Nagas are one among many of the ethnic groups of the North-eastern India that geographically share the borders of four countries- China, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Bhutan of Asia. They are historically and culturally different from the rest of Indians though they had strong connections established over centuries between the state of Assam and the mainland including Tripura. The physical connection is very narrow and only four percent of the region is contiguous with India where as the remaining ninety six percent of the northeast borders the other countries. They remained isolated on the hill tops and villages often engaged in warfare raids upon the territories of one another till the British besieged them in AD 1882 in the battle of Kohima.

Like any other tribals in India, the Nagas have their own rich cultural heritage preserved in the form of oral traditions and artefacts. The Nagas claim that they had recorded their history on an animal skin which unfortunately was eaten by a dog. Since then, they say that their history and traditions are being preserved in their memories and disseminated orally in the form of songs, myths, tales and other forms of expressive behaviour, their material culture. The Nagas are distinct from the rest of the Indian tribes not only in their origin, languages and appearance but also in their life style patterns. The Nagas are heterogeneous tribes and belong to Mongoloid and Indo Burmese stocks. There are as many as seventeen social groups among the Nagas which were further subdivided into several major clans. These cultural groups from the level of clan to that of a major tribe sustains their distinctiveness in different walks of their tribal lives- traditions, customs, food, religion, social organization, rituals, political and economic organization, functioning of customary law and order-and thus protect their respective identities even amidst the changing world’s scenario.

Nagaland, wherein these tribal groups inhabit is geographically situated in the hilly tracts of North-eastern India emerged as a State on December 1, 1963. Dr. Sarvepalli Radha Krishnan, the then President of India, formally inaugurated it as the
16th State of the Indian Union. Different geographical regions which were previously called after the names of the tribes were brought in the name Nagaland. It is bounded by Arunachal Pradesh in North, Assam in West, Manipur in South and Burma (Myanmar) in the East. The state has now eleven districts viz. Dimapur, Kohima, Mokokchung, Mon, Phek, Tuensang, Wokha, Zunheboto, Peren, Longleng and Kepheri. The Nagas are highly territorial in their identity formations. The seventeen Naga tribes are distributed in different geographical regions. Dimapur District is multi-ethnic settlement wherein different Naga and other tribal groups live. Thus the tribes of Nagas viz: Rongmei (Dimapur), the Angamis, Moa (Memai) and Rengma Nagas (Kohima), the Aos (Mokokchung), the Konyak (Mon), the Chakhesang and the Pochury (Phek), the Sangtam, the Yimchunger, the Khiemungam and the Chang (Tuensang) and the Lothas alias Kyong (Wokha), the Semas (Sumi) (Zunheboto), the Ziliang, the Liangmai and the Kuki (Peren), the Phom (Longleng and Kepheri) are identified with different territorial regions. The region is covered by deep valleys, gorges, winding streams, hills that form the habitat for a rich variety of flora and fauna.

The Ao-Naga is one of the major tribes in Nagaland who had four distinctive dialectic groups viz: Mongsen, Chungli, Changki and Sangpur. However the major dialects of the Ao-Naga are Mongsen and Chungli. Though Mongsen was the main and poetic mode of expression in the past the dialect Chungli had been in use for communication and conversation. It so happened because when American Missionaries came in contact with the Aos, they first stayed in Molungyimsen village where the Aos of that region spoke in Chungli dialect. Then these people picked up the Chungli dialect for communication. Thus advent of missionaries around AD 1872 shifted the spoken dialect from Mongsen to Chungli. Thus Chungli dialect is continued to use for the mode of communication. Again The Ao-Naga tribe itself is not homogenous and is constituted by six major clans which were categorically organised basing on the spoken dialect. The Chungli group incorporated the Pongen, Longkumer and Jamir clans and the Mongsen group included Imchen, Walling and Longchar clans. Nomenclature in the Naga Hills history presents great difficulties as it is with the other places of North-eastern frontiers. Both the place names and names of the tribes and clans are exceedingly confusing throughout the older writings. The
name Naga is an Assamese appellation to the people living to their east which means, the naked. Most of the tribe held the names given by the ‘other’ groups of people.

**Significance of the study**

Prior to the emergence of Nagaland as a state in Indian Union the Nagas had undergone a phase of politico-cultural turmoil during which they struggled hard to survive and sustain their identities among the other turbulent tribes of North-eastern region. Under the British hegemony the political and social life of the Nagas was much disturbed. It is because the Britishers frequently reshuffled the geographical boundaries of the Naga tribes in the name of political reorganisation of colonial administrative domains. They deployed literacy and spread of Christianity as paradigms politico-social integration of the tribes into their colonial regime. At the same time, they condemned Naga religion, culture, and practices, and attributed such acts to the wrath of God. Naga religious rites were forbidden since their animistic socio-religious practices and song traditions appear to be devilish to the Christianity. The Nagas felt that the expansion of Christianity erased their cultural trademarks, political, religious and social institutions and thereby affected the original form and structure of their tribal life.

These developments evoked consciousness among the Naga people who felt that their political and cultural identities are getting lost. Such apprehensions led them to come into conflict with the Britishers during the Colonial period and later with the Indian Government even after the emergence of Independent India in AD 1947. They assert that they had a long cherished history. Nagas claim that their forefathers got migrated from Mongolia in BC 2617 and after migrating across Turkistan, Tibet and Mongolia, they finally arrived in Eastern Yunan Province of China in BC 1385 From China they entered Southeast Asia and thence to their present habitat in BC 1225. Their continuity as a people inhabiting their present lands is an established historical fact. In historical records, the first mention of the Nagas as a people inhabiting their present lands was made by Claudius Ptolemy, the Greek historian and geographer in AD 150. In his records Ptolemy mentions the Nagas as Nagalai. They were again mentioned by Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese traveller who spent 15 years in India during the years AD 629-645. Hiuen Tsang visited Kamrup the capital of the Varman King, Bhaskar Varman in AD 643. From Kamrup in Assam, in his accounts “Si-Yu-Ki” he
writes about the Nagas saying: 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 Southwest China. These tribes are in fact akin to those of the Man
people in their customs.\textsuperscript{6} 

Besides these records, the Nagas are also mentioned in the
Royal chronicles of the Manipur kingdom in records like Chietharol Kumbabu and
Ningthourol Kumbabu (AD 663-763 and AD 906-996). They are also mentioned in
the chronicles of the Ahom kings who came from upper Burma and the western Unan
provinces of China and settled and ruled in Assam for 600 years beginning from the
13\textsuperscript{th} century. Naga resistance against intrusions and raids from these two neighbouring
kingdoms and also other kingdoms like the Burmese, Tripuris, Dimashas and the
Cachar kingdoms from the 13\textsuperscript{th} century to the 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries are all there in recorded
history. As for their encounter with the British in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century and their resistance
against British rule for one hundred fifteen years (1832-1947), numerous accounts are
found in the British colonial records. It is said that the battles the British fought with
the Naga tribes in the 19\textsuperscript{th} and first half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries far outnumber all the
frontier battles fought with the Indians in the great Indian sub-continent. Even in spite
of all these battles, the British were able to subjugate only thirty per cent of actual
Naga territory. (The actual Naga ancestral domain would be around 120,000 sq. km).

In British colonial accounts, the unconquered 70\% territories of the Nagas were
recorded as unadministered territories or excluded area. Even in the thirty per cent
lands that the British administered, they never laid any claims to the lands they were
administering. C.V.Aitchinson in \textit{Treaties, Engagements and Sanads} clearly mentions
that there was no written treaty or agreements have been made with any of the Naga
tribes.\textsuperscript{7} Also following the submission of the Naga memorandum to the Simon
Commission in AD 1929, where the Nagas had refused to be included in the reformed
scheme of India, the British Government in recognition of their demands put the Naga
Hills under excluded area in the Government of India Act of AD 1935.

These political conditions lead to the evocation of Naga identity as a social
construct for incorporating all the tribes only in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century after the
formation of the Naga Club in AD 1918. Even after the grant of Nagaland state by the
Government of India, Naga identity still stands amorphous since their long cherished
customs and traditions have been thoroughly invaded by modern political system.
Historically the Nagas have always been proud of their independence and pristine
lifestyle. Under Article 371-A (1) in the Constitution, special constitutional safeguards are provided to protect Naga identity and Naga way of life. The Indian Parliament cannot make any law in respect to religious and social practices of the Nagas, Naga customary law and procedures, administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to the Naga customary law, ownership and transfer of land and its resources. From time immemorial, the Nagas have their own democratic polity which consist of the Naga village Council, the Range (Area) council and the Tribal council designed to serve the democratic Naga way of life. These are certain characteristics clearly perceivable from the society’s folklores and narratives distinct of the Nagas which form the bases of their claim for a distinct identity. Their desire to retain those characteristics is apparent in their struggle to indigenise the modern administrative mechanism based on their respective customs and traditions.

Globalisation is another factor that awakened identity consciousness. It is a socio-economic phenomenon that transformed the entire world into a global village and merged the spatio-temporal boundaries of the universe. It stirs up awareness with regard to homogeneity versus heterogeneity. In the wake of globalisation, the Nagas felt the need to revive their tradition for the identity of their own and keep up their conventional heterogeneity amidst the homogeneity under Christian identity. The impact of globalization is most felt in the area of indigenous cultural products. The Nagas are apprehending that the artisans may modify or redesign the artefacts to keep pace with the global markets which may sometime distort or invert the traditional ideology embedded within the cultural product. In otherwords, the identities embodied in cultural products will thus be eliminated for greater marketability. Such de-identification of local cultures for global recognition would inevitably lead to a hybridization of identities in cultural artefacts. Hybridization implies the consumption of original features that results in a new product. This inverse process of de-identification begins from the extrinsic domain of visible ethnic identifiers. But this cannot be dismissed as an isolated phenomenon because the extrinsic markers are an extension of the intrinsic identities. The loss of the visible distinctions in cultural products will eventually deplete much of the lore and history of the people so that a time will come when the product will account for writing a “de-humanized” history for the people. As already the cultures of North East India are facing tremendous
challenges from education and modernization, people are scared that the globalization would eventually reduce their cultural ‘identity’ to ‘anonymity’.10

The Ao-Nagas, being the major sub-tribe of the Nagas of North Eastern Hill tribes share the same ideology with regard to their identity formations. The Ao are also known as Hatigurians. Hatiguri is a place located between the Mariani and Titapar, situated about 30 Km from Tzurang river towards Assam. Most of the Ao villages have alternate names given by the Assamese people. When the Britishers entered the Ao country from the plains, Merangkong was known as Naogaon and Mopongchuket as Molodubia, and so on, Naogaon and Molodubia being the Assamese names for these villages. Once established in the Ao country, the British officers began to ask the names of villages yet further in the interior and were naturally told the Ao names. Thus the Tuesang, a big village of the Changs for years was known by its Ao name of Mojungjami "the village of wicked men". It is because the Changs were the hereditary enemies of the Aos. Most of the names of the Naga tribes were given by the others.11 Such apprehension in every sphere of life currently empowers them to reassert their identity in all spheres of life.

Nature and scope of study

In the light of above discussion the present thesis entitled *Oral Narratives of the Ao-Nagas: Constructing Identity* broadly proposes to study the oral traditions, especially the oral narratives (personal and folk) told by men and women in different cultural contexts on different issues of their society to show how the community constructed their identity, their ‘self’ in their renditions through the ages. Like any other oral society, the Ao-Nagas prevail upon their lore, the verbal and non-verbal expressive behaviour deposited in the mnemonics of the people which is learnt and transmitted orally through the generations. The lore embodies the knowledge, beliefs and the institutions that guided the people and communities to retain their identities, their ‘selves’ from erosion and invasion despite changes in time and space. Their folk (oral) lore is a rich source for reconstructing their histories and encompasses a wide variety of genres- folk narratives, songs, proverbs, riddles, performing arts like music, dances, drama, painting, arts and an extensive material culture- which establish the distinctiveness and identity among the other tribal communities in Nagaland. Further the study brings forth the change and continuity of Ao-Naga culture as constructed in
their folklore. The thesis examines the notion of identity as conceived by the Nagas in general and the Ao-Nagas in particular. The study shows whether the Ao-Nagas ‘what they think of identity’ is really lost or still stands as ‘core’ of their life-style patterns in the contemporary changing dimensions of their worldview. The issues of related to these aspects are proposed to discuss in the light of latest theoretical discourses on identity and methodological implications of narrative inquiry.

The thesis brings forth the socio-religious nuisances of Ao-Naga folk life as reflected in their ritual processes and practices in pre and post Christian times to understand changes and continuity in their new identity formations.

The study proposes to develop Indigenous models of ritual process in tribal societies to demonstrate how the rites performed on different ritual contexts and the material culture associated with them would mark the identity of these communities in the changed contexts. This research also sheds light on social organisation and politico-economic life of the community in the pre and post Christian contexts to show structural continuities and variations in identity formations.

**Geographical area of study**

The geographical distribution of the Ao region is bounded by the Tzula River; Sangtam, Chang and Phom tribes on the East; the Lotha tribes, the Assam plains on the west; Konyak tribe in the north and the Sema tribe in the south. The entire Ao territory is divided into six ranges (Tsükong), each having a name comprising of several villages. The ranges run parallel to one another and are called: the Ongpangkong, the Langpangkong, the Asetkong, the Changkikong, the Japukong, the Tsurangkong. The scope of the field work is limited to the regions Longkhum village, Ungma village, Mopongchuket village, Changtongya village and in around Mokokchung and Dimapur districts. All these settlements are populated by Ao-Nagas wherein the other Naga tribes also share the environment.

**Survey of Literature**

The survey of literature is done in three broad areas. They are: (i) Folk Narrative Research and identity (ii) Status of knowledge on Ao-Naga community (iii) Field methodology and data processing.
(i) Research works on Folk Narrative Research and identity:

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s book, *kinder und Hausmärchen* (Children’s and Household tales)\(^{13}\) is a collection of folktales meant for socialization of the children in the society. It is methodological research on folk narratives. This work is a part of their project in *Germanistik* (German studies) encompassing the fields of philology, law, mythology and literature. By the middle of nineteenth century, Grimm brothers shifted their concern from collection of folktales to (i) search into the origins and dissemination and (ii) study the changes that occurred through the ages in the process of transmission. Grimm brothers along with Friedrich Max Muller, an Indologist, upheld the ‘Indo-European theory of mythic origins’. On the basis of comparative phylogy and comparative mythology, they attempted to reconstruct the myths and the mythic-religious beliefs that caused the emergence of these narratives.

Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917), in his first volume, *The Origins of Culture*,\(^ {14}\) dealt with various aspects of ethnography including social evolution, linguistics, and mythology. His theory on social evolution contains three stages, savagery, barbarian and civilization. Tylor holds that savagery represents an early stage of cultural development, and barbarians as representatives of a middle stage. Civilizations, such as those of Europe, represent the third stage. He, being the founder of the British school of anthropology upholds that the ‘myth’ in modern folk society contains the survivals of ‘savage myth’ and substantiated it basing on his theory of social evolution. He emphasized the need to go deeper into the ethnological roots of the folktales to study origins.

Theodor Benfy (1840-1881) translated the Sanskrit work, *Panchatantra*\(^ {15}\) into English. Basing on the study of the animal tales of this book, he traced the Indic origin to European folktale. He advocated that the dissemination of tales from India to Europe occurred through three stages: First through oral tradition before the 10\(^{th}\) century, later through the vehicle of Persian and Arabic translations of Indian literary texts, and finally through contact between Muslim and European populations. Present day scholars consider India as one of several important sources for the European folk narrative tradition. They upheld the theory of monogenesis (single origin) for the similarity of narrative traditions throughout the world.\(^ {16}\)
Vladimir Propp’s, *The Morphology of the Folktale*, is a famous and highly influential work on structuralism. He extended the Russian Formalist approach to the study of narrative structure. He made a number of distinctions and general schemas about fairytales. Propp examined the kind of relation which comprise each tale, comparing the formulae derived from each and developed a methodology by which one could study the tales according to the functions of the *dramatis personae*. Thus function became the basic classificatory and analytical unit in Propp’s structuralism. Propp observed one hundred Russian fairy tales and derived 31 functions (kinds of actions) that construct the narrative structures. It does not mean that all 31 functions occur in a single narrative.

Lévi-Strauss’ in his book, *The Structural Study of Myth*, analyzed the structure of the myths in comparative religion. He observed that the patterning of cause and effect relationship in the events and sequential ordering of events in a myth emerges out from the logical structure of the human mind, which configured by the respective societies. He compared the structure of the Oedipus myth with Zuni origin myths and concluded that the logic of mythological thought and the structure of narrative were based on the mediation of binary opposites, such as nature and culture or man and woman. Lévi-Strauss did not deal with the plot-structure of a narrative. He studied the plot-elements by breaking down the myth into the shortest possible sentences, and rearranged these elements into paradigms in order to derive “mythemes” or the meaningful units of the myth. Lévi-Strauss methodology is concerned about the structured meaning in myths, which according to him, is a single reality and observable as such. He does not believe in studying myths in isolation, rather takes into account the cultural-ethnographic context in which they exist and probes into the deep structure of myths and rearranges the elements into meaningful paradigms.

Sigmund Freud’s (1856-1939) processed the dream narratives of his patients through his theory of psychoanalysis in his essay on ‘The Occurrence in Dreams of Material from Fairy Tales’. He interpreted that his patient’s dreams contained motifs from ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ and ‘The Wolf and the Seven Kids’. His concept of ‘sexual symbolism’ found expression in his famous book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*. It is a source to understand human thought. The book presents Freud’s
early theories in regard to the nature of the unconscious dream psychology, the significance of childhood experiences, the psychic process of “censorship,” the “hieroglyphic” language of dreams, and the method he called “psychoanalysis.”

Carl Jung’s (1875-1961), *The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious* is a collection of Jung’s articles dealing with the archetypes of the collective unconscious. An archetype is a psychic format in which instinctual and conditioned behavior plays out in human activity. He took examples from fairytales and religious imagery to substantiate his concept of archetypes that influence the personal and collective consciousness of the people. The book further throws light on the process of individuation, a process of psychological "wholeness (which) consists in the union of the conscious and unconscious personality.

A*lan Dundes’s* book, *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth* emphasized the serious nature of myth as a “sacred narrative” through compiling an anthology of twenty-two texts on the theory of myth. His book *Analytical Essays in Folklore* is an anthology of his articles published in various journals. The book throws light on various aspects of folklore-theory, method, structural analysis, and psychoanalysis- with suitable examples from American folklore. Another book, *Folklore Matters* contents essays that covers huge field of folklore. It focuses on establishing identity through folklore, how fake lore is produced, comparative methods and analysis of folk toy, proverbs, ballads, pranks and so forth. His essay, *Defining Identity through folklore,* emphasises the importance of identity by studying folklore. He states that folklore is not simply a way of obtaining available data about identity but one of the principal way by which an individual and a group discovers or establishes his or its identity. The study of this essay gives deeper understanding in connection with identity and folklore.

Richard Bauman’s work, *Verbal Art as Performance,* puts forth an outline for understanding performance theory as it relates to speaking events. He considered verbal art as performance than simply as repository of lore. He considers folklore as a performance framed in a given framework, context, and appreciated (or not) by an audience/auditor.

Dan Ben-Amos in his article, *Toward Definition of Folklore in Context,* holds that the domain of folklore revolves round three aspects: a body of knowledge,
a mode of thought, or a kind of art although they are not exclusive of each other. He opines that three types of relations that exist between the social context and folklore: possession, representation, and creation or re-creation forms base of folklore study. Folknarratives, especially folktales constitutes all these three forms of relationships depicting the cultural identity of the tellers who are part and parcel of such narrative tradition. Hence folklore is artistic communication in small groups.

A. K. Ramanujan’s essay, *Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?* explains cultural ideologies and behavioral manifestations thereof in terms of an Indian psychology which he calls as “context-sensitive” thinking. In his works on folklore studies he highlights the intertextuality of the Indian oral and written literary tradition. His essays, *Where Mirrors Are Windows: Toward an Anthology of Reflections* (1989) and *Folktales from India, Oral Tales from Twenty Indian Languages* (1991) are good examples of his work on Indian folklore studies. Context-sensitivity is a theme that appears not only in Ramanujan's cultural essays, but also appears in his writings about Indian folklore and classic poetry. In *Where Mirrors are Windows*, for example, he discusses the “inter-textual” nature of Indian literature, written and oral. By this, he means that Indian stories refer to one another and sometimes to other versions of the very story being told. It is important for Ramanujan to note that these inter-textual influences do not occur in a unidirectional pattern. He emphasizes that the oral and written traditions, the Sanskritic and local traditions are in dialogue with and mutually influence one another. Stuart Blackburn and A. K. Ramanujan’s book, *Another Harmony: New Essays on the Folklore of India* is a collection of essays that represent, as the editors suggest, a “fifth stage” of research into Indian folklore, wherein new materials are studied from new perspectives. His essay, *Two realms of Kannada folklore* explores two realms of Kannada folklore: on the one hand, there are domestic tales in which women tell stories about nameless figures to a family audience in a manner much like the *akam* form of classical Tamil verse; on the other hand, *puram* tales are for a public telling. He suggests some other distinctions, such as those among myths, ritual tales, and folktales. Ramanujan’s another article, *Toward a Counter-System: Women’s Tales* distinguish between women-centered tales, in which women are the main protagonists and that exhibit a cultural counter system (an alternative set of values
and attitudes, theories of action other than the official ones) and the generically broader set of stories told by women.

Jawaharlal Handoo in his article, *The world of Teyyam: myth and the message,* made structural study of Teyyam performance, a ritual theatre still prevalent in northern Kerala state of South India. He emphasized the need to interpret oral narratives on performances since they stand metaphors of cultural identity.

Lalita Handoo in her book, *Structural analysis of Kashmiri folktales,* addresses two folkloristically important questions: cross-cultural application of Prop’s morphological-structural approach and testing the validity of the method across different types of folktales.

P.S. Kanaka Durga’s works on different genres of folklore, especially on folknarratives of Andhra Pradesh throw a flood of light on recent trends in folknarrative research. In her article “From Incorporation to Liminality: Child Marriage in Rites of Passage” analyzed the structure of the ritual process of marriage, especially the child marriage in which certain ritual events are different. She critically evaluated the ritual models advocated by van Gennep and Victor Turner and established how Indian models are different from that of the Western. She accounted cultural variations for the difference in structures. Her articles “Interchangeability of Gender Roles: Identity in Personal Narratives: A Case of Convergence” and “Transformability of Gender Roles: Converging Identities in Personal and Poetic Narratives” provide a vivid picture of gender formation and its transformability in Indian womanhood. These articles substantiate how the narrators converge with their personal experiences and their expressive behaviour, exclusively in rendering folk narratives. In the paper “Politics of Textualisation: Socio Economic Dimensions”, She explained the socio-economic dimensions of textualisation process of folk narrative tradition. In her paper “Gender Construction and Domestic Violence: Towards a Folkloric Perspective”, she probed into the issues of domestic violence from the perspective of the process of gender construction in Indian society basing on folktales and legends collected from Andhra Pradesh. In the paper “Women in Hydro mythology: A Discourse on the Representation of Tradition and Counter Tradition in South Indian Folklore”, she analyzed a folknarrative in the light of contemporary discourse on structuralism and post structuralism and interpreted how
the tradition (normative) and counter tradition (anti-normative) permeate the social life. It further shows the changing dimensions of human and social values in mundane lives. The paper “Social Construction of Gender: Reflections in Women’s Folktales”\textsuperscript{43} substantiate the process of constructing gender as reflected in the folktales often told of the women, by the women and for the women. In the article “Gender and Identity in Women’s Folktales: Narrative Inquiry”\textsuperscript{44} the she establishes how the narrators establish ‘narrative identity’ in their oral narratives. The narrative inquiry method is adopted in the analysis and interpretation. Her paper “Women folktales: An Art of Subversion”\textsuperscript{45} interprets that the women render folktales as a strategy to negotiate with the multifarious task they are supposed to do in their lives. Thus they learn an art of subverting or inverting the realities and pump them into their renditions as folktales.

Hubert Hermans’s article on The Dialogical Self: toward a Theory of Personal and Cultural Positioning\textsuperscript{46} gives psychological perspective of identity constructions in the societies. His theory of dialogical self is a psychological concept that describes the mind’s ability to imagine the different positions of individuals in an internal dialogue between ‘I’ (the core self) and ‘me’ (extended self). He established the dialogical nature of self as ‘I’ as ‘knower’ and ‘me’ as ‘known’ constructing personal and social identities of the people. Composite concept “dialogical self” goes beyond the self-other and merges the separation between the inside of the self and the outside world and make them as central to the society at large.

Naomi Ellemers, Russell Spears, and Bertjan Doosje essay on Self and social identity\textsuperscript{47} examine the self and identity by taking into account the different conditions under which these are affected by the groups to which people belong. They focused on social identity in different group contexts and have analyzed how both the individual and the collective self are concerned in a variety of different group situations. They developed taxonomy of situations to reflect different concerns and motives that come into play as a result of threats to personal and group identity and degree of commitment to the group.

Kwame Anthony Appiah in his book, The ethics of identity\textsuperscript{48} observes that people are not simply members of groups or products of culture. He argues that individuality and autonomy are basic to personhood in all social and cultural contexts.
Appiah rejects the romantic notion of identity formation as a search for a pre-existing authentic self waiting to be found or discovered.

Anthony Elliott in his book, *Concept of the self*,\(^4^9\) aims to examine critically the ideas, concepts and theories of the self that are used in social analysis while also discussing key areas in which such approaches have produced elucidation of the experience of self-identity, selfhood and personal identity. Elliott has tried to develop a concise introduction to some of the major concepts and theories of the self in contemporary social theory and social science.

Soumen Sen’s essay, *Identity Expression in Ritual and myth*\(^5^0\) focuses on how identity is express through the study of myth and ritual. He studied on the Khasi and Jaintai tribe of North-east India. Though these tribes have lost its significance in regard to the practice of indigenous religion but according to him the recent social and political movements draw much of its symbol and expressions from the myths.

Arnold Van Gennep’s book, *The rites of passage*\(^5^1\) is famous for his study on the rites of passage rituals that mark significant transitions in human lives like birth, puberty, marriage and death. The idea of significance passage rituals was first introduced by Gennep, who saw rebirth as the law of life and described rites of passage as a threefold process: *rites of separation: rites of transition (liminality from the Latin, limen, meaning threshold): and rites of incorporation*. The individual would first be ritually removed from the society as a whole, then he would be isolated for a period, and finally he would be incorporated back into the tribe in his new status. His method was constructed to describe patterns of life in those traditional societies often described as primitive or tribal societies.

Victor Turner (1920-1983), in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*\(^5^2\) begins by defining society as he sees it, within the context he has used the term. According to Turner, both structure and communitas are vital to humanity. His concrete data regarding ritual comes from his fieldwork with the Ndembu. Turner’s theoretical approach is reliant on the work of Arnold van Gennep, who developed the idea of liminality in his own work. Turner used ideas, like communitas and liminality to organize his thoughts and to assist in understanding the ritual behavior of the tribe he studied. Turner\(^5^3\) coined the term *liminoid* to refer to experiences that have characteristics of liminal experiences but are optional and don’t involve a resolution of
a personal crisis. According to him, the liminal/ liminoid entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.\textsuperscript{54} Turner's work is also influenced by structuralists, such as Levi-Strauss, and by sociologists of religion, such as Emile Durkheim. \textit{The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual}\textsuperscript{55}, is another work of Turner. It is a collection of ten essays on ritual. He analyzed rituals and demonstrated the symbolic meanings that derived from social contexts. What mattered to Turner were not the symbols themselves, but the roles of the symbols in specific social situations. His analysis on the rituals of the \textit{Ndembu}, an African tribe in Zambia used several kinds of trees for young women’s ritual and they attributed various symbolic meanings to these trees.

\textbf{Mary Douglas’ book, Purity and Danger: an analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo,}\textsuperscript{56} analyzed the ideas of pollution and taboo, considering different cultures from a structural point of view and with some influence from Gestalt psychology. Her purpose was to avoid a limited explanation, regarding the phenomena in relation to the whole social structure. The theory of purity and danger was put forward by Mary Douglas who was perhaps noted for her writings on pollution and taboo. She saw liminality as the intervening elements between contrasting structural positions associated with what she called “matter out of place”. This book presents a deep study of pollution concepts and a wide approach of how social rules are reinforced. Another book by Mary Douglas, \textit{Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology},\textsuperscript{57} offers a theory on how rituals and symbols reflect the structure of society. The book is divided into two main sections. The first half of the book lays out methodological concerns, and the second half offers examples and test cases of how the methodology can be used. Douglas builds on the socio-linguistic work of Basil Bernstein and shows how it can be used to examine and make sense of societies. Douglas examines the body in relation to society and studies two neighbouring Nilotic tribes, the Nuer and Dinka to illustrate that the differences in religious practices can be explained by an understanding of their views of the world. Douglas looks at another quadrant of the grid and group framework and states that evil is not a problem for all groups.
Clifford Geertz’s, *Local knowledge: further essays in interpretive anthropology*,\(^5^8\) is a collection of academical essays. He deals with human nature, presumably everywhere one and the same, comes only in its local varieties, as a bewildering diversity of languages, cultures, cultural practices, beliefs, mentalities, behaviors, prescriptions, proscriptions, taboos etc, as varieties of local knowledge that appear mutually and reciprocally repellant or incurably allergic to one another in their inconsistency as illuminations of the truth of experience or reality.

(ii) Status of knowledge on Ao-Nagas:

In this section, the works so far produced on the Ao-Naga community are analyzed briefly in two phases\(^5^9\): (a) Colonial phase (produced by the British administrators and anthropologists) (b) Post Colonial (the works that speak about culture, identity, globalization etc.)

(a) Colonial writings:

J.P. Mills’s monograph on *The Ao-Naga*,\(^6^0\) gives an account of Ao-Naga tribal life in six chapters. He described the domestic life of the Ao people, their law and customs, religion and brief introduction to language and folktales. He held that these folktales gives rare glimpses of the early history of the north eastern hills which helps in tracing the orgins and migrations of the Nagas. Mills gave an ethnographic account of the routine life, food, economy, religion, belief system, rituals (social and religious), dress, songs, narratives, values, norms and customary law, political organization etc. Mills compare the Aos with the other Naga tribes like Manipur, Myanmar (Burma), Assam in the matters of food, dress, religion and other patterns of life style. Mills was afraid that as the generations pass, there may be a possibility of losing these traditions due two reasons (i) since they are oral cultures that survive on memories of the past handed down from one generation to the other, there are many chances to forget them in due course and (ii) the nature of modern education and conversions into Christianity allow the glorious past to pass into oblivion.\(^6^1\) He feels that those who tell the stories are the one who were part of the feast of merits and the one who brought heads during head-hunting rituals. His article on *Certain aspects of Naga culture*,\(^6^2\) finds variations in the customs of different Naga tribes with regard to (i) methods of government- how Nagas run their village administration,(ii)
disposal of dead and (iii) treatment of enemies’ heads. The article highlights the heterogeneity of the Naga tribes.

**W.C. Smith’s** book, *The Ao-Naga tribes of Assam*, appears to be a travelogue. He is interested in Ao-Naga language. He considers Aos as primitive tribe who had been isolated in the hills of north-eastern India for generations. He holds that the onset of globalization brought with it the advancement in communication system and technology which cut the boundaries of time and space and evolved the world into a global village. In his view, Ao-Nagas are also subjected to the changes occurring in the third world countries due globalization and losing their hoary past. However, Smith could not completely record mechanism of the social changes happening in Ao-Naga dominions.

**Haimendorf’s** book, *The Naked Nagas* is an anthropological work produced during his visit to Nagaland in the 20th century. He lived in the Naga Hills with the people in small groups of villages for several months. He learnt their language and participated in the activities of their tribal life - hunting, fishing, planting, weeding, dancing and feasting - with the people. His reports were in the form of diaries. His book is a first person narrative.

**M.M. Clark’s** book, *A Cornuer in India*, gives an account of the purpose of her stay in Nagaland, for spreading of Christianity and for imparting English Education through American Baptist Missionary Society. Her book contains information on the dress, food, customs, rituals etc. of the native tribes.

**(b) Post-colonial writings**

**M. Alemchiba Ao** book, *The Arts and crafts of Nagaland*, gives a vivid description about many important aspects of traditional Naga society like head hunting, spinning and weaving, arts and crafts. He stresses the need for the translation of the oral ethno-poetry of the Nagas into written form to disseminate their hoard of culture to the outside world.

**Verrier Elwin’s** book, *The Nagas in the nineteenth century*, is an anthology of excerpts collected from the writings of Britishers on the Nagas from 1827 to 1896. In about one third of the book (eight sections), Elwin gives a general information of different Naga tribes. The remaining chapters describe the geography, anthropology,
exploration, history, religion, custom and tradition, warfare and development (i.e. agriculture, trade, industry, health and education of Naga land and people. The book gives a cursory picture of nineteenth century reports on the Nagas, revealing the breadth and depth of observations made by the British.

M. Alemchiba Ao in his book, *The folktales from Nagaland,* contains twenty three folktales collected from Nagas. The intention of the writer is to preserve the fast dying oral literature for future generations.

Milanda Ganguli’s book, *A Pilgrimage to the Nagas,* presents an account of her experiences amidst the Naga tribes. The author discusses various issues related to the history and culture of Nagaland and its people. She focused on the issues of origin, spread, social and religious customs, festivals, and Morung (dormitory) system. The influence of Christianity on the Ao religion is also mentioned in the book.

Panger Imchen’s book, *Ancient Ao Naga religion and culture,* focuses on the Ao-Naga belief system and socio-cultural practices. He emphasized in his book that preservation of Naga heritage is essential to construct stronger baser for Christianity in Nagaland. He suggests that the socio-religious and cultural backup of the community has to be given due importance to develop an indigenous church for Nagas.

Temsula Ao’s book, *The Ao-Naga Oral Tradition,* throws light on the oral traditions of the community. She used these traditions as source material for studying Ao-Nagas. She presented twenty six tales in the book but were neither explained nor interpreted. Though she mentioned myths and tales of Ao-Nagas, she did not interpret the difference between these two genres. She explained the need to study the context of the tale to have a clear understanding of those strands of culture that nourished the Ao-Nagas through the ages. She encourages the younger generation to learn their own traditions which otherwise may get diffused and finally get lost forever. Temsula Ao’s article, *Ao-Naga Myths in Perspective* examines the origin myth of the Ao-Naga to see how the social structure and clans divisions were established and also the establishment of the traditional religious practices and system of ethical conduct. Again another article on, *Identity and Globalization: A Naga Perspective,* discusses the identity of the Nagas in the wake of globalization by using the examples from
origin myth, shawl, land boundaries, ethnic and linguistic difference, houses, village gates, textiles, tattoos handicrafts, dance etc. she is concern that if the trend is allowed to continue in an indiscriminate and mindless manner, globalization will create a market in which Naga, Khasi or Mizo communities will become mere brand names and commodity markers stripped of all human significance and which will definitely mutate the ethnic and symbolic identities of a proud people.80

Lucy Zehol’s edited the book, Women in Naga society,81 focuses on the status of various tribes of Naga women in the society in domestic and public realms.

A.Asola Jamir in her article, The image of women in selected Naga Folklore and its impact on Naga Women today,82 studied selected folktales, folksongs, superstitions and sayings to situate the multiplicity of roles played by women in changing of their Naga society. She expects that the community should change their traditional views towards the Naga women who play versatile and vital role in domestic and public spaces of the society.

V.K.Nuh’s book, The Origin of Naga,83 traces the origin and spread of all Naga tribes from Khezhakenoma village based on oral traditions.

(iii) Field methodology and data processing:

Kenneth S. Goldstein’s book, A guide for field workers in folklore,84 emphasises how experience in the field improves the quality of research in folklore. For him methodology is only one of the requirements for successful data collection. He holds that unless the fieldworker has the inclination, temperament, or personality for data collection, he will never be successful in his pursuits since the mere use of methods and techniques do not serve the purpose. The chapters on problem formulation, pre-field preparations, establishment of rapport with informants, observation collecting methods, interview, collecting methods, and the techniques of motivating informants explain the nature of professionalism in field work that a researcher is supposed to develop. The book explains about data collection techniques used for different genres, ethnographic method, the concepts in qualitative and quantitative research like positivism, naturalism, subjectivity, objectivity, reflexivity etc.
Samuel P. Bayard’s article, *The Materials of Folklore*, tells about what constitute folklore material and how it should be collected. He distinguished folklore from cultural anthropology. He advocated that the folklore lies not in the traditions and, aesthetics and arts of the people but lies within the realm of thought and some aspects of the content and activities of peoples’ minds.  

Donald A. MacDonald’s article, *Fieldwork: Collecting oral literature* explains the planning of the researcher for field work and prescribes several rules and regulations to be observed in the field. He tells about the field roles to be played by the researchers, methods and techniques to be adopted in the field basing on the context of collection of data etc.

Dennis Tedlock’s, *Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation* presents startling new methods for transcribing, translating, and interpreting oral performance that carry wide implications for all areas of the spoken arts. Moreover, he reveals that how the categories and concepts of poetics and hermeneutics based in Western literary traditions cannot be carried over in their entirety to the spoken arts of other cultures. He stresses the need for the extensive textual and contextual analysis to interpret them from the perspective of the people on whom the research is being carried.

Richard M. Dorson’s, *Introduction: Concepts of Folklore and folklife studies*, prescribes the need for a folklorist has to master the skills that are essential to study and interpret folklore a distinct discipline of study. He grouped folklore into four categories: He further describes the field of folklore and folk life under four groupings: (i) verbal/ oral expression that include spoken, sung and voice behaviour, (ii) material culture (iii) social folk custom which comes between verbal expression and material culture and (iv) the performing folk arts.

Jacques Derrida’s, *Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* are a manifesto against structuralism. Derrida’s essay proposed some theoretical limitations to structuralism. The element of “play” in the title of Derrida's essay is often erroneously taken to be “play” in a linguistic sense, based on a general tendency towards puns and humor. His post structuralist theory aims at textual analysis and upholds the concept of “self” not as a singular and coherent entity but a fictional construct. Instead, an individual comprises conflicting tensions and knowledge claims
The meaning the author intended is secondary to the meaning that the reader perceives. It is important to analyze how the meanings of a text shift in relation to certain variables, usually involving the identity of the reader. In his post-structuralist approach to textual analysis, the reader replaces the author as the primary subject of inquiry. He called displacement is often referred to as the “destabilizing” or “decentering” of the author, though it has its greatest effect on the text itself. Without a central fixation on the author, post-structuralist examines other sources for meaning (e.g., readers, cultural norms, other literature, etc.). The essay explains about the deconstruction of meanings in the binary oppositions of the structure and established the relationships between the signifier, signified and the sign.

Marcus and Cushman’s article, *Ethnographies as Texts*, explains how the ethnographic accounts can constructed as cultural texts. He explains about the ethnographic realism, a style of ethnographic writing that narrates the author's experiences and observations as if the reader was witnessing or experiencing events first hand. The authors identify nine characteristics of ethnographic realism: a totalizing description of another culture; an omniscient, unintrusive narrator; substitution of composite creations for individuals; references to fieldwork only to the extent necessary to establish the actual presence of the ethnographer; focus on everyday life situations; dogmatic claim that the native point of view is being represented; generalizations are favoured over detailing of particular facts; use of jargon; conceptual abstractions which bypass attention to the context of native language.

Stephen A. Tyler’s, *Post-Modern Ethnography: From Document of the Occult to Occult Document*, proposes an entirely different definition of ethnography which causes the problem of representation to disappear altogether. His definition of post modern ethnography emphasizes the dialogical nature of ethnography, but here the discourse is between reader and writer rather than between the writer and the culture he studies. He claims that all ethnographies are post-modern in effect and also states that the post-modern ethnography has not yet been written and may not even be possible. Tyler's essay is important for it emphasizes on discourse analysis, the ethical character of ethnography, and the relationship between writer, text and reader.
Michael Genzuk’s, *A Synthesis of Ethnographic Research*, focuses ethnography as a social science research method where typical ethnographic research employs three kinds of data collection: interviews, observation, and documents. He explains three methodological principles—naturalism, understanding and discovery for ethnographic method.

Jerome Bruner in his article, *The Narrative Construction of Reality* argued that the mind structures its sense of reality using mediation through cultural products, like language and other symbolic systems. He gives an account of ten ways of how a narrative constructs reality. Narrative diachronicity, particularity, intentional state entailment, hermeneutic comparability, canonicity and breach, referentiality, genericness, normativeness, context sensitivity and negotiability, Narrative accrual (how they are cumulative).

Richard Giovannoli’s, *The Narrative method of inquiry*, points out that, the purpose of narrative research is to study personal experiences and the process of meaning-making in a systematic manner. He held that the narratives are essentially more than the telling stories; it is the way one creates and recreates the realities of one’s own self.

William M. Clements’, *Personal Narrative, the Interview Context, and the Question of Tradition*, explains why personal narrative as a genre possesses several advantages over the investigation of more exotic materials. He suggested that while collecting personal narratives, the collector should familiarize with the informant prior to the interview, familiarity with the cultural milieu from which the informant comes, trying to get information on whether the informant has narrated his/her personal narrative, the collector of personal narratives can evaluate traditionality by considering the depth of artistry in the material he/she collect. He further state that, in the interview context, an informant may create narratives in response to specific questions from the interviewer.

Paul Recoeur in his three volumes of books *Time and Narrative* explains the relationships between the narratives, time and identity of the narratives. For him in the narrative construction the historical time transcends into human time to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full significance when it becomes a condition of temporal existence. He explains the process of
attaining narrative identity by the narrators in the narratives. For Ricoeur the constitutive features of any narrative form are personal identity, constituted by an idem-identity and an ipse-identity, which always involves a narrative identity. For him the narrative identity could be obtained in three steps: (i) narratives draw together disparate and somehow discordant elements into the concordant unity of a plot that has a temporal span,(ii) the elements and episodes that a narrative unites involve contingencies. All of them could have been different or even nonexistent. Nonetheless, as emplotted, these elements take on the guise of necessity or at least of likelihood because they are followable. Taken by itself, an element of a story is of interest only if it is surprising. But when it is integrated into a plot it appears as a quasi-necessity and (iii) narratives are made up not only of actions and events but also of characters or personages. Finally, a narrative’s characters only rise to the status of persons-fictional or real-who can initiate action when one evaluates their doings and sufferings and imputes them to the actors and victims as praiseworthy or otherwise

Catherine Kohler Riessman’s, Analysis of Personal Narratives,\textsuperscript{106} gives a vivid description of the collection, analysis and interpretation of personal narratives, which is being emerged as a genre of study. The author gives the reasons for its influential use in social science research. The method is based on: the detailed transcripts of interview excerpts; structural features of discourse; analysis of the co-production of narratives through the dialogic exchange between interviewer and participant; comparative approach to interpret the similarities and differences among life stories of the participants.

Ram Ahuja’s book, Research Methods,\textsuperscript{107} explains the method of converting raw data into meaningful statements includes data processing, data analysis, and data interpretation and presentation. Data processing mainly involves various manipulations necessary for preparing the data for analysis which could be manual or electronic. It involves editing, categorizing the open-ended questions, coding, computerization and preparation of tables and diagrams. The data collected from the field is evaluated, analyze and interpret. The analysis is the ordering of data into constituent parts in order to obtain answers to research questions. Merely analysis does not provide answers to research questions so interpretation of data is necessary. Thus,
to interpret is to explain, to find meaning. One must first analyze the data and then interpret the results of the analysis.

Janet Bean, in her Field Guide: Instructor’s Manual emphasizes the need to have cooperation between the researcher and the cultural groups in the fieldwork situation. She expects the fieldworkers to gain understanding of various subcultures while to improve their research, record keeping, speaking, and writing skills.

Lacunae in previous researches:

So far the researches conducted on the Nagas in general and Ao-Naga in particular, accepted that their rich cultural heritage and identity are preserved in their oral traditions (folklore). But different genres of their folklore are not methodically collected, analysed and interpreted from the perspective of the people who had produced them. Most of the researches depended on the Administrative records, field reports of the anthropologists and other such sources which did not reveal the soul of the community—how it struggled through the ages to carve its own niche i.e., the cultural identity ever since the historical formations. Though some works focused on rituals, folknarratives and songs they are highly descriptive and interpreted more from the researcher’s viewpoint. The content of the lore is given importance rather than the cultural context of their renditions. Some works are compilation of folklore genres meant for archival purpose. The rituals are though graphically described, they are not analysed in the light of latest discourses on cultural semiotics and ritual theories. Almost all works express the fear that the literacy, Christianity and globalization are threats to their personal and community identities; and one must save their culture from erosion. They warn the younger generation that they should protect their rich heritage by preserving in audio-visual forms and print media. The research works are not suggesting measures to save the heterogeneity of community from homogeneity caused by the above three factors. The methodology used by the colonial writers was primarily based on exploration and fieldwork and secondly the methods that they used were survey methods, observation and participant observation methods with the objective of trying to show how it really was. Therefore this literature has only description. Their writings became the sources for post-colonial writers on the Nagas. However their writings were more or less a descriptive affair or information on the Naga culture, traditions and the life of the people. So folklore of the Nagas was not
explored and is not taken into consideration for the study about the Nagas. Writings were not perceived from oral tradition or from the folk perspective.

Now the survey of literature emerges the following questions: The Nagas, especially the Ao-Nagas really lost their identity. Whether literacy erased their oracy? Whether Christianity could completely wipe off the animistic thinking, ritual practices, social organization, and gender construction of Ao-Nagas? Whether Indian administration could replace native village organization, customary law and traditional economy? Could the globalization erode Ao-identities?

Hypotheses

It is hypothesised that:

- Nagas had a long cherished history and culture hoarded in their oral traditions. Their frequent involvement in inter and intra-tribal conflicts and displacement of their political/geographical domains by Britishers and Indian Government could not disturb the functioning of their traditional village councils. The customary law still prevails. The agricultural practices are still tribal but follow some technological advancement.

- The introduction of literacy and advent of Christianity though condemned some democratic ways with regard to spousal selections (Morung system-dormitory), the rest of the patriarchal social organisation related to the institutions of marriage, kinship, law, customs etc, are being continued with some changes coming up in the passage of time.

- Though most of the Ao-Nagas took to the Christianity, their animistic belief system still gets reflected in their symbolic ritual practices observed during several socio-religious celebration in the contemporary times.

- At the outset it appears that Ao-Nagas are losing identity because of globalisation. If the deep structures of different aspects of their folk life as reflected in their oral narratives are analysed and interpreted from the perspectives of the community, they reveal change and continuity of Ao-naga identities through the ages.

Aims and objectives

Basing on the hypotheses made above, the thesis entitled *Oral Narratives of the Ao-Nagas: Constructing Identity* advocates the following aims and objectives.

- To collect different genres of Ao-Naga folklore- folk narratives (mythology, folktales) proverbs, riddles folksongs, beliefs, and religion, ritual practices and personal narratives / life stories of the narrators in the field.

- To analyse the folknarratives from structuralist and poststructuralist perspective for establishing how the folknarrative typology and structures
could reflect the social hierarchies in at different realms of folklife. The Proppian, Levistraussian and Derridian philosophies are being evaluated in this context.

- To show how the people in oral societies construct and sustain their identities through the generations in their folknarrative tradition and other genres of folklore.
- To analyse the ritual life of the Ao-Naga community of the past and present and evolve indigenous models which are quite different from the models put forward by Van Gennep, Victor Turner and Mary Douglas.
- To study different walks of the lives like social organizations, religion and rituals, agriculture, economy, administration etc. and their ethnic cultural practices that mark their identity as reflected in their oral narratives. And also to establish the changes and continuities of Ao-Naga identities in pre and post Christian era in the wake of globalisation.
- To suggest the measures for retaining the cultural identities of the Ao-Nagas in the changing scenario.

**Methodology**

Methods can be defined as the procedures and techniques characteristic of a particular discipline or field of knowledge or a way of doing something, especially a systematic way; implies an orderly logical arrangement. Methodology refers to more than a simple set of methods; rather it refers to the rationale and the philosophical assumptions that underlie a particular study. The first step in methodology is collection of data. Data is organized information. It can be numbers, words, measurements, observations or even just descriptions of things. The data is collected from primary and secondary sources, but the information gathered from both these sources gets merged in the research process.

**Primary sources**

The prime source of the study is the data gathered from the field work. The Ao culture is rooted in their folklore traditions transmitted orally throughout the generations since they have no written source. The study focuses on the oral narratives as the major source of study. Oral narratives are highly dynamic genres embodying the essence of culture; how it is being experienced, represented and transmitted to the other generations. Narratives are stories that have been shared in everywhere in human culture as a mode of communication, education, preservation of culture and to instil knowledge and values. Hence the people adapt narratives to
contour and conceptualize their experiences to render in the form of stories which are nothing than their experiential expressions. The oral narratives broadly include folknarratives (myths, folktales etc) metanarratives (narratives on narratives), personal narratives, life experience narratives and auto ethnographies of the informants in the field. Men, women and children from different socio-economic statuses and age groups were primary resource persons in the field study. Oral narratives on the traditional rituals and practices are collected from the older people who witnessed three generations. The data on the life cycle (childbirth, puberty, marriage and death) rituals and politico-cultural/religious rites is collected in the form of oral narratives. The contemporary rituals are collected in the context of celebrations.

The material culture associated in the folklife of the Ao-Nagas is also collected from the dwellings of the people. The other folklore genres of the community are also collected. The field work is done in around the villages Longkhum, Ungma Mopongchuket and Changtongya and in around Mokokchung and Dimapur districts.

Secondary Sources

The published or unpublished written data related to the topic of research constitutes the secondary source material. Besides the research works that were already analysed above in the survey of literature, administrative records of the British and Indian government and village reports form the source material.

Methods

Research methods are classified into quantitative and qualitative.

**Quantitative research**[^1][^2] is defined as that which explains a “phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods, particularly statistics.”[^3] It contains the data gathered from structured research methods such as survey, questionnaires, checklists and experimentation.

(i) **Quantitative methods** are generally works towards documenting subject attributes expressed in quantity, extent, or strength, as well as guaranteeing among other things- objectivity, accuracy, validity and reliability. Their purpose is to measure variables and to produce figures which will allow judgements as to the status of the variables in question, which in turn will allow further processing, and
comparisons and permit replicability.\textsuperscript{112} Survey method is a quantitative method. Before entering into the field, the survey method was applied. I acquainted fully with the literature on the area and its people to supply information, study the geography, weather conditions, and locations before entering into the field and attempted to reach the local people who may assist with the research. Survey method is a non-experimental, descriptive research method or a fact-finding study.\textsuperscript{113} Survey method helps to organize data into meaningful components that can assist in understanding the human condition on many levels. In a sense it is a shorthand method of gaining information from a subset of the entire group studied. Survey method is always conducted in a natural setting; it is a field study.

In order to get informations from the field using the above methods, different techniques like focus group discussions, interviews, informal discourses on different issues of the research topic with the communities are appropriated. Focus group discussions are conducted with the members of the councils and elders of the folk groups on different issues on religion, rituals, social norms, customary law etc. In the directive and non-directive interviews, the questions used are open ended which gave scope to the researcher to understand the perspective of the community. After field work, transliteration of data and transfer of data from audio through script is done which is called transcription. A researcher can employ multiple methods.

(ii) \textbf{Qualitative methods}: van Mannen considers qualitative research as a best umbrella term covering an array of interpretative techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning not the frequency of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world. The qualitative researchers are concerned with attempting to accurately describe, decode and interpret the precise meaning to persons of phenomena occurring in the normal social contexts and are typically preoccupied with complexity, authenticity, contextualisation, shared subjectivity of researcher and researched and minimization of illusion \textsuperscript{114}. The qualitative methods include observation, ethnography, postmodern-ethnography (dialogical method) and narrative inquiry.

\textbf{a. Observation method} is used in obtaining data by direct observation, looking from the outside in and describing the site as the researcher sees it. There are Participant Observer and Non-participant Observer. Participant Observer has the
advantage to participate and observe what is going around and feel the experience the actual role which the researchers assume. Non-Participant Observer may be able to view the situation with an objectivity of which participant would have robbed him/her and as he/she is not in the centre of the action but may be able to take notes, view the entire kaleidoscope of activities and perhaps even be able to use a tape recorder to obtain a full report of the audio aspects of the event.

b. Ethnography is an experience labeled as the fieldwork method and then writes accounts of the culture, emphasizing descriptive detail. It is to be closely observes, records, and engages in the daily life of another culture. Ethnographic method in short is the graphic study of culture of the races. Ethnography (Greek *ethnos* = people and *graphein* = writing) is a genre of writing that uses fieldwork to provide a descriptive study of human societies. Ethnography presents the results of a holistic research method founded on the idea that a system's properties cannot necessarily be accurately understood independently of each other. It is the process of describing a culture or way of life from a folk people’s point of view. Another name for it is field research. The ethnographer usually cultivates close relationships with “informants” who can provide specific information on aspects of cultural life. While detailed written notes are the mainstay of fieldwork. Even tape recorders and cameras are also used. So the ethnographic method involves observation and note taking.

c. Post-modern ethnography is a cooperatively evolved text consisting of fragments of discourse intended to evoke in the minds of both reader and writer an emergent fantasy of a possible world of commonsense reality. Clifford Geertz’s concept of ‘thick description’ has influenced academic disciplines. Postmodern ethnographers are interested in understanding how this form perpetuates certain relations of power and domination. Postmodern ethnographers are examples of narrative forms and new ways of telling. Postmodern ethnography springs from methodological reflection within the cultural theory of postmodernism that transposed its principles into ethnographic practice. According to postmodern ethnographers, objectivity and impartiality are not features of the ethnographer’s interpretative work, but fictions promoted through rhetorical strategies of textual type known as the ‘poetics and politics of writing’. These ethnographers believe that instead of
understanding the other more fully, what fieldworkers should do is gain a fuller understanding of themselves, by uncovering their prejudices, ideology and tacit knowledge.\textsuperscript{120}

d. **Narrative inquiry** an ‘inquiry into the narrative’ is another method used to analyse and interpret the oral narratives in the thesis. Narratives are stories which are told in ordered sequence of events that is combined with verbal communication to make sense of what one experience, and also with different characters that communicate a message artistically. It focuses particularly on people’s lives and lived experiences and the process of gathering information/data for the purpose of research through storytelling where the researcher writes/records a narrative of the experience. The person who narrates the story is the primary sources for the narrative enquiry. The lives of the people are consists of stories. Narrative in essence is the stories of lives and the stories of the lives of others and it is open to interpretation. This interpretation develops through relationship of researcher and the respondent or story teller and listener. Narratives are basically consisting of a narrator who shared what happened or tells a story to others by means of conversation or communication through utterances. Production of narratives is a dialogical process between self of the narrator and the researcher. Hence the narratives and other data collected in the field is a product of employing the Dialogical method, which is reflexive, self emanating and emergent. It produces ‘a corpus of thick data\textsuperscript{121} produced ‘dialogically’ by the ethnographer and the informant thereby merging the boundaries between the subject/object and researcher/informant. Self-reflective knowledge comes from the discussion from both sides. Dialogical method helps the researcher to know the reality of the human beings. Both fieldworker and informant begin with little or nothing in terms of shared experience but when they engage in dialogue with each other they starts to experience the activities going on around them. Narratives research directs a study and gathers information to help bring out the appropriate objective research tools, and can be used as the single evaluation of a real-life problem.\textsuperscript{122} Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience.

The study adopted both the qualitative and quantitative methods and data collected had been cross checked with the other source materials. Such process is known as method of “triangulation” which is essential while interpreting them from
the perspective of the community. Triangulation refers to the use of several methods in answering the research question. Deniz describes four forms of triangulation:

(I) Data triangulation which consists collection of data through multiple source sampling strategies involving different people, time and locations.

(II) Investigator triangulation that refers to the use of more than one in gathering data.

(III) Theoretical triangulation in which the research relies on more than one theoretical position in interpreting data.

(IV) Methodological triangulation that refers to the use of more than one method of gathering data. Deniz calls attention to the ‘with-in method’ (using varieties of the same method) and ‘between method’ (using contrasting methods) triangulation.

Chapterisation

This thesis is divided into Eight chapters.

The first chapter is Introduction which gives a brief preamble to the study of Naga, especially Ao-naga culture and identity. The chapter deals with significance of the research topic, its nature and scope and survey of previous literature, hypothesis aims and objectives. The chapter also gives an account of the methodology followed in the research process.

The second chapter, An Overview of Ao-Naga Cultural Life describes in brief the Ao-Naga Folklife to situate the community’s identities in their expressive behaviour. The chapter describes geography, environment and people of Nagaland in general and Mokokchung district, the land of Aos in detail. The cultural life of the Ao-Nagas that encompass social structure, economic activities, political life customary law, religion, rituals, dress, musical instruments, material culture and ethno medical practices etc., are discussed in brief.

The third chapter Origin and Dispersal of Nagas: A Folkloric Perspective defines the nature and scope of Ao-Nagas’ Folklife and interprets it from the perspectives of identity formations, both in their personal and community domains. The chapter analyses and interprets the mythical tradition of the Nagas and the AO-nagas to throw new light on their origins and migratory patterns through the ages.
The fourth chapter, On Ao-Naga Narrative typology and structure: Metaphors of Identity focuses on (i) how the oral narratives of the Ao-Nagas (both in personal and folk) endure their core strands of identity in their tale motifs, and (ii) how the structure of the oral narratives mirror the social stratification and cultural values of the Ao-Nagas. The folknarratives in this chapter are analysed on the paradigms of syntagmatic and paradigmatic structural models and processed through the Derridian post structural hermeneutical discourse and theory of narrative inquiry.

The fifth Social organisation: Reflections in Folklore analyses the folktales, personal narratives and proverbs told by men and women of different age groups to interpret how Ao-Nagas organised their patriarchal society revolving round the institutions of marriage and kinships. The chapter further focuses on how the masculinity and femininity are constructed upon men and women in Ao-Naga society and explains the gender roles and relations in family system. The role of customary law in regulation of social life is also explained.

The sixth chapter, Life Cycle Ceremonies as Cultural Metaphor discusses in general how the rituals celebrated by the Ao-Naga people in different socio-cultural contexts stand as the metaphors of their cultural identities at personal level, as the members of their respective family/clan groups level (collective), among other clans of the Naga society. The definition and theoretical dimension of the rituals in general and life cycle ceremonies in particular are discussed. The ritual process of the ‘life cycle ceremonies’- birth, puberty, marriage and death’ of the Ao-Naga are analysed and interpreted from the perspective of the community. The ritual events celebrated in each life cycle ceremony are studied to show how they metaphorically represent the cultural components of their respective families and clan groups. Further the chapter develops indigenous models of life cycle ceremonies of the AO-Nagas which are quite distinct from the models developed in the west and other tribal society of the world. The life cycle ceremonies are explained not only as the metaphors of their personal identity, but as the loci changing identities from one threshold to the other in one’s life course.

The seventh chapter, Communal Rites as Markers of identity focuses on the rituals that demand the communal participation of the AO-Nagas. The communal
rites are depicted as the paradigms of socialisation and markers of Aos’ identity. The intricacies socio-political and religious intricacies of Ao culture are explained how the communal rituals involve social groups as a whole to process their changing identities. The ritual process of social, economic religious and political rituals of the Aos is analysed. Indigenous ritual models of different communal rites which mark different dimensions of Aos identity are developed.

The eighth chapter, Conclusion is a brief summery of all the chapters along with findings. It is observed that the Ao-Naga community is a distinct folklore community which draws its strength by wilful play of verbal and non-verbal genres of folklore in everyday life through which it constructs its identity despite the onslaught of modernity and globalisation.

Endnotes:

3 Nagaland in the 20th century was severed through a treacherous betrayal by the British Government. Burma was gifted with half, and the other half fell under Indian dominion. Those areas that fell under Indian Territory were further subdivided into four fragments, namely - Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. Thus, within the Indian Territory, large chunks of Naga lands and Naga people were put into three other states against the wishes of the Nagas. This was done to reduce the Naga political issue to the smallest possible geographical area. The present Indian State of Nagaland is comprised of only 16,557 sq. kms with a population of hardly over two million people. Kaka Iralu. D. “The Fifty Four-Year Indo-Naga Conflict: A Question of Internal Indian Ethnic Conflict or a Conflict between Two Nations” Paper presented in National Seminar on Resolving Ethnic Conflicts in North East India. Guwahati, Assam, November 11-12, 2002.
5 Claudis Ptolemy, Geographia, V11, Patis, E, Champion, 1925, (ii) p.18
9 “The famous Ao-Naga shawl called “Mangkotepsu” is male attire but these days one sees that jackets made out of it have become unisex and are sold at tourist spots with its lore and history totally ignored. Other handicrafts, dance forms are also being manipulated to ‘fit’ into the required mould”. Temsula Ao, “Identity and Globalization: A Naga Perspective”, in Globalization and Tribes of Northeast India, A quarterly newsletter Folklife from National Folklore Support Centre, Serial No.22 July 2006, pp. 6-7
10 Ibid
12 These ranges are clearly explained by Purtongzuk Longchar in his book, Historical Development of the Ao Nagas in Nagaland, Dimapur, Print home,2002, pp. 10-12
13 Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *kinder und Hausmärchen* (Children’s and Household tales), German, 1812. For further details visit: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grimms_Fairy_Tales
32 *Ibid*, p. 7
34 *Ibid*, p.53
42 *Idem*, *Indian Folklore Research Chennai*, Journal, National Folklore Support Centre.,Vol.1, No.4,2005,pp.69-93

34
46 Hubert J.M. Hermans, “The Dialogical Self: Toward a Theory of Personal and Cultural”, Culture Psychology 2001; 7; 243
53 *Ibid*, pp. 53-92
54 *Ibid*, 95
59 Colonialism created structures of the binary oppositions, the Orient, containing the emotional and decadent cultures and Occident, the principled and progressive worldview. This opposition justified the colonizer’s self-perceived “destiny to rule” subordinate peoples. It got reflected in their writings and the administrative changes that they made in their colonies. Postcolonial works emphasize the re-analysis of categories assumed to be natural and immutable. Postcolonial Studies’ main achievement was the separating of colonialism’s ideology and its Euro-centered worldview of bringing western civilization and Christianity to the rest of the supposedly benighted and heathen world.
61 Ibid, p. 307
65 *Ibid*, p. 10
66 M.M Clark, *A Corner in India*, Guwahati, Christian Literature Centre,1978, (Reprinted and Published)
69 Naga writers like her has given importance to the oral tradition.

Temsula Ao, “Identity and Globalization: A Naga Perspective”, in Globalization and Tribes of Northeast India, A quarterly newsletter Folklife from National Folklore Support Centre, Serial No.22 July 2006, pp. 6-7

Ibid. p.7


Ibid. p. 8


Ibid. p. 415

Ibid. p. 422


Ibid., pp. 31-36


A post-modern ethnography is a cooperatively evolved text consisting of fragments of discourse intended to evoke in the minds of both reader and writer an emergent fantasy of a possible world of commonsense reality, and thus to provoke an aesthetic integration that will have a therapeutic effect. 

Ibid, p.125

Ibid. p. 136


Ibid., pp. 3- 4


Ibid. p.1


Ibid. p. 111


http://xenia.media.mit.edu/~brooks/storybiz/riessman.pdf


Ibid.
114 D. Frayer, “Qualitative Methods in occupational psychology: Reflections upon why they are so useful but so little used?”, *The Occupational Psychologist*, 14, 3-6.
117 ibid