Chapter: II

AN OVERVIEW OF AO-NAGA CULTURAL LIFE

The cultural life is not a fragmented-existential, locational and artefactual-entity of society. It is a holistic and well articulated orb that encompasses different aspects of the folkgroups that make them distinct from one another in social world. A brief picture of different realms of cultural life-the geography, environment, the historical milieu, a brief account of Ao-Naga society, religion, rituals, polity, economy, customary law, folklore genres, ethnomedicine, material culture etc,- is given to situate different paradigms of Ao-Naga identity in all these aspects.

People, land and Environment of Nagaland

The Nagas have high sense of territorial integrity of their boundaries and identity with their lands. Their entire struggle in the past to save their lands from frequent expeditions from the neighbouring tribes as well as the Britishers bares testimony to it. Geographically the Nagaland State is almost triangular in shape, having an area of 16,579 sq. Km. It is one of the North-Eastern most state on its maximum part of the south-east. The state lies between 26°6' N and 27°4' Latitudes and between 95°20'E and 95°15' E Longitudes. The following table provides general information about the topography of Nagaland.

Table No. 2.1: Nagaland at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Area</td>
<td>16,579 sq.km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Capital</td>
<td>Kohima (1,444.12 m. above sea level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Boundaries</td>
<td>East – Myanmar, West – Assam North – Assam &amp; South – Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>19,88,636 (2001 census)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Population</td>
<td>16,35,815 (82.26%) (2001 census)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Population</td>
<td>3,52,821 (17.74%) (2001 census)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density of Population</td>
<td>120 per sq.km. (2001 census)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Ratio</td>
<td>909:1000 Female : Male (2001 census)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Rate Persons:</td>
<td>67.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male :</td>
<td>71.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female :</td>
<td>61.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Districts with HQs</td>
<td>(1) Kohima, (2) Mokokchung, (3) Tuensang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newly created districts</strong></td>
<td>(1) Longleng  (2) Kiphire  (3) Peren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Villages</strong></td>
<td>1286 (2001 census)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Census towns</strong></td>
<td>9 (2001 census)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biggest Village</strong></td>
<td>Kohima village (3965 households; 13,705 persons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Official Language</strong></td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Rainfall</strong></td>
<td>2500 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Peak Mount</strong></td>
<td>Saramati, 3840 metres (Tuensang district)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Other Important Peaks**  | Mount Japfu, 3015 metres (Kohima district)  
|                           | Mount Zanubou, 2750 metres (Phek District)  
|                           | Mount Kupamedzu, 2650 metres (Phek district)  |
| **Forest Cover**           | 13,345 sq. km (80.49% of State’s Geographical Area) |
| **Medicinal Plants**       | Conitum ferox, ginseng, lemon grass, aconitum heterophyllum, aquilaria gallocha, artemiszia annua, dioscorea floribunda, gloriosa superba, hedychium spicatum, lycopodium clavatum, ardocostachys jatamansi, panax pseudoginseng, picrorhiza kurron, piper longum, piper nigrum, podophyllum hexunddrum, pogostemon cablin, smilax china, tagetes minuta, taxuz bacata and valeriana wallichii. |
| **Main Rivers**            | Dhansiri, Doyang, Dikhu, Tizu, Melak |
| **Soil types**             | Inceptisols (66 per cent), ultisols (23.8 per cent), entisols (7.3 per cent) and alfisols (2.9 per cent). |
| **Major crops**            | Paddy, maize, sugarcane, potato and tea. |
| **Agro-climatic conditions favour** | Agriculture, horticulture and forestry |
| **Natural resources**      | Limestone and marble (1,000 million tonnes), petroleum and natural gas (600 million tonnes), coal (50 million tonnes) and substantial reserves of slate sandstones, basalt, chert, dunite, gabbro, g ranodiorite, serpentine spilitepyroxenite and quartzite. |
| **Railway Head**           | Dimapur                             |
| **Airport**                | Dimapur                             |
| **Commercial Centre**      | Dimapur                             |

**Sources:** Nagaland State Human Development Report published by Department of Planning & Coordination Government of Nagaland, October 2004; Nagaland, Indian Brand Equality Foundation (IBEF), November, 2010.

Nagaland is a hilly state with interspersed ridges and valleys. The altitude varies 110 to 3840 metres above sea level. Generally the climate of Nagaland is cool in winter and warm in summer especially in the interior places and higher hills. There
is no regular river system in Nagaland that flow directly into the sea. The rivers of Nagaland flow either into Brahmaputra in the west in Assam or into the Chindwin in the east in Myanmar (Burma). The Catchment Rivers in Nagaland that drain into Brahmaputra and the catchment area of rivers that drains into Chindwin are approximately equal, but the interesting thing is that in the case of Brahmaputra catchment a group of rivers drain the area and they join the Brahmaputra in Assam separately whereas in the case of Chindwin catchment all the tributaries join together and finally run into the Chindwin.

The weather in Nagaland has four distinct seasons: winter (cold season), pre-monsoon (hot season), monsoon (rainy season) and retreating monsoon (cool season). The winter season begins in December and continues till the end of February, March and April are the hot season as this period is hot. The rainy season included the months from May to September. The period of October and November is treated as cool season as this period is neither too hot nor too cold.

The mountains of Nagaland are high, others are low, some have steep sides, and others have gentle sloping sides. To the North of Kohima the main ranges gradually decline in its height. In their general appearance, the hills are covered with dense evergreen forest. The mountain system in Nagaland is an offshoot of the Himalayan mountain system which runs roughly east to west. The mountain of Nagaland by and large runs north to south.

The State of Nagaland is rich in flora and fauna. About one-sixth of Nagaland is under the cover of tropical and sub-tropical evergreen forests. Its vegetation types range from alpine to moist tropical types. The flora of a place is the result of the interplay of a combination of factors- edaphic, climatic and topographic. Nagaland is one of the thickest top-soil layers anywhere in India. There are bamboo species not bigger than the thumb which entwines themselves up hundreds of feet to the tops of tall trees. Some bamboo Dendrocalamus Gigantium\(^2\) are so big that several strong men are required to left finger but hundreds of times stronger than its own size of wood and tougher and more elastic than fibre glass. Bamboos were collected during the months of July to October when there were little free from the normal economic pursuits. Bamboo of about a year old is generally selected for the purpose, but bamboos beyond 3 years old being brittle are not at all used. Traditional musical
instruments of the Nagas like mouth-organ, bamboo flute, and trumpet were made of bamboo.

In Nagaland, there are plant species that grow continuously through out the year till they become big and bear fruits. There are abundance of edible wild plants and fruits. Wild vegetables from the forest constitute a very significant part of the food of the people. Wild fruits are also quite plentiful. Wild grapes, wild apples, wild lemon, wild bananas, wild walnut, wild mangoes, wild mulberry, wild cherry and a host of other indigenous fruits are to be found. There are also list of wild medicinal plants run into several hundreds.

The State is comparatively rich in animal resources and the source of all animal life is plants. The Carnivores like tiger, lions and so on live only on the meat of other animals. But these other animals again depend on plants for their sustenance. Therefore, the animal life of any place is dependent on the type and quality of the vegetation. There are different food and cash crops by the people of Nagaland.

As has been discussed before, the Nagas are heterogeneous tribal entity having multicultural clans, each of which has its own ritual festivities that makes it distinct from the other. The following table represents the festivals of different Naga tribes celebrated in various seasons in their geographical domains.

**Table No. 2.2: Tribes, Seasons and Festivals of different Nagaland**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.no</th>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Subdivision / District</th>
<th>Main Festival</th>
<th>Ritual calendar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Angami</td>
<td>Kohima</td>
<td>Sekrenyi</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ao</td>
<td>Mokokchung</td>
<td>Moatsu, Tsungremong</td>
<td>May, August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chakhesang</td>
<td>Phek</td>
<td>Tsukhenyie, Sukrenyi</td>
<td>April/May, January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chang</td>
<td>Tuensang</td>
<td>Kundanglem, Nuknyu Lem</td>
<td>April, July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kachari</td>
<td>Dimapur</td>
<td>Bushu Jiba, Baisagn</td>
<td>January, April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Khiamniungan</td>
<td>Noklak in Tuensang</td>
<td>Miu Festival, Tsokum</td>
<td>May, October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Konyak</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Aoleang Monyu</td>
<td>April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kuki</td>
<td>Dimapur; Peren</td>
<td>Minkut</td>
<td>January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lotha</td>
<td>Wokha</td>
<td>Tokhu Emong</td>
<td>November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Phom</td>
<td>Longleng</td>
<td>Monyu, Moha, Bongyum</td>
<td>April, May, October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Pochury</td>
<td>Meluri in Phek</td>
<td>Yemshe</td>
<td>October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rengma</td>
<td>Tseminyu in Kohima</td>
<td>Ngadah</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13  Sangtam  Kiphire; Tuensang  Amongmong  September
14  Sumi  Zunheboto  Ahuna, Tuluni  November, July
15  Yimchungru  Shamator in Tuensang and Kiphire  Metumniu, Tsungkamniu  August, January
16  Zeliang Hega,  Peren  Langsimyi/Changa Gadi, and Mileinyi  February, October, March


The above table throws flood of light on the heterogeneity and cultural diversity of tribes in Nagaland.

Geography and environment of Mokokchung District, the land of Aos

The land wherein Aos live is a place with long ranges of hills with gentle slopes leading to water resources like streams. The Mokokchung District is the home of the Ao people. It has an area of 1615 sq.km. According to the 2001 census there are 1, 20,193 Mokokchung is thickly populated by Aos. It is situated at a height of about 1325.08 meters above sea level. The land of the Aos lays in the North-east border of India between 26.12 and 26.45 degree North Latitude, 94.18, and 94.50 degree East Longitudes. It occupies the country, which is drained by the Jhanzi, the Desoi and by the stream, which flows in the Dikhu on its left bank. They occupy forty-six villages, excluding Longsa which is the only village situated on the right bank of the Dikhu. Out of these, twenty-one are Chungli entirely, nineteen are Mongsen entirely and both the groups inhabit the other six villages. The climate is generally cool, and the higher hills are relatively healthy. The attitudes of the Ao land are between 1000 to 2000 meters above sea level. According to R.R.Bhattacharya and Parvin Singh, “Starting from the breathtaking panoramic views of its capital Kohima, the roads wind through thick tropical jungle, deep gorges and unexplored terrain. They lead to far-flung villages where each tribe has, for generations, formed its own beliefs, practiced its own rites and sung its own history in the splendid isolation of these hills.” The people of Nagaland belong to the Mongoloid stock. Each tribe has its own ethnic and cultural identity and practices. The population of Nagaland, according to the 2001 Census is 19, 88,636. Out of this 82.26% of the population is rural. The average
density of population is 120 per sq.km. The following table represents the topography of Mokokchung district.

**Table No.2.3: Mokokchung District at a glance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.no</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Geographical Area (sq.km)</td>
<td>1,615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Headquarters</td>
<td>Mokokchung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Population (as on 2001 Census)</td>
<td>2,27,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Literacy (%)</td>
<td>84.27; Male- 86.14, Female-82.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Climate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Average Annual Rainfall (mm)</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Minimum Temp (0C)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Maximum Temp (0C)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>GEOMORPHOLOGY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i) Major Physiographic Units</td>
<td>Denudational Hills, Structural Hills, Intermontane valleys, Plateau Melak, Dikhu, Tsurang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii) Major Drainages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>LAND USE (sq.km)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Forest Area</td>
<td>289.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Gross Cropped area</td>
<td>382.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Agriculture land</td>
<td>180.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Net area irrigated</td>
<td>59.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. Gross area irrigated</td>
<td>72.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Major soil types</td>
<td>Alluvial Soil, Non Laterite Red Soil, Forest Soil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Major Crops</td>
<td>Rice, Tuber, Maize, Naga Dal, Soya Beans, Pea, Mustarad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Ao land bears a monsoon type of climate, with cool winters and mild summers. The winter night temperature goes down to seven degrees Celsius and the summer heat does not rise above 32 degree Celsius. There is an average rainfall of 25” millimetre during the nine months of the year, with the heaviest rainfall in July and August. In W.C. Smith’s view in the rainy season the valleys and lower ranges are quite malarious. The temperature never goes very high, because of being tempered by the heavy rains.

The Ao territory is made up of ranges (tsükong), running in a north-easterly direction with an island plateau in the heart of it. According to the ranges, the Ao
divided their villages and all the ranges have different practices, customary laws, different folklore like myths, legends, ranges folktales etc. All Aos are not equal in many ways. There are slight differences in all custom, traditions and practices. The ranges are more or less parallel to each other and run south-east direction. The entire District is comprised of six hill ranges described below:

1. **Ongpangkong Range**: The Ongpangkong (cold range) is the southernmost range forming irregular boundary with the settlements of the Sema and the Lotha on the south and the Sangtam tribe on the east. The name was given because it is the coldest range. Mokokchung town, the district administrative headquarters is situated in this range.

2. **Langpangkong Range**: The Langpangkong (bed range) is the eastern most range skirting along the course of the Tzula (Dikhu) river which forms the natural boundary line of Mokokchung with that of Tuensang and Mon districts. It was named because of its resemblance to a bed.

3. **Asetkong Range**: The Asetkong (Island range) is a central range running from south to east, but compared to others it is the shortest range consisting of five villages, one mission centre called Impur and also two components namely Anjilung and Longjiang. The administrative centre is called Kobulong. A road links it with Mokokchung town on one side and the Amguri P.W.D. road on the other end. The Ao meaning of the Aset is island; the altitude of this range is lower than that of Langpangkong.

4. **Changkikong Range**: This range starts from Changki village direction and so is known as Changkikong range. It stretches in the north-west direction. The administrative centre is at Alongkima. Changkikong range runs parallel but lower in altitude than the Langpangkong range and is lying to the south west of Asetkong.

5. **Japukong Range**: The Japukong range is the outermost regular range stretching from the north-east to south-west, lying at the interior south of the Tzurangkong and bordering the Assam. Japu is the village from which the whole range starts and is so named the Japukong range. It is also said that the range is thus named because of its resemblance to old man drying rice.

The **Flora and Fauna** of the Ao land consists of both deciduous and evergreen forests. They draw materials for adornment and the same was represented in folklore and oral tradition. In the low altitudes, the trees are evergreen and in the high altitudes, deciduous trees are found. Since water does not stay due to porosity of the earth so the retention power is less. Many trees cannot withstand the cold, thus it shed leaves. The land looks dry during the month of February and by March it becomes green again. Rhododendrons, begonias, tree fern, mosses, creepers, vines, elder gentian, hollyhock, morning glory, lady slipper, lilies and other flowers are
found in abundance. Variety of wild fruits like bananas, mangoes, wild apples, figs, oranges, raspberries, strawberries, cherries are found. The land had dense forest with plenty of birds, animals and reptiles in the earlier times, however, many of the birds and animal were killed due to indiscriminate hunting. Birds like hornbill, woodpecker, orgy, drongo, minivet, white crested bird, thrushes, magpies, colourful pheasants (tragopan), and wild guinea fowl are still found in Ao land. Among the wild animals, boar, barking deer, Himalayan black bear, jungle cat, porcupine, royal Bengal tiger, bear, wolf, monkeys, ibex wild bear, python and land tortoise (Chelome imbricata), river crocodile are still seen.

**Political life:**

Naga traditional life revolved around the village. The family, clan, khel and village represented the extent of a Nagas concern, and there was very little inter-village, and even less inter-tribe, interaction. The village was the highest political unit and the sameness of culture and shared concerns for security gave a broad common framework of meaning and loosely held the members of the tribe together. A person’s identity was inseparable with that of his family, clan, khel and village. Inter-village feuds were very common because the village would avenge any wrong committed against a member by a person from a different village, and any member of the culprit village was a target in seeking vengeance. Within the village, a culture of caring among fellow villagers was assiduously nurtured and the bonds of kinship were usually very strong in the village. Duties and responsibilities to family, clan, khel and village were stressed almost to the exclusion of individual rights, indicating group solidarity. Individual hunting feats were mostly for social acclaim and to please the gods. For instance, a successful hunter did not partake of his own kill. It would be distributed to kinsmen and relatives, especially the womenfolk and the old, while the hunter would be prepared some other food.

**(i) Putu Menden, the village Councils**

In traditional Naga society, like in the Ao tribe, the Village Council played a major role. The council was the highest authority in the community and life revolved round the decisions taken by the council. The Nagaland Village Council Act gives due recognition to other traditional village institutions such as the “Putu Menden” in Ao
Areas- to function according to their custom and usage- as a village council. The council decides important issues of law and order, influenced social institutions, and had an almost overwhelming role in the way the community functioned. At the village level, the structure of polity of local self-government is essentially democratic and effective. The *Putu Menden* (Village Council) is a system unique only to the Ao Naga tribe. The word *Putu Menden* (*Putu* means generations and *Menden* means seat) can be literally translated as the seat or reign of a generation. The peers of a generation—equally representing all clans in the village- rule over the village state republic for 30 years, until the next generation takes over. The *Putu Menden* is the traditional village council of elders which is empowered for internal administration, external diplomatic relationships, security and general welfare of all community members. The village council constitutes the representatives chosen by the dominant clans of the settlements. The members of this council are known as “*Tatar*.” Tajen holds that Aos as a whole have no political organization but their respective village organizations are formed on similar patterns.\(^{11}\) The *Mongsen* group called the Council as *Samen Menchen* and for the *Chungli* group it is called *Tatar Menden*.

Tribes or Villages with Chiefs or *Anghs* (Kings) systems are mostly prevalent among the *Sema* Naga and *Konyak* Naga tribes and is an autocratic system wherein the rulers enjoy autocratic governance on hereditary basis. In Federal democratic system the Village Councils are made up of democratically elected members representing the different clans of the village. Thus the elected Village Council is the supreme institution in the community for all important matters from agriculture, resource management, law and justice to security.

(ii) **Structure and functioning of Putu Menden**

The size of a Putu Menden depending on the size, population and number of clans in the village ranges from as less as 12 members to as many as 200 members. Eligibility to be in the Putu Menden is automatic and according to the *zinga* that one belongs to.

The structure and ways of functioning *Puntu Menden* vary from village to village but with similar conventions and norms, and structural frameworks. Generally each clan nominates elders from the given Putu as representatives and this assembly of elders forms the Putu Menden. As mentioned earlier, there can be no one single description...
of how a Putu Menden functions but following is a rough illustration of the three tiers of the Putu Menden:

(a) **Onger Menden** (Seat of the Priest) – The Onger is the head of the Putu Menden. He can advice but cannot object to any decision of the house;

(b) **Tazüng Menden** (Seat of the Elders). They consist of the senior members (Tazüngpur) of each clan and are akin to being the cabinet in modern parliamentary systems. The senior most member is called Tazüngtiba and he presides over all meetings like the Speaker. This is the body which formulates policies, executive and act as judiciary and prepares the annual plans, as well as, fixes taxes (*Yimkong Saru*) and collects revenues;

(c) **Tekong Menden** consists of a number of subsidiary groups with well-defined roles and distinct functions. They perform tasks assigned by the Tazüngpurs and are responsible for collection of taxes (*saru*), fines and other revenues. They enforce the executive and administrative orders passed by the Tazüngpurs and also assist in the negotiation and settlement of inter-village disputes and other public issues. It is their duty to forge diplomatic relationships with other villages; decree penalties and punishments for wrong doers; preside over the war council; select the area for annual cultivation and all related activities; finalize dates for marriages; organize and manage ceremonies; settle disputes; organize community hunting or fishing; proclaim community work; and facilitate public debates. The *Putu Menden* also nominates Village Council Chairman, as well as, proposes the names of village *Gaonburas* to be appointed by the government. Governance for the Putu Menden was not maintaining law and order or enhancing development, but rather extended to ensuring access to and the collective management of resources, maintaining social security and developing knowledge and learning systems.

(iii) **Courts and justice**

*Tribal Courts: Intervention of Britishers*

Traditionally, Nagas did not have regular courts. Later, with the advent of the British, tribal courts were set up and judges were appointed from among reputed persons within the tribal community to decide cases. Thus, the first regular courts were started. The British also created the posts of ‘Gaonburas’ (village elders) and ‘Dobashis’ (interpreters) to assist them in the administration.
Gaonburas ‘village elders’ in the Assamese language of Assam, are village elders nominated by the Village Councils and authorized by the Government to act as assistants to the Deputy Commissioners in village administration. The *gaonburas* are generally charged with responsibility of good behaviour (read as ensuring law and order) in their villages/clan/locality, as well as, being the spokesmen of their community. The number of *gaonburas* in a village depends on the total population and number of localities or *khels*. *Gaonburas* are now an integral part of the governance and administrative system of the villages. They are usually selected by the clan or khel and the Village Councils forwards the names to the government for approval and therefore are considered as agents of the government. This is because *gaonburas* are appointed by law of the state government and not by the traditional institutions themselves. The *Gaonburas* nominated by the Village Council and formally appointed by the government together with the other elders of the village assist the Village Councils in the delivery of justice. The Village Councils therefore act as village courts to settle cases within the villages and the issues may range from laws of inheritance, adoption, marriage, divorce, rape, theft, defamation, murder etc. The British also created the posts of ‘*Gaonburas’ (village elders) and *Dobashis’ (interpreters) to assist them in the administration. While the Gaonburas were charged with responsibility of good behaviour by their villages and soon also became the spokesmen of the village community, the Dobashis, in the course of interpreting for British administrators, were liaisons between the British Government and their local people. Having been accredited with the authority of the Government, the Dobashis enjoyed the respect of the native people. Being knowledgeable about customary laws, the Dobashis advised the British officers in the settlement of cases. Subsequently, the Dobashis courts evolved to decide cases according to Naga customary laws. However, the British administrator remained the sessions Judge, thus combining the executive and judiciary responsibilities in one person. Because of its practical usefulness, the institution of Dobashis is being continued till today. In due course it emerged as the deliverer of justice, or judgments in many disputes. The Aos hold that the dubhashi mode of settlement of disputes is better in many ways, as compared to the system adopted informal law courts. In formal law courts, decisions are taken on the basis of better evidences and arguments, whereas, such system, in the Dobashi mode matters are settled by objectively looking at the issue and decisions or judgments arrived at
through consensus like in Village Courts or based on traditional precedence. Overtime, the Dobashis by virtue of the establishment of Dobashi Court become adjudicators in their own right. Dobashi Courts are attached to the office of the Deputy Commissioners at all administrative strata of and disputes between villages and also between individuals are tried as per traditional norms as well as by existing laws and practices of the land. The Dobashi courts therefore are the transition courts between the codified and the ‘uncodified’ legal systems in the state. As is usual, further appeals can be made to the courts of magistrates or higher courts of law.

**Economic Life**

The economy of any region can be studied based on the land holding system, sustenance patterns - hunting and gathering, domestication of animals, shifting agriculture, augmentation of water resources and exchange patterns (trade and commerce through barter system). The interference of the governance to regulate the economic activities formally by taxation and informally by participation in rituals related to the socio-economic activities of the communities is very significant in the Ao-Naga society.

(i) **Land: Categories of Ownership**

Naga community in general holds collective ownership over their land. In the past, land was the only economy for the Ao-Nagas. There are lands belonging to the village, individual and clan. In recent time, the state government also owned land for the construction of government institutions and for developmental and conservation purposes. The traditional system of ownership of land varies from one group to the other. The distribution of land (forest) for cultivation among the Ao-Nagas is an elaborate and complex and is regulated by Putu Menden, Village Council. The land pattern in the village can be divided into cultivable land, forestland and inhabited land.

**Village lands**

Naga village is inhabited by more than one or two clans, depending upon its size. Each clan has its share in the village land. Thus the Ao-Nagas also possess some share in village lands. The dealings with regard to the ownership of land vary across the villages and clans of the tribes. The local landholders manage the issues related to
their respective lands in the villages. In village common lands are demarcated separately for cultivation, forest, and housing and for others like cemeteries, religious institutions, schools, parks, community halls, guesthouses etc. These lands are managed by the *samen/tazungpur* (councils) of the village. With the permission of the village council only, the villagers should do hunting, fishing and collect forest products and materials from the land. Those who violate the norms of the administration are liable for punishment by the council prescribed by the customary law. Moreover, the village land should neither be sold nor leased out to non-locals or even non-Nagas. Thus land people are tied by the customary law to (i) prevent the entry of non-local/ non-ethnic tribe of the region for minimizing cultural and political conflicts and (ii) to retain people’s identity with the land. Though individual ownership over the land is being emerged, selling them to non-Nagas is strictly restricted.

**Individual land**

In Ao-Naga society no family is left without landed property either for dwelling or for cultivation. Those who first settled or founded the village occupied huge lands. The people who do not have lands may take permission from those who had huge landed property for cultivation. Once the harvest is over, rent in terms of cash or kind is paid which is called *lumelen/lumepu*. Usually they give two to three baskets of grains to the owner. There is no fixed rate of rent. Some families and clans had lands inherited from their ancestors since times immemorial. No member of the family has the right to dispose the property of the joint family against the interest of other members. In the word of W.C. Smith13, “the average Ao Naga is very independent especially if a man has a tract of land under cultivation and he can be reasonably certain of getting his necessary food.”

**Clan lands**

The clan lands are maintained by the clan leaders, *kedong mapang*. The members of the clan enjoy these lands as their hereditary property. No body can either sell or mortgage the clan lands. Among the Ao-Nagas, clans collectively hold ownership over their land. Clan members can cultivate on these lands without rent. If there is surplus land, the others in the village can cultivate on rent payment basis.
(ii) Sustenance patterns

The sustenance patterns of the tribals always follow the rhythm of the nature and environment. Food gathering and hunting always follow the track of the seasons and thus people shift their survival strategies. Throughout the year the people should work hard to earn their livelihood. There was no space for laziness and dodging in Ao-Naga worldview. It is well established in their folknarrative tradition. The following narrative emphasizes the need to work hard for self-sustenance in Ao-Naga economy.

Narrative 2.1: Sarilongli and his wife

Once upon a time, Sarilongli and his wife were living in a village. Both of them got bored in their routine life working in the field, cooking, fetching waters and firewood. They wanted to search for a place wherein they can survive without doing any work. They traveled for many days. At last, they reached a place called Alikodaksür. They were sitting on a bench. Beneath the bench, they found people who were very short and tiny. They were relentlessly combing up and down of the short plants, Likok dong to collect the seeds from them. The seeds taste soar. The couple realized their mistake and went back to their village. They assembled the villagers and declared, “Hi people, people could never find a place on earth wherein they survive without hard work. Everybody should work to live and sustain”. The villagers also felt happy for the couple learnt a lesson. Since then they lived happily by complementing each other and never expressed their dissatisfaction with regard to any work in their life.14

From the above narrative it is clear that tribal economy requires the participation of every member of the society to maintain their families. All the modes of sustenance gathering of food, hunting, fishing and agriculture-are adopted basing on their availability in different seasons without disturbing the tempo of the natural environment. The need for the frequent shifts in sustenance patterns is well established in their oral narrations.

The narratives further tell about their food procuring techniques and symbolically suggest the reasons for their shifts in their sustenance patterns. The following narrative depict how the Ao-Nagas picked (gathered) their food, even their animal food very causally in the same way as they plucked fruits from the trees.

Narrative 2.2: Tsüposang

Once upon a time there was Tsüposang. He was very friendly with all living beings in the forest and also in the waters. Since he knew the language of the animals, he could locate them wherever they are. Whenever he wanted his food – a bird, or a fish or any other animal meat -he used to take the best among them very casually to his home for his dinner. One day, his anuk (son-in-law) asked him, “Oku (Uncle), let me also come to the jungle with you”. Tsüposang frankly denied. He convinced him, “If watch the animal behaviour it looks funny and also ununderstandable to you. If a new person like you makes any noise they get disturbed or may get frightened. They no longer remain as my friends and may run far away from me. Better not to
However as the son-in-law was pestering, he accepted to take him to forest on the condition that he would not open his mouth. Finally they reached the forest. Tsüposang began to converse with the animals by making some sounds to call animals. He began to call and talk to the animals by name like, “Shitsü (monkey) kang kang, mesü (deer) kang kang.” Then all the animals and birds responded to him and gathered around him. The son-in-law who was hiding behind the trees he saw an animal, Chipcho (Porcupine) trying to climb up a tree. The attempts being made by such short animal to climb up a tree were found funny to the son-in-law. Hence he laughed loudly at it. All the birds and animal ran away after listening to his new voice and sounds and they were no more available to Tsüposang to pick them informally to home for food. He grew angry with his anuk for his entry in to the forest and spoiled his friendship with the living beings in forest world. Then out of regret he requested the animals and birds, “Please, keep at least a leg or a hand of the Porcupine on the pathway for me.” A jackal passing by that way overhears to his request and conveyed to the animals, “Grandfather has told us to keep at least your feces (sii) on the pathway for him.” From that time onward, the Ao-Nagas find the feces of the animals in every path way but not the body remains of Porcupine.

The above folknarrative reveals how the Nagas viewed their shifts in their socio-economic organization and sustenance patterns. When the animals and human beings are together with mutual understanding in the forests amidst the natural resources, the former casually picked up even the animals in the same way as they collected other foods like nuts, fruits etc. As the family structure expanded and new members entered, the social bonds and relations become obligatory. The relations between fathers-in-law and sons-in-law attained mutual customary and obligatory. One should oblige the other. Even though the father-in-law did not like his son-in-law to accompany him, he was forced to take him. The latter had no acquaintance with food gathering techniques. Hence his entry into the forests disturbed the hitherto existing relationships and drove the animals deep into the forests. Thus it required technique to hunt them for their food. The jackal in the narrative who miscarry the message of the father-in-law symbolically represents the trickery of human beings involved in technologically advanced societies. In a way the story depicts Ao-Nagas transition from food gathering to hunting mode of life leading to agriculture.

The Ao-Nagas sustain on hunting the birds like pigeons, wild hens, ducks, parrot, and bulbul; and animals like deer, wild boar, porcupine, rabbit, monkey, wild rat, squirrel etc; and gathering forest produces like nuts, fruits and honey. Fishing is food sustenance to the Ao-Nagas. As already cited, jhum- shifting cultivation is another mode of sustenance. The hunting is mostly consist of small group and sometimes individual. The hunts are shared among the family, relatives, neighbors and close friends depends on the hunt collected.
Technology of hunting

The Nagas, who by profession being hunters avail themselves to the usage of locally made tools and techniques to hunt birds. The Ao-Nagas use lijak, catapult (A plaything consisting of a Y-shaped stick with elastic between the arms) to kill birds. For hitting the birds or baits the shooter use small balls made of clay (ajungli). In the contemporary times marble stone pellets and guns are also being used for hunting the birds. The other technique they comply is ‘trapping’. The traps are made of bamboo sticks woven together like a bushel. The mouth of the bushel being turned down and is supported by a stick so that it stands half-open from the ground. A bait is being used to attract the birds and as soon as the birds goes inside the half open bushel where the bait is being kept, the hunter then pulls the rope which is tied to the stick which supports the bushel to stand. Baits like earthworms and grasshoppers were used. Sometimes the hunters also use a sticky liquid like glue to trap the birds. They apply the glue like liquid on the surface of a wood or a tree branch scantily covered with leaves on which they place the bait.

The traditional style of hunting is heroic. The hunters attacked the animals with spears and daos to kill or wound them. The hunting techniques depend greatly on the type and nature of the animal to be hunted. The hunters stay over consecutive nights in the forests to identify, locate, track and finally attack it successfully. Otherwise the hunter would become the bait for the animal. The hunter should have conscience to follow the blood marks or foot prints of various animals in the forests. However, the community fix seasons for hunting so that it would not disturb the nature and also the other livelihoods like agriculture. Indiscriminate is hunting and bird catching is not throughout the year. Hunting is allowed only for two months in the winter that too after the harvest season is over. Those who found violate the law are to be fined either in cash or kind.17

Fishing

The Ao-Nagas consider fishing for livelihood and amusement. The community holds ownership over the natural resources including water. The villagers have the natural rights for fishing and hunting in stream and land of their village. Customary law sanctions fishing and land rights to complement each other. The technique used for the fishing is mainly blocking the flow of the river by top soils/earth and stone.
Once the flow of the water is stopped the fishes begin to draw together. As a result it becomes easier for the people to catch the fish using baskets made of bamboo. Sometimes the Nagas poison the streams and catch the fishes after they die in poisonous waters. However, the village authority condemns the practice of poisoning for fishing as it affects not only the natural resources and but also the other living beings in the waters.

The Ao-Nagas also sustain on domesticated animals such as pigs, cows, buffalo, mithun, dogs and fowl. This occupied important places in the economy of the Nagas because it served as food items and also used as a means of exchange. Animal husbandry was one of the important means of livelihood when it comes to secondary occupation. Animals were reared and preserved for sacrificial and ceremonial feastings, barter economy and so on. Because of such reasons, animals were valued. The variety and the number of animals that a family maintains determine its economic status. Various vegetables were grown in all Ao villages. The Ao people cultivate all sorts of crops like millets, maize, potatoes, sugarcane and yam etc but cotton was the most important one. It was grown in most of the Ao region.

(iii) Agriculture:

Agriculture is one of the significant sustenance for the Ao-nagas. They follow shifting, Jhum and terrace, panikhets method of cultivation in their hilly and plain on the mountain slopes of Nagaland. Aos sustain on shifting cultivation as their hilly and sloppy terrains are suitable for such mode of agriculture only. These forms of cultivation are devised and appropriated throughout the generations in the state. The jhum cultivation completely depends upon the rainfalls; it suffers from the vagaries of climate and monsoonal fluctuations. The following narrative substantiates the problems faced by the villagers in jhum cultivation done in the khels situated in different geographical locations upper and lower levels of the villages.

Narrative 2.3: Story of Punasosang

Once upon a time a young man by name Punasosang in Soyim fell in love with a girl from Impang (upper khel) and used to visit her dormitory (Tsuki) to spent time with her. One his way to the dormitory one day he saw a bird which died because of the whirls of wind. He was sad with this incident. As days passed by it was time for all the villagers to celebrate Moatsu festivals. The upper khel Arju (boy’s dormitory) members along with Punasosang went down to the lower khel and booked a pig (ak) for the Moatsu festival from a widow at the rate of fifty yimchi (tin) of grains. On the day of the festival, the Arju members went down to the house of the widow and killed the pig for celebration. Then the villagers had a great feast on that day. After the festival
was over, it was time for the villagers to harvest the field. The field site of the upper khel villagers could harvest the field very early without much problem. Whereas, the field site of the lower khel villager were in a hilly place so they could not be harvest the field on time. After the harvest when Punasosang was walking through the lower khel, he saw that the widow could not finish her work. He could manage the help from the members of Arju from upper khel and finished the work. The old widow blesses all the boys for helping her.

The above tale substantiates how within a village the people conduct the jhum cultivation in different times due to non-availability of labour and other resources like waters.

The area under Jhum cultivation is about 87,339 hectares and under terraced cultivation is about 62,091 hectares. Putu Menden decides the site or plot for cultivation every year. The villagers are only allowed to cultivate on the selected site or land even if the individual has their own individual land. The decision of the Putu Menden is final and anyone failing to abide by the Council’s decision entails serious fines and penalty. Such measures are taken in order to protect the forest for future use and also for the fertility of the soil in a rotational practice of cultivation. The chosen site is cultivated for two consecutive years after which the entire process of selection a new area or site begins all over again. In the past the cyclic process of cultivation was 11 years but in the contemporary years the cycle has increased to 12 years. One of the advantages of the Jhum system is that it provides every citizen of a village with an access to land and the right-to-till. In the past, land was the only economy for the Aos. They cultivate the land for livelihood and survive economically by developing the land that belonged to them. The cultivators cut the treetops to allow sunlight to reach the land. They burn all the trees and grasses for clean and fresh soil. It is believed that this helps to fertilize the land. During burning of the field if an individual burn the other person’s field by carelessness or by accident then a fine is imposed by the village authority. In Longkhum village, a widow was fined Rs. 500 by the village authority for burning a field that is on the other side by accident. During burning of the field one has to be careful not to create such accident.

In the case of the Sumi Naga, the Akukao (village chief) owns and controls almost the entire land, though there are other individual lands also.

The State Government is trying to convince the villagers to change over from jhuming to terracing. The Government is in fact, making all out efforts to improve the agriculture. It has under taken a number of irrigation projects, supplied pumping set to
farmers, started community Development projects, set up seed farms and established an agricultural research centre.

As mentioned earlier every village has its own cultivable land, sufficient to support its own population; livestock for meat and also for ceremonies and festivals, wide range of forest for collecting building material, fire-wood, wild animals and food gathering. The Ao-Nagas were more or less self-sufficient as they produced everything they needed. In the Ao society, from the beginning there has existed economic classification, which plays important role in the social order. The wealth of an Ao consisted of the quality of rice available in the store of each family and the land, cattle, ornaments, cloths etc. In the past, rice was the stable food and their source of wealth and richness. A rich man who has lots of food grains lends with interest to people who had no food, and he also gives his surplus lands for cultivation on payment of rent that are landless. In the Ao society, from early days there existed economic classification, which plays important role in the social order. The wealth of an Ao consisted of the quality of rice available in the store of each family and the land, cattle, ornaments, cloths etc. previously rice was the stable food and the source of wealth and richness of the community. A rich man who has lots of food grains lends on interest to people who had no food. He also gives his surplus lands for cultivation on payment of rent to the landless people. Thus the Ao-Nagas began to take pride by cultivating paddy and grains giving alternate status to fishing and other sustenance. The following narrative of the Ao-Nagas substantiates how agricultural productions are more beneficial than fishing. However most of the folklife of the Ao-Nagas revolves round the agricultural activities, mostly the paddy cultivation.

**Narrative 2.4: Aluyimer (farmer)**

Long time ago, there was a widower named Sangmonger in Nujongkong village. He lives with his grandson Talisangba. One year, the villagers were affected by scarcity of water. All rivers and streams were dried up. Fortunately, the widower and his grandson’s field were near the flowing river. The villagers used to catch fishes from that river and sell them. The grandson asked his grandfather, “Shall we also go for fishing like them?” but his grandfather just kept quite and told him to get water from the river and irrigate the field while he spread the soil. Whole year, they worked hard in the field without bothering to go for fishing like the villagers. The paddy in their field turned out to be healthy, whereas the fields of the villagers were destroyed completely. One fine day, they also went fishing with the villagers as they had worked hard enough to make their field healthy. As they were coming back from the fishing, some of the villagers pushed the grandson near the corner of the pathway. Seeing his grandson pushed that way the grandfather sing a song, “Tayipti tentsu mopong asu ang mopong ako, apodaka nemtsung o talisangba ita nugoksudima” (What kind of wind is blowing towards us this morning. What kind of force is this, that even Talisangba is pushed like that). Next day, again his grandson
wanted to go for fishing so he told him, “I will catch a big fish for you one day, so just work hard in the field.” The grandson listens and obeys to what his grandfather said.

As the harvest time draws near, the villagers did not produce anything from the field whereas the grandfather and the grandson had a good harvest. After the harvest, his grandfather met some villagers who were going for fishing and told them to bring the biggest fish alive for him. In the evening, the villagers brought the biggest fish alive to his house. He exchanged the fish with the rice grains. He kept the fish in a wooden plate and covered the fish with grains and gave it to his grandson. When the grandson was playing happily with the breathing fish, he told him, “Whoever work hard in the field would never live an unhappy life because with grains we can buy anything so let us always work hard.” That is how the grandfather exhorted him and taught him a lesson through practical work. There is a saying that, whoever goes only for fishing often becomes poor.22

The above narrative indicates that the Ao-Nagas realized the advantage of cultivation over other sustenance patterns like hunting and fishing. The narrative reveals two important shifts in conception of exchange pattern of the Ao-Nagas: the emergence of rice or grains as chief mode of exchange and production not only for consumption but also for exchange and hoarding for future needs.

**Terrace Rice Cultivation**23 has been the pride of the people of the Angami and Chakhesang tribes of Nagaland and this technology distinguishes them from the other tribes. This system of growing paddy has been there since the establishment of the village. The first settlers had brought the technology with them. Most of the terraces that anyone comes across in these regions could be as old as the village and that would mean not less than 300 years old.24 Terrace Rice Cultivation is a system of irrigated agriculture for growing rice. The terraces vary in breadth and length depending on the slope of the land and the expertise of the people developing the terrace. The limit to terrace construction is not the slope but availability of irrigation water. The Chakhesang are able to develop broader and longer terraces for the same slope than the Angami tribe.

(iv) **Water Resources**

Water is the source of life and its abundance determine the economy and polity of any land. Most of the cultivation relies on rainfall. Nagaland receives very high rainfall and enjoy sub-tropical monsoon climate where the average annual rainfall is around 250 cm to 300 cm. It receives rainfall for seven long months—Aprils to October. The pre-monsoon shower starts from the month of April through convectional activities. The south west-monsoon rain reaches the State from first week of June and it continues till the end of September. Finally, the retreating
monsoon rain start from last week of September which continues till the last week of October. Besides, certain meager amount of rainfalls are also brings by the western disturbances during the winter. However, Nagaland is one among the most water scarce state in India because of inefficient water management, lack of adequate preservation and effort to harvest the “free gift of nature”.

The boundaries of a village or owners of the land are formed by rivers, stream, rock, trees, mound and other natural spot. In such formation, water becomes important resources for the community. Community water pond or reservoir is called *tsuba*. Such reservoir helps the villagers to come to meet their daily needs for water. In some villages there are more than two to three reservoirs. During winter season if the reservoir dries up then at such times the villagers have to trek miles into the jungles to bring home needed water. In current times water supply department provides water to the villagers and the rainwater harvesting helps the people during dry season which is a recent methods. Big tank/reservoir is constructed to store/conserve rain water. Water is collected from the roof top, through semi-circular gutters fitted along the edge of the sloping roof and channelized through down flow pipes to storage tanks kept at the ground/underground. The gutters are fitted in such a way that the slope is maintained towards the storage tank. In *Aliba* village (200 households), there are eleven rain trap tanks almost one in each cluster. Rain water is collected via rooftops and through a network of underground pipes, they all channel into the nearest Tank in the colony. Rain trap tanks were constructed around 1987-88 by a respected citizen Er.Lanutoshi of *Aliba* village.

A prominent common feature about setting aside primary forests for community reserves was to conserve the water source. This feature confirms that there exists a vast traditional knowledge on the natural resource management among the village communities and they are aware that primary forests serve as water reservoirs. There is a strong resolution passed by the Village Council to conserve and preserve the water sources of the village.

(v). Exchange and Trade

Aos maintained inter and intra tribal trade relations by barter system of exchange. Trade flourished between the Aos and the people of Assam due to the reciprocal demand of these commodities, which were, obtain from each other in
exchange, on barter basis. Ao economy was a self-sufficient economy except for salt as there was scarcity. J.P.Mills remarks, “Salt, without which he cannot live; the Ao can only obtain in plains.” Cotton, chilies, ginger, gourds, mats etc were took down to the plains in order to get in exchanged of salt and also dried fish, cattle, agricultural implements, beads for ornaments etc. In the past, barter system was practiced mainly because there was no good circulation of money. Though many of the writers have termed this trade as barter, it would be prudent to call the same as ‘exchange’. These exchanges were not economically very significant but nevertheless had some impact with the societal organization.

There also existed inter-village trade as long as there was peace. They sell each other’s products like crafts, woven goods and so on. Salt was sold for twice or three times its weight of unclean cotton, according to the amount of cotton available between the Aos. Trade also flourished among the neighbouring tribes. For instance, Konyaks and Phoms used to buy clothes from the Ao villages and exchanged with spears and dao (big knives).

People used two type of currency for trade. One is a round brass disc, about 12 inches (30 cm) in diameter with a slightly convex surface which known as ‘laya’. These discs were used for trade with other tribes like Konyak, Chang and Phom but not among the Aos themselves. The other type of currency was known as ‘chapili’. It was in the form of strips of iron about six or seven inches long. With the coming of British, there was free access to the market places. The Europeans introduced of the metallic currency of India as the medium of exchange. It caused the displacement of unhulled rice that was considered as the standard of value before. It marked the introduction of currency into the Naga economy.

(vi) Crafts

Art and craft have always been a part of life among the tribes of Nagaland. There was very little of craft diversification but not totally absent. Craft production was evident in the form of weaving cloth (mostly by women), production of agricultural and other implements and bamboo crafts which led to small incipient trade. Pot making, basket making, weaving of mats, wood carving, blacksmithy, carpentry, dyeing and cloth weaving for their personal and household requirements were the works done by the people. The families were independent economically
because each household produced their own needs. There was no specialization in the industrial line. People build their own house and make furniture because there were no professional builders or carpenters. Only few blacksmiths were found, because of the contact with the plains (Assam). They made daos, spearheads and the simple agricultural implements from an iron, which was brought from the plains. Among the Aos the villages of Changki, Japhu and Nanchem made earthen pots that were sold to all the villages and some even sold out to the plains. But this was never developed and was never an income for living as there was no proper industry. Hands alone were used to make earthen pots. The manufacture of pots was exclusively a female task. Pots were produced by a few villages of Naga tribe.

The main craft of women has been to weave traditional attire such as shawls, and loincloth for men, and skirts and shawls for women. Traditionally these were woven using natural dyed hand spun cotton, by the women. These were woven on the loin loom. Some villages specialized in spinning and dyeing cotton yarn. This was either sold as dyed cotton yarn or as the ready shawl, as per requirement. Each household raises enough cotton for its own use. Before the machines were known the Nagas as well as the Aos used few simple tools for the whole process of spinning which was rather primitive. The cotton was seeded by rolling around stick on a flat stone. The contemporary weavers use acrylic material, they still try to keep the traditional designs and colours. But as the yarn available is thicker and too bright, the result is not as intricate as in earlier traditional fabrics. Traditionally, each design had a norms attached, to who could wear which designs and products. For example, Sutsongrong, the end piece made of dyed goat’s hair and cane, could be attached to the shawls of only head hunter, or a person who has done mithun sacrifice, or the leader of the Panchayat. Each design also has a name. For example, the shawl having blue ground and black checks is named as keyisü meaning tiger shawl. It implies that the man who wears it is like a tiger. This is an Ao-Naga shawl, worn by both men and women. Traditionally, this shawl was woven using cotton yarn, dyed blue using Osak (Strobilanthes flaceidifolius) plant. Apart from these, Mongkotep sü, the shawl having a white band of pictorial motifs of cock, mithun, spears, elephants, tigers, stars, moon, human head, etc. woven in the centre of red and black stripped shawl is a warrior shawl. The headhunters and rich men who have sacrificed mithun were only entitled to wear it. Mills writes, “This laborious task usually falls to the lot of old women
who, being no longer able to go down to the fields, eke out an existence in this way”.

(vii) Technology of weaving

The Ao people who were in contacts with the plains in the Assam valley, were introduced to little seeding machine consisting of two wooden rollers geared to revolve in opposite directions and turned by a crank with the right hand. This machine was probably imported from the plains and village like Asangma of Ao-Naga used to make them. The cotton having been seeded is carded by being flicked with a little bow. Then the cotton is gently rolled by hand with the help of a round stick over a flat stone or plank into sausages after which it is to be spun into thread. They used a bamboo stick like a pin about 22 cms long tapering to a fine point at the top and about the thickness by a pencil at the thickest paint near the bottom. Just above the thickest point is fixed a wheel made of black stone. The stone is turned flat and round by rubbing on the other stone. To make the hole in the middle a man holds it between his toes and twiddles a spear on it between his hands till the iron belt by the spear goes through. The narrow end of the pin shaped bamboo piece passes through the bore and is fettled at about 5 cm from the thick end.

After all the works were done, the women start to spin. To spin, she sits with her skit pulled up till her thigh and tucked in between her legs. She places the cover end of the spindle in a broken piece of pot, or a little basket covered with a bit of rag, and spins it with a drawing motion against her right thigh, feeding it meanwhile from a sausage of wool, held in her left hand. The thread (ang or ayang) collects above the stone until the spindle is full. To make the thing of the women who is doing the spinning slipping and to make the rotation of the spindle easy, a sort of white powder obtained from a kind of water melon is applied on the thing at the beginning and at intervals.

For starching the yarn, the skeins are damped with cold water, and vigorously pounded on a board with a rice powder, or a bamboo with the root portion cut level and afterward it is soaked in hot rice water for about ten to twenty minutes. Then it is dread in sun, being jerked at intervals to get rid of excessive flour. After it is dried completely the woman winds the thread into balls (anglung or yanglung) ready for weaving. To do this, she sits down and holds the skein she is working around her
extended knees and the end of the yarn is rolled on a care made of a stone piece. After the yarn is transferred into skeins the process of dying takes place.

As the Nagas as well as the Aos are found of colours so the clothes are very colourful which attracts the eyes especially during festivals. The Nagas are found of using variety of coloured clothes and dress. The Nagas used dark, blue, red and rarely yellow dye. The whole process of dye were carried out by women, there is also a taboo among some tribes to handle any dye during pregnancy less the foetus be effected by the colour. Among the Aos, J.P.Mills writes, blue and red are the only two colours which the Aos known how to dye. The blue colour varies from light blue to about black according to the strength of the dye used. The dye was obtained from the leaves of a plant called ‘Osak’ (Strobilanctres Flaccidifolius). This was cultivated for this purpose in the shady and heavy jungles. This leaves were used by all the Nagas for dyeing.

The method of preparing the dye was long and laborious. The leaves grown in the shade produce a colour approaching black while those grown in the sun produce a lighter blue colour and both are used in different stages of the dyeing process. The indigenous blue dyeing was used in autumn and early winter seasons when the leaves were fully grown and the women folk at this time were little free from their busy agricultural works. The methods of preparation and use of blue dye differs slightly among the different tribes.

For the Aos, the leaves that grown in the shade were pounded up and spread out on palm leaves or bamboo tray to dry. They were used after it was kept in the house for one or two months. The required quantity was then put into cold water and well stored and left to soak for three days. On the third day wood ash was added and the mixture stirred well. The dyed cloth or yarn was then washed in cold water, dried and again kept in the dye for one more day and finally dried. It was again soaked for another night if the colour was not dark enough. It was then boiled in water with unpounded leaves of osak grown in the sun for about an hour to finish it off. This process may be repeated more than once. The best dark blue cloths are made of thread which has been subjected to both cold soaking and boiling before weaving.

At the time of boiling the cloth, it was worked over and over with a bamboo stick many times to facilitating uniform colouring. In the process of dyeing during the
olden days no stranger were allowed to watch for it was believed that the colour will not take off. When the husband thinks his white cloth is dirty, he will ask his wife to dye it dark blue. The indigenous red dye was used less than the dark blue. The red colour denoting of blood, it was believed that young women using this colour in dye operation would die a violent death or lose her head in a raid. Therefore, only old women dye yarn in the red colour. Even in the dyeing of red colour, all the tribes have slightly different method. For the Aos, the dye was obtained from the root of a creeper locally called ‘Aozü or Aowali’. The root after drying thoroughly pounded and mixed with dried and pounded leaves of a tree called ‘tangshi’ in local dialect. This was again mixed with dried and pounded husks of an acid berry called ‘tangmo or tangba’. The thread which was to be dyed was boiled to the mixture for about half an hour. The boiled thread was taken out and dried in the sun and brushed clean. Mills explains one process which was unknown to the Mongsen group, where the thread was boiled with the seed of the oil-seed plant (azü) and for two or three days it was left soaking in the cold brew so it looks pale brown when it is taken out and dried. Then it was boiled in an infusion of the pounded leaves of the kotsam tree and bark of the roots of the changlong tree which turns red. When sufficient colour had been imparted, it was taken out, rinsed in cold water, and dried. It is said that using of dye of any colour was restricted before harvest because it might affect the crops. Akhoya Village of the Ao tribe did and produced the best dye. So the Ao people go to this village to dye their cloths. Today this village weaves the best cloth and they weave a large variety.

After dyeing was done, the women started to weave. The weave the Ao women based the indigenous handloom called ‘Tekalilemtsü’. Mills writes, the Ao loom was a tension loom of the simple Indonesian type which was even found among the Semas and Lothas. The Ao women keeps the necessary strain by sitting with a belt which is often made of low skin ‘aphi’ in the back attached to a bar ‘anen’ from which the warp ‘kutong’ runs to the beam ‘mungmung’ is firmly attached to the wall of the house. The heddle is called ‘Angetlong’ and the shuttle is called ‘Süksen’ which is shot through by the hand, and the woof ‘lenten’ beaten up with the sword ‘alem’ which is rubbed either with max or with a very fine white powder, where Mills thought it to be like French chalk found on the underside by the leaves of a species of wild plantation. The patterns in clothes are obtained by the necessary combinations of
different colored threads in the warp and woof. Weaving of clothes with decorations design takes double as even more time depending upon the nature of the design. The designs were mostly done by using different colours of warp at different stages or by the extra weft weaving method. For extra weft weaving, the warp yarns are lifted by a bamboo stick like the knitting stick or by porcupine quill with the finger of the left hand while by the right hand the thread is passed through the shed so formed as per the design. To sew the strips of cloth together for body-cloths or to darn holes, the Aos used a needle. \textit{(achem or yimpen)} which was simply a thin splinter of cane or bamboo with a split end on to which the thread was twisted or struck with a little wax.

Making goat’s hair accessories, such as daos, spears, jewelry like ear ornaments and pendants for the warriors and shawl end known as \textit{Sutsongrong}, were other traditional crafts practiced by Ao Naga men, apart from making cane and bamboo baskets. For this purpose goat’s hair was traditionally dyed orange red using natural dye. For yellow, stem of dried orchid known as \textit{akong} was used along with red dyed cane to make these products. Till date the craftsman of \textit{Longsa} village follow this traditional technique.

\textbf{(viii) Taxation}

The socio-economic development process in Nagaland certainly began with India winning its freedom. The erstwhile British administration had evolved a special kind of administration for Naga Hills District. The Nagas were exempted from most of the taxation prevailing in British India (this practice has remained undisturbed till date). The Nagas had to pay only one form of taxation namely the "house tax" collected from each household. The traditional village councils governed the affairs of each village according to the traditional customary procedure. The district administrative head, however, exercised his authority with due firmness all over the district in those areas of administration, which fell within his jurisdiction. The British policy was of least interference in the traditional way of life of the Nagas. The house taxes are collected according to the needs of the village which varies from place.

\textbf{Economic changes}

The introduction of Christianity followed by the British rule brought tremendous economic changes in Ao society. The economic condition has changed
due to education, modernization and urbanization. By 1960’s almost all the Aos were involved in small-scale industries, many have entered into government service, business, supply work which was the major source of income. Comparing to the cultivators they live a better life. The people who were living in the villages went searching for a place in urban places like towns and cities for better living standard. And the parents instead of sending their children to the field sent their children to schools. Due to the increase in education, expansion of employment opportunities, better living condition etc., people were interested to migrate to urban areas.

For the Ao people, Mokokchung town is the trade centre of the district. To get supplies to the villages of the Aos, firstly it reached Mokokchung where commodities and goods were brought from Assam area. The people were more or less self sufficient but due to more demands and needs of the people the volume of trade also increased and the needs and requirements of the people were made available in the markets. In the local markets, vegetables and fruits were sold which were brought from different villages, shops were opened where traditional arts, craft, cloths, dresses, ornaments were sold, all sorts of articles required for modern living were imported by the people. People started to involve in small cottage industries and from their incomes were extracted. There are both rich and poor people but there were no beggars. It is well known that the people were living in a very thick forest and isolated life for centuries. Since there was no contact with the rest of the country, there was no development. It was only in the 19th century that they had a close contact with the outside world by various agencies and incidents. Only through the coming British in 1832 and the Christian missionaries in 1876 in the Ao area, slowly and gradually started to progress. W.C.Smith feels that, improved methods of travel and communication and the developments of commerce have annihilated distances and the world has grown smaller and with the result these tribes have come into contact with groups and higher cultural levels, and this has brought many breaks in their practices which had grown hoary with age.36

Social Life

The structure of the Ao-Naga society is basically rural in character. For Nagas family is the basic unit of society, constructed on the basis of the institutions of marriage and kinship. Ao-Naga family rests on patriarchy wherein the father or the
husband is the head of the family. For the Aos, the family is the most important social institution like in any other culture. The traditional norms and values determine the gender roles and relations in the family and the customary law regulate them in such a way that there occurs any anarchy in their gender performances. The Ao family is a nuclear unit which must exist independently of any direct parental authority. Since the society is patriarchal in nature inheritance follows the male line. The daughters are regarded as subordinate members, do not become co-owners with sons and do not inherit property of the family. All the tribes maintained Morung called Dormitory (like present institution: schools, colleges, universities) during the olden times. The Ao men stayed in Arichu and women stayed in Tzuki. Both boys and girls stay in their respective dormitory till they get married. Ao men and women are easily identified from the other Nagas through their names. The system of marriage is exogamous upon which the framework of Ao society was built. The Aos still strictly follow the rules of exogamy and endogamy to preserve their racial purity and social integrity. The men are monogamous. Widow re-marriages are also visible and accepted in the society. In the Ao-Naga family every individual is a member of a clan. Clan is a group of people that trace their descent from a common ancestry. Since the Aos belong to a patriarchal family, descent is traced through the male line, and children belong to the same clan as their father. In succession, sons, brothers, nephews, cousins etc are the order of preference for inheritance. Customary law imposes the responsibility of debt clearance on debtor. As mentioned, if the father fails to pay back the loan, his successor, be it his wife or uterine son or distant heir should clear it off. Both men and women have different gender roles in the family and in the community.

(i) Customary law:

The entire Folklife of the Ao-Naga gets regulated by the customary law of the community. The two major linguistic groups Mongsen and Chungli which further subdivided into six major clans- Pongen, Longkumer, Jamir, Imchen, Longchar and Walling and many sub-clans had their own customary law that make conform their socio-economical and politico-cultural spheres of their respective lives which in turn would construct the identities of their own. In the constitution of India, in the Article 371A (1), “Customary Laws”, provision was made for safeguarding social and religious practices, customary justice and landed property of the Nagas. J.P.Mills
observed that the council would rarely fail to counsel the parties since their trials follow strictly their customary law. They do not like to breach customary law as they believe that breaking of one norm would lead to the breach of another law and order. Hence any attempt to breach law is condemned in the community.

(ii) Religion:

The Ao-Nagas are the followers of animism in their religious behaviour. Animism can be defined as a folk religion that sees a spirit or spiritual force behind every event and many objects of the physical world carry some spiritual significance. The animistic worldview contains both the observed or physical world and the unseen or spirit world. Animists perceive that life is controlled by spiritual powers and live in fear of spiritual powers whose activities must be divined and frequently manipulated. They seek to live in harmony with their world believing that the forces and powers of the world are interconnected. They deify the elements of nature and worship them to realize their wishes. There are various names and descriptions of the gods in the realm of Ao-Naga religion where they have different personalities, mode of worship and with their own distinctive authority. They are: Lijaba, Creator of the earth; Longtitsungba Lord of Heaven; Tiar/Tiaba, pre-destiner; Meyutsung, Lord of death. In their world view these powers exist behind high mountains, in flooded rivers, big trees, stones and in epidemics that threat the populace. The Aos adore their gods (tsungrem) and seek blessings, protection, security and well-being from them through worship. The Aos are also scared of gods. They believe that the spirits may create troubles and sufferings to their family due to the disgrace. So Aos observe rituals and offer sacrifices to appease deities and spirits from causing evil to them. They are god fearing and believe that Meyutsungba would judge the people after death to allocate hell or heaven depend upon their deeds. Such spiritual threats existing in the religious thought of the Aos’ made them to embrace a new religion Christianity which also distributed similar religious message that would bind the god and people together. Inability to bear the cost of expiations in ritual centred Ao-animistic religion, they could easily adapt to Christianity. Even after their conversion to Christianity, the core of their animistic region still pervades their spiritual ideology.
(iii) Rituals:

The Ao-Naga Folklife revolves round several ritual celebrations performed indifferent socio-religious and political contexts. The life cycle rituals-child-birth, puberty, marriage and death- and the rituals that demand communal participation like house warming ceremonies, agricultural rituals (Tsungrem Mong), and political rituals like, Putu Menden, headhunting. The triumphant warrior cuts and brings the head of the enemy to their village to show his community as a token of victory over them. The head hunter gets praises and honour for heroism. It is a prestige to not only the head-hunter but also to the community to which he belongs. It proves the strength and ferocity of the tribes in internecine warfares. Every ceremony necessitates the observance of a period of purity and pollution known as Genna (anempong). It is an act of prohibition followed by strict restriction and sanctification which is observed just before and after every ceremony. During this time the entire normal activities should be ceased because it is a period of purification. The ritual process, the narratives associated with the rituals, the material culture connected with the rites reflects the way how the people/groups embedded their identities in their socio-religious behaviour.

The Ao-Nagas’ have a rich folklore with a variety of genres both verbal and non verbal. Their affluent narrative tradition contains myths, folktales and legends. The Aos are experts in transcribing their experiences in the form of narratives. The hoard of Ao-Naga lore contains myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, word games, jokes, beliefs, rituals and other related practices. The performance tradition is significant for their folk songs, and folk dances performed and musical instruments are played as pastime activities or on the context of ritual festivals. They are always associated with traditional folk dances, songs and games. Some of them are nukurar ken (responsive love song), nokin ken (warrior song), tong pang ken (victorious song) etc. The games like Mezung/sungbang (top), Shiangtsükshir/ külingtsükpep and Sütsüng (played with the seeds of the sword-bean creeper) are played. Tug-of-war (Ar Atsutepha) is a famous game among the Aos, in the past the ropes for this game were thick jungle creepers of great length. Even in the present day context, the Ao play this game on every important ritual occasion but they used ropes that find in the market.
(iv) Dress:

The designs and colours on the dress identify the respective ethnic groups of the Nagas. During forefather’s time, attire plays a very important role for one’s identity. The dress differs on the paradigms of clan, group, socio-economic status, valour and designs of tattooing. The dress of the family members of the head hunters and sponsorers of generous feast in the villages are distinct from that of the other marking their significance and identity in the community. The wife and daughter of the man wear a different pattern on their skirt which was heavily ornamented. The whole family wear hornbill feathers as a sign of status. There were variety of clothes but in the present time, Aos are identified by other tribes when worn a shawl by men called tsungkoteptsu and women, waru supeti (wrap around) and Etsungtsu (shawl). Nagas are rich in their arts and crafts. Their traditional costumes include the multi-colour spear, ceremonial daos, colourful armlets, bracelets and varied dresses. Hornbill feathers are important part of the Ao as well the Naga’s attire. The Hornbill feather were used universally by the Nagas as a symbol of prowess and wealth in the past and drongo bird feather is also part of the Ao attire and is used as an adornment on the ears.

(v) Musical instruments:

Bamboo mouth-organ is one of the oldest traditional musical instruments used by the Nagas. It whole length is about 6 inches long and half an inch in width. Ani, a kind of thin bamboo is used to make this organ. In both the ends at least 1 inch should be keep in such a way that it can be held putting the thumb and the pointing fingers. The other end is made like a nail head in which a string about 8 inches long is tied for one and to pull it out separately. Through the length, a small portion of the centre is taken out vertically with the help of a sharp and pointed knife. The end where the fingers are holding is cut off so to move the fingers easily. The other remains uncut to block the air. This is called tongue. This tongue is taken out by means of a small pointed knife and thin out as round as a needle. Likewise there cup violin made of a good quality of hard and thin bamboo or sometimes a shell of bitter gourd is used. There is also bamboo flute, the trumpet which is normally made of brass with bright ringing tone.
(vi) Material culture

The material culture is exhaustive. All these artefacts are metaphors of the Ao-naga lifestyles. It includes (i) different types of artefacts used by the Aos in every sphere of life from birth to death and (ii) the technology involved in their manufacture. House construction, pottery, food technology, utensils, spoon (earthen, wood and bamboo), hearths, firewood, wooden cots (langpang/yipchen), couches for sitting (mekum, menden), textile technology, designing, colouring, basket making, manufacture of spears, daos, nets and cages for hunting etc constitute Ao-Naga material culture. Further the texture and designs drawn on their textiles are very traditional. Traditionality is still being maintained in the matters of designs though texture is replaced by contemporary synthetic or silk material. The traditional patterns and styles are still being practised at least on their respective ritual or festive occasions even after their conversion into Christianity. Even during the celebration of Christian rituals, they prefer to be traditional Aos. However, every aspect of their material culture identifies with its consumers, the Aos.

The forests of Nagaland are rich in bamboo and cane. In general, it has been rightly said that Nagas start life “in a cradle of bamboo and ends in a coffin of bamboo”. Baskets meant for permanent use all over Nagaland are usually woven in a checker-twilled pattern or open-work pattern in various sizes, resembling the cane seat of a chair. The Ao basket (akhī and akha) is conical in shape, while the Angami basket is cylindrical with the mouth slightly wider than the base. In addition to the conical carrying baskets, every household use several big flat-bottomed baskets in twill pattern and are used for sieving the liquids like rice beer. The knitting of the baskets are water-tight. Split bamboo is the usual material used for both mats and baskets.

The Ao-Nagas house consists of a small front room (chin) on the ground level, a large main room (kilung) on piles and at the back a sitting-out platform (songlang) also on piles. An average house measures 25 feet long by 14 feet broad with a platform at the back measuring 11 feet long by 14 feet broad. The back and front are square and the roof of thatching grass or palm leaves. The ridge of the roof runs out along the projecting roof-tree and forms a little flying gable in front. The walls of the houses were made of strong bamboo mats. In the outer room the rice pounding table
(semki/acham) cut from one piece of wood and bamboos water containers (tsushi) were kept. The hunting implements like spears and different baskets for routine use were supposed to be kept in the front hall. Two or three steps often only notches cut in a sloping log-lead up to the main living-room. The floor of this room is of closely knitted split bamboos supported on poles. In the middle is a hearth (atap) made of beaten earth, furnished with three stones for supporting cooking-pots. The ceiling is made bamboo matting. From the main ceiling-beam immediately above the fire is suspended one above the other three bamboo trays. The bamboo shelves are arranged on the walls. One corner of the main room is often partitioned off and used as a little store-room (mopungki). The beds (langpan/yipchen) are often hewn out of one piece of wood. A ridge of wood serves as a pillow and the head-end has often slightly longer legs than the feet end. The husband’s bed is by the fire and another bed for children by the wall. From the main living-room a door leads directly on to the back platform, which is used as a general sitting-out place by the family. They keep their head towards the east.

(vii) Ethno medicine:

The forest provides medicinal herbs for treatment of different diseases and ailments. In the past the traditional knowledge of medicinal herbs were confined to the medicine men which has been passed on orally from generation to generation. The importance of ethno medicine is reflected through the folktales. The following narrative shows how plants cured different the diseases and sickness of the boy.

Narrative 2.5. : Boy with sores on his body

Once upon a time when the Aos were living in Chungliyimti, there were two settlements, the khels (mepu): upper and lower khels. The Chungli group lived on the upper khel whereas the Mongsen group lived on the lower khel. In Mongsen group of the khel, there a boy by name Chungrongjung (best among the others). He developed sores on all over his body due to a snake bite. As he was young, he used to visit dormitory. No body accepted him. All the girls, boys and even the villagers chased him away from the village. He went deep into the forests and sat on a stone feeling unhappy for he was driven by everyone in the village. Ones, when he was sorrowful with these thoughts, he saw a snake with bruises on its entire body. The snake was bruised by the people with stones and dao. The snake went near a pond. It chewed some leaves and applied its paste to its body where there were wounds. The boy observed the snake when it came on the second day for leaves. He saw the bruises getting cured. Even on the third day also the snake came and repeated chewing and applying it to its body. All bruises were healed and the body became smooth. The boy observed the way how the wounds on the snake were cured and thought that it might be a medicinal plant. Then he plucked some leaves. He chewed and applied to the wounds on his body. Slowly all is wounds got cured and became handsome within no time. Then when he visited dormitory the girls invited and offered him seat in honour. They did not recognise him as one who had sores on his body. He told the girls that he did not have gold or silver to give and he wants to sit near the firewood where he formerly sat when he had sores on
his body. Then the girls realised that he was the one who had sores on all over his body. They wanted him to marry, but he denied and left the place. In due course he became rich and could purchase and maintain and breed the animal mithun, so the privilege of rich. So according to the forefathers, nobody in the world could breed such big mithun like Chungrongjung did.

The above narrative reveals how tribals closely follow their fellow beings, the animals in their routine life. He was bitten by a snake which caused sores all over his body. When he observed the snake which got cured its wounds by applying some chewed medicinal leaves to them, he understood that the same may be the cure for his wounds also. That’s how he could heal his ailment. Sharing of the same environment both by humans and animals is the norm of the tribals. Such custom articulate the land and people together on one hand and on the other the context sensitivity of the tribals with regard to the ethno medical practices. The narrative has several cultural implications with regard to Morung system of bridal/bridegroom selection, qualities admired by both for marriage and parameters for considering the richness of a person (maintenance of Mithun).

**Nagas in Modern History:**

The Nagas experienced western military violence beginning in 1832 when British troops entered Nagaland. Between 1832 and 1851 the British undertook 10 military ‘expeditions’ into Naga territories, inflicting considerable damage and suffering on the people. The Naga Hills District was a former district of the Assam province of British India. The Aos first came into contact with the British when, in January 1844, Colonel Brodie, the Deputy commissioner of the Sibsagar District made a tour between the Dikhu river and the Doyang river. He entered the hills via Namsang, Kamsing, and Noagaon. After Brodie, Edward Winter Clerk, an American Baptist Missionary visited them. The Ao country was occupied without much opposition as they themselves wanted to come under the British administration. Adjoining Sibsagar settlement the Longsa village containing 600 AO houses was annexed to British territories in Nagaland. Afterwards the villages Yehim and Chesami and Chichung River were included. Later Mangrung (including Satemi), Nangtang, and Phinsing villages were brought under their control as they are much peaceful Ao lands. Porteous said that if they had the requisite force available, he could have built an outpost in the Ao country, which would certainly give a sense of security along the Nankam- Ungma road, which is the main line of communication.
The Ao country was the immediate neighbour of the plains of Sibsagar. They had carried trade with the Assam Raj, and even prior to the British occupation of the country, men like Mr. Clark’s native Assamese preachers considered travelling perfectly safe. Porteous wanted to administer the newly possessed domains by a European officer for systematic collection of revenues. Mr. Davis planned to collect tax of about 2 rupees per family from Aos. Porteous, preferred a place near Ungma (Mokokchung) for the new sub-divisional headquarters at the point where the Khenza ridge joins on to the Nankam-Mongsemidi range on Ao-Naga territory. Here two roads are of primary importance i.e., one under Nankam across the Doyang to connect with the Kohima-Wokha-Golaghat road, and the second to connect the new sub-division with the plains of Sibsagar. In order to establish law in the newly organized regime they planned to bring the Frontier Tracts Regulation into force and to extend the rules for the administration of justice and police. The regulation was extended to Mokokchung under section 5 of the Scheduled Districts Acts. The Chief Commissioner was made to consider any further step necessary to legalize the revenue administration. This additional tract in the existing district and for its formation into a new Sub-division with head quarters at Mokokchung was issued. This notification has been approved by the Government of India and was published in the Assam Gazette.

The Naga Hills district was created in 1866 by the Government of British India. Its headquarters were located at Samaguting. In 1875, the Lotha Naga region was conquered and annexed to the district. In July 1884, Mr. McCabe, the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, with a force of 50 sepoys of Naga Military Police and 40 sepoys of the 44th Assam Light Infantry under Lieutenant Tiernan, took an expedition against the Mangmetong village under Ao district, for killing a man of Lakhuti village. The village was strongly fortified but the inhabitants fled away on the approach of the troops with firearms. Mangmetong was burned down without much opposition. Lieutenant Tiernan and a few sepoys were injured by panjis, while passing through the defence. The Hatigorias of Nungtung murdered a man of Koio, a Lotha village which was under the British protection. Mr. McCabe marched against the village; the offenders were not given up, whereupon the village was burnt to the ground.
An administrative center was established at Wokha (habitat of Lotha Naga) which was shifted to Kohima (capital of Nagaland) in 1879. In 1889, the Ao region was fully annexed to the Naga Hills District as a subdivision. The boundaries of the District were further extended to include most of the Sema Naga territories (1904) and the Konyak Naga region (1910). In 1912, the Naga Hills District was made part of the Assam province. The Government of India Act 1919 declared the Naga Hills District as a "Backward Tract". The area was to be treated as an entity separate from the British Indian Empire. In the early 1930s, some of the tribals in the region rebelled against the British rule under the leadership of Haipou Jadonang and Rani Gaidinliu. As per the Government of India Act 1935, the area was made an "Excluded Area", administered by the Governor of Assam. The Deputy Commissioner of the district, CR Pawsney, established the Naga Hills District Tribal Council in 1945, which later evolved into the Naga National Council in the 1945. Under the leadership of Phizo, the Naga National Council unsuccessfully led a secessionist movement. When the Constitution of India was first released in 1950, the Naga Hills District was placed in “Part A” category of tribal districts as per the Sixth Schedule. The Part A areas were supposed to be governed by the Government of Assam in collaboration with the Autonomous District Councils. However, the Naga leaders refused this scheme. Subsequently, the Naga Hills District, along with the Tuensang Division (then a “Part B” area in the North-East Frontier Agency) was made a new administrative unit under the Ministry of External Affairs in 1957. After negotiation with the secessionists, this administrative unit was later made a full-fledged state called Nagaland. The early history of Nagaland is largely undocumented. The chronicles of the neighbouring kingdom of Ahom in Assam notes the customs, economic activities of the Naga tribes. The British invaded and subsequently occupied the Naga Hills for more than a century, causing a profoundly traumatic impact on the Nagas.

To summarise form the above, the cultural life of Nagas is incongruity with the cultural landscape. The geographical landscape is a fragmented one with hilly terrains intercepted by valleys and rivulets. This natural configuration resulted in the formation of isolated villages having pockets of habitations at intervals with clan settlements as individual agglomerations. As a result, the politico-economy and socio-religious life of the Nagas remained to clan consciousness and there by generated
intra and inter tribal conflicts for the sake of dispersed identities. The same is reflected in their mythologies and narrative traditions as observed in the next chapter.

Endnotes

2 The tallest of bamboos with close culms and slender branches. Culms 24-30 m tall, 20-30 cm diameter, usually 2-2.5 cm thick-walled, dull green, covered with white waxy crust when young; internodes 35-40 cm long, lower nodes with root scars. http://www.inbar.int/publication/txt/tr17/Dendrocalamus/giganteus.htm 1.12.2011
3 *Adhatoda vasica* Nees. (Acanthaceae); sangtam tu; malabar nut. Leaves (8–10) are warmed on fire and applied locally in the treatment of joint pain, lumbum pain and sprains. Bl. (Araceae); shituku nupang; giant yam. Fresh stalks are boiled and taken as anthelmintic. *Canna indica* L. (Cannaceae); amjitera; Indian shot. Fresh raw rhizomes are commonly chewed to get relief from gastric troubles. *Capsicum* spp. (Solanaceae); mersu; chilli. Crushed fruits are applied as antipruritic and counter irritant. *Carica papaya* L. (Caricaceae); mamazu; papaw. The latex is applied topically in the treatment of ringworm. *Caryota urens* L. (Palmae); asang renra; fish tail palm. The cotton like tissues (fibres) are directly applied over the wound to stop bleeding and to join the cut edges. *Costus speciosus* (Koen.) Sm. (Zingiberaceae); moori. The fresh rhizome is crushed and then it is massaged locally during muscle cramp and muscle pain. *Ficus carica* L. (Moraceae); mongozono; ripe fruits are eaten in the treatment of intestinal ulcer. *Musa paradisiaca* L. (Musaceae); somomo; plantain. The juice (20–25 drops) collected from the plant with little water is taken orally with a gap of 30 min for the treatment of severe diarrhoea/cholera. *Sapindus mukorossi* Gaertn. (Sapindaceae); ering jung; soap-nut. Fruits are crushed and used as antipruritic during foot and toe infection. It is also used as shampoo and as detergent. http://www.sciedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0367326X99000635. 30th Nov, 2011.
8 W.C Smith, supra.
9 In Ao language bed is called Langpang.
14 Information collected from Imolomba Jamir (M), 57 years, Ungma village, interviewed on 19.12.2007
15 This animal lives in the deep forest and difficult to hunt down. For the Ao-Nagas the quill/spike of the Porcupine served many purposes- as earrings, as a means to make hair bun strong, used in weaving, to part the hairs on the head and the meat of the animal is used as medicines.
16 Information collected from Imolomba Jamir (M), 57 years, Ungma village, interviewed on 19.12.2007
17 Information provided by Sakunungla Longkumer (F), Longkhum Village, interviewed on June, 2010 http://www.dorabijitatrust.org/northeast/pdf/6%20Nagaland.pdf. Down loaded on 27.10.2011
18 Information collected from Sakunungla Longkumer (F), 55 years, Longkhum village, interviewed on 18.06.2008
20 Ibid, p. 179
21 Information collected from L.Teka Longchar (M), 66 years, Longkhum village, interviewed on 13.06.2008.
The complete hillsides are cut to form terraces suitable for cultivation. The width of the terrace depends upon the slope of hill. If the slope is less, there is much possibility for making big terrace. The fields are irrigated by a network of water channels. Normally the terraces are so accommodated that water flows down conveniently from one terrace to the other below it, and so on. Bamboo pipes are used to regulate the flow of water. The digging up of the terraces requires a immense effort in cutting them into shape, but these terraced fields, once prepared, are much easier to maintain than the jhum plots. They have also the advantage of being closer to the village site. The other ethnic groups living in the North and East besides depending on forest products still continue shifting cultivation (jhuming).


Bendang Pongener (M), 30 years, Debuia village, interviewed on November, 2011.

B.B. Ghosh, 1979, Nagaland District Gazetteers: Mokokchung District, Dimapur, Sethi Printers, p.113

J.P. Mills, 1926, The Ao Nagas, Kohima, Directorate of Art and Culture, p.103

Ibid., p.104.

Smith, W.C., The Ao-Naga Tribes of Assam, New Delhi, Mittal Publications, 2002, (Rpt.)

Ibid, p. 37

J.P. Mills, supra, pp. 90-91

Ibid


J.P. Mills, 1926, p.92

Ibid, p. 3

W.C. Smith, (1925) 2002, p.179


They may not be used while the rice is growing, except at the Tsungremmong, for from seed time to harvest “the earth is pregnant and to spin tops at such a time would cause illness and misfortune. J.P. Mills, 1926, The Ao Nagas, op.cit., p.155.

Lanu A Ao (ed.), Naga cultural attires and musical instruments, New Delhi, Concept, 1999, p.112

http://ignca.nic.in/craft156.htm. 28th Nov, 2011

L. Teka Longchar (M), Longkhum village, interviewed on November, 2011

Otsufuba Longkumer (M), Longkhum village, interviewed on 18.12.2007


Localities, sectors or wards in the village.

Mithun (Bos frontalis), the domesticated free-range bovine species, is an important component of the livestock production system of North-Eastern hilly region of India. This unique bovine species is believed to be domesticated more than 8000 years ago. Mithun is primarily reared as meat animal. Mithun is also used as a ceremonial animal and plays important role in economical, social and cultural life. Besides, it is now established that superior quality milk and hide can be obtained from mithun. http://www.nrcmithun.res.in/: Accessed 13/12/2011

Information gathered from Tsükdinungba Longkumer (M), 75 years old, Changtongya village, on 24.04. 2008.


G R Irwin to the Chief Commissioner of Assam; Fort William, the 28th January, 1890; Published by Kohima Archives 1991; FPP (External A), Feb 1890; Sl. No. 166.; J.P. Mills; The Ao Nagas, 404-405.


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