CHAPTER VI

CONTEMPORARY ANGAMIS
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In the foregoing chapters a discussion on different traditional beliefs and practices based on oral history has been made. However, in some aspects of the life of the Angami Nagas, a new trend has appeared and thus there is a deviation from some of the practices followed by the early Angami Nagas. An attempt is made here to analyse the life and practices of the contemporary Angami Nagas which were in fact the continuation of the earlier life passed from generation to generation.

Prior to the invention of print media and their uses in this part of the country the Angami Nagas used the oral traditions to transmit their history from generation to generation. This was done in the form of story, traditional beliefs, myths or legend, since they did not have their own script. In the process of this research work, most of the respondents based their narrations on the stories learnt from the older generation of people.

Though the elders could narrate the story of the migration, myths and legends of the Angami Nagas,
most of the people of the present-day generation do not have much knowledge about their tradition, myths and legends and as such, many new practices have found place in the life of the people. This may also be due to the irrelevancy of the traditional practices in the present day world.


The impact of modernisation is so great that the Angamis today go only for modern style and practices everywhere and the young men and women, like any other people, look up to modern style—and behaviour. Western education has found a prominent place among the young Angami Nagas which has also changed the political, social, cultural life of the people. This has ultimately affected to a great extent the preservation of the cultural heritage of the people. It has also been seen that most of the contemporary Angami Nagas know about their history from the print materials only which do not contain details of Angami Naga life and culture. For example, Miss Kevisevou of Kohima village¹ and Mr. Kezevilie of Chiedema village² stated that they have no idea about the migration

¹ Miss Kevisevou, Aged 20 years of Kohima village, interviewed on 10-5-1995.
² Mr. Kezevilie, Aged 22 years of Chiedema village, interviewed on 15-5-1995.
of their grandfathers or forefathers to these present villages.

Many of the elders used the word Tenyimia at the time of my research work (field study) and they have explained the term Tenyimia, which includes not only the Angami, but also other tribes, such as Angami, Chakhesang, Mao, Rengma and Zeliang. All the above tribes are believed to be the sons of Tenyi. Therefore, the word Tenyimia has come from Tenyi. The elderly people therefore even now use the term Tenyimia to mean such people but as the young ones do not understand the actual meaning of the term the word "Angami" came to be used more commonly by them.

In the early days of settlement, the Angami Nagas used to live at the top of hills during head-hunting period but now the traditional belief of the need to stay uphill for security reasons or for protection from diseases is no longer tenable and many people from the villages have shifted to National Highway road or State Highway side, irrespective of high hills or plains. This has been necessitated due to population increase and economic needs. The traditional practices are thus found of no value to the contemporary Angamis even to modify them to adjust with the fast changing world. Mr. Kigwelie
of Chiesema village stated that once he lived in the village but after Nagaland became Statehood, the State Government had developed State highway and therefore he shifted to the main road as he has found that living on the main road was more convenient in many ways. However, many villages still exist at the site of the old village as well.

At the time of war during the head-hunting period, most of the Angami Nagas strictly maintained their wooden door gate but with the coming of the British along with Christian religion many people were converted to Christianity and it is seen today that most of the villages of the Angami Nagas neglected in maintaining their village wooden door gates as they do not feel the need of such gates. It is found in some villages that they do not replace the old wooden door gate though it was completely damaged. For example, in Merema village, one of the wooden door gates is found completely damaged. However, it cannot be said that the wooden door gates are not maintained in all the Angami Naga villages. There are still some villages which preserve but do not properly maintain.

3. Mr. Kigwelie, Aged 85 years of Chiesema village, interviewed on 10-7-1994.
Attempts to renew such practice is not seen also.

In early days, most of the young people learnt things from the parents or elderly people or grown up friends. Both girls and boys were taught through Kichuki or Morung or Baze or Thehu about the ways of life. Even today the parents instruct their children about the ways of living, but young people learnt more things from schools, colleges and churches. It is found in many villages in Angami areas that the children depend on teachers than the parents for their knowledge. Many of the young children do not take the advice of the parents. Mrs. Khriebou-u of Kohima village⁵ complained that even my own children do not take my advice though I consider it good for them. Similar instances were also found in many villages in the Angami areas. In the olden days, the young learnt many things through discussion or helping fellow friends in the agricultural fields about their culture and importance of social life. But today, the young people, after going to schools and colleges, do not bother to learn about their past through discussion with the village elders. It has been found that the young ones nowadays are busy with modern educational processes

and they do not find time nor have they interest in learning and spending time in discussing matters of their past.

Social practices have also undergone tremendous changes. Many of the elders in the Angami villages said that in the olden days the expenditure on marriage was very less and simple. Only a few fowls were demanded by the girl's parents after the final negotiation was made for the marriage. It is further said that in some cases if the parents of the girl or boy were rich they would offer feasts for the family and relatives. In such a case, the parents demand only two or three pigs as stated by Mr. Sebi Dolie of Khonoma village and Mr. Neiliehou of Kohima village. Thus comparing the past with the present, the marriage ceremony became too expensive. Today, the parents of the girl also demand more pigs, cows, mithuns, etc. and it gives more burden to both the parents. If the present system of the marriage party continues, in future it will be very difficult to afford to arrange marriage among the Angami Nagas, although it was not as a part of dowry system which do exist among them.

7. Mr. Neiliehou, Aged 79 years of Kohima village, interviewed on 1-5-1995.
The institution of Thehu or Kichuki (Morung) once played an important role in training the young ones in learning their culture - social, political, economic life and their own history, myths, stories and legends, religion etc. Children were educated about the importance of preservation of their culture and social life in these institutions. But with the introduction of western education, the children joined in the schools and colleges and as such, these traditional institutions have become redundant for them. Therefore, instead of preservation or maintenance of Thehu or Kichuki (Morung), today the children consider schools and colleges as more important, although the elders are ready to share their experiences that they have had through the institution of Thehu or Kichuki (Morung). Therefore failing to attend the institution of Thehu or Kichuki (Morung), by the young people, much of the essence of the old and traditional culture are likely to be forgotten by them sooner or later.

The Angami Nagas considered jhum and terrace cultivation as part of their life. This has been their practice since they first settled at the present areas. However, with the progress and development in the State after it attained Statehood, slowly, many people began to improve on their agricultural practices within the
State. The Government of Nagaland also encouraged them by giving demonstrations in different kinds of plantations of agricultural plants in the fields. Being the State capital of Nagaland, Kohima and its neighbouring villages of the Angami region also took advantage of it in quickly learning the improved methods of agriculture for improved production of their agricultural fields. Many villages have today learnt new methods of cultivation and production. They now learnt how to plant different kinds of vegetables in jhuming fields and also started gardening different vegetables. This plantation of vegetables in the garden and jhum fields have led them to learn the technique of marketing their products and thereby improve their economic conditions. This has replaced the early Barter-System. Mrs. Setsou of Gariphema village stated that once their village people wasted their village vegetable production in the garden or jhuming field but they learnt to make money out of them by marketing them not only within Nagaland but outside as well. Thus a new approach to life is seen among the contemporary Angami Nagas.

Agricultural methods too have taken a new shape. The Angami Nagas in the early days used only the local manure in their terrace cultivation or in their gardens. Today, they not only use this manure but also has learnt the use of other modern fertilizers in fields and farms.

Mr. Mhodi of Khuzama village stated that by using different manures and fertilizers, different kinds of vegetables are produced throughout the season in their fields and gardens whereas use of manures was considered to be unhealthy practices in early days.

With the changes in life style, the people now have become more commercial-minded quite different from the gone days of barter economy. People today are found to be interested in profit making business rather than spending time in petty agricultural practices.

It is also found that the Angami Nagas concentrate not only on the agricultural production but also in learning modern method of trade and commerce. Therefore today there are no longer the practices of barter system in the village. In the early period the Angami Nagas used human labours for digging and ploughing of terrace fields.

9. Mr. Mhodi, Aged 64 years of Khuzama village, interviewed on 5-5-1995.
and gardening. But with the introduction of modern equipments like power tiller or bulldozer, people in different areas have started using such tools for digging and ploughing of terrace fields and gardening wherever possible. Not only that they also learnt the use of buffaloes and cows for ploughing the terrace fields and farms.

In the past, the Angami Nagas selected their sub-clan, clan or village representatives to various administrative bodies on the basis of wisdom, health, family background and wealth, etc., with a real purpose to enable these bodies to solve or to settle the village or inter-village problems, but today, when we look around different villages in Angami areas, things have changed. Now the selection of their representatives are made only by a few people and hence, there are instances where concrete solutions were not possible as they did not truly represent the masses of the people. Therefore some sort of dilution of traditional values came about among the people. However, this may not be universally true as in some villages the majority of the people still select their representative through the consent of their village. A shift in the qualification for selection of representatives is thus noticed, while in the traditional society, age was given due consideration in selecting
the representatives, but now education has been considered as one of the important criteria for such selection, besides family background, wisdom and wealth.

At one time the elders (Phichumia) or leaders (Krutamia) were greatly respected in Angami Naga villages, and even today in some villages due respect is given to the elders (Phichumia) and leaders (Krutamia) of the villages. But it is also seen that the village people gave more respect to the educated persons like Government Officers, MLAs or Ministers than the elders. Thus in many cases elders hesitate to take decisions in the midst of educated people. Mr. Lhoutuo Shuyha of Merema village stated that today young ones sometimes do not obey the elders in the villages, particularly in the Northern Angami villages, and so, the elders (Phichumia) of the villages do not want to give advice to the young people.

The coming of the British, however, brought a change in the political system of the Angamis. The British appointed village elders as Gaonburas and Dobhasis in order to assist the administration. Therefore with the appointment of Gaonburas and Dobhasis in the villages

10. Mr. Shuyha, Lhoutuo, Aged 81 years of Merema village, interviewed on 26-6-199H.
some new responsibility was given to the village elders and leaders. Most of the Gaonburas and Dobhasis did their job to the best of their ability. But it is also noticed that in many villages the villagers still preserved the old system and position of the elders or leaders in making any decision either in village land disputes or any problem arising in the village. The elders or leaders in the Angami Naga villages settled problems in the village or between villages through meetings in places like Thehu or Kichuki (Morung) or Baze and this continued till the introduction of the village Council Act of 1970 by the Government of Nagaland. The introduction of village Council system of administration in Nagaland provided the Angami Nagas to start their own village councils in their respective villages, and thereby send their own representatives from different sub-clans or clans to the village councils. Today in every village in Angami region the village people have got their own village panchayat hall where they can bring the village problems or development for discussion or settlement. It is found that with the introduction of the village councils in the villages the place of Thehu (Morung) or Baze in Angami Nagas region became less important in settling or solving the village problems or cases. However, the role of the elders in solving problems has not been reduced. They still take
active part as members of such institutions of the villages.

In ancient time, and even before achieving Statehood it is found in most of the villages in Angami Naga areas that the elders or leaders tried their best to settle any problems or disputes of land that arose between clan, village or village to village. Some villages still practise such procedure. The elders or leaders used to solve the village problems through the institution of Thehu or Baze according to traditional and customary land laws. But today such cases were brought to the village councils for solutions. It is to be noted that although with the passage of time there appeared all the modern courts etc., there are still examples where cases have been decided by the village elders or leaders. However, it is a fact that many go to modern courts to seek justice in case they are not satisfied with the decisions of the village level courts of the elders.

The Angami elders (Phichumiako) in the villages consider the relation of different clan or Thino (Thepfu) of the different villages as one of the most important binding forces in the early days in order to maintain their political relation or to help each other from time to time. Therefore this relation was made known to the
younger generation through Kekinyi (Visiting village) festival. But today it is found that many young people have forgotten about the relation of clans (Thino) of different villages, as the elders also failed to organize such Kekinyi festivals. It is seen that if the Kekinyi festival is not arranged in future between different villages and clans (Thino) the young people might completely forget their blood relations that had existed from their forefathers time till today.

The Angami Naga villagers believed in the existence of god or kepenuopfu and they worship their god (kepenuopfu) in different forms. This practice continued till the coming of the British and the American Baptist Mission to this region. The coming of the foreign missionaries to this land and spread of Christianity among the Nagas brought remarkable changes in all aspects of life of the Angamis. Keviyiekielie Linyu writes:

Christianity has brought a new philosophy of life, the philosophy of Peace, Love, Trust and Hope to replace that of war, hatred, suspicion and fear, redeeming the people from a world of the domination of the Spirits and ignorance into the realm of God and a world of knowledge. Furthermore, Christianity, instead of destroying, as it is usually blamed, has saved, modified and preserved the
cultures, religious ideas and social structures of the Angamis in the face of the fast changing situation. 11

The impact of Christianity brought western concept in everything including traditional dress etc. As for example, the Angamis used to put on their old traditional dresses during different festivals in the year. These dresses were used at all festivals and were regarded as highly honoured dress. People of all status would invariably go with the traditional dresses only. Today majority of the villagers use traditional dresses during the Sekrenyi festival which is the biggest festival in the year particularly for the male folk. However, it is found that the Angami Nagas particularly the young ones do not use nor respect their own traditional dresses today. Instead of showing respect to their old traditional dresses they have more respect to the modern dresses or western fashions.

Almost all the Angami Nagas are converted to Christianity today. Only a few in some villages practise animism but even those who believe and practise the old tribal religion do not strictly perform them in the way their forefathers did in the early days. Keviyiekielie 11. Linyu, Keviyiekielie, Op.cit., p. 78.
Linyu stated that:

Christianity has brought tremendous changes into the Angami society, but Christianity itself has acquired some characteristics from the Angami culture which became distinctly Angami church. The church structure is based on the tribal structures. The villages are independent and so the local churches are also independent. 12

The Angami Nagas used to celebrate different kinds of festivals in different seasons of the year since the early days of their migration to the present areas. But today it is found that most of the villages do not have much enthusiasm in organizing the celebration of different festivals in the village. This may be an adverse effect of the spread of Christian religion in the villages.

In all the villages in Angami areas the village people have observed and practised taboos (nanyu) during the year depending on season and month, and different taboos (Nanyu) were considered very important among the people in early time. Such observations and practices are slowly disappearing today in most of the villages. It is found that only few people who are still non-Christians practise such taboo (Nanyu) in the villages. Such non-Christians too do not practise these different

12. Ibid., p. 17.
kinds of taboos strictly or organise properly according to their tradition and customary practices which they inherited from their forefathers. They only organise and celebrate just for the sake of celebrating them.

Once the people organise or observe Nanyu or Penie (taboos) in the village, the strangers were not allowed to talk or to visit the village, but today it is found that such things are not properly maintained. At one time the village people did not allow travellers or did not touch even insect in observing some of Nanyu or Penie (taboo) in the village, but these are not strictly followed today.

In every village, in the past, the villagers kept three to four or more Zievo or Priests for performing different religious ceremonies, either for the individuals or the family. The people respected the position of Zievo or Priest on every occasion since they were the people who occupied the highest place in the Angami society. Despite such position and respect that has been shown in the past to the Zievo or Priest by the Angami Naga people things are completely changed today. Nerhema village of Northern Angami area had two Zievo or Priests for their village but today they have no more Zievo or Priest in their village as stated by Mr. Neizie-o of Nerhema
village. Kohiraa village had four Zievo or Priests but today they have only one Zievo according to the information given by Mr. Neiliehou of Kohima village. Similar situation prevailed today in most of the Angami Nagas villages. It is also found that the functions of the Zievo or Priest were not properly maintained in different villages even where Priests or Zievo are still maintained. Once such a Zievo or Priest was given high respect for their religious functions performed for the village, but today such an attitude has almost disappeared in the Angami Naga society. The non-Christians who practised animism also do not celebrate with rituals and solemnity. Those who still practise animism also take part in the celebrations of different religious ceremonies or function in the villages. Since most of the villages have become Christians now, the rituals and worships of non-Christians are hardly seen in the villages.

Thus, as a result of the impact of Christianity most of the traditions of the Angami Nagas are forgotten today and the young ones do not know much about their past history and culture.

14. Mr. Neiliehou, Aged 79 years of Kohima village, interviewed on 1-5-1995.