CHAPTER-I

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It is now widely established that materialist dialectics helps in analysing human society in a multi-faceted manner. It helps in classifying the nature of the process of development from the earliest foundation of human habitation down to contemporary capitalism. In Indian parlance too, the application of this scientific approach has proved immensely useful in understanding Indian society. Researchers followed researchers and each time debates tried to improve upon the study carried out previously. But when we look at the overall picture of Indian society, the characteristics of some of the regions remain unproduced. The North Eastern region with its predominantly tribal society is one among such regions which have not received the adequate attention of scholars. However, this serious neglect cannot be attributed to scholars alone - one has to appreciate the equally serious lack of materials available to them. For quite some time, the regional historians too did not handle the theme because of an unfamiliarity with the dynamics of the developed scientific approach. Reconstructing the history of societies dispossessed of any written records was an extremely difficult task requiring unique and unconventional methodology geared to meet this particular problem. But the persevering efforts of regional historians operating as it were within all these
limitations did, however, unveil the peculiarities of the region's history in the overall Indian context.

At this stage let us consider the point that various tribes with all their distinctiveness and varied patterns of development formed the subjects of study by travellers, anthropologists, civil servants, missionaries and soldiers much before the onset of the second half of the nineteenth century. It is established that only Assam, Manipur and Tripura in this entire North East region finds a place in the traditional local chronicles or in any other form of written literature prior to the nineteenth century. Curiously enough the other areas like Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh which are predominantly tribal have remained unrepresented even in the traditional records of the region. To choose the entire region would have facilitated an orientation to the study of this area, but that would not help in breaking the tradition of neglect. Therefore, we limit our study to the Angami tribe of Nagaland, and that too, to two important villages of Kohima and Khonoma as a case study. In both these villages, the transition of society seems to have followed in the colonial and post-colonial phase. Before looking into the various features of Angami tribal society, we have got to resolve a number of problems:
a. What do we mean by tribal society?

b. Why a tribal society?

c. How does it differ from other societies?

d. Why is this tribal society concentrated in this region?

e. What are those elements which determine the social progress of such a society from time to time?

f. How can the nature of the process of development of this tribal society be estimated?

g. What is the position of these two Angami villages of Kohima and Khonoma in the Naga Hills?

h. What led to the formation of these villages?

j. How can the various processes of transition involved in the growth and development of these villages be explained?

However, at this stage one can only return to these questions by taking up a few aspects of the problem in full perspective. They include: (a) the nature of migration which led to the formation of these villages; (b) the process involved in the settlement question in pre-colonial times; (c) the role and position of these villages in the colonial phase; and (d) the post-colonial development and the transition to modernization.
In advancing the analysis of these chosen aspects one would really benefit by adopting models or methodology suitable to such a historical situation, the nature of every model being finally determined by the source material available. In the Indian context, the wide application of Marxist analysis has already been carried out and the nature of Indian social formation has been interpreted variously. Therefore, one cannot really ignore the fact this scientific approach has laid bare the fact that history also shows that it is not only the type and productive capacity of the instrument of labour but also the relations between man in the process of social production. The nature of productive forces and relations in these villages are peculiar. Their study can neither be explained in any of the definitions of social formation or feudalism in the pre-colonial period nor do they come nearer to any level of state formation. This makes the analysis all the more difficult but interesting.

The significance of the Naga tribes, of which the Angamis are one, cannot be underestimated. There are various theoretical attempts to characterize the Nagas, but the generally accepted view is that they are a powerful tribe that have for centuries inhabited the Naga Hills. Varied opinions also testify to their non-Indian origin. Angami is one of the prominent tribes of the Nagas, mostly occupying
the southern and to some extent the western portion of Naga Hills.\(^1\) Although the Angami tribe has been one of the earliest settlers in North East India, there is an extreme paucity of recorded information on them. The only authoritative work exclusively focusing on them has been left by J H Hutton\(^2\) who served as an administrator in Naga Hills from 1917 to 1935. Although Hutton tried his best to include all aspects of Angami life in his account, when the question of singling out the essential features of their life arises, his account reveals certain inadequacies which can probably be attributed to his European origins and his ties with the government which he came to represent in the region. It appears more so because he was not writing about them with the basic proposition of the materialistic view of history. However, his account continues to retain its significance particularly for those who are still unfamiliar with the Angami tribe. There do exist a few other written materials on the subject (both published and unpublished) but they do not contain the detailed information necessarily required to reconstruct the history of these Angami villages. In spite of all these difficulties, what encouraged us to proceed

\(^{2}\) Ibid.
with the proposed study is the lately developed and fruitful Vansinian approach which will certainly prove useful in understanding such societies. To quote Jan Vansina,\(^3\)

"Whether memory changes or not, culture is reproduced by remembrance put into words and deeds. The mind through memory carries culture from generation to generation. How it is possible for a mind to remember and out of nothing to spin complex ideas, messages, and instructions for living, which manifest continuity over time is one of the greatest wonders one can study, comparable only to human intelligence and thought itself. Because the wonder is so great, it is also very complex. Oral tradition should be central to students of culture, of ideology, of society, of psychology, of art, and, finally, of history.\(^4\)"

It is this approach which we have pursued in the analysis of the various aspects while studying the two villages of Angami Nagas in this thesis. In fact, Jan Vansina has brilliantly demonstrated the pertinence of the application of the oral approach to such areas where very little exists in terms of written source materials. His efforts in reconstructing the history of kingdoms of the Savanna depended primarily on hearsay, visions, dreams, hallucinations, verbal art, personal traditions, traditions of origin and genesis, epics, tales, proverbs, sayings, memorized speeches and so on.\(^4\) He has fully established the congruence between

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society and its traditions. He believes that "traditions are perfectly congruent with the society. Any alteration in social organization or practice is immediately accompanied by a corresponding alteration in tradition." In studying the kingdoms of Savanna from oral sources, he has integrated Marxist insight by pointing out the ascent of material history from a less developed type of society to qualitatively new and higher types - surpassing the earlier ones in all the major economic, social, political, cultural and the moral criteria.

However, the application and importance of oral tradition varies from place to place. While pursuing this study, we have conducted detailed field work and interviewed the older generation of traditional storytellers. This stock of folk tales, poems, legends, sayings, prayers and proverbs has not only enriched our understanding of this phenomenon but has also urged us as to which question to pursue. The various festive occasions and traditional performances were also carefully observed to yield the analysis. However, it has not been possible to go into the analysis in detail and some aspects will remain unsettled.

5. Jan Vansina, Op.cit., p.120.
at this stage. By and large, efforts have been diverted to stress the leading role of the mode of production and the basis of socio-economic structures. Since the study has been a micro-level enquiry and only two villages have been chosen for study, discussion with regard to politico-judicial, ideological and superstructural aspects remains limited particularly during the pre-colonial times.

It needs to be further specified that we have tried with all our limitations to avoid the reduction of analysis of the proposed aspects solely to the definitions of the mode of production which would possibly have led us to widen the basic dialectical unity but dismiss the importance of the socio-economic formation as a coherent of social organism. Generally, the process of the origin of the Angami Nagas has been examined with the view that all cultures have taken elements from other cultures. We have kept in view how various changes were effected through borrowing concepts and practices and migration of families from village to village. The aims and objectives of the British in subduing the Angamis and the process involved in the subjugation have been illustrated with different variables - i.e., force, persuasion, role of missionary activity and the nature of self inclination of the Angamis. An estimate of the representatives of colonialism vis-a-vis the Angami Nagas is also
accounted with the idea of observing transition and transformation which has been further taken up in detail when we begin to study the nature and process of modernization.

All these concepts have been based on the empirical studies of the two villages of Kohima and Khonoma—two prominent Angami seats. Various notions offered by Peter Skalnick and H J M Claessen, and in the Indian context by R S Sharma, Romila Thapar, J B Bhattacharjee, and others were verified with all the materials while exploring the nature of the formation and the process involved in the settlement of these villages. It should, however, be observed that although these scholars had started with the basic premise formulated by Morgan and Engels.

7. R S Sharma, Indian Feudalism, Macmillan, Delhi, 1965. See also, Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India, Delhi, 1983, by the same author.
on the characteristics of the primitive societies, yet
the case studies carried out by them evolve the specificities
not suitable to this model. However, although it was necessary
to keep such varied concepts in mind, yet the understanding
that the Angami villages of Kohima and Khonoma show a
considerable degree of peculiarity in their varied phases
of transition and transformation forms the basic discussion
in this thesis.