CHAPTER ONE

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

On 1 December, 1963, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the President of India inaugurated Nagaland, the sixteenth state of the Indian Union at Kohima. The state is situated in the North-Eastern corner of India. It is bounded by Assam all along its west from north to south, Manipur in the south, Burma on the east and Arunachal Pradesh on the northern side of the eastern border (Ghosh, 1982). Nagaland, the smallest state at that time, with a population of little above five lakhs people, was formed by the Government of India in 1960. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had announced on 1 August, 1960, in the Lok Sabha that his Government had decided to create a new state within the Indian Union, known as Nagaland because the Nagas had been longing and struggling for some sort of autonomy for years (Elwin, 1997). “India”, Nehru said again, “achieved her independence thirteen years ago and the Nagas are as independent as other Indian citizens. We have not the slightest desire to interfere in the tribal customs and usage of the Nagas or in their distinctive way of life” (Elwin, 1997, p. 1). To affirm his stand he further said, “our policy has always been to give the fullest autonomy and opportunity of self-development to the Naga people, without interfering in any way in their internal affairs or way of life” (Ramunny, 1988, p. 1).

Nagaland has an area of 16,579 square kilometer. It is the third smallest state of the country in area, after Sikkim and Goa. It has one of the most beautiful terrains among the Indian states. The hills are not only beautiful and picturesque but also fertile and full of resources (Singh, 1987). The Naga Hills are inhabited by several tribes who are collectively called the Nagas (Shimmi, 1988). They inhabit the present state of Nagaland, parts of Manipur, Assam, the north-eastern parts of Arunachal Pradesh, the Somra tract.
and neighboring Myanmar (Lotsüro, 2000). Nagaland with its rich diverse cultures and festivities of its various tribes and sub-tribes is distinct from other states.

1.1 TOPOGRAPHY AND HABITATION

The topography of Nagaland is just like any other mountainous state with high hills, sharp edges, with deep and narrow gorges. As Joshi (2001) described, “it is endowed with rich natural flora and fauna, lush green hills and valleys, rivers, …with many rich resources like forest, minerals, fertile soil, abundant rainfall, moderate cool climate etc” (p. 4). Except a few hundred square kilometers of the plains in Dimapur, Naginimara, and Tijit area; the foot-hills of Chumukedima, Borjan Colliery to Dikhu valley and several other valleys of the river-beds like Ghaspani (Medziphema), Baghty, Bhandari etc (Sen, 1987), the entire state is hilly and mountainous. The terrain of Nagaland can be sub-divided into three: (i) high hill-ranges in the east, (ii) medium high hill-ranges in immediate zone, and (iii) outer foothill areas in the west.

High mountains and deep valleys are special characteristics of the state. The Naga Hills in general is limited by Patkai Bum in the North-East, Barail Range in the South-West, Saramati Range on the East (Sen, 1987). The Barail range enters the state from North-Cachar and after passing through Kohima runs in the direction of Wokha. Japava (Japfu) which lies to the south of Kohima is the highest peak of Barail Range and attains a height of 3,804 metres above the sea level (Hussain, 1988). The Patkai range constitutes the international boundary between India and Burma (Hussain, 1988). The hills are gradually decreased on the West of Nagaland and meet with the plains of the state of Assam (Sen, 1987). There are seven mountain-peaks in Nagaland. Mount Saramati, in Kiphire district, with a height of 12,598 feet is the highest peak in the state which is situated on the Burma-Nagaland border. Mount Japfü situated in Kohima district has a height of 9,890 feet. Mount Ezupu has a height of 9,320 feet. Mount Kapu with 9,315 feet is another mountain peak. Mount Paona with 9,150 feet, Mount Zephu
with 8,408 feet and Mount Kapamesu with 7,964 feet are the other mountain peaks. The altitudes vary between 914 metres and 3,048 metres above sea level (Saleh, 1989). Nagaland is situated approximately between 25º 11’55” and 27º2’10” North Latitude and between 93º0’20” and 95º17’10” East Longitude (Sen, 1987).

In the beginning the Nagas did not choose the hot, damp and malaria infested low-lying areas and valleys for human habitations. They preferred hills tops as places for village settlements because of strategic reasons (Hussain, 1988). They built their houses on the hill-tops due to fear of their enemies so that they could observe the positions of their enemies to take suitable action against them. This type of natural settings has a great bearing on the population distribution in Nagaland particularly in the extreme eastern part adjoining Myanmar, which is less developed and inaccessible due to formidable physical terrain.

1.2 RIVERS

Nagaland is blessed with a number of rivers and streams and they run in a serpentine manner. Dhansiri, Doyang, Dikhu, Milak, Zungki and Tizu are the main rivers of Nagaland (Hussain, 1988), among a number of other minor rivers and they play a significant role in the economy of the state. They flow either into Brahmaputra in the west in Assam or into the Chindwin in the east in Myanmar. No rivers of Nagaland flow directly into the sea (Nagaland, 2001). Of these, Dhansiri, Doyang and Dikhu flow towards west and fall into the Brahmaputra, while the Tizu river flows towards the east and south-east and joins the Irrawady in Myanmar (Venuh, 2005). Most of the small rivers and streams dry up during winter while during monsoon period they discharge large quantities of water.

The Dhansiri (Temeki) river forms a natural boundary between Nagaland and North Cachar Hills of Assam and joins another river Doyang from Nagaland near
The rivers that join the Dhansiri are the Intangki, the Monglumak, the Amaluma, the Diphu and the Dzüdza (Nagaland, 2001). The Doyang is the largest and the longest river of the state, originating from the Barail Range near Mao (Imnayongsang, 1990) and in terms of utility it is the most important river in the state. It is formed by two rivers that run parallel in the upper part of Doyang- the Dzüü and the Sidzü rivers. The Dzüü river has its source from Japfü peak and flows towards the north before it joins the Sidzü river below Kijümetouma. The Sidzü river originates from Mao Gap and flows in a north-west direction towards Chakhabama, later it joins the Dzüü river and then becomes known as the Doyang river. The river Doyang flows in a northerly direction and receives tributaries from Zunheboto and Mokokchung districts (Nagaland, 2001). Venuh (2005) wrote,

> The river drains the inhabited areas of different Naga groups, sometimes forming itself a boundary for different tribal territories. In the south, it passes through the Angami territory and flows towards the eastern edge of the Rengma territory. Moving northwards, it enters the Sema area and then flows through the Lotha territory. It passes through a great part of the Lotha territory and after flowing towards the south-west for a few kilometers finally falls into the Dhansiri in Golaghat district of Assam (p. 3).

Before it emerges out of Nagaland the Doyang is joined by two tributaries- the Chubi and the Chudi rivers. The Chubi drains the south-west area of Mokokchung district and the Chudi drains almost the whole of the Rengma area (Nagaland, 2001). The Tsurang river flows through the valley of Changki near the boundary between Mokokchung and Wokha districts and joins the Brahmaputra. The Milak river, which is known as Jhanzi in Assam, has its source at Mokokchung and passes through the Tuli range. An important
tributary of Milak is Tsurong. It rises east of Lakhuni village and joins Milak. (Imnayongdang, 1990).

The Dikhu originates from the central part of Nagaland near the Nuhuto Hill under Zunheboto district. It is known as Longa or Nanga to the Semas and as Tsula to the Aos. It enters the Ao area west of Longsa village, then it flows northward forming a natural boundary between the Ao area on the one hand and the Sangtam, the Phom and the Konyk area on the other (Imnayongdang, 1990). It has two main tributaries namely, Nanung and Yanyo; one from Kuthur above Tuensang town and the other from the Konyak region. The tributary Yangu, flows between the territories of Phoms and Konyaks. The Tiru and Tizit rivers lie in the wettest parts of Nagaland and thereby produce two middle sized rivers namely the Tiru and the Safrai rivers. The Tizit river has its source in the northernmost point of Nagaland in Mon district and flows in the Tizit valley until it enters Assam at Namsa (Nagaland, 2001).

In the eastern part of Nagaland, the Tizu river is important as the Doynag is important on the other side. Originating in the mid-eastern side of the state, Tizu joins Chindwin of Burma. On its way Tizu is fed by Zungki which in turn is fed by Tsohyemung and Langnyu (Ghosh, 1982). The Zungki, the biggest tributary of Tizu river begins from the north-eastern part of Chendong forest and flows towards Noklak, Shamator and Kiphire till it finally joins Tizu river below Kiphire (Nagaland, 2001). The Likimro, another tributary of the Tizu river has its source at the Saramati mountain. The Lanye river takes its origin from the north Henopong forest in Tuensang district and flows towards Phek and finally joins the Likimro river. The Tizu river with its tributaries pass the mountainous region into Myanmar where it flows into the Chindwin river (Nagaland, 2001).
1.3 GEOLOGY

Literature on the geology of Nagaland is scanty. The rocks of this region, geologically speaking, are comparatively young about 140 million years old (Ghosh, 1982). According to the geo-scientists of various departments, the north-eastern region of the country was under ocean which existed between India and Burma, and the land which now joins India and Burma did not exist that time but came up much later. Marine deposition took place on that sea floor layer after layer and now we have the sandstone, slate and limestone formation (Imnayongdang, 1990). Recently some mammal fossils of about twenty million years have also been found by Geological Survey of India, North-Eastern Region (Sen, 1987). Coal, oil and gas, cromite, nickel, iron ore, lime-stone, base-metal, are the mineral wealth of Nagaland. Coal has been located in the several regions of Mokokchung district, and oil and gas in the foot-hills of Wokha district of Nagaland.

1.4 CLIMATE

Nagaland has a typical monsoon climate ranging from tropical to temperate condition. Over the foothills it is warm and humid, and that over the high hills it is cool and temperate or moderate climate. In December, January and February the coldest months in the year, the night temperature comes down between 4° c to 0° c. Over 75% of the total rainfall in the state occurs during the rainy season mid-June to mid-October. The average annual rainfall varies from 150 cm to 280 cm and the temperature varies from 0° c in winter to about 35° c in summer (Imnayongdang, 1990). The summer and winter temperature over the hills vary from 5° to 25° and those over the foothills have a range between 12° to 32° (Venuh, 2005). There are four distinct weather conditions in Nagaland namely, winter, pre-monsoon, monsoon and retreating monsoon. According to Changkija (2006), the climatic condition ranges from wet-tropical in the plains, subtropical in the middle and temperate in the high hills of monsoon with excessive rainfall.
The coldest month is January in which frost falls in Aghunato, Zunehboto, Phek, Wokha, Pfutsero etc. towns and several other places. Spring and autumn are nominal and short-lived (Ghosh, 1982). The pre-monsoon rains in Nagaland occur in the later parts of April. They are highly beneficial which help in the sowing of cereal and vegetable crops in the *jhum* fields. Most of the monsoon rainfall is wasted in runoff and there is much soil erosion as the region is hilly with steep slopes. Thus topography and soil erosion are mainly responsible for agricultural backwardness of the state (Imnayongdang, 1990). In general the climate of Nagaland is healthy and invigorating except in the low-lying plains that adjoin the hills.

1.5 FLORA AND FAUNA

Nagaland bears testimony to the presence of large varieties of flora and fauna as great part of her Hills is still covered with evergreen monsoon forests. There are varieties of plants in the mountain ranges as in some of the South American countries where the green vegetation is thickly grown. Despite the state being mountainous, having heavy rainfall and the land being subjected to destructive method of traditional shifting cultivation it is still an ideal home for many species of flora. But the unmindful and unlawful felling down of trees and clearing of forests for habitation and burning jungles for cultivation in recent times have caused the extinction of many protected and valuable species. Nowhere, in fact, is there much timber still remaining except in the bottom of the river valleys and on the summits of the hills (Allen, 2002). In Nagaland, there are species which grow continuously without any dormant period. For example, the *alders* (*Alnus Nepalesis*) of Nagaland and some *Cedrellas* outgrow even the fastest growing *Eucalyptus*. (Nagaland, 2001). The soil and climate of Kiphire, Pungro, Chansang and Saramati ranges are favourable for the growth of Rhododendron and a group of high diversity plants like herbs and shrubs. The land is blessed with abundance of edible and medicinal plants and fruits. Wild varieties of vegetables, grapes, apple, lemon, bananas,
walnut, mangoes, fig, mulberry, cherry, sour and bitter fruits and a host of other indigenous fruits are found.

Other important plant species found in the hills are oak, chestnut, birch, magnolia, laurel, bonsum, gamari, hollock, koroi, khokan, peepul, creepers, cactus, cotton, etc. Rice, maize, wheat, millet, gram, mustard, potato, tapioca, pineapple, apple, sugar-cane, apricot, plantain, chilies, etc are grown here in large quantity (Sen, 1987). Tea grows all along the low northern slopes at the foot of the Barail (Yonuo, 1984). A good variety of plants bearing beautiful flowers is a usual sight in Nagaland especially in Dzuku valley. Different varieties of orchids found in Nagaland attract tourists. It is learnt that the rare Shiroi Lily (Lilum Shirohi) is found only in the Shiroi Mountain in Nagaland while the bamboo Pstenoatachium (Dzüli) is found only in Nagaland and the tallest Rhododendron in the world (108’8’’) is found in Mt.Japfü (Nagaland, 2001).

Fauna of any region is of great importance so far as the ecological life is concerned. It is true that the source of all animal life is plants. Even today many parts of Nagaland is covered by thick forests and jungles and hence it is a home for many wild animals, birds and reptiles. Nagaland, however, in due course of time has given way for de-forestation instead of afforestation. On account of indiscriminate hunting in the forests including in the wild life sanctuaries namely, Intanki national wild life sanctuary, there has been a rapid depletion of wild life in the state. The free use of gun in the state is being another reason for the extinction of different species.

Nagaland has a combination of the sib-Himalayan, Indian, Chinese and Burmese types of fauna (Singh, 1994). The fauna consists of Bos frontalis (Mithun) which is semi-domesticated animal (Sen, 1987). Animals like wild elephants, buffalo, tiger, bison, barking deer, swamp deer, four horned antelope, pangolin, flying fox, sambar, leopard, monkey, jackal, wild pig, wild bear, wild dog, wild cat, golden cat, porcupine, giant, monitor, rats, otter, langur, badger, etc are found in the forests of Nagaland. Reptiles like
Indian python, Chinese green, tree viper, eastern green mamba, (Venuh, 2005), and other snakes include rat snakes, grass snakes and cobras, lizards and toads are also common in Nagaland. The best species of birds like the partridge, nightjar, warbler, robin, quail, woodpecker, hornbill, pheasant, swift, hawk, crow, snipe and wag-tails are found in the higher altitudes (Singh, 1994). Other birds include the myna, cuckoo, sparrow, sunbird parrot, vulture, skylark, owl, eagle, hornbill (gray and black), jungle fowl etc. There is an extensive use of animal hide and skin, skulls, tusks and feathers for ornamentation and decoration (Singh, 1994). The hunting of the famous hornbill bird is associated with magic and also for decoration purposes (Sen, 1987). The bird tragopan is found in Kohima and Phek districts whereas elephant is found in Mokokchung, Wokha, Mon and Kohima districts (Venuh, 2005). Due to lack of lakes and wetlands and being mountainous, water birds and water animals are not very abundant in the state. A notable feature is that the Shiloi lake at the foot of the Saramati mountain attracts migrating birds from Siberia on their way to lakes in Manipur and Myanmar (Nagaland, 2001).

1.6 ORIGIN AND MIGRATION

History bears testimony to great achievements of civilizations that flourished from time immemorial. As in the case of civilizations attempts to trace the origin and history of every race and tribe arouse curiosity in the minds of people. It is often done with the help of unwritten records like stories, folklore, hymns, signs and symbols and scarce written materials, artefacts etc. There is no land in the world that has not witnessed migrations and settlements. For example no one can claim India as a land of the Hindus as claimed by some Hindu fanatics. The Muslims and Christians have been accused of having their roots in some foreign lands and as such being the agents of disunity and cause of disharmony in the country. One cannot forget the fact that India had a long history of migrations starting from the Aryans who crossed over from Central Asia and settled in India. It is evident from the words of Wolpert (1989),
Around 2000 B.C. the original Indo-European-speaking, semi nomadic barbarians, who most probably lived in the region between the Caspian and the Black seas, were driven from their homeland by some natural disaster, possibly drought, prolonged frost, or plague. Whatever the cause of their dispersion,...the ancestors of the Italic-, Greek-, Germanic-, English-, Celtic-, Iranian-, Sanskritic-, and modern Hindi-speaking peoples were forced to flee from southern Russia to survive. These tribes moved in every direction, splitting up into smaller, more cohesive units, driving their herds of cattle, sheep, goats, and domesticated horses with them, and opening a new chapter in the history of Europe, as well as of India,...by about 1500 B.C., however, they (Indo-Iranians) appear to have split once more, and pastoral tribes known to history as the Indo-Aryans, or simply Aryans, advanced still further east, across the perilous Hindu Kush Mountains, into India (p. 24).

Jha (1977) is of the opinion that Sanskrit, Latin, Greek, Germanic (German, English, Swedish, etc), Slav (Russian, Polish, etc.) and Romance (Italian, Spanish, French, Rumanian, etc.) languages belong to the Aryan family. The scholars have named this language group as Indo-European or Indo-German language group (Chaudhuri, 1993). On the basis of similarity between these languages, it has been postulated that the original Aryans had a common homeland located most likely in the great steppe land stretching from Poland to central Asia. From this region Aryans may have migrated to different parts of Europe and Asia (Jha, 1977). The overwhelming majority opinion of the historians is that the Aryans as a people had migrated into India. After they had entered the Punjab- the ‘land of the five rivers’ or ‘of the seven rivers’, they moved in a south-easterly direction (Smith, 1990).
1.6.1 RACES IN INDIA

India is a land of mixed races and communities. She represents unity in diversity from the North to the South and from the East to the West. It is quite amazing for an outsider to wonder at this incredible unity characterized by India along the past twenty centuries or more. There are a number of theories on existing races in India that have been expounded by scholars. Chief among the scholars are Sir Herbert Risley who classified the races in India into seven groups; while Dr. J. H. Hutton grouped them into eight. The latest view, however, generally accepted by all today, has been put forward by Dr. B. S. Guha, the former director of the Anthropological Survey of India, in his book *Racial Elements in the Population*. According to him, the six main races came to India are 1. Negrito, 2. Proto-Australoid, 3. Mongoloid, 4. Mediterranean, 5. Western Brachycephale and 6. Nordic (Mahajan,). He has classified the Mongoloids into three sub-groups, namely, {i} the Palaeo-Mongoloids of long-headed, {ii} the Palaeo-Mongoloids of broad-headed and {iii} the Tibeto-Mongoloids. The Nagas in India don’t have any affinity with other races of India, except the Mongoloids. Mahajan (1993) wrote, “they were the most ancient stratum of the population and formed a dominant element in the tribes living in Assam and the Indo-Burmese frontiers” (p. 45).

1.6.2 INDIA AND THE NAGAS

The Nagas of the past did not have written records and chronicles until the British came. Many of the British administrators to the North-East particularly to this Hilly region were writers. The scanty information we have of the Naga society in the pre-British period does not throw much credible light to the past few centuries. Hence the fact about origin, migration and settlement of the Nagas, remains much in obscurity. There are many interesting myths regarding the absence of written records among the Nagas. One of them is that at the beginning of creation God gave the knowledge of reading and writing both to the hill man as well as the plainsman. The plainsman was given paper to
write upon while the hill man was given skin. The hill man devoured the skin when he found it edible. As a result, the Nagas have no record of their past (Joshi, 2001)

The Nagas live in North East India. They are a group of tribes racially and culturally distinct from other tribal groups living in North-Eastern India (D Souza, 2001). They are an Indo-Mongoloid folk, divided into many major tribes, speaking languages and dialects more than double the number of tribes (Alemchiba, 1970). The scholars have traced the survival of different group of people in South-East Asia, who speak Austric or Mon-Khmer languages and have Mongoloid characteristics. So also in India, the Khasis, Nagas and Meitei and the people of the Nicobar Islands are distinguishable from the Negroids of the Andamans and Dravids of the mainland.

1.6.3 MEANING OF THE TERM ‘NAGA’

The term ‘Naga’ appears to have been given by others and not by the Nagas. Imchen (1993) is of the view that it was not used by the Nagas until the advent of the British, for each tribe or village in some cases was a sovereign independent state known as the Aos, Semas, Angamis, Konyaks, etc. They were not called as Ao Naga, or Angami Naga. Each tribe is known by a name. For example, the Aos were known as Aor; while the Angamis as Tenyimi; the Semas as Sumi and the Lothas as Kyon. All the other tribes, whether in Burma, Arunachal, Manipur, Assam, or Nagaland, have their own distinct name (Sema, 1986). While Horam (1974) describes, the Angami tribe as Tenyimia; the Sema tribe as Semi; the Rengma tribe as Mezama; the Lhotha tribe as Chizima; the Chang tribe as Mochumi; the Sangtam tribe as Lophomi; the Yachimi tribe as Yamsongar; the Konyak tribe as Taprongumi; the Ao tribe as Metikumi; the Mao tribe as Sopomi, and so on. The word, mi, ma, mia- all mean ‘people’ in the various Naga dialects. Alemchiba (1970) quotes V. Elwin, “even as late as 1954 I found the people of Tuensang rarely speaking of themselves as Nagas but as Konyaks, Chhangs, Phoms and so on,…gradually, however, as the Nagas became more united they began to use the
name for themselves” (p. 24). In Burma the Khiamungan, the Tikhir, the Chirr, and Mokori form a sizable number of population. These four tribes and some Pochuri villages were collectively called Kalyo Kengyu by the British. Khiamungans are a major tribe in Nagaland but majority of them lives on the Burma side. Lotha (2007) wrote, “at present, Tikir, Chirr and Makori are considered ‘sub-tribes’ of Yimchunger tribe. The majority of the Makori live on the Burmese side but in Nagaland, they are considered a ‘sub-tribe’ of Yimchunger” (p. 2). Some of the tribes form together and are known by a new name. For example the tribe Zeliang-Rong is a combination of Zemi, Liangmai and Rongmai tribes living in a compact area. Similarly, Chakhesang is a composition of three tribes, namely Chakru, Kheza and Sangtam (Sema, 1986). According to Horam (1974) even the present tribal names, like Angami, Ao, Lhotha, Sema and Tangkhul seem to have been coined by outsiders most probably by the British administrators. In many cases these tribes existed in complete isolation. Their contact with one another was restricted to head-hunting and frequent warfare (Sema, 1986). Imchen (1993) concluded that the term ‘Naga’ came into common usage during British rule and became more evident during the rise of the Naga Club (NC) in 1918, and subsequently, at the formation of the Naga National Council (NNC) as a united Naga political institution in February 1946.

Many authors have defined the term ‘Naga’ but all in diverse ways. Namo (1987) wrote, ‘the word ‘Naga’ is derived from a Burmese word ‘Na-ka’ meaning ‘earring’ (Na-Ear and Ka-Ring). The Burmese still call us ‘Naka’. Even before our ancestors migrated from Burma to present Nagaland, they as a distinct tribe, were called Nakas or Nagas in the present form” (p. 17). Piercing of the ear-lobes is a widespread practice among the Naga tribes. A. Z. Phizo, the legendary Naga leader also maintained that the Burmese word, ‘Naka’, is the origin of the word ‘Naga’. Perhaps the Burmese word
‘Naka’ became ‘Naga’ due to either phonetic perversion or when it was used in Roman script.

According to Maitra (1991) the word ‘Naga’ has been derived from the Sanskrit word ‘Nagna’ which means ‘naked.’ Of course it is true that in the earlier days Nagas in the remote areas of the state used to put on scanty clothes. Many, however, agree to the view that the origin of the word Naga is associated with the Assamese people as they are the immediate neighbours of the Nagas. In Assamese, the word *Noga* means ‘naked’. They use this word even today for the Nagas. Throughout Assamese literature one finds the use of this word (Sema, 1986). Similarly, quoting from J. H. Hutton’s book ‘Angami Nagas,’ Chutia (2002, May 9) wrote, “the word ‘Naga’ has been given all sorts of derivation, the most probable explanation of it is that it is merely of a European lengthening of the Assamese ‘Naga’ (pronounces *noga*) means naked” (p. 4).

The general belief is that the name was given by Aryans to mean naked hill people. It is a fact that the word ‘Naga’ remained a terror to the Aryan -speaking Assamese for ages. Quoting from E. A. Gait, Imchen (1993) suggests, “the word known to the Assamese seems to be derived from *Nok*, folk, in some local dialects. Thus *onok*, we; *nenok*, you (plural) *parnok*, they meaning, we people, you people, those people, etc. found in the Ao dialect” (p. 16). The Bengali word, *Nangta*, with the meaning ‘crude and barbarous’ is also associated with the word ‘Naga’ (Imchen, 1993). According to Philip (1983), “nok in the Ao language is dao—a sharp, long knife used for head hunting,…and also an implement of daily work. ‘Ka’ means ‘to have’. Hence the word ‘Naga’ may have derived from the words of ‘nok-ka’ meaning ‘a man with a dao’” (p. 5). While Thong (1997) described, “the head-hunters inhabiting the hilly regions between the Brahmaputra river in India and the Chindwin river in Myanmar (Burma); who practice rituals with the head of their victims are called ‘Nagas’, which was originally derived from the word ‘Naüga’ as expressed by the Cachari King Dima of Dimapur” (p. 3).
word Naga according to the interpretation of some Manipuris from the valley is derived from ‘Nag’ which means ‘Jewel’ and hence the Nagas are called the Jewels of the Hills (Horam, 1974). It is evident, therefore, from the views of different writers that the origin and meaning of the word ‘Naga’ is more speculative than authentic.

1.6.4 MIGRATION AND RECORDED HISTORY OF THE NAGAS

One of the features of every tribe is to trace their origin lest they remain in obscurity. The Nagas, too, try to identify their roots through their own myths and stories; and written and unwritten sources. From the available remnants of ornaments, tools and cutleries one can only presume the possibilities of their whereabouts in the past. It appears that the Nagas living in the North East have come from outside the region. Daili-Mao (1992) wrote,

Most of the scholars believe that that originally Naga people came from central Asia. These people of central Asia were known as the non-Chinese Chinang Tribes and Barbarous. They first came to north-west border of China many centuries before the Christian era and later on these tribes spread over to China, Indonesia, Philippines, Bhutan, Burma, other South-East Asian countries and to the present Naga Hills/land (p. 12).

This is evident from the fact that the Nagas bear similarity with some tribal group such as Dyaks and Koyans of Indo-Chinese countries because their social customs and culture resemble the latter (Singh, 1981). According to Kaka D. Iralu, based on the oral traditions and legends which are corroborated by written documents of their neighbours who had learned the art of writing long before them, the Nagas came from southern China. Iralu (2010, June 2) wrote,

The Nagas, Kachins and Karens are considered as blood brothers who came in the same migratory wave from southern China during the
building of the Great Wall of China (403-221 B.C.). Their forefathers probably ran away from the forced labor that was used for building the wall. The Chinese have a word for the Nagas which means ‘The runaway people.’ Before these events, their forefathers along with the Kachins and Karens migrated from Mongolia along with the other Mongolian Asian races in 2617 B.C and entered the Yunan Province of China in 1385 B.C. This was after their migration across Turkistan and Tibet (p. 6).

Various ornaments and weapons used by the Nagas have similarity with that of the people from outside the North East. For example, Raatan (2006) is of the view that their love of marine shells points to a past settlement near the sea, their spears with ornamental barb curling outward from a shaft suggests some relationship with the residents of the Philippine Islands and Indonesian people. While Alemchiba (1970) is of the opinion that some places in the said areas bearing similar names like ‘Naga’ and ‘Nabas’ of Philippines, ‘Naka’ of Malaya, ‘Naiga’ of Burma, ‘Nagreg’ of Java Island, etc, suggest cultural and physical similarities among these people.

There are conflicting stories regarding the origin, migration and settlement of the Nagas. Hence it is difficult to say with precision when the Nagas entered the North-East. Dr. S. K. Chatterjee, a writer and scholar is of the opinion that the Mongoloids made their entry by 10th century B.C; when the Veda books were compiled. Their earlier history, however, remains obscure. Anand (1980) observed that the Nagas belonged to the Indo-Mongoloid group and spoke the Tibeto-Burman dialects of the Sino-Tibetan family. Their earliest presence appeared to have been noted in Yajurveda about a thousand years before Christ when the Vedas were compiled. The Yajurveda mentions the tribal group that occupied the North-East-particularly North Eastern Frontier Area (NEFA), Nagaland, Manipur and Burma as ‘Kirata’. Sunguist (2001) wrote, “Elwin traces Nagas’ origin back to the northwest part of China. They migrated during the
conflict between the Chinese and Tartars in the 13th and 14th centuries” (p. 581), from the Sikiang Province in China and crossed the Brahmaputra river west-wards.

The routes these immigrant tribes took were different. Sanyu (1996) wrote, “some took the Himalayan section which extends down through the Patkai, Arakan Yoma, and Banda Arch towards Sumatra and Java, and some took the Pacific section which extends from Formosa through the Philippines, Borneo and on to Japan” (p. 11). According to Singh (1987) different Naga tribes came to Nagaland after crossing the Irawaddi and the Chindwin rivers of Burma. Some of the allied tribes of the Nagas like Caren, Shan, Chin, Singpho and others who had come from the western China settled in Burma.

Yonuo (1984) is of the opinion that the Nagas came to Nagaland and Manipur sometime between the last century B. C. and the beginning of the Christian era from the modern Yunnan through Burma. It is from there they moved to Tibet to Assam and then entered the Naga Hills. The Royal Chronicles of Manipur recorded by King Meidingu Nongda Lairen Phakhamba of Manipur mention about Naga Haochang village of Kabui (Impui) Nagas around 33-150 A. D. Another mention of the same village was later made by the Manipuri king Ningthourel Lamba during his reign around 662-762 A. D (Nuh, 2002). So the Nagas must have occupied the land at about the beginning of Christian era. Their migration might have been caused by the need for more agricultural land. The other factor which added to this migration within Asia was the expansion of the Chinese Han people pushing southwards as population grew in the cradle area in the valley of the Yellow River (Sanyu, 1996). So from these above descriptions and presumptions one can conclude that the Nagas were a Mongolian stock that migrated from China before the Christian era through the Patkai range and got settled in different areas of the present Naga Hills.
Sanyu (1996) quotes Huang Tsang, (the Chinese pilgrim who visited Assam during Bhaskarvarma’s rule in 645 A. D.) that “the east of this country is bounded by a line of hills, so that there is no great city to the kingdom. The frontiers are contiguous to the barbarians of south-west China. These tribes are in fact akin to those of the Man people in their customs” (P. 7). In the Buranjis or chronicles of Assam the Nagas are not referred to by their tribal or modern names. They are usually described by the broad name ‘Naga’ (Barpujari, 2003). However, nothing much is known about the history of the Nagas prior to the advent of the Ahoms to Assam in 1228. With the gradual establishment of the Ahom kingdom, the Ahoms came into contact with the Ao, the Lotha and the Rengma Nagas who were closer to Assam (Barpujari, 2003). Ahom Buranjees also recorded that by the time the Ahoms came to Assam in the thirteenth century, Nagas were already settled in Naga Hills.

1.7 SETTLEMENT

The history of how the Naga tribes came precisely to occupy their present places has yet to be established, (Alemchiba, 1970), as there are incompatible legends, theories and claims of migration by various writers and tribes. However, study of those legends and traditions reveal that the area had been peopled by successive waves of immigrants from different directions. Yonuo (1984) wrote,

Yet, it looks possible that the first wave of migrants were the Maos (Shipoumai), Angamis, Semas, Rengmas, Rongmai and Lothas who moved from the south through the mountain-fringes touching the valley of Manipur to the north. Then, they settled down at Makhripfù, a village in Mao area near the hills of Japfu. After living there for some years, Shipoumai, now better called Maos, settled permanently down in this area where Maharmai or Marams closely allied to Meiteis also came in latterly, whereas the rest went through different directions to different
places where the Angamis, Semas, Rengmas, Chakhesangs, Zeliangrongts and Lothas are today,…the second wave of immigrants comprised the Aos, Changs, Kheinmunghans, Sangtams, Yimchungers and Tangkhuls. They are believed to have migrated from Thangdut, near the Chindwin river in Burma by different routes and in different times. The Konyak Nagas came to their present hills from the north-east of Burma. The Aos’ migration route is believed to be from Burma through the Tangkhul, Chakhesang and Tuensang areas to the present Ao villages,…thus, all of the Naga tribes came to settle in their respective hills and mountains (p. 39).

It is clear that the migration of Nagas did not take place at one time. It must have continued for some years or centuries before they came to settle down in their present places in India and Burma. Perhaps the break-up into different tribes must have taken place not only in the present habitat but also on the way to their settlement. Sema (1986) wrote, “the above view is substantiated by the present location of tribes like the Konyaks, Phoms, Changs, Sangtams, Kheimungans, Yimchungers, and especially that of Konyaks and Kheimungans. These tribes are still living in places in Burma which are adjacent to Nagaland” (p. 5). Various oral traditions, folklore, legendary sources and writings by well known authors also support this view.

Khezhakenoma appears to be an important migration route of many of the tribes living in Nagaland. Various traditions speak that Nagas lived there for years before their departure to other places for settlement. Sema (1986) wrote, “according to a legend, the Aos went first and were followed by the Lothas and the Semas. After them came the Rengmas, the Angamis and the Chakhesangs” (p. 5). In the words of Hutton (1969), “the Angamis, the Aos, the Lothas and the Semas, they say, are descended from four
brothers” (p. 18). The oral tradition about this village, however, is quite confusing as the interpretations do not match.

1.8 DIALECT

The Nagas have a number of dialects. The language of the Indo-Mongoloid people belongs to Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese speech-family except the Khasis and the Jaintias. These languages have been classified into two groups namely Tibeto-Burman and Siamese-Chinese. All the Naga dialects are included in the former group. These dialects, not only they vary from tribe to tribe, and hill range to range, but also from village to village in some areas. The inter-village feuds and existence of many tribes also undoubtedly contributed to the rise of different dialects.

The Nagas do not have a script of their own. Sema (1986) wrote, “each tribe has a separate dialect and often some tribes have two to three dialects. For example, the Aos have four dialects- Mongsen, Chungli, Changki and Merinokpu” (p. 12). Among these, Chungli is accepted as the mother-tongue of the Aos. The Nagas have adopted the Roman script. According to one oral tradition the Nagas had their own script written in an animal skin, but they cooked it by mistake and ate it up. Another legend says it was the dog that ate the skin in the absence of its master (Imchen, 1993). English is the official language of the state, however, Nagamese, a broken form of Assamese, plays as a lingua-franca among the Nagas.

1.9 SOCIETY

The Naga society is an aggregate of communities which means they are composed of different tribes. They are all known by a common name ‘Naga’, which inherently displays their name, language, customs, culture, practices etc. But the real identity of a Naga is revealed in the tribe he belongs to. Sunguist (2001) wrote, “the Nagas are a non-caste, classless, autonomous and free hill-dwelling people” (P. 581).
Ghosh (1982), quoting from W. C. Smith’s book, ‘Ao Naga tribes of Assam,’ highlights some of the characteristics of the Tibeto-Burman tribes of Assam that are also found among the tribes of south-east Asian countries.

They are: head-hunting; common sleeping houses (Morung) for the unmarried men which are taboo to women; dwelling houses built on posts and piles; disposal of the dead on raised platforms; a sort of trial marriage, or great freedom of intercourse between the sexes before marriage; betel-chewing; aversion of milk as an article of diet; tattooing by pricking; absence of any powerful political organization; the double-cylinder vertical forge; the simple loom for weaving cloth; a large quadrangular or Hexagonal shield; residence in hilly regions with a crude form of agriculture (P. 42).

A village is an independent autonomous unit. Philip (1983) wrote, “with all Nagas the real political units of the tribe are the village” (p. 29). A common bond namely ‘an individual is for the village and the village is for the individual’ binds all people together. Hence they are socially, politically and religiously united. Raatan (2006) wrote, “more than four-fifths of the population lives in small, isolated villages,…the villages are usually divided into khels, or quarters, each with its own headmen and administration” (p. 228). The number of khels depends on the size of the village. Philip (1983) quotes the words of Elwin, “the basic interest of every Naga is in his family, the clan, the khel and the village” (p. 29). All Naga villages can be termed petty republics in themselves. Tribal administration is democratic. The constitution of a village is based on the principles of justice and equality. The village council consisting of Gaun buras and elders generally decides all disputes in the village. The decisions have to be unanimous (Singh, 1987). Once a decision is taken it is binding on all. The organization of the village community differs from tribe to tribe. Each village was more or less self-sufficient. Villages had
their own cultivable land, sufficient to support its population. The houses were built on hill tops for security reasons as various tribes were engaged in inter-village feuds. As Raatan (2006) noted “selection of the sites for the village was largely influenced by considerations of defensive strategy,…well fortified with stone walls, sharp pointed bamboo spikes, heavy wooden gates and deep ditches around” (p. 229). One of the features of most villages was the xylophones or the log drum meant to give an alarm or celebrate a victory.

There is a system of hereditary chieftainship among the Semas and Changs. On the other hand the Konyaks have very powerful Chiefs or Angs who are regarded as sacred and whose word is law (Elwin, 1997). Raatan (2006) wrote,

Among the Angamis, although the chief is chosen for his wealth, physical prowess and skill in diplomacy, the decisions are taken collectively by all the villagers. The Semas have a system of hereditary village chief. The chief is called ‘Kukami,’ who rules over a village but have no control over other villages. He is overlord of the village and all others are ‘mighimis’ or dependants. The chief looks after him, gives him land, helps him financially, protects him and even arranges a bride for him if the mighimi is not in a position to pay the marriage price. On the other hand, the mighimi looks upon the chief as his father, works for him, fights for him and obeys him in all matter of village administration,…it was customary for the eldest son of a Sema chief to establish a village of his own out of his father’s estate. In case, the village did not admit to further division, the son could go to another area, clear or conquer that place and establish his authority. Thus the Sema society encouraged expansionist colonization (p. 230).
A special characteristic of the village is the Morung or the bachelors’ dormitory, which is situated at the centre of the village. It was actually a training place for the youth of the village. Women were not allowed inside. May be at a young age of six or seven, a boy enter the morung and remain there till he married and set up his own independent house (Raatan, 2006). The young people attain maturity here and are taught folk tales and songs. In the words of Elwin (1997), “the ‘Morungs’ are guard-houses, recreation clubs, centres of education, art and discipline and have an important ceremonial purpose” (p. 8). Important decisions relating to war and peace were taken in the morung. But it is not common for all the Naga tribes. Angami villages do not have a Morung but the Ao, Lotha, Konyak and the Phom villages have.

The Nagas were a self-sufficient group. They produced everything for their survival be it food items, tools, ornaments, clothing etc. Marine shells particularly white shells closely strung with types of beads formed part of the ornaments meant for men and women. Shimmi (1988) wrote, “ivory armlets were worn by the well-to-do but in most tribes; men wore white wooden armlets in the upper arms and heavy brass rings in the lower arms. The girls generally wore coiled brass lets in the upper arms and brass ring in each lower arm” (p. 17). Both men and women wore ear rings of different types and kinds. The patterns of the textiles were distinct and different for each tribe. For each occasion they have different types of costumes. By the costumes worn by them, one could make out the position one holds in the village. Nagas are very protocol-minded about dress, and in the olden days the finest cloth could be worn only by the head-hunter or the donor of feasts of Merit (Ramunny, 1988).

Recently the government of Nagaland declared the state as the ‘land of festivals’. The Naga people celebrate a number of festivals; most of them revolve round agriculture. During festival they observe different genna (day of prohibition). Dances and music draw the attention of the people during festivals. The important festivals are
Sekrenyi (Angami tribe), Sükrühnye (Chakhesang tribe), Aoleang Monyu (Konyak tribe), Monyu (Phom tribe), Moatsü and Tsüngremmong (Ao tribe), Miu and Tsokum (Khamniungan tribe), Naknyu Lem (Chang tribe), Tuluni (Sema tribe), Metumni (Yimchungrü tribe), Amongmong (Sangtam tribe), Tokhü Emong (Lotha tribe), Ngadah (Rengma tribe), (Sen, 1987), Hega and Chega Gadi (Zelianf tribe), Yemshe (Pochuri tribe), etc.

1.10. ECONOMY

The economy of the state is agricultural as majority of the population is directly dependent on agriculture. The state produces a considerable amount of rice, but still depends on the import. The main crops are rice, millet, maize and pulses. The two methods of cultivation practiced by the Nagas are *jhuming*, sometimes known as the ‘slash-and-burn’ or ‘shifting’ cultivation which is practised by the majority population, and the other method is terraced cultivation (Lotsuro, 2000). Jhum cultivation is a method in which a piece of land is cleared of all trees and grasses; burnt and then a variety crops like rice, maize, millet, chilies, potatoes, ginger, capsicums, pumpkins, cotton, and other kinds of vegetables are grown. Yonuo (1984) wrote, “the same plot is used for about two years or so in succession until it is worn out and overrun with weeds and grasses. It is then allowed to lie fallow for some years till the soil regains its fertility” (p. 20). Then they look for another fresh plot of land for cultivation. The terraced cultivation is mostly followed by the Angami tribe. This method of cultivation is also found in Malaya, Indonesia, Philippines, Formosa, Japan, etc. The terraces are cut on the slopes of the hills and the fields are irrigated with running water from the mountain side or from streams.

Rice is the staple diet of the people. They eat any kind of meat and boiled leafy vegetables. They also eat millet and barley. Ramunny (1988) wrote, “they never used to drink milk. Their favourite beverage is rice beer. This had very little alcoholic content
but provided sufficient kick, and contained essential nutrients for energy and strength” (p. 7). Coffee, cardamom and tea, are grown as plantation crops while sugarcane and potato as cash crops. But all these are grown only in small scale and also in some areas of the state. The people do rear buffaloes, mithuns, cows, pigs, dogs and chickens for food as well as for commercial purposes. Cows and buffaloes are tamed and harnessed for ploughing the fields, thus contributing to the economic life of the people.

1.11 RELIGION

The traditional Naga religion is animistic. Nuh (2003) wrote, “Nagas did not belong to any major religion of the world but like any other tribal of the world they believed in and feared spirits” (p. 16). However, various types of beliefs and rituals of the Nagas suggest that their religion was a mixture of animism and polytheism. They had a vaguely imagined supreme creator, ghosts and spirits of trees, rivers, hills, unseen forces etc (Elwin, 1997). Their belief was expressed through the worship of nature and through their faith in the power of magic and of omens. In order to propitiate and exorcise them (malignant demons), the Nagas usually offer efficacious things like egg, fowl, in some cases it is giblets, spirituous liquor, pig, cattle, mithun, cloth, pieces of iron, etc (Yonuo, 1984). There is a kind of superstitious belief among the Nagas to know whether good or bad omen present at the time of important undertakings like starting a war, commencing a journey, first sowing out or harvesting, etc. During festivals and other auspicious days, a few grains of food and of rice beer is offered to the departed soul with the belief that they would visit the people and bring good fortune if they are pleased with the offerings. Yonuo (1984) wrote, “individuals pray to God to avert bad luck, cure sickness, promise victory in life and assure a propitious passage from this world to the next” (p. 23). However, idol worship was unknown to them.

A part of Naga belief is the observances of a large number of gennas, for the propitiation of the spirits. Some call the day of prohibition as genna. They are observed
for the benefit of everybody - the individual, household, clan, village, members of a
certain age-group or sex-group (Philip, 1983). Breaking of them may bring curse. Hence
strict observance of them is essential for health, wealth and progress of the individual
and society. These *gennas* varied from tribe to tribe and from region to region (Sema,
1986). Philip (1983) says, “Naga religion is not a moral code. It is a system of
ceremonies” (p. 39). There are priests and medicine men that play important role in the
life of people. The Nagas believed in life after death and so the good soul goes to a
Village of the Dead towards the sunrise, the bad to a less pleasant place towards the
sunset (Elwin, 1997).

1.12 HEADHUNTING

It is assumed that the practice of head-hunting was prevalent in many countries
like Europe, British Islands, Ireland, Nigeria, Balkan Peninsula, Malaysia, Indonesia,
Indo-China, Philippines, North America, Burma etc in earlier days. It was not a mere
exercise to display one’s courage and valour but it was associated with religious ritual
practices. Nagas too from time immemorial have practiced head-hunting war for various
reasons. According to a legend the Nagas learnt the practice of head hunting from the
fight between an ant and a lizard over a berry. In the course of the fighting the ant cut off
the lizard’s head and thus men learnt to take heads (Elwin, 1997). The reasons cited for
head-hunting are complicated and interesting. Head-hunting culture was a part of the
lives of the Nagas when all the villages were independent and sovereign. Therefore, the
village had to be located on top of a hill for good defence (Thong, 1997). In the words of
Lotsūro (2000), “inter-village wars culminating in the taking of the enemy’s head were
part of the everyday life until the Pax Britannica established its sway over the Naga
Hills” (p. 19). Another belief was that it was expected to bring individual glory to a man
and prosperity to his village in the form of good harvest, many children and hunting
(Lotsūro, 2000). It was said that heads were needed for several religious ceremonies and
rituals. Whenever a chief’s house or Morung or such abodes were to be built, a head was needed to appease ancestral ghosts (Thong, 1997). Ferrando (1947) wrote,

We hear stories of brutal massacres when the Nagas were not yet under the British and present Indian administration. But the outlook of the people was never as entirely brutal as some journalists would make it appear. The heads were not cut for pleasure, but for religious reasons, to bring fertility to crops, to obtain spiritual benefits (p. 94).

An added reason for this practice was for the acquisition of more land and water for cultivation, hunting, fishing and food gathering. Elwin (1997) wrote,

The practice is probably based on a belief in a soul-matter or vital essence of great power which resides in the human head. By taking the head from another village, therefore, it was believed that a new injection of vital and creative energy would come to the aggressor’s village when he brought the head home. This was valuable for human and animal fertility. It stimulated the crops to grow better, especially when the head was that of a woman with long hair. Moreover, the Nagas have always been a warlike race and the warrior, especially the young warrior, who had taken a head held a great advantage over his fellows in attracting the most beautiful girl of his village for marriage. Indeed, it is said that a youth who had not taken a head found considerable difficulty in obtaining a wife at all (p. 11).

In the words of Horam (1977), “it was that a young man, eager to prove his mettle, would long to take a head, bring it home in triumph to be feted as a warrior, gain the wearing of the coveted warrior’s ornaments and having at last proved his worth and manhood, acquire a bride” (p. 88). The head-hunting practice had actually isolated
villages from one another and this had restricted free movement of people from village to village and increased suspicion among different tribes. Gradually with the prohibition enforced by the British and the influence of Christianity most tribes have discontinued this abominable practice.

Nagaland, a small state in the Indian union, has one of the beautiful terrains in India. It is endowed with natural beauty and natural resources; however, serious efforts are not made to preserve these. It is a home for many colourful tribes and non-tribes, with distinct dialects, customs and cultures. The government has to take concrete steps to modernize this state to bring it at par with other states in the country and above all there should be the willingness from the part of the people to cooperate with the government and all its plans for the good of all.