Methakeji zepfü aserhe

Tozholemu ti keso zizhe

Zeppepile zemengu peki

Alheno tsu Sorozhu chakro

Kemozhu lechu vo nitso.

Tigi khrii pre, terho-naki krii

Kevihe nu ovate nihoh

Urrahuri zu kevi cha

Lhato memo seya huteru.

Ketzorü no tsie keseranu

Premezüru bidoh keyukri

Ketianuwü u kethapfü che.

Uhi wadi kehreledi nu

Sevü n ngu kemü meya-modzü

Thelojiche zekevakiwe.

Serhemoiü mewe ogipu.

Kemokri votso tenihoh.

Pesekriewü a-ge jahelo

(Translation)

From youth on let there be no parting.

I will wait by the path to watch;

I gaze at that fairest one from afar.

When her hair is long and bond up,

Let her remain my friend and go to the field with me.

Then will I wait for her at dawn.

I will take her beyond the others.

I will return alone by way of sorüzhü.

Then am I lonely by myself. Send her word of it.

In the sky the moon is rising, the sun-god has set.

The moonlight is shining down on me,

On our favourite path through the village;

After death we can tread it no longer.

By the stone of ketsorr

Let us pluck off heads of grass and caress one another.

Thus shall I possess her.

We will pour our cups into one gourd.

We will go ahead of the spiteful,

We will not hide our love.

If we do not go to the fields together,

Men will remark on it.

Whether we do or we do not, they will accuse us.

Don't be angry with me, Pesekiewü (Hutton, 285)

According to the narration, this song is sung during procession in the *thehuba* during the *Thekranyi genna*. *Thehuba* is a place of gathering constructed with stones. Sitting places are put up with stones piled up on top of each other forming a circle and men enjoy leisure time singing and sharing stories. Another song sung during this festival goes,

Kidzü Tsohpru

(Men)

Kidzü tsophru tsia wü lhunu zhü.

Zuwa derei lhule lo voh ü.

U tema sa lhule mo a ru.

(Women)

Thenuma wü ba cha soichie.

Hai tha pfü hai tsü rei gü,

Tieh tei mu u rüli kese

(Men)

Khrü wü jü rei la le lovoh ü.

A ni rrwü jüroh la mo le.

(Translation)

(Men)

Seeds are in the earth and keep falling thereto;

They take them away, but still they spring up.

If man die he riseth not again.

(Women)

Girls delay not too long (to marry)!

When your hair grows long you will grow old;

When that cometh to pass life is at an end.

(Men)

The moon waneth and wareth again,

When I have lost my beloved there is no more meeting. (Hutton, 284-285)

After *Thekranyi*, *Likhwenyi* is celebrated and it goes on for three days. This festival settles in the month of September or October. In this festival, crops are protected and scarecrows are put up in the fields to frighten birds away. This festival is considered important for girls because during this festival, a day is set aside for the young girls to perform a ceremony called *Theyuu Khutie* which means eating toad's meal. They are offered a special feast of harvested rice and fish curry. When this ceremony is done, a girl is considered as an adult who is legally responsible for her action. Another ceremony is performed after five days called *Tithu* known as the sky ceremony. This festival is important with rituals performed to protect the ripening crops from natural calamities.

Likhwenyi is followed by *Liede* which is celebrated in the month of November. This is an inaugural function for the harvest is done by an old lady. This festival is celebrated for two days and during those two days, no one is allowed to go to the field except for the *liediepfü*, the harvest starter. *Tiekede* or *Kevakete* is celebrated during the last week of November and it marks the completion of harvest. This festival offers thanksgiving to the supreme power for the bountiful harvest of the year.

Some of the major Angami festivals which are still celebrated today by most people are *Sekrennyi*, *Khoupfünyi* and *Chadanyi*. Most of the festivals have disappeared completely altogether with the rituals and observances. The festivals which are still celebrated today have also undergone some changes in the pattern of its celebration. The rituals accompanying such celebrations are no longer followed. For example, the *Sekrenyi* festival has been reduced to just one day of celebration. On the day of the celebration, the Angamis from all regions gather at the appointed or selected location wearing their full traditional attires. The festival begins by following any usual formal programme routine of speech delivery by the chief

guest and then there are traditional performances of folksongs and folkdances, followed by the sharing of a common meal. Changes are being introduced every now and then with the passage of time but what cannot be left forgotten is the fact that the observances of these festival acts as a repertoire for preserving and transmitting old traditional values and knowledge. All these festivals bind them together as one forging unity despite the geographical distance. It is such celebrations which identify them to their roots. In the Hollywood movie of ‘Thor Ragnarok,’ we are introduced to Zeus in a scene where he tells his son Thor that Asgard is not a place, it is a people. This is very relevant simply because it is the people and the memory of the place which makes it possible to preserve their identity and culture as an ethnic group.

Nichu Nikri

Niehu nikri va kemela nu

Tsuranumo chaza prirano

Lhumetso vapi tero gü.

Methakeji zepfü aserhe

Tozholemu ti keso zizhe

Zeppepile zemengu peki

Alhenö tsu Sorozhu chakro

Kemozhu lechu vo nitso.

Tigi khrii pre, terho-naki krii

Kevihe nu ovate nihoh

Urrahuri zu kevi cha

Lhato memo seya huteru.

Ketzorii no tsie keseranu

Premezüru bidoh keyukri

Ketianuwü u kethapfü che.

Uhi wadi kehreledi nu

Sevü n ngu kemü meya-modzü

Thelojiche zekevakiwe.

Serhemoiü mewe ogipu.

Kemokri votso tenihoh.

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I will take her beyond the others.

I will return alone by way of sorüzhü.

Then am I lonely by myself. Send her word of it.

In the sky the moon is rising, the sun-god has set.

The moonlight is shining down on me,
On our favourite path through the village;
After death we can tread it no longer.

By the stone of ketsorr

Let us pluck off heads of grass and caress one another.

Thus shall I possess her.

We will pour our cups into one gourd.

We will go ahead of the spiteful,

We will not hide our love.

If we do not go to the fields together,

Men will remark on it.

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Don't be angry with me, Pesekriewü (Hutton, 285)



Fig 2.3 The Sentinel, *Sekrenyi Festival 2021: Angamis celebrates 'Festival of Purification, 25 Feb.*

2021.

2.2 Feast of Merit

Feast of merit or giving feast to the community was an important cultural practice of the Naga life. This feast is performed in order to attain social status. It is not compulsory and depends entirely on the decision of an individual. As recorded by Julian Jacobs in his book *The Nagas: Society, Culture, and the Colonial Encounter*,

(stones) each represent a certain amount of wealth expended, for on setting them up a great feast is given to many men by some individual who thus perpetuates his own memory. After Feasting and drinking 'moti' for 3-4 days, all proceed and drag in the stone and set it up... (Jacobs 77)

This feast enhances the status of the feast giver and stone monoliths are set up in commemoration of the feast giver. Quoting Varrier Elwin, K.S Zetsuvi states,

the feast bring the donor honour both now and after death and he can henceforth wear special clothes and ornaments and decorate his house in a special way. (Zetsuvi 51)

The feast of merit has long been abandoned ever since Christianity made its entry into the land of the Nagas. We can almost say that this adversely affected even the material culture beside the old traditional practices. Most of the special clothes and ornaments worn by an individual who conducts the feast of merit are lost forever.

This feast not only brings honour to the giver but he is also endowed with the opportunity to decorate his house in a special way. In some Angami villages like Khonoma, there are as many as seven types of the festival of merit. The first is known as *Lhiga-gei* which means the feast of below hundreds. When an individual is prospering after receiving bountiful harvests and is succeeding in his trade or business, he offers this feast to his near and dear ones. This feast is given in order to receive the blessings of those who partake in the

feast and also to display his generosity. Food is always considered an important subject for bonding and during this feast food and drinks (rice beer) are served. As compared to the other feast of merit, this feast is considered to be inexpensive and can be given by almost anyone in the community.

The second feast is known as the feast of the hundred. This feast is given by a person who has harvested more than hundred baskets of paddy. The feast begins by slaughtering two pigs and a considerable quantity of rice-beer. In this feast, both the relatives as well as the neighbours are invited to join in the feast. The next feast is known as *Phichü-lhie* roughly translating to feast to the elders. In this feast a good number of pigs and cows as well as mithuns or *Bos Frontalis* are slaughtered to feed the elders in the community.

The fourth feast is known as the distribution of raw meat. This feast demands for the slaughter of as many as six pigs and a lot of cows and mithuns which are consumed. The feast is conducted in a grand manner inside the household and raw meat is distributed to each and every house in the village. The fifth feast is known as *Kesia Merochü* which means the ceremony in honour of the dead ones. A lot of animals are killed for this celebration and monoliths are erected based on the number of the feast giver's dead ancestors. The sixth and perhaps the biggest feast among all the other feasts is the feast of *Zachü* and *Lishü*. This feast extends even to the neighbouring villages. An individual who is successful in giving this feast upgrades his social status and earns the goodwill of his fellow villagers.

The number of the feast of merit varies according to each village. The feast of merit creates distinction in social status. An individual possessing enough wealth conducts such feast and his wealth is a symbol or sign of fertility. "The Feast is therefore recognition of his ritual status, and a mechanism for spreading his fertility among his fellow villagers." (Jacobs

The feast of merit not only marks distinction by erecting monoliths or posts, but it can also be seen in the clothes that they wear. Julian Jacobs elaborating further on the feast of merit narrates the observation given by an individual stating that,

A number of Lothas have performed social gennas and wear corresponding cloaks.

Nzanthung for example has done the Wozuya genna and was wearing a dark blue cloth with five pale blue bands in the centre and three pale blue lines at the top and bottom.

Phandemo, who had gone considerably further and dragged a stone five times, wears a similar cloth but with four pale blue lines instead of three. (Jacobs 78)

This distinction or difference in the clothes worn by individuals who have conducted the feast of merit promotes individualistic competitiveness. The feast also allows individuals to make symbolic statements of their power. Though it promotes the urge to accumulate wealth, it also constrains the accumulation of too much wealth by demanding that it is redistributed to the community or neighbouring villages in return for maintaining high social status. It can be said that this system of feasting and maximizing fertility forms the basis of unity for the community as well as the neighbouring villages.

Although the feast of merit is no longer practised in this modern society, the ceremony of stone pulling is still very much in existence. The stone pulling ceremony can be considered to be a part or partial of the feast of merit as long as the erection of stone monolith is concerned. The modern Angami society organizes stone pulling ceremony almost every year in order to keep the old tradition and culture alive. This stone pulling ceremony invites the whole of Angami villages to take part in the ceremonial ritual of bonding. The participants are made to wear their traditional attires and the huge stone is dragged in the old traditional style by men ululating and pulling the rope attached to the stone in harmony. Once the stone is dragged and placed in the specific location for erecting the monolith, the ceremony ends with the sharing of food.



Fig 2.4 Medolenuo Ambrocia, Nagaland: Thousands of men, women take part in stone-pulling event.

5 Dec. 2018

2.3 Morung

The institution of morung forms an important social structure not only for the Angami tribe but for the Nagas as a whole.

The word ‘*morung*’ is derived from the Konyak community in its origin and it has been narrated that when the Ahoms asked the Konyaks if the dormitories found in the village belonged to them, they replied saying ‘*moi rang hoi*’, which means, ‘yes, my dormitory.’ Therefore the word ‘*morung*’ is ‘an inadvertent misinterpretation of the word ‘*moi-rang hoi.*’ (Kire 32)

The Angami Nagas refer to the morung as ‘*thehu*’ which means ‘a meeting house’. Majority of the tribal narratives states that the first house to be built in any new village is the morung. The morung serves as the guard house for the whole village. When a village is set up, villagers hurry to construct a morung. Everyone in the village contributes their own share of the materials required for building a morung. Failing to

contribute is often considered as being disrespectful to the village community. The morung is not an individual's property but a house belonging to the whole village. The morung is an institution where young men deemed capable of manual work are initiated into it and receive semi-military training and war tactics.

Every clan in a village has its own morung and the village activities revolve around it. The young boys in the morung are disciplined and taught various crafts. Usually the Angami morung or *thehuba* or *kichüki* is a space allotted by a wealthy member in the society. This space is transformed into a dormitory for young boys. The dormitory is constructed in such a way that a wooden stair is used for climbing up and down. It is not only during the night that the young boys in the village go to rest their tired bones in the dormitory but on days of *penie* when working is not allowed they gather at the dormitory even during the daytime to rest.

It is here that the young boys are taught major life lessons. Here they are imparted the knowledge and wisdom of elders, about war, about brave warriors, about poetry, traditional songs, humours, folktales and so on. Not only these, but they are also taught on various social conduct and manners. Important announcements are also given in the morung and it is believed that Naga oral tradition has been kept alive in the morung and transmitted down from one generation to the next through folksongs, folk dance and folktales. Strict rules are also implemented in the institution of morung. "These rules are called *thehu-mhosho* in Angami. A *thehu*-maxim goes that, a son of the *thehu* never gets spoilt." (Zestuvi 30)

It is said that boys who spend their time in the dormitory will turn out to be definitely smarter and more confident than the others. He will also turn out to be a better orator, wiser and socialize better. In the dormitory, traditional musical instrument such as

Tati, Lili, Luoii, Dzüsi are always kept and the neighbouring houses listens to the young boys in the dormitory singing before retiring for the night.

A woman is not allowed to enter inside the male dormitory or *thehu*. If a woman does so, she brings bad luck upon men. No disrespectful or immoral activities are allowed anywhere near the morung. The morung also acts as a shelter house for those seeking refuge. An individual is considered safe as long as he stays inside the morung. This is so because duels and fighting are not allowed inside the morung.

Similar to the boys, girls have their own dormitory too. When a girl attains the age of puberty, she is made to go and sleep with the other girls of her age group in a house known as *kichiiki* (sleeping place). When night falls, the girls get together after their dinner and set themselves to making handicrafts to gift their lovers as an exchange for the gifts they have received. This institution is not just a place for receiving and making gifts for lovers but it is a place where young girls learn to sing folksongs and recite folktales. A girl belongs to the institution or dormitory until she decides to get married.

Milada Ganguli in her book *A Pilgrimage to the Nagas* writes about the narration of an Angami from Khonoma village

Until not long ago the boys and girls used to have their own spacious dormitories, because according to our tribal customs older children do not sleep in their parents' houses. Our village was burnt down several times and the dormitories destroyed by fire. Until new ones are built the boys sleep in a rich man's house in their part of the village, and the girls in the house of a local widow. (Ganguli 41)



Fig 2.5 Abu Metha, *Beautiful view of the Angami Morung at Naga Heritage Village, Kisama.* 25

Nov.2021.

2.4 Customary laws

The Angami Nagas follow the law of the *Tenyimia*. Every Naga tribe has a well defined territory with a clearly demarcated boundary. The boundaries are made in such a way that they cannot be disputed over the years. Under the land ownership system there are common land, the clan land, lineage land, and personal land. In every village, there is a common land which is owned and used by the whole community. Any individual from the village has access to procure trees or bamboos which are preserved in such kind of land for his needs. The construction of public houses like the morung, village gates and bridges are constructed in the area taken as common land.

According to the Angami customary laws, land is always inherited by the male members in the family. The male child in the family inherits the ancestral property. If the father has no son, then the property goes to his closest relatives. The female members or

the daughters in the family do not receive any share of immovable property. However, in this modern era, daughters are also entitled to inherit their share of property.

The eldest son inherits the best field of his father after he gets married. The youngest son in the family inherits the parents' house and is endowed with the responsibility of looking after his aged parents and managing all the expenses of the funerals. Every son in the family gets his portion of land after getting married. If a son dies during his father's lifetime without leaving any male child, the property is reverted back to his father. Nevertheless, if the widowed wife of the deceased husband wishes to continue living under the roof of her husband's house then she has the right to use the properties as her own. The customary law however does not allow her to sell the land or give it to anyone else. If in case, a mother manages to buy a plot of land, it depends entirely on her will to sell it or use it.

If an individual wishes to sell some land or properties which are considered valuable, then it is a custom to inform the nearest relatives or family members first so as not to lose any property close to the family. The kith and kin of the individual can retain if they are in a position to buy it, but if they are not able to do so, then he can sell it to anyone whom he prefers. According to the customary law, it is forbidden to sell an inherited field.

The laws regarding theft is that, punishments were meted out to people committing theft and it is severe at times. If someone is caught in the act of stealing, he gets beaten up and reported to the village elders. The culprit caught in the act of committing theft is made to pay seven times the value of property of what he has stolen. Rape was uncommon during the olden days and the person who commits this crime is beaten without any mercy. Marks are inflicted on his face to remind everyone about his

loose behaviour. In some cases, the accused is banished from the village for about three months. Matters relating to rapes are discussed by the village elders. If a person is caught red handed then there is no escape for him. The offender is treated with outmost severity. He is beaten up severely and mercilessly and if the offender dies from the beatings and the injuries, the ones responsible for beating him to death are not penalized.

In regard to the settlement of disputes, oaths are taken if any suspicion is aroused. An oath is considered to be a very serious commitment and no one dares to swear on an oath unless he/she is sure of his/her own statement. An oath is taken only when there are no options left to settle disputes because lives are involved in it. There are also penalties involved for committing offence. When there was no law court, the oath taking was seen to be the most common factor for deciding disputes. The witnesses comprised the family members and relatives or clan members, however if the oath is of a serious nature, the oath taking is administered in the presence of a neutral party. Depending on the seriousness of the matter, representatives from other villages are also included for witnesses.

Based on the detailed account narrated by JH Hutton in his book *The Angami Nagas*, an oath usually ends by uttering the statement,

If I lie in what I now say, then betwixt heaven and earth, let me not grow like other men but let me become as ruin, as burnt out fire, as rotted twine. (Hutton 145)

Therefore, oath taking is risky because of the fact that it not only exposes the life of the person concerned, in danger but it also drags the members of his family or whole clan. Oath taking is considered to be the last court of justice for the Angamis and it is done so when there are no other options left to settle disputes. Sometimes an oath is taken to settle disputes between villages. In cases like that, the ritual of cutting an animal into

two parts is followed by each party holding one part of the cat. This indicates that the party which is guilty will face the same fate as that of the cat. The peace agreement between two villages is settled by taking an oath which no one will break it again. A covenant is also made between the two villages by erecting memorial stone as a symbol of the peace agreement. If anyone should break the agreement, he meets an unnatural death with an improper burial. The traditional laws and customs are respected and words are uttered with outmost care when taking an oath.

The culture of oath taking can still be seen evident in the manner in which children's converse with each other. The children might not be fully aware of the consequences of oath taking or the seriousness in doing so, nevertheless children imitates what the elders do. Children's swearing on an oath usually utters phrases like "Promise by God...Red touch, Bible touch...Father Mother die." However silly it may sound, these phrases are uttered in order to extract the truth and a belief that if the guilty person lies, his father and mother will die.

Besides oath taking, there are also penalties for individuals committing an offence. During the olden days taking the head of an enemy and bringing it home was considered to be an achievement. But in the case of killing one's own villagers whether accidentally or intentionally, the offender is penalised and banished from the village for seven years. There are records of killing one's own villagers or ally on hunting expeditions even in recent times. The punishment or penalty is still the same, banishment from the village for seven years. This banishment is known as *themu* which is a dreaded title.

When there is homicide by accident, the offender would be deprived of all his moveable properties and his land will be sold in action, preference being given to the

immediate relations. Secondly in the case of homicide in a fight, a public meeting is held to decide the matter and the guilty party has to go into exile for seven years. Meanwhile all his properties will be confiscated and sold to anyone through auction. Thirdly, homicide by stealth or an act of treachery, perhaps in revenge for some real or fancied wrong but not in an open fight is severely dealt with. In this case not only the murderer, but his whole kindred are expelled for seven years, and sometimes even for a whole generation in some villages...The customary practice for homicide by treachery was to demand the life of the killer who would rarely escape death and even the lives of his family members were endangered. (Zetsuvi 67)

A man who accidentally kills his own fellowmen is banished from the village for seven years. If a woman is unfaithful to her husband, her hair is shaved off as an act of punishment and sometimes there are cases where women caught committing infidelity were given harsh punishments. Their nose or ears are cut off to let her drink her own blood.

2.5 Myth and legends of origin and migration of the Angami Nagas

Studies on folklore traditions of Nagaland despite their rich trajectory transmitted through the ages in diverse forms among different communities are very limited. The history of the Nagas more particularly belonging to the pre-modern or pre-colonial period is shrouded in mystery and myths of orality. The oral history also poses a challenging task in documenting early history because of the diversity of languages spoken by various tribes dissimilar with each other and dialectical variation of the same language among different villages. The little amount of documentation and accounts undertaken by westerners-administrative officials, anthropologists and missionaries who also introduced writing in some of these languages adopting Roman script for their administrative and missionary purposes are the early material to access to the early period of Naga history.

Even much of these materials are imbued with a colonial motivation of ruling the newly colonized people as well as ‘civilizing the uncivilized’ tribes of the hills. Only in recent years concerned efforts at some levels have been undertaken by the literate among Naga communities documenting, writing histories and ethnographic accounts on various areas of the Nagas.

The Naga society follows the oral tradition since time immemorial. The culture and tradition has been preserved and transmitted orally from a generation to the next. The Angamis or the Nagas in general do not possess any written history or record of their past. According to the Ao tradition, the Ao tribe possessed a written script but it eventually got lost.

In the beginning when the earth was still young, and there was no sharp differentiation between darkness and light, man and beast lived together. During this age, there was a written script. The script was written on the hide of an animal and was hung on a wall. One day when the people were away in their fields, a dog dragged it down and ate it up. From that time onwards, the people had to commit all knowledge in memory and began transmitting the same by word of mouth to succeeding generations. (Ao 9)

A similar story has been narrated among the Angami Nagas as well,

An Angami legend said that in the olden days God gave men a deer skin on which they were asked to write their traditions. The plainsmen acted accordingly, but the hill men being so hungry, cooked the skin and ate it up. The result was that, they were bereft of written language. (Zetsuvi 11-12)

The myth and legends of origin and migration form an integral part in constructing their identity. These myths and legends are preserved carefully and recent studies have proven through fieldwork that more importance is given to preserving the

folktales or folklores having a connection with their origin and migration than the other stories. The myth of origin and migration comes under folklore as they connect that particular society to their cultural identity. Folklore is not confined to the past alone but the present society is constantly engaged in its preservation, transmission and creation of newer folklore.

The Angamis along with the other tribes like the Aos, Sema, Lotha are considered to be the advanced tribe. Though the Angamis use a common language known as *Tenyidie*, every village speaks *tenyidie* differently in tone and accent. The British created four divisions in the Angami region known as the Western Angami, Southern Angami, Northern Angami and Chakhroma. This division was created for the smooth running of administrative purposes. The Nagas society as we know, have been colonized and it was these colonial rulers who identified villages speaking similar dialects and material culture as tribes, categorizing them under one administrative circle. This artificial barrier created by the Britishers gave birth to different tribal groups. Instances of borrowing name tags from neighbouring villages to name group of villages by the British were also common.

The word 'Angami' has been interpreted and explained by various scholars and anthropologists. J H Hutton mentioned in his book *Diaries of Two Tours to Unadministered Area East of the Naga Hills*, the word 'Angami' is derived from 'Gnamei' which is a term used by the Manipuris to call the group of people. The word however does not stand for any meaning. Another explanation of the word 'Angami' is that the Mao Nagas address the Angamis as 'Ngamai' which means perfect. Among the variety of interpretations, the Zeliang Nagas interpretation of the word 'Angami' carries more sense than the rest. The word 'Angami' is derived from the Zeliang word 'Hangamai' which means 'robbers'. They were called so because the Zeliangs who lived

near the Angamis faced constant problem of raiding and harassment from the Angamis especially the Khonoma people.

Anungla Aier in her book *Studies on Naga Oral Tradition*, states that the people of Poilwa, a Zeliang village when inquired upon by the British as to who lives there (Khonoma), they replied saying that the people living there are 'Ngnamai' meaning 'thieves'. The story behind the origin of this term is explained by the fact that Khonoma was a powerful village with great reputation in warfare. Since Poilwa village was situated near Khonoma village, many heads from Poilwa was taken as trophies by the warriors of Khonoma. The elders from the village opine that the name 'Angami' is derived from their name for Khonoma which the British changed it to make the pronunciation easier for them. This label was further used by the British to categorize villages sharing similarity with the Khonoma village. Despite the slight variation existing in the narration of this legend, it can be assumed that the interpretation of the word given by the people of Poilwa village carries more sensible meaning than the rest.

Every Naga village carries its own myth of origin and legends of migration which serve as the foundation of their identity. The narration of origin stories are done with utmost care but it is prone to exaggeration and changes due to its nature of oral transmission. Most of the Nagas trace their origin to the legend of Khezakeno village. Khezakeno is a Chakesang village falling under the Phek district. Some of the Naga tribes like the Chakesang, Rengmas, Sümi and Angamis associates their origin to the legend of the magical stone at Khezakeno. Along with these tribes of the Nagas, the Longchar clan of the Ao tribe also identify themselves to the legend of Khezakenoma unlike the other clans of the Ao tribe who ascribe their origin to the legend of the six stones or Longterok at Chungliyimti.

According to J.H Hutton, the Naga tribes trace their origin back to the Kezami village of Khezakenoma. A couple was said to have lived with their three sons at Kezami village. Every day they would dry paddy on a big flat stone and by evening the paddy will double up or increase in quantity because the stone was believed to be possessed by a spirit enabling it to possess magical powers. The three sons took turns to dry paddy but unfortunately a fight broke up between them one day and they began to quarrel bitterly among themselves. The parents fearing that there will be bloodsheds broke eggs on it and covered it with brushwood, mean time they also laid faggots about it and set fire on the stone. The stone bursts with a loud crack like thunder and the spirit inhabiting the stone left and fled towards heaven in a cloud which appeared like smoke and the stone lost its magical powers. There are variations of this legend found in many other Naga tribes. Though the name of the stone changes and there are some differences in the details of the story, nevertheless, the magical stone is always present in all of the narration.

The Angami legend narrates that a certain individual by the name of Koza came walking from the East and when he reached Mekhrora (Makhel) in Manipur he rested there for some time and resumed his journey till he reached Khezakenoma. R R Shimray states that,

As to their origin and dispersal, the various tribes of the Nagas have now accepted Makhel as the original place from where they dispersed. There are many historical facts such as stone monoliths and sacred trees planted at Makhel when they were about to disperse to different directions. One distinct practice of the Nagas is that they should erect stone monuments and also plant sacred trees wherever they settled. (Shimray 26)



Fig 2.6 The Land of Tradition Phek District, *Tso Tawo at Khezhakeno village*. 01 Aug. 2023.

Though most of the Angami villages are aware of the legend of khezakenoma no much importance is given to it and they associate themselves to the legend of migration from Makhel. It has also been mentioned by JH Hutton in the 1920's that the priests of the Angamis waited for the priest of Mao and Makhel to consult or inform them before declaring any celebration of festivals deemed important or deciding on appointing a date for festival celebration. The Angamis also address the Mao Nagas as '*Sopfuma*'. The Angami legend of migration states that the Angamis migrated from Makhel to Khezakenoma. The reason behind them, leaving Makhel remains unknown. However it has been assumed that the reason behind the migration was probably due to the increasing numbers in population and the shortage of the availability of cultivable lands which prompted some to search for new land to cultivate and settle. The Angamis regard Koza as the founder of the Khezakenoma village. "Khezakenoma villagers still call their village as Kozami which means 'men of Koza'" (Zetsuvi 13)

The legend follows the same pattern of the story as narrated above. It was believed that when the stone lost its magical powers, the three sons of the couple separated and became the fore-fathers of the Angamis, the Lothas, and the Semas. The parents of the three sons who decided to remain back formed the other seven villages of Kezoma.

The people of Khezakenoma however have a slightly different version of the legend of Koza. They narrates that a man name Koza who came from the East showed up at Makhel, lived for a while and proceeded towards Khezakenoma. The legend further narrates that one day Koza noticed a frog bringing a grain of rice and left it on the stone where it multiplied into two. Witnessing what was happening before his eyes he brought a basket of paddy and spread it upon the great flat stone. The basket of paddy which Koza dried upon the stone doubled in quantity. Koza lived at Khezakenoma and was blessed with children. His children took turns in drying the paddy over the stone until a fight broke out among them. The wife of Koza, fearing for the worst set the stone on fire and the spirit living in the stone left it. As for Koza, his family kept increasing in numbers that the land became too small for them. Hence, they scattered and set out in different directions and formed the tribes of the Nagas.

The migration of the Nagas before the settlement at Makhel still remains unsure and uncertain. Based on the work of researchers and collection of field data, it has been revealed that the Nagas myths of origin are of two kinds mainly

I) Myth of Autochthonous origin

II) Myth of origin somewhere in the East. (Aier 22)

The myths of autochthonous origin seemed to be a common one among the Nagas. There are myths of origin from stone as well as from under the earth. The myth of origin

from the underground varies in degree of prominence from tribe to tribe. The Aos and the Angamis references to such a myth are only found in the colonial writing. For some other tribes like the Lotha, Konyak, Khamniungam, and Chang etc the myth is narrated more clearly. J.H Hutton states that

The Angami too, spring from the bowels of the earth but that not in the Angami country, but in some land to the south.....believed to be descended from two men, sometime described as brothers (or cousins) who came from out of the bowel of the earth through a hole. The place is not known to the Angami but if found it is believed that the prints of the hand, knee and feet will be seen in front of the hole left by them when they emerged. (Hutton 6)

According to the latest findings no known person in any Angami villages who were interviewed seemed to know or is aware of the story which was recorded by Hutton. This myth has disappeared from the memory of the Angami and Chakesang people. Hutton also mentions that the Angami tribe is often narrated to have descended from two men, who came out of the Earth and is sometimes described as brothers. From the elder brother of the two descended the group of the Angamis known as *Kepepoma/Kepezoma* and through the younger descended the division of *Kepepfüma/ Kepevuma*.

Accordingly, the Angami is divided into two moiety-like segments- *Pepo* and *Pepfü* distinguished on the basis of terminological variations in the way they address mother and father. The *Pepo* address father as “*Apo*”, mother as “*Azo*” whereas the *Pepfü* address as “*Apvu*” and “*Apfü*” respectively. (Aier 23)

Whether the story of the two brothers is related to the story of Vadeo and Cievo is unknown but it is probable that the two brothers can somehow be Vadeo and Cievo. The story of these two men and the ancient tree that sprouted from the walking stick of Vadeo which is still found standing at Makhel village in Manipur towers the other stories of

migration. This story of migration remains popular among the Chakesang and the Angamis. Easterine Kire's *Son of the Thundercloud* shares similarity with the legend of Vadeo and Cievo. The complete form of this tradition was recorded by Anungla Aier in her book *Studies on Naga Oral Tradition*.

According to the narration recorded by her from an elder of Chozubza village (Chakesang), a woman was magically impregnated by a dark cloud. The name of the woman as well as the father of the child remains unknown. The place where she lived is also unknown. She named her son as Khaseo or Khüzüo which means the 'dark one'. Khaseo also had a son in turn and named him as Khuso. In the distant past, Khaseo and his son Khuso came from the downriver of Tizü. It was a very long and difficult journey and many lost their lives on the way. They finally came upon the *Tsüsüra* River, a tributary of *Tizü* River. Having reached the nearby mountain range called the *Rüunguzou Nasa*, Khuso came to the site of Khusomi village and established a village there and named it as Khusomi after his own name. (Aier 52)

Khuso had two sons and he named them Vadeo and Cieveo. The village began to prosper and grow big. *Khuso* sent his two sons to establish new villages. It was said that Vadeo went towards the Sapok-Makhel and Cieveo went towards Chukitong and became the ancestors of the Lothas. When they parted, the brothers made a pact to inform each other of their death by sending messengers. Vadeo said that he will send a fly and Cieveo said that he will send a bee. When Vadeo left his ancestral village Khusumi, he was given a cow, a cock and a stone plate called "*Khoroba*". He was told by his father that when he reaches the destined place for him to settle, the cock will crow and the cow will moo. After travelling some more they reached a particular place where all the signs as predicted by the father took place. So he stopped there and rested. It was in that moment when he heard a sound like the bubbling of water so he went to investigate and when he pushed his

walking stick to the ground, water gushed out from the underground. Finding water and the predicted signs all taking place, he felt that it was the right place and named the village as *Mükhiira* which means “Place of gurgling waters”.

After many years had passed, one day when Cieveo was preparing to go to the paddy field, a fly flew into his beer mug. This immediately brought to his mind about the pact that they had made before they parted ways. He understood the message that his brother Vadeo has sent the fly to inform him of his death. The fly symbolizing a messenger of death can be taken as indicative of the Angamis belief of the bee hovering about a person constantly to mean bad news coming on the way. Cieveo upon receiving the sign or message of his brother’s death called thirty warriors to visit his brother in Sapoh- Makhel. After paying his respects to his brother while they were returning back, they met with some warriors from Khusomi village who thought that they were enemies. So they chased them to a place near the meeting point of the Sedzü and Dzü-u River. Since it was already night Cieveo and his warriors climbed to a large tree that was growing near to the river bank. The men from Khusomi village waited for the morning. But when morning came, they discovered that Cieveo and all his men had already slipped away during the night. Till today this particular spot is called *Cieve küümüla* (place where Cieveo slipped away)

The Angami Nagas relate themselves more to this legend of migration of Vadeo. The story of finding new settlements taking the cow, cock, wooden seat, plate, basket and how he was instructed to wait for the right signs are all common themes in the narratives of the Chakesang, Angamis and Zeliang. Although the legend of Khezakeno is widely known among the Angamis, there are no direct references of Khezakeno as their original village. Unlike the Ao Nagas, who incorporate every prose into songs, the Angami Nagas along with the other tribes usually narrates myths and legends of origin and migration in a

normal narrative style. The Aos in comparison to the other Naga tribes accompanied every prose by singing songs that narrates of events which had occurred along the way.

Folksongs in Ao society constitute a performance beyond art for art's sake. They convey meaningfully situated historical narratives. (Kire 11)

The performances of songs which tell specific anecdotes of places, names, events as part of the migration narrative are considered proven verification of the truth of the event contained in the legend. The significant thing is that legends of this kind along with the origin stories and songs are wrapped up with notions of identity and are taken as proof of their identity affiliation.

Ooo Jhinaa kong na thongker

Tukong semraa tenka rauw-ona

Lakhu tong ko münur atsü teno na

Mipfü memütet süngkha rarr

Tsüngliyimti ko shanik zünik Teychiter

Atsu luring o na

Atsü talak nii.

(Translation)

Ooo...having reached the mountains of Jhina

Across thirty mountain ranges we came

Sitting on banana stems across the waters

People unknown came in many

At Chungliyimti portions of meat divided;

This is the story, forget this not. (Aier 62)

The myth of origin from stone is also found in the Angami village especially in Jakhama village. Based on the findings of Anungla Aier,

As told by our forefathers, men and animals all originated from a special stone at a place called *Kehoza*. According to the legend, this stone bears the footprints of men, animals from the infant stage to adulthood such as the marks of crawling, kneeling, standing erect were said to be seen in this stone of origin. The myth further tells that three ancestors *Lokio* (ancestors of *Tenyimia*), *Kotio* (ancestor of the Meithei, Manipur) and *kocheo* (ancestor of the plainsmen-Ahoms emerged from the stone and migrated to different directions. (Aier 36)

The narrators of this myth believed that the stone was located down the village near the river Kehoyü which lies between Kezoma and Jakhama village. The place and the stone were so revered that in the olden days annual rituals were performed at the site after the *Sekrenyi* festival. This myth of origin was so important to the people of Jakhama back then that the Deputy Commissioner of Kohima, C R Pawsey himself challenged the village folks saying that if they were able to find the stone and show him, he will exempt them from paying house tax. Unfortunately the stone could not be found as a huge landslide occurred around the vicinity from where the stone is located. Hence, the people of Jakhama unable to show the Deputy Commissioner the stone was made to pay their house tax. Earlier it was forbidden for anyone to go near this place without carrying any food offering and to this day some locals still carries food offering whenever they visit this site. (Aier 16)

The myth further tells us that after originating from the stone at Kehoza, the people migrated to a place called Phezu near Viswema village. From there they shifted again and settled at Viswema village. A warrior by the name of Vikene was sent by village elders to defend the village and so he settled at Pheyozhu and later established a settlement there. According to one person name Zarhol from the same village, a different story was narrated to the interviewer. He states that from Kezoma, people migrated to a place called Voküpfühü, the people of Kehoza went to Phezü, located somewhere below Viswema village.

Beside the myth of autochthonous origin from stones and below the ground, there is also myth of origin from the east. This kind of myth is more common and more widespread than the myth of autochthonous origin. On the basis of various researches and studies done on the Naga oral society and their origin, it was found that the belief that their ancestor came from the east is very clearly asserted. The big problem with the narration is that, there is no mention of any particular places or landmarks. The folklore of the Nagas also do not mention of any particular place in the course of migration from the east. The Phom and Lotha tradition tells of places like Pongngaihung (Phom) Konaho Phonglan (Lotha) respectively which are supposed to be somewhere in the Himalayan region. The Chang and the Konyak people who claimed that they originated from Changsang Mongdi and Alemkaphen, is also said to be in the east. Among the Chakesang and the Angamis, the story of Hedzüma is believed to be the place from where their ancestor originated. We can find this myth of origin even recorded in the book of Shürhozelie '*U Tsiephumia Rüve*.

Hedzüira or *Whetzüira* as some others call it, was a village lying somewhere in the north east. It was a place where the earth and the sky meet. There is a gaping hole at the meeting point of the earth and the sky because the sky is unable to cover the entire length

of the earth. Due to this gaping hole, it was believed that the hole emitted strong and freezing wind. The people living in *Whedzūma* ages abnormally fast due to the strong wind. It was said that a father who marries off his daughter is hardly able to recognise her next year.

Amidst the variation in the myths and legends of origin and migration, it has been found that most of the Naga tribes associate themselves with the legend of Khezakenoma. For the Angami Nagas however, the legend of Vadeo and the migration from Makhel gain prominence in regard to their tradition of migration. As stated in the previous chapter of the thesis, the Angami Nagas are usually associated with the Dyaks of Borneo and the Igorots of Philippines based on their technique and style of agricultural activity. As far as language is concerned, most rely on the fact that the Nagas speak a variation of Tibeto-Burman languages. Anungla Aier in quoting Robbins Burling, (2007) states that,

neither language nor ethnicity is fixed. They are not glued firmly for eternity. They always change. They are constructed, negotiated, and revised...We do not know how and when the Tibeto-Burman languages reached the north-eastern region, or how the daughter languages diverged and spread. Still linguists usually assume that each language has a single line of antecedents... therefore asking where a language comes from makes sense. (102)

The myth of origin and the legends of migration are the two most important attributes of Naga oral tradition associated with the perception of identity. Though these myths have gone through several layers of social filters in the process of transmission, it cannot be denied that they continued to remain as one of the most authentic sources which could give information to the people's cultural past. These stories of origin and migration are strongly imprinted in the memory of the people and much importance is given in its preservation and transmission. The identity label 'Naga' which was given to

them by the colonialist is a colonial construct and the evidence of it can be seen in their oral tradition and their folklores. The word 'Naga' carries no meaning for any tribal groups and as such does not identify them. The term 'Angami' itself is a name given to the villagers of Khonoma by the Zeliang and as such it does not represent the entire Angami village.

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