CHAPTER V

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5.1. FESTIVALS

Throughout the history of human culture, certain days or periods of time have been set aside to commemorate, ritually celebrate events or seasons that give meaning and cohesiveness to an individual and to his religious, political, or socio-economic community.

The terms feast and festival usually involve eating or drinking or both in connection with a specific kind of rite: passage rites, death rites, sacrificial rites, seasonal observances and commemorative observances. These festivals often include not only feasting but also dramatic dancing, singing and athletic events. Depending upon the central purpose of a feast or festival, the celebration may be solemn or joyful, merry, festive, and ferial (NEB 1980, Vol.7, pp. 197-198).

By their very nature, feasts and festivals are special times, not just in the sense that they are extraordinary occasions but more so in the sense that they are separate from ordinary times. Festival times is sacred; i.e., it participates in the transcendent realm in which the patterns of man's religious, social, or cultural institutions and activities were or are established. Through ritualistic re-enactment of the events that inform man about his origin, identity, and destiny, a participant in a festival identifies himself with the sacred time (ibid.).

5.1.2. Naga Festivals
The Nagas celebrate various rites in which feasts have assumed positions of significance. Seasonal variations were associated with the migrations and fertility of animals and the growth and decay of tubers and fruits upon which the communities depend for their very existence. Thus, out of an acknowledgement of seasonal change, rituals (often including ceremonial feasts) most likely developed among the various Naga societies in relationship to beliefs that the continuance of the food supply depended on the sacred or holy powers that control the nature: that is, animals, vegetation, the change in climatic conditions, weather phenomena, etc.

All the Naga communities have their own festivals which are celebrated with gusto. Noted among these festivals are Angami’s Sekrenyi (25 February), Ao’s Moatsu (1-6 May), Chakhesang’s Tsukhenyie (March), Chang’s Naknyulum (1st week of July), Khiamnuingan’s Miu (5-10 April), Konyak and Phom’s Aoling Monyu (3 April), Lotha’s post-harvest, Tokhu Emong (7 November), Rengma’s post-harvest festival, Ngada (27-28 November), Sangtam’s harvest festival, Amongmong (3 September), Sema’s post-rice plantation festival, Tuluní (8 July), and Yimchunger’s Metemneo (8 August).

5.1.3. Important festivals of the Southern Naga communities

5.1.3.1. Festivals of the Tangkhul

(i) Luira Phanit

As Thisham Phanit (festival of farewell to the dead) is the biggest festival observed by the living for the dead, Luira is the most important festival of the living, marking the beginning of agriculture cycle of the year. It is celebrated
for twelve consecutive days in the middle of February, Marun, which is their New Year. It takes place when all the major social activities such as the repair or construction of new houses in the village, performance of feasts of merit to enhance one’s social status, installation of huge beds called sumkoks that which are carved out of single pieces of wood, construction of onrah (cenotaphs: Fig. 22), etc. have been accomplished. Every Tangkhul village celebrates this fiesta with pomp and show, the hallmark of it being the plentiful supply of food, meat and rice-beer.

As this festival is meant for marking the beginning of the agricultural activities of the year, during this festival offerings are made to the goddess of crops, Phunghui Philava, to ensure good harvest. As failure to perform the festival with all necessary rites and offerings will lead to failure of crops in the coming year, this festival is observed to the minutest detail. One of the ways of propitiating the goddess to make her to give them good harvest is through the performance of tug-o-war among the various age groups of the village. They also engage in various sports activities such as wrestling, javelin throw, varieties of dances, etc. All the villagers dress themselves up for the occasion with the best clothes available at their disposal, and make merriment throughout the festival. The order of the sowing festival, Luira Phanit, is as follow:

First To Third Day: This period is known as kha kasit (kha = village; kasit = prohibition). On these days outsiders are not allowed to enter the village. To sound across this message, the concerned village burns the dried up woods and leaves that had been cut down a couple of months back for slash-and-burn cultivation.
Fourth Day: The day marks the real beginning of the festival. All the animals meant for this festival are killed on this day. In the morning the village Chief, Awunga, and his wife go to the distant paddy field on foot, and perform the first agricultural rites of the year. Here a chicken is killed, the blood of it smeared on the corn seeds, and place them at the altar of the family located near the hut of the paddy field. They then offer the meat and rice-beer to the goddess of crops, Phunghui Philava, and sow the seeds on the worked ground, saying: "O goddess of crops, do let the crops grow abundantly". This custom is observed strictly; if anyone violates this practice by sowing before the village Chief does, the belief is that the return of crops that year will be very poor and, in consequence, there will be famine in the following year. The violation of it is, therefore, viewed seriously and the perpetrator of the same is punished and he/she is looked upon as the enemy of the society. The day is called Sa kathi eina Awungashi kharuk ($Sa = animal; kathi = butchering; eina = and; Awungashi = king's; kharuk = sowing$). This is the day when animals are slaughtered by the villagers, and the King carries out the sowing rituals.

Fifth Day: Known as the day of sowing for all the clans in the village, Shangrei kharuk, this is the day for the general public to take with them chickens and rice seeds, and go and carry out the same rituals in their respective paddy fields as the village Chief had done the previous day.

Sixth To Eighth Day: Having thus pleased Phunghui Philava, the goddess of crops whose hair touches the ground, through propitiations and rites, the people turn to singing different songs of the festival, often in rhythm with their dancing feet. On these days are also taken up various games and sports competitions. Eating and drinking occupy the central
importance. It is at this stage of the festival that the eyes of the young males of the village in particular are given a great feast; the well-attired virgin girls of the village of two/three generations come out to the ground for singing and dancing, nganuiphung, and exhibit themselves and their ability in dancing and singing. It is a sort of "Beauty Contest", inasmuch as the whole villagers peruse each of the participant minutely and comments passed upon. These virgin girls, after a good bath, oil themselves with the fat of pig, and dress themselves with the best of their available cloths and ornaments, particularly a short skirt of red and white colors that covers from flank to knees known as phangyai kashan, and a piece of black cloth that covers the body from armpits to the hip known as sihup (Fig. 5). In olden days this cloth is not worn, so that their breasts can be observed), kazao (bracelets of brass or conchshell: Fig. 19), har (armlets of lead/brass: Fig. 1), pasi (a 5 cm wide wicker made of bamboo, used as a head-band: Fig. 4), shimcha (shim = house; cha = necklace. An ordinary necklace of glass and shell beads which is worn daily throughout the year), kongsang (a precious multi-stringed necklace of carnelian, chert, glass, and shell beads that covers both the head and the bosoms: Fig. 15), khom-masim (a multi-stringed waist band of cowries and black seeds of plantain worn over the skirt and covers the whole buttocks. Khom = cowries; masim = plantain-seeds: Fig. 2,3 & 18). These foppish girls in uniform move their hands, feet, and figures gracefully in accordance with the rhythm of the songs sung by themselves. The spectators in general, and the young men in particular, watch and share their impression about the dancing girls to others secretly; the size and shape of the breasts occupying the main attention. Young girls who have committed fornication dare not participate in it, and any absent girl is naturally suspected of being illegally pregnant. If an innocent girl could not take part in this
function owing to sickness etc., the degree of regret is quite great. The songs they sing are basically prayers to Phunghui Philava to increase their harvest. The boys, on their part, dance for hours together, each dancer trying to demonstrate his prowess in dancing. The other outstanding features of this festival is the tug-o-war competition which they play according to age-wise groups. Here the opposing groups pull the thick creeper as hard as they can in order to break it rather than defeat the other group, for the split of the creeper means a splendid harvest that year.

Ninth Day: They go to their respective paddy fields and offer the heads of chicken to Phunghui Philava, praying her to grant them good harvest that year.

Tenth Day: The villagers go to the jhoom fields and burn the remaining dried leaves and woods. This serves as a signal to the nearby villages that "whoever wants to come to our village are now welcome". Traders and fun-seekers from neighboring villages then commence preparing themselves for the next day's journey to the village observing the Luira Phanit.

Eleventh Day: The aliens arrive to the village, and they are duly welcomed by the host villagers with food, meat, and rice-beer. On this day are displayed the final show of the singing competitions of the girls, and also the dancing competitions of the boys, mainly for the benefit of the village's guests.

Twelfth Day: This is the last day of the Luira Phanit. On this day both the villagers and the outsiders engage themselves in selling and buying of trading commodities, namely, salt cakes, cloths, cattle, pigs, fowls, pots, and so on.
(ii) Yarra Phanit

This is a festival exclusively for the unmarried young people. It is usually celebrated for four days in the month of April every year. This is the only gala that has no religious connection. Each locality of the village has working gangs based on age. Most of the time these gangs work and move in group, and Yarra Phanit (Yar = gang; ra = liquid; and Phanit = festival) is the merriest festival for them. Every year each of these age-groups select the house of one of their girl members on rotational basis for the celebration of this festival. They decorate these house with the tender leaves of chestnut trees. Here they eat maximum food and meat, drink a good quantity of rice-beer, play games and sing songs continuously for four days. During the day time, they go to jungle in group to eat berries and secretly take a stolen nap for few hours, for no one is permitted to sleep at night throughout this festival. On the last day, these groups go for fishing and hunting, and enjoy the last meal with great fanfare. It is so full of fun that all the young people make it a point not to miss this festival.

(iii) Mangkhap Phanit

This festival is celebrated for four days in the month of July every year. It is basically a period of recuperation; the villagers have worked very hard for weeks together, ploughing and transplanting rice saplings in their paddy fields, digging the earth and planting the seeds of beans, yams, bumpkins, maize, etc., and, thus, they are thoroughly exhausted. The festival begins with offering of heads of chicken by each household to their respective luikameos, deities that are supposed to look after their paddy fields. Here they propitiate the luikameos through offering of meat and
rice-beer and beseech them to ensure that whatever they have planted may not go in vain, but bear good fruits. In this festival they kill buffaloes, cows and pigs, and everyone eat and drink heartily to replenish the lost energies.

(iv) Khana Kasa (khana = ear; kasa = piercing)

The piercing of ear is one of the basic characteristics of the Nagas. "NAGA" is applied to more than forty communities living in the eastern Himalaya range, and it is derived from the word "NAKA" etimologically, which means 'pierced ears'. Actually, the Tangkhuls, for one, give great importance to the occasion when the ears are pierced and is treated as a social event, when the whole village feasts for two days. Rich fathers, whose children are getting their ears pierced, slaughter pigs, cows, buffaloes, and seijang (Bos frontalis) to commemorate the occasion. Poor families celebrate it by killing fowls. There is no particular time for it; the village priest, who carries out the ear-piercing operation for one and all children of the village, fixes certain convenient time for it. After making sure that a sizable group of children between the ages of 3 to 5 is available for ear piercing operation, the priest, in consultation with the village elders, announces the time in advance. On the appointed period, he goes from house to house, properly propitiates the deity, kameo, with meat and rice-beer, and pierces the ears of young boys and girls. It is believed that a mistake made during the propitiation leads to splitting of the ears of these children in the later stage of their life. The ears are pierced for the following reasons:

(a) To accommodate ear-blugs, earrings, and other decorative objects;
(b) To make the child wiser; and
(c) To ensure the longevity of the child.
The Anal and Lamkang harvest festival is practically the same. In each case the best crop in the village is reaped by the whole community going to the field with dance and song, and subsequently the lucky owner of the crop has to entertain the village for three days. It would appear that all good Anals and Lamkangs must pray to have the second best crop. On the second day of the feast, the consumption of meat and tobacco, the carrying of water and wood, and working with axes or hoes are taboo. The Lamkang have an extra feast when all the grain is garnered, when for ten days no one may enter or leave the village, and no work can be done, the whole energies of the community being concentrated on eating and drinking well.

The Chirus celebrate a festival called Ratek in the middle of August. A pig and a dog are sacrificed by the priest outside the village, on the side towards Kobru hills, and then two or three days later an offering of rice-beer is placed in a small bamboo tube beside the village main well, and the drum is beaten for some time. The party then returns to the village chief's house and are treated with rice-beer. The following day a tall bamboo is planted in the village with an ornamented basket hanging from it, and much rice-beer drunk. The following year the bamboo is pulled out and thrown away, the festival being named Ratek poiyi (to throw away). Before the feast young men go for hunting, and if they are successful good luck is sure to follow. On the first day of the feast, a pig and a dog are sacrificed, and rice-beer drunk; on the second day, the bamboo is thrown away and more rice-beer drunk in the house of the village chief; on the third day, the unmarried girls of the village give a drinking feast to the young men, and they both dance together. If there is enough rice-beer this portion of the festival may be prolonged for several days. It is believed that unless these two festivals are carried out every year in their proper rotation, there will be serious mortality among the elders of the village.
They celebrate another festival called Arem in March or April, before the sowing. On the first day a dog is killed at a stone to the west of the village, and a pig to the north in the direction of the Koubru hills. All the men attend, but no women. This is one of the rarest Naga festivals where women are not allowed to participate. The animals are killed by the priest. The flesh is eaten there by the whole party, and the viceras, which were offered to the deity, are left behind at the place of sacrifice. There is then a drinking party in the house of the priest. On the second day all the young men go and catch fish, and on the return they are entertained with two pots of rice-beer by the unmarried girls. On the third day lup-lakpa (a village hereditary officer next in rank to that of the village chief) gives a feast of meat, rice, and rice-beer, to the men only, and later all dance in front of the youth dormitory, chhirbuk. The fourth day is spent in visiting each other, drinking and singing at each other’s houses. As soon as it is dark, men and women meet before the chhirbuk and dance round the stone drinking rice-beer. Then they go to the lup-lakpa’s house and drink again, and then to a house where all the unmarried girls are collected and drink again, and then the boys bring the girls to their chhirbuk and dance round the stone again, drinking as they go. This is a heavy day’s work, and it speaks well for the young folk if many of them have the energy to complete the program by drinking and dancing together on the fifth day. During the festival neither the villagers can leave nor outsiders are allowed to enter the village. The Chirus sacrifice a pig in July on behalf of the village deity, while each household offers the deity a fowl. This feast is called the "feast of the hot season rest" (a few days of leisure after the second weeding of the crops).
The Chothes celebrate a festival in October, just when the grain is filling in the ear. Every householder has to bring a small sheaf of the green rice, which is presented to the village deity, and feasting and drinking goes on one whole day, during this time neither the villagers are allowed to leave nor outsiders are permitted to enter the village.

5.2. COIFFURE

In nearly every society of the world men and women of all ages pend a remarkable amount of time doing a variety of treatment to their hair. Some of these ways of treating hair are merely decorative, but others have a much deeper significance. If the body is to be used for ritual purposes, the hair is the most obvious place to begin since, like the nails, hair grows continuously and can be cut without pain. But, unlike the nails, the hair of the head is most suitable for dressing, plaiting and ornamentation. The relationship of hair to the body as a whole is also vitally important; the most prominent type of hair grows on the head, and the head itself has a special significance in symbolic thought (Carlisle 1979).

Described below are the different traditional hairstyle of the Southern Naga and other neighbouring Naga communities.

5.2.1. Coiffure of the Southern Nagas

One could easily identify a Naga as to which community he belonged just by looking at his hairstyle.

5.2.1.1. Hairstyle of the Tangkhul Nagas

The Tangkhul children have their heads shaved, but on reaching a marriageable age they allow the hair to grow long. The central and western Tangkhul boys then cut their hair closely
at the sides, leaving a broad crest, which varies in width from 12.5 cm to 5 cm down the middle of the head, giving a sort of cocks-comb effect. From the point of the skull the crest narrows to the nape of the neck, where the long hair is tied in a loop. This is what Khuzo (1998: 56) has to say about the peculiar hairstyle of the Tangkhuls: "The Tangkhul Nagas keep their hair like the Apache Indians, shaving on both the sides, leaving a point in the front." This hair style is permanently maintained till death, and is to a large extent distinctive of this community. The girls, after making their hair grow long, wear a fringe combed over the forehead and parted down the middle. In some villages a lock of hair, triangular in shape, is combed out from the middle of the head and trained over the forehead. They maintain this style for a year; after that the girl's head is shaved off, inasmuch as it is believed that the hair, called moreisam (morei = sin; sam = hair), grown during this one year period receives unsavoury comments on her person. The shaving off of the moreisam (sinful hair), therefore, dispels the wearer's sins. Hair coming out after that is no more trimmed again. After their marriage, they wear the hair knotted at the back. Some northern Tangkhuls, especially of Jessami area, let the hair grow naturally in front while tying up a small knot at the back. The hair which form this knot is made to fall untied to the neck. They wear a fringe in the front without a parting by unmarried men, while the married men brush their hair back from the forehead, often parting it in the middle.

5.2.1.2. Hairstyle among the Naga communities of Senapati District

Among the Maos and Marams, the hair of the children of both sexes is cut close until puberty, and it is considered a dishonour for a girl to have short hair when she marries, or
to have a child until her hair has grown to some length. The men cut the hair at the sides, and young men love to twist the locks at the back in rolls of cotton. At Maram only those persons who have performed feasts of merit through erection of monoliths are entitled to part their hair in the middle. Others merely comb the hair out to a fringe in front and then comb the rest back. The hair of the unmarried girl of Mao and Maram communities is always shaved until she gets married. To these communities it is a sign of virginity. Another explanation is that, as long as the head is shaved, it is not a breach of honour if they say anything to their male kindred, inasmuch as they are still regarded as minors. Saying unmannerly things when they are grown up and when they start leaving their hair long is, in the eyes of the others, considered as a mark of disrespect and leads them to shame among their male kindred. The married women of these communities keep their hair long and usually tie it up in a knot behind. If the hair is scant or short, they supplement it with tresses. During festive occasions, those who have hair up to the shoulder parted the hair in the middle in front and is tied round the head. The same fashion is also followed by the Poumai and Thangal Nagas of Senapati District, Manipur.

5.2.1.3. Hairstyle among the Koireng and Zeliangrong Nagas

The Koireng and Zeliangrong men wear their hair short, and the favourite style is sticking straight up from the head, the hair being cut to about 3.5 cm from the scalp and occasionally a portion of the forehead shaved. "Hair-cutting is done in a very primitive manner, the implement used being a dao (machete) and a small block of wood. This block is pressed down close on the head underneath the hair, which is then chopped off as close as may be, and it is wonderful how close it can be cropped in this way. In some instances which came under our notice a common field hoe was the cutting tool"
(Woodthorpe 1882: 197). The general practice, however, is to wear the hair longer, and cut straight round, divided in the middle; those who subscribe to this manner usually wear a fillet of bamboo round the forehead, confining the hair. The girls, on reaching puberty, wear their hair long, which they comb in a fringe over the forehead, and loose at the sides, so that it falls over the ears. Married women comb their hair back and tie in a knot at the back of the neck, and supplemented often by artificial lock of hair.

5.2.1.4. Hairstyle of the Nagas of Chandel District

The Chiru men part their hair in the middle and brush it down straight, and trim it level with the bottom of the ears. They wear a fillet of cane round the head. Like the Tangkhul and some other Naga communities, Chiru women start keeping long hair after entering the stage of puberty. The Marring men comb their hair from behind and from the sides, and gather it into a horn-shaped protuberance above the centre of the forehead; round the base of this horn are usually wound strings of beads of various kinds, and transfixing it crosswise is a steel bodkin-shaped instrument with a sharp point about 37.5 cm long and flattened for about a third of its length at the other extremity.

5.2.2. Hairstyle of the northern Nagas

Of the northern Naga communities, the Ao, Lotha, and Sema Nagas keep their hair long at the top of the head and shaved the lower part. Here the hair is cut off to the same length all around the head and it almost looks like a mushroom. The Angami Nagas, and to some extent the Chakhesang Nagas, let their hair grow naturally in front while tying up a small knot at the back. The pigtail that goes to form from this knot is separated from the rest by a narrow circle of shaved skin. An
unmarried man wears a fringe without parting, while the married man brushes his hair back from the front often parting it in the middle. The Konyak Nagas grow a long tail at the back which is tied up round with cloth and is done up into an elaborate knot at the back of the head.

5.3. DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

The adornment and decoration of the human body features in all known cultures and societies, and it is as old as recorded history. Bodily adornment is a universal means of expression of cultural and individual ethos. Each culture develops its own costume, producing appearances which not only serve to enhance individual attractiveness, but also indicate tribal roots. Traditional costume marked a person out as belonging to a discrete cultural unit, and often indicated his or her standing within that community. Its main role is communication: the signalling of tribal affiliation. It is rare to find a community, especially among the Nagas, which does not have its own characteristic head-dress or distinctive ceremonial costume.

In Naga society, dresses and ornaments play a vital role in giving comfort as well as in signifying that a person has complied with certain rituals, warfare, and feasts of merit and, as such, they encourage competitive emulation. They also reveal the wearers' economic and social status in a given society. All the cloths of the Southern Nagas, especially the Tangkhuls, have their meanings and, thus, some of these cloths can be worn by all and suntry, some only by elders, and some reserved for the distinguished warriors and nobles. The Tangkhuls manufacture twenty-three patterns of cloths (Rimal et al. 1983).
The appeal of Naga costume is such that it made late Jawaharlal Nehru to observe when he saw the modern Nagas opting for western costume in preference to their traditional dresses that "I am horrified at the picture of these people (the Nagas) being made to give up their old artistic clothes or even lack of clothes in favour of a dirty pair of shorts or some such thing. I am also greatly disturbed at certain shabby articles of modern civilization replacing the artistic products of these people. I am quite clear that we should prevent cheap mill-cloth going there (Naga areas) as far as we can. We are in fact encouraging handspun and hand-woven goods all over India. Surely we should use only these in this area for presents and for other purposes. Indeed the right course would be to get yarn woven into artistic patterns and encourage this artistic craft there" (Shimray 1985).

The Nagas love to adorn themselves with varieties of apparels, and they are buried along with the dead to garb themselves in the next world. Different clothing and adornment are used for different occasions and, as such, we can broadly classify them into four types, namely, daily garbs, festival attires, dancing and singing costume, and war dresses.

5.3.1. Daily Garbs

Known as shamzing sari among the Tangkhul community, these dresses and ornaments are worn day in and day out during ordinary days known as shamzing atam (non-festive days). They consist mainly of simple cloths and ornaments which are affordable by one and all, and they are basically worn for their utilitarian value rather than for beauty. Some of these wears are used during the important events too. Listed below are some of the items regularly used by the Tangkhuls in their normal day to day life:
(i) **Kashan:** It is a piece of hand-woven cloth worn round the waist, and covers up to the ankle. About seven varieties are available for womenfolk. One common type known as **thankang kashan** reaches only up to the knees, and it is usually preferred by unmarried girls.

(ii) **Kachon:** It is a multi-colored piece of cloth worn by both men and women round their bodies that cover from the neck to the knees. There are about ten varieties; one variety known as **raivat kachon** is exclusively for eminent warriors and the village chief; four are common for all the males; four are common for all the females; and one called **sholakhom** is specifically for betrothed girls.

(iii) **Malao:** It is a piece of cloth folded round the waist, a portion about 20 X 5 cm of which hangs down in front like those of the Sema, Rengma, Lotha Nagas, etc. An apron of about 15 cm wide and 5 cm in length is worn during festive days and holidays.

(iv) **Shanghon:** It is a ring worn round the male genital organ. It is made of either deer's horn, ulna bone of buffalo/cow (which is sawed with sickle), date palm leaves, or cane ribbon, and are colored black by applying the juice derived from the bark of walnut tree's roots. The size is about 30 mm to 64 mm wide.

The ring is worn on the male genital, the foreskin being pulled through tightly. It is put on at puberty and worn until death. It, at first occasions, causes great pain, but from the pressure the organ gradually alters its shape. The ring is removed at night which, if the man is married, his wife wears it on her finger, and while urinating. Its size is altered from time to time as may be found necessary. The ring was
adopted to prevent erectio penis and, as such, to serve as means of curbing passions. It is used without other garments during ploughing of field, wrestling, cutting of firewood, etc., and they consider themselves properly garbed if only they have the ring on. The term shanghon is derived from two words, that is, shang is a short form of shangkui, meaning 'male genital organ'; and hon means 'cover'.

(v) Pasi: It is a fillet made of thong of bamboo like a laurel, about 63 mm, worn round the forehead by both males and females; the females wear them only during festivals. Among the Sangtams, only betrothed girls wear them.

(vi) Cha: It is a string or two of necklace of beads, shells and fiber worn by both the sexes.

(vii) Har: It is a bracelet worn by females only. About eleven bracelets of brass are put on before marriage; these, after marriage, are replaced by round bracelets of metal-like solder or lead, seven on the right arm and four on the left.

(viii) Nahui: It is a spiral brass earring worn on the upper end of the ear. It is worn in pairs. These coiled earrings are worn by rich people only. The ear of a Tangkhul man is pierced in three places, i.e., the lobe, the concha and the top of the fossa of the antihelix. The piercing of the lobe is a universal part of the birth ceremonies, whereas the other two perforations are optional, and are confined to persons of well-to-do families, inasmuch as a buffalo has to be killed on the day the nahui earrings are put on, and a feast given to the whole village.

(ix) Khana marun: It is a wooden block inserted at the ear-lobe. It is generally worn in pairs. The males, whose ears
are perforated at childhood, the opening being greatly dilated at first by means of a V-shaped piece of cane, and afterwards by W-shaped piece. The process of perforating the ears is expensive because a feast has to be given during that occasion and, therefore, it is accordingly customary to delay until a good number can be operated at once. When properly formed, the ear is ornamented with a miniature bale of cotton about 7.5 cm in diameter. At other time wooden blocks are inserted in each ear-lobe.

(xi) Kangra: It is a ring of cane, dyed black with indigo obtained either from the plant Strobilanthes flaccidifolius or bark of roots of walnut trees, worn on both the legs just below the knees. These garters are not particularly ornamental, and are worn as an aid to hill climbing. Angamis, Changs, Konyaks (red cane), Maos, western Rengmas, Yimchunger and Zeliangrongs, too, wear them.

(xi) Zeithing: It is an iron staff of about 1.5 m in length, four-sided with a flared head and that tapers off to a point. Only womenfolk use them. Though it is sometimes used as a walking-stick by old women, it is mainly for marriage ceremonies. The marriage attire of a groom is incomplete without a zeithing in her right hand.

(xii) Kongsang (5 & 15): It is a necklace of beads, bones, and shells, it is the most precious of all the ornaments, and is worn by both males and females from well-to-do families. Of the two parts (one worn round the neck, and the other over head), only the lower portion, i.e., neck, is worn; the upper portion being worn only on high days and holidays.
Sasa: It is a loose outer garment, without sleeves, worn by womenfolk. Besides warming the body, this cloak serves as a carrying bag too.

Chahna: A common necklet worn by womenfolk. This collar consists of a pair of wild boar’s tusks, the ends of which are bound with cane and fastened together under a huge button of conch shell. The other two ends do not meet and, thereby, a gap of about 5 cm is maintained. The other variety of it is called Hungkham, and it is worn by both the sexes.

Hungkham: It is a loose deep collar of wild boar’s tusks, about 15 cm wide in front of the neck and tapering gradually to the back where it is fastened. This collar is usually plain, and projects out some way in front of the chin. In lieu of the wild boar’s tusks collar, colored ones of cane work are also worn. They are meant only for renowned head-takers, their wives and children.

Phelkom: It is a brass ring worn right above the ankle. A piece each is worn round on both the legs of men.

Kazao: An armlet worn by men that consists of a piece of light wood about 10 cm hollowed out so as to admit the arm, and then reduced until the ring of wood is not more than 64 mm in thickness. The outer surface of this armlet is then ornamented with red-colored cane, covered over with the yellow bark of an orchid (Dendrobium ochreatum) so as to leave exposed two rows of diamond-shaped spaces surrounded by the yellow.

On the wrist heavy solid bracelets of brass, also called kazao, are worn by both the sexes. Usually three to five pieces are worn on each side of the hands.
5.3.2. Festival Attires

This is the time when they are getting brief sweet moments to eat, drink, make merry, and give rest to their weary bones and muscles.

The following cloths are worn by the Tangkhuls during festive occasions like Luira festival, Mangkhap festival, etc., and during "Feasts of Merit":

5.3.2.1. Shawls

Known as kachon, there are five varieties exclusively worn by females, and another five for gents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gents</th>
<th>Ladies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Haora (Fig. 11)</td>
<td>(a) Changkhom (Fig. 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Luirim</td>
<td>(b) Khuirang kachon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Phungui (worn during harvesting)</td>
<td>(c) Pheiphir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Raivat kachon (worn by warriors)</td>
<td>(d) Sholakhom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Thangkang kachon</td>
<td>(e) Than kachon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) Thanglui</td>
<td>(f) Kholamphi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g)</td>
<td>(g) Pheikam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the above mentioned shawls for gents, the size of ordinary Haora and Luirim are about 2.13 m in length and 1.52 m in width, whereas the ones meant for the village chief and renowned warriors who have taken many heads, measure about 2.5 m long and 2.13 m wide, and they cover the wearers from neck to ankle.

5.3.2.2. Skirts
Known as kashan, they are worn like petticoats, tucked around the waist. These long cloth strips are especially common in Southeast Asia. Altogether there are seven types which are used by the Tangkhul women, namely:

(a) Khaorui kashan
(b) Khuilang kashan
(c) Kongra kashan
(d) Phangyai kashan
(e) Ramrik kashan
(f) Thangkang kashan (Fig. 10)
(g) Zingtai kashan
(i) Kahang kashan
(j) Seijang kashan
(k) Rasu kashan
(l) Samphei kashan
(m) Shanhingla kashan

A strip of cloth, known as sihup, serves as an upper garment. This black cloth of about 1.22 m long and 15 cm wide is used only by females. It is wrapped around the body from armpit level down to the hip.

5.3.2.3. Ornaments

The following are the ornaments the Tangkhuls put on during festive occasion:

(i) Mayong pasi: It is a wicker of bamboo with vertical rays of the same material, about 17.5 cm tall. It is worn around the forehead by both the sexes.

(ii) Mayongcha: A necklet of plaited can of yellow and red colors, worn by renown warriors who have taken many human heads. It is about 14 cm in diameter and 5 cm wide.
(iii) Kongsang (Fig. 15): It is a necklace-cum-headgear put on by persons of noble birth and wealth, is the most prominent of all the ornaments. The acceptance that ornaments are more than a matter of aesthetics for the Nagas; that they help make statements about, and to define, the identity of individuals and groups, comes mainly from this type of ornaments. Indeed, the importance of kongsang is such that it is handed down from parents to children for generations together. In a highly patriarchal society of the Nagas in general and the Tangkhuls in particular, this is among the few things which a girl inherit from the family where she is born and brought up. This necklace-cum-headgear consists of the following:

(a) Chamik (etched cornelian beads);

(b) Chamthei (cylindrical cornelian beads);

(c) Khaying (elongated hexagonal beads of prase for headgear, and tubular beads of prase for necklace);

(d) Kongsang (cylindrical enamel beads of reddish brown color). These beads, though appear at first sight like sections of the jasperized stems of gramineous plants or small pithy wood, are made of an enamel colored with oxide of copper, and might have emanated from China.

(e) Lumtha (cylindrical beads of shell);

(f) Mahara (perforated bone spacers of three sizes, namely, (i) 11.5 cm long piece of bone with 16 perforations; (ii) 5 cm long piece of bone with 6 perforations; and (iii) 4 cm long piece of bone with 3 perforations);

(g) Shaireng Ja (yellow anular beads).

The headgear consists of maximum ten lines, and the necklace is normally made up of sixteen strings.

(iv) Khana: It is a circular earring of about 5.5 cm in diameter. It is worn by the Tangkhul and Yimchunger (who call
it tsungkheok) women in pairs. The most antique ones are in polished rock crystal, whereas more recent ones are made of glass.

They are worn as a sign of wealth, and are also used as currency in barter transactions. In order to wear them the hole in the earlobe must be wide enough to allow half the width of the earring to go through. For this reason the holes are made during childhood and gradually enlarged by inserting sticks or wunra (pieces of cotton), until they become sufficiently big enough to receive the earrings which are worn with the openings pointing downwards.

Normally these khanas are not removed even while going to bed. Their weight cause the lengthening of the holes and a deformation takes place which is considered aesthetically pleasing.

As is the case with all the valuable ornaments, possession of these earrings is judged potentially dangerous and they are, therefore, subjected to rules which neutralize the negative charges. For example, a new owner of the khanas sacrifices a chicken on his way home so that his wife or daughter will have a long life and, thereby, enjoy the acquisition of these valuable objects. The Ao women of Mokokchung district and the Sangtam women of the Tuensang district (both in Nagaland State) wear similar rock crystal earrings but of rectangular shape. The Aos call them maibong naru.

5.3.3. Dancing Costume

Known as Mahon Sari, these dresses are colorful and clean, and are put on after taking proper bath, and anointing themselves with pig's fat. The ornaments are taken out on these special
days of their life, and given good polishing and washing. Hutton (1921a) saw them attired in festival and dancing apparels and made this remark about the Nagas’ dress and ornaments: "All Naga communities have a most remarkable appreciation of the effective and picturesque in dress, and their use of color is usually in extraordinary good taste and particularly well adapted to the surroundings in which it is displayed. The designs of their cloths are conspicuous for the right use of brilliant colors, while their ornaments of black and while hornbill feathers, cowries, ivory and scarlet hair seem peculiarly well fitted to the deep green or bluish background usually afforded by the well-weeded hills which are their home."

Dancing, as practised by all the Naga communities, is a very serious affair. Distinct types of dance are performed for different occasions with diverse stepping patterns, but the accompanying costume is usually the same. Besides kazao, pheikom, kongsang and raikhamei being described above, the following are some of the indispensable dresses and ornaments that are worn during communal dancing and singing:-

(i) Vagui: An embroidered cloth band, with a wheel of hornbill feathers surmounted in it, is worn by warriors. Among all Nagas the right to wear the tail feathers of the Great Hornbill (Buceros bicornis) is regarded as peculiarly belonging to the braves who have taken heads, and those who have not done so are allowed to wear merely some substitute like feathers of a domestic fowl or imitated hornbill feathers. Vagui, thus, is the insignia of the successful warrior.

(ii) Ngalama: It is a special bead-gear worn by successful seducers during Luira Phanit, one of the biggest festivals of
the Tangkhuls. On these gead-gears of plaited cane are surmounted lozenges of thread of various colors, supported by 30 cm-long vertical bamboo splints. The number of these lozenges depends on the number of girls whose sexual favor the wearers have enjoyed immorally.

(iii) Khaipak: A broad-headed kind of hand-bill, with heavy blade about 45 cm in length and 7.5 cm wide at the head, and only edged on one side. Also known as dao, it is a multi-purpose implement that is used extensively for cutting wood, head-hunting, ceremonial dances and most of his domestic activities.

(iv) Rai Khamei: A tail-like stick of about 60 cm, lined with human hair, worn by warriors. These tresses come from those persons whom he had killed for their heads and, thereby, they symbolize the martial prowess of the wearers.

(v) Reopo: A string of tiny bells attached to ceremonial khaipak. These bells produce jingle when the holder of the khaipak goes for dancing during festive occasions.

(vi) Sinara: A shiny material tied with pig’s hair on top of a plaited bamboo head-band.

(vii) Kharei: A head-dress of the Tangkhul with gorget that measures about 75 cm and the gorget 77 cm. Bamboo, wood, brass, job’s tears, hornbill feathers, orchid (Dendrobium ochreatum) stem, tresses, cotton thread, fibre, and nei (a local resin derived from seeds of parasitic plants) are the materials used in making this head-dress.

The basis of the head-piece is a conical structure of wicker work, about 30 cm high and covered with a layer of fur and
hair, black and red in color. To the sides are stitched round structure replicating as wings, filled in with red colored seeds in rings; in front is a disc of polished brass, with a button-shaped knob in the centre. Hornbill feathers and slips of bamboo are also attached to it and, occasionally, a long crescent-shaped piece of buffalo horn scraped thin is placed in front of the helmet. Warriors of distinction who have taken many heads, wear the hair of their victims, hanging down the side ornaments of the helmet in the first instance and, as they accumulate, made into a kind of fringe worn round the face, like the mane of a lion. Because of greater length, women's tresses are preferred. It is worn on festive occasions when dances are performed, as also while going for head-hunting and war.

The central Nagas of Mon and Tuensang districts of Nagaland State and northern Nagas of Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh, (especially the Konyaks, Noctes, and Wanchos) wear them too.

(viii) Manei-rumkhong: A sacred wooden plate used mainly for fertility rites. It is oiled once a year on the day the animals are slaughtered for the Luira festival. It is usually kept hanging inside the granary.

(ix) Pheimakhei: It is a legging of plaited cane and yellow stem of orchid, woven on the leg. This legging is worn only when the wearer uses a shield and a spear in his hands.

(x) Kuikalop: A heavy war helmet made of bear skin which functions as a means of defence. When worn on ceremonial occasions, its sole objective is to convey the idea of combat readiness and pride in warfare. This conical headdress is worn by renown warriors. Its circumference is of about 40 cms.
(xi) **Pangkhaola**: It is a wristband made of plaited yellow stem of orchid, cane and bamboo thongs. It is worn in battle by the warriors. It is about 18 cm long and 12 cm in diameter at the upper end.

(xii) **Khom-masim** (Fig. 1, 2, 3 & 18): It is a belt worn by women. It is wrapped around the waist and kept in position by a string of beads which is sometimes so broad as to reach below the hips. The liveliness and the love for decoration and color expressed in these belts make these objects quite suitable for the purpose of attracting attention. They are worn basically for marriage and festivals, and cannot be used in isolation: a walking stick known as zeithing and other shell and bead necklaces and head-dresses called kongsang and huishon (a spiral brass ornament that hangs down from the head with two small bells at the ends: Fig. 13 & 15) go along with these belts.

A Tangkhul woman’s belt measures about 65 cm, and consists of six lines of khom (cowries) and twenty lines of masim (boiled and dried black beads made from the seeds of a plaintain). The original Khom-masim consists of only khom and masim, but many other beads of varying colors are added nowadays for the purpose of making the belt more attractive.

(xiii) **Raisam**: A bundle of hair worn by warriors on their backs. These tresses come from those persons whom he had killed for their heads.

### 5.3.4. War Adornment

The Tangkhuls wear varieties of ornaments which also serve defensive purpose. This fact was emphasized by Woodthorpe (1881) when he says, "I need hardly remark that all Nagas’
personal decorations have a defensive purpose in view, like our old military stocks and epaulets, and are planned to ward off the spear or axe." Besides sinara, kuikulop, mayongcha, kharei, and raisam which have been described above, the following are the ornaments and dresses worn by the warriors when going to war:

(i) **Zingyor**: A tuft of red-painted pig’s hair fixed to the lower end of a leather shield used while on the war-path. It is tied into position with strips of cane.

(ii) **Pharphon**: A special spear with a long wooden handle (about 5 metre) used in war. The wood commonly used for this spear comes from a palm tree (*Caryota urens*) which is one of the hardest known plants in the hills of North-East India. It belongs to the group of warfare insignia which underlines the owner’s status and can be possessed by anyone who has taken a head, or acquired the right of having it from the elders.

(iii) **Vagui**: An embroidered cloth band worn by warriors, with a wheel of hornbill feathers surmounted in it. The detail of it has been explained above. During the wartime, this head-dress is worn by the leader of the raiding group who, incidentally, also carries out the *kapa* omen (a divination taken by splitting a piece of bamboo where it is considered propitious if the fracture of the right side is taller than the left).

(iv) **Sangkheii**: A miniature basket carried on the back for carrying human heads, bamboo spikes, and other personal amenities.
Tattooing practice is widespread in traditional cultures today also, and most are commonly used as explicit tribal identifiers.

The term used for the process - usually called tattooing - comes from the Tahitian word *tatau* (Cavendish 1983: 2796), and it is used basically to mean permanent marks or designs made on the body by the insertion of pigment through ruptures in the skin. Tattooing proper has been practised in most parts of the world, though it is rare among populations with the darkest skin colour and absent from most of China. Tattooed designs are considered by various peoples to provide magical protection against sickness or misfortune, or they serve, as in the case with men in Samoa, to identify the wearer's rank (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1980: 841), or status as is the case with the Thracians (ibid.: 2798) and ancient Romans who tattooed their criminals and slaves (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1980: 841), or membership in a group as is the case with the women of some African tribes and the Tangkhuls, Aos, Konyaks, etc., or to register a man's accomplishments in head-hunting as is the case among the Nagas and some archaic hill peoples of Oceania and Southeast Asian countries. Decoration, however, seems to be the commonest motive for tattooing.

In India, Gonds (from Muria, Nagpur, Bastar, etc.), Garos (of Meghalaya), Kukis (residing in Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura), Mikirs (of eastern Assam), Mizos (of Mizoram), Santals (of Orissa, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, etc.), and Singphos (of Arunachal Pradesh), all tattoo their bodies.
5.4.1. Tattooing among the various Naga communities

Most of the Naga communities tattoo more or less, some on the face, some on the body, for various reasons. Among some communities, to obtain the "Certificate of Manhood", they must get skulls. A Naga who has taken a head go for the ceremony of tattooing his body. The burnt ashes of a pot are pricked into the skin with the thorns of the cane. The tattooing is pricked round the calves of the legs in ten or twelve rings interspersed with dots; the thighs, the breast, the neck, the fingers, the back of the hands, the arms, the forehead and the nose, and the vicinity of the eyes and the ears are similarly decorated. The poorest Naga peasant deems it an honour to have his body thus embellished with stripes, figures, and dots; and the omission of the ceremony would entail on him eternal disgrace and censure. Indeed, this tattooing determines the character and consequence of the individual; for by certain marks on one arm it is apparent that he has killed a man; when both arms and body are tattooed, he is known to have taken two heads; and when the face and eye-sockets are tattooed, he stands proclaimed as the taker of three heads, and is thenceforth esteemed a valiant warrior.

The main method employed by the Nagas is to hammer the skin with a thorn and to rub a blue pigment into the cut. It is quite painful, and often leads to infection; but it is stoically and even willingly undergone because of the high value placed on it.

An account pertaining to it was nicely given by Woodthorpe (1881) for women: "The shoulders of women of Naga communities east of Kohima (the Chakhesang, Pochury, etc.) are tattooed with diamond patterns, three horizontal lines are taken across the body above the breasts, between which eight lines go down
to the waist narrowing gradually to a point: the navel is the
centre of a Maltese cross, each arm about 12.5 cm long
consists of three lines with a pointed finial. The leg tattoo
is drawn with an admirable sense of fitness, that on the
thighs consisting of close vertical lines and on the calves of
horizontal lines, a small break occurring in each on the shin
bone: this has the effect of increasing the apparent rotundity
of the legs below the knees." Sometimes it is fatal.

Most of the Naga communities use tattoo designs as an
identity. For example, the Changs men who have taken heads are
tattooed with a pattern which resembles two or four leaves
springing from a common stem.

The women have a diamond-shaped patch tattooed on their
foreheads and either vertical or horizontal lines on their
chin. They also have two rays tattooed from each corner of the
mouth. (This tattoo is put on before puberty is reached. After
tattooing, the girl’s hair is allowed to grow and she is
married about two years later. From the time she is tattooed
she has to observe the food taboos observed by women; before
tattooing she can eat all that men eat.) The Thendu Konyak men
tattoo their faces only, whereas the Thenkoh Konyak men tattoo
their bodies only. This distinction enables one to distinguish
between the two Konyak groups, who go for tattoo on taking a
head. This same method can be applied to women of Mongsen and
Chongli groups of Ao community; the patterns on their arms and
legs clearly distinguish them (but the four vertical marks on
the chin running down into an X-shaped zigzag pattern of two
lines ending between the breasts is the same for both).

The tattooing is done with an adze-shaped implement set with
cane thorns like the bristles of a tooth brush, only much
longer. Girls being tattooed have to be held by several
persons, and the process occasionally cripples a girl for
life, and sometimes causes her death. The Ao men are not tattooed.

The Naga men bordering the eastern part of Assam tattoo on the chest after taking their first head. The pattern consists of four lines which spring from the navel diverging as they ascend, and turn off into two large concentric curves over both sides of the chest, the lines broadening out to about 2.5 cm in width at the middle of the curves. The tattooing is done by scraping the skin with a dao (machete), a sharp stone, and rubbing in very finely pounded rice. The colouring matter is the juice of berry which is crushed over the powdered rice and leaves an indelible black stain. The women all tattoo slightly: fine lines are drawn on the chin, the outer ones being tattooed from the corners of the mouth; the front of the throat has a few crossed lines on it, three arrow-headed lines are tattooed on each breast, running up to the shoulders, and a fine diamond pattern runs down the centre of the stomach. The calf of the leg, from about 7.5 cm below the knee, is also tattooed with diagonal lines (like cross gathering). The wrists are also tattooed with stars and stripes.

The Konyaks allow matrimony to those only who make themselves as hideous as possible by having their faces elaborately tattooed. The process of disfiguration is carried to such an extend, that it gives them an unnatural darkness of complexion and that fearful look.

5.4.2. Tattooing among the Tangkhuls

Among the Tangkhuls, phakhara (tattooing) is confined only to the females of the north, and a great ritual and social importance is attached to it. For them the operation has the character of a "rite of passage", symbolising the transition from one stage of life to another. These designs serve as
"Insurance Certificate". The women of the north (Tangkhul) are much sought after by the southern men because, however fierce their feuds, a tattooed woman always goes unscathed, fear of the dire vengeance which would be exacted by her northern relations were she injured giving her this immunity. The Tangkhul tattoo design consists of three lines about 95 mm in width that start from the point of the chin round the neck, being carried in some cases right down to the navel. The upper arm is tattooed in a similar way with lines in diagonal patterns, making two crosses, which are generally kept separate.

Phakhara is usually done by instalments, always in cold weather. Old woman who does the operation pierces the skin with a sharp bamboo splinter and sooth is applied. The diet of the girl undergoing the tattooing operation is restricted, and she is also subjected to taboo rule which forbids her to leave the village in which she is residing until the ceremony is over. It is often done in another village, especially when the girl's mother comes from another village. The girl then resides in the house of her mother's brother. Furness (1902) remarks thus: "The Nagas, who regard tattooing as a sacred operation, taboo the house where it is being done, in order to keep out strangers. When women are tattooed, not even men or boys of their own family are allowed to remain in the house."

It is thus clear from the above discussion that, besides decoration purposes, the Nagas tattoo their body not only to identify the role and status of an individual within a community, but also to announce that individual’s tribal affiliations to outsiders.

5.5. DIVISION OF TIME
A calendar is a means of grouping days in ways convenient for regulating civil life and religious observances.

The basic unit of computation in a calendar is the day, and although days are now measured from midnight to midnight, this has not always been so. Most primitive tribes used a dawn-to-dawn reckoning; and this system was continued by the Babylonians and Greeks, who counted a day from sunrise to sunrise. In Egypt, a midnight-to-midnight reckoning was adopted; the Jews and, later, the Italians counted from sunset to sunset. The Tangkhuls counted their days from dawn to dawn, and divide the day into four parts, namely, ngathor (morning), ngashun (afternoon), ngazin (evening), zingyinlam (dusk), ngaya (night), and ngayasailungphup (midnight).

Once the day is divided into parts, the next task is to gather numbers of days into groups. Among the Tangkhuls, it was common to count moons (months) rather than days, but later a shorter period than the month was thought more convenient, and an interval period called hapta (week) was adopted that which consisted of seven days.

The month is based on the lunation (the time between New Moons), that period in which the Moon completes a cycle of its phases. Lasting approximately 29 and a half days, it is easy to recognize and short enough for the days to be counted without using large numbers. The Tangkhuls, thus, call a month kachang akha (kachang = moon; akha = one).

5.5.1. Tangkhul Calendar

The Tangkhuls divide a year into twelve months, each of which is named in accordance with the different stages involved in agricultural cycle and other natural happenings. The duration

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of the months are not exactly like that of the Gregorian calendar but rather flexible in accordance to the various processes of cultivation and other episodes in nature. The fact that each of these months is associated with song representing its distinguishing characteristics is remarkable, and goes a long way in helping us understand the ingenuity of the community. Besides, they also have names for seasons and days which are in complete harmony with the modern ones. Listed below are the seasons, months and days of the Tangkhuls:

5.5.1.1. Zurkan (Seasons)

(i) Spring - Luiradung (March, April and May);
(ii) Summer - Zur (June, July and August);
(iii) Autumn - Haoyang (September, October and November);
(iv) Winter - Si (December, January and February).

The changes of season are computed as Zur-Kan (Monsoon and dry period), and Si-Lum (cold and hot period).

5.5.1.2. Kachang (Months)

(i) January - Khayon
(ii) February - Marun
(iii) March - Mayo
(iv) April - Khaying
(v) May - Kharam
(vi) June - Makha
(vii) July - Marang
(viii) August - Phei
(ix) September - Pi
(x) October - Tatharaha
(xi) November - Ngaphei
An elaboration of their significance is noted below:

Khayon (January): This is a month of construction; houses are built and rich people erect forked wooden posts in order to display their wealth and, thereby, earn special status in the social hierarchy of the village. Lots of animals are slaughtered for such endeavors, and the house-wives busied themselves going to the granaries to draw out baskets of rice. The volume of rice in the granaries thus decreases. Khayon means ‘to decrease steadily’.

Marun (February): This is a month of planting seeds. The seeds are inserted to the holes made by the digging implements. Marun is the short form of khamarun, meaning ‘filling up a hole’.

Mayo (March): This is a month when trees and earth start giving out young shoots and thereby making the surrounding areas appear tender and gay. Mayo is the short form of khamayo, meaning ‘tenderness’.

Khaying (April): The tender leaves of the previous month, i.e. March, have turned the landscape into a beautiful panorama of greenery. Khaying means ‘green’.

Kharam (May): In this month a bird called Kharamva (kharam is the short form of kharamkhava, meaning ‘touring’; and va is the short form of vanao, meaning ‘bird’), one of the 300 known migratory bird species that visit the Indian subcontinent annually from lands beyond the Himalayas, after spending months together in warm places elsewhere, appears. The
Tangkhuls, like the Eskimos and Red Indians, have named this month after this touring bird.

Makha (May): Regular monsoon rains start pouring from this month onwards; the rain water and the accompanying fog make everything dirty, and the clothes and utensil get "mildewed". Makha means 'filth'.

Marang (June): It is so named because, owing to insufficient supply of water or due to negligence, transplantation of rice seedlings at this late stage leads to plants yielding poor harvest. "Marang" is the short form of khamarang, meaning 'non-yielding of full grains'.

Phei (July): It is a lean month; the rice stock of the common people normally gets exhausted. They, therefore, start working in other's fields to earn their livelihood. Phei is the verb form of kaphei, meaning 'working in other's field to earn'.

Pi (August): The crops start maturing in this month, and the people become vigilant to safeguard them from the birds and animals. During this period they sleep in the field itself and, thus, calling that month as sleeping period. Pi means 'to sleep'.

Tatharaha (September): This is the month when rice plants become heavy with fast ripening seeds and the fields become a yellowish-red carpet. The people, seeing this panoramic view and inhaling the sweet aroma of the mellow fruitfulness, forget their hunger. It is a compound word being taken from three words, viz., ta means 'come', thara means 'crop', and ha is the short form of maha, meaning 'harvest'. In other words 'approaching harvest'.
Ngaphei (November): This is the peak month of harvest. The people, in their desire to transfer all the paddy from the fields to their granaries, engage themselves in rallying the grain loads from one wonra (cairn constructed on the roadside in memory of dead ancestor, which is used as a resting place) to another. At these places relatives and friends who could not go to the fields owing to their engagements elsewhere, and children who could not go to their far-off fields, come and collect the grain loads. Here the grain loads are readjusted to suit the carrying capacity of these helpers. Ngaphei is the short form of khangaphei, meaning 'adjustment'.

Tharao (December): The harvest, and the following gleaming process, being over, the field now look parched and untidy. Tharao means 'topsy-turvy'.

5.5.1.3. Hapta (Week)

(i) Monday - Horthang  
(ii) Tuesday - Shokthang  
(iii) Wednesday - Yaothang  
(iv) Thursday - Pemthang  
(v) Friday - Sothang  
(vi) Saturday - Kupthang  
(vii) Sunday - Matthang

5.6. DREAMS AND OMENS

The Nagas believe in their own dreams, and take note of them as forecasting events to come. A dream is not interpreted in the terms in which it occurs, but on a regular and known system. Omens are consulted on all occasions of importance, and determine the cause of conduct of the inquirers. There are hundreds of instances when individuals and groups abandoned
their plans following negative dreams and unpropitious omens. They go to war, carry out agricultural activities, name their children those names they have chosen during the birth time, construct houses, perform feasts of merit, go for hunting, arrange marriages, etc. only when the dreams prove positive and the omens are propitious.

5.6.1. Omen among the Southern Nagas

(i) Among the Zeliangrongs, it is customary to choose a man to go at midnight to the outer entrance of the village to take the omens regarding their welfare in the ensuing year. If he hears anything like the dragging of wood while at the entrance of the village, tigers will do mischief, and there will be much sickness in the village if he hears the sound of falling leaves.

(ii) At Mao and Maram, the issue of a hunting party is prognosticated by their success in kicking small pebbles on to the top of a monolith, i.e. they will get games if the pebbles hit the target, and the reverse if otherwise (Hodson 1911).

(iii) Giving birth to twins of the same gender is a lucky sign among most of the Southern Nagas. The Poumais believe that twin boys bring prosperity to the whole village, where as twin girls bring luck only to their parents. It is, however, a had omen to have a twin birth of a boy and a girl, for it is believed that they bring misfortune to the whole village.

(iv) The Tangkhuls think that an eclipse is nothing but the eating of the sun by a tiger and, therefore, it portends trouble. The Koirengs believe that it is a sign of war raids.
(v) The Zeliangrongs cut short their journeys and return home whenever they are unfortunate enough to meet a mole on the road or a deer barking in front of them.

5.6.2. Practice of augury among the Tangkhuls

5.6.2.1. Kapa Khayang (kapa = bamboo thong; khayang = observation)

It is the most common method employed by the Tangkhuls. This kind of divination can be taken only from one particular spiny bamboo species locally known as pasha (Malocalamus compactiflorus), and no other varieties of bamboo can be used. After fetching the pasha (these plants are quite rare in the Tangkhul region) from the outskirts of the village, it is kept outside the house for a night for it to be dewed, and no one can tread on it. It is picked up the next day, cut into several pieces of about 61 cm each and, dedicating them to kameo (deity) through chanting of syllables, they are bundled up and stored away at a safe place for future use. In each village there are only a handful of persons who are bestowed with the capability of predicting the future through the observation of the way the piece of bamboo splits. One of these kapakhamachutas (men whose predictions often come through), when approached by someone, takes one of the pasha pieces and splits it suddenly. It is considered a good omen if the fractured piece being held on the right hand is longer than the left side, and the reverse if otherwise. The presence of overlapping strands, if any, is a good sign too as they depict tooth-picks, meaning the person for whom this divination is carried out is soon going to eat meat and, thereby, he will be picking his teeth. If that person is taking this omen for hunting expedition, he is sure to come home with trophies.
5.6.2.2. Harkho Khayang (har = chiken; khayang = observation)

The Tangkhuls take this omen when they are about to go for hunting, war, raid, marriage, and other important things. A Tangkhul strangles a fowl by its neck, holds up the dying bird about 30.5 cm or so from the ground level, and keenly observes the position of the bird’s feet, and the manner in which its excrement falls in the final struggle for life. The omen is auspicious if the right foot is placed over the left; the person for whom the omen is taken will outsmart his opponent in any kind of argument. The opposite will take place if the left foot is on top of the right. The inquirer will bring home human heads, or animals, or have smooth married life, or successful journey if the feces comes down in one solid piece and remains firmly at the spot where it falls; the omen is bad if it rolls away. In such cases, the inquirer either cancels or postpones his plan, especially that of raiding, inasmuch as rolling away of the stool is being considered as a sign of his own death, namely, he will be definitely beheaded by the enemies. Among other Southern Naga communities, this method is mainly resorted to by the Maos, Marams, and Zeliangrongs.

When the Maos (Fig. 6; and the shawl worn by Mao women: Fig. 14), Marams, and Poumais are about to go for a raid, they take a bundle of sticks and throw the same to the ground. The raid will be successful if the sticks fall head over head.

5.6.2.3. Chikren Khangana (chikren = a small warbling bird; khangana = listening)

This is the simplest method of taking omen, and it is usually taken along with other divinations in order to know the wishes of kameos (deities). Here the inquirer goes to the nearby
jungle (just a few yards away from the village gate), turns his back towards the village, and intently listens to the sound made by chikrens. The omen is considered favourable if a melodious sound produced by the bird comes from the right side from where he stands. It is better still if the sound coming from the right side is followed by a second song from the left side (the birds in question often go in pair). He either cancels or postpones his endeavour if the omen taken for it is sinister, that is, if the sound of the bird comes from the left side first. A similar omen known as chihai khangana (chihai is a tiny insect) is taken, and the same formula is applied here too.

5.6.2.4. **Makho Kazang** *(makho = altar; kazang = entering)*

This divination is taken only once in a year, and it is done so before any agricultural activity of the year begins. The responsibility of maintaining the makho, which is situated deep inside a forest beyond the village gate, lies either with the village chief or the head of one of the oldest clans of the village. After propitiating the kameo with meat and rice-beer, the sharra (priest) opens the altar (a heap of stones placed over a pit), removes the well-covered empty pot from the vault of the altar, and keenly observes the inside of the pot. If the pot is found wet, the interpretation is that the village will receive a good amount of rainfall that year and the omen, therefore, is considered a propitious one. A dry pot signifies a scanty rainfall and, therefore, it is a bad sign. The harvest will be good if a full grain in found inside the pot, whereas a chaf depicts the opposite. The village will be affected by fatal diseases if a worm is found inside the pot. There will be war or the village will be raided by enemies if a blood stain is found inside the pot. It is a
taboo to do any agricultural work before makho kazang divination is carried out.

5.6.2.5. *Hara Khayang* (*hara* = egg; *khayang* = observation)

The Tangkhuls go for divination through breaking of eggs for agricultural purposes and also to know in advance other aspects of life. They take this omen in the beginning of the year’s agricultural cycle when a particular territory of the village is being considered for slash-and-burn cultivation. Such land is known as *shalui* (usually a hill slope where terrace cultivation cannot be carried out mainly because of the lack of proper water supply). The land in question may be a semi-primary territory with a nominal owner, or a secondary one. In case of the land belonging to the former category, it is the land-owner that carries out the egg-omen operation, and for which he is given a portion each of every plants, tubers, cereals, etc. Such kind of tax is known as *harayan lamshai* (*harayan* = convention of egg; *lamshai* = land-tax). This tax is given by those members who make use of the land for agricultural purposes. If it is a secondary land, it is the chief of the village that takes this omen, and receives the *harayan lamshai*.

The way the egg-omen is taken is interesting. The village chief or the land-owner, as the case may be, first makes a bonfire and a flat stone is placed in the middle of the fire. He then breaks the pointed end of the already sanctified egg, places it on the flat stone, and keenly observes the egg as it gets heated. After minutely examining the way it boils, how the content flows over, and the manner in which the now-empty egg shell falls, he comes to know whether or not that year they are going to get sufficient rainfall, or good harvest, or the village will be attacked by enemies. He then announces the
outcome of the omen to the whole village. If the omen for the particular land being considered for jhooming is not good, the idea is abandoned and a new territory is reselected.

Though it cannot be said that *hara khayang* is part of the general stock of Tibeto-Burman customs, it is a trait which is practised over a wide area of Southeast Asia. Among the Southern Nagas this kind of omen is consulted frequently by the Tangkhuls and Zeliangrongs. Among the Tangkhuls it is a taboo for women to go for augury.

5.6.3. Dreams

Of all forms of second sight dreaming is the favourite and the best among the Nagas. In most dreams the sleeper’s soul sees something symbolical of what is going to happen to him. The Southern Nagas have almost a science of dreaming, and it is practised in particular by adults. A dream is not interpreted in the terms in which it occurs, but on a regular and known system which, sometimes, vary from community to community, or even from village to village of the same community. They foretell the results of hunting expeditions, journeys, raids, etc. Some of them are quite repute for their prophecies, though everyone is also his own dreamer, and their dreamings have a curious way of coming true. The Tangkhuls call them *mang khamachuta* (*mang* = dream; *khamachuta* = accuracy). Some of the samples are given below:

(i) The Koirengs, Maos, Marams, Poumais, Tangkhuls, and Zeliangrongs believe that an early death will take place in the family if a tooth falls out in a dream.

(ii) It is a universal believe among the Southern Nagas that to be bitten by a snake in a dream means either sicknesses or some other misfortunes will soon take place.

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(iii) To kill someone in a dream means a good health and immunity from sickness among the Maos, Marams, and Poumaids, whereas it means a successful hunting for the Koirengs.

(iv) To dream of a fire means a hot summer for the Tangkhuls, Zelianrgongs and some other Southern Naga communities and, in extension, a poor harvest that year. Whereas for the Koirengs the same dream bears the significance that a house will be burnt.

(v) To dream of a sun rise signifies an early death for the Maos, whereas it bears an opposite meaning in some of the Poumai villages.

(vi) To dream water means good luck for the Koirengs, but dreaming of a pig means the reverse.

(vii) Among many Southern Naga communities to dream of an earthquake means death, poverty, or scarcity in all cases.

(viii) The Tangkhuls believe that to see, converse, or receive food from the dead is a sure portent of sickness or death.

(ix) Climping trees and successful crossing of bridges in dreams mean to the Tangkhuls that luck will attend to all enterprises undertaken.

(x) It is a universal belief among the Southern Nagas that to be bitten by a dog or just seeing it in a dream means the dreamer will fall sick. To see a buffalo is a sign of bad luck.

(xi) To the Tangkhuls to dream oneself being smeared with dirt means people will talk bad about him.
(xii) To climb a hill is universally a sign of good luck, while to go down hill is a warning of death or defeat.

(xiii) To dream of winning a race or such contest universally means success in life.

(xiv) It is universally that to dream of flying or of falling down is an indication of the growth of the body during sleep.

5.7. FEASTS OF MERIT

Along with head-hunting, the Feasts of Merit constitute the basis of Naga ethics and social life. They consist in a series of ceremonies, progressively more lavish and socially important, and culminate in the sacrifice of a seijang (Bos frontalis). Through the Feasts of Merit a wealthy man transmits his own fertility, proof of which is his wealth, to the members of the community offering meat, rice and rice-beer, and receiving in turn merit and social prestige.

The last feast in the cycle of Feasts of Merit, which only a few persons reach, assures honor for the promoter in this lifetime and in the afterworld.

The way and method of performing the feast of merit differ from community to community, yet this kind of practice to elevate oneself to the enviable position in the society is common to all the Naga communities. Some of them go for stone monoliths (Fig. 20), some for only forked wooden posts (Fig. 23), whereas some communities go for both. Whatever the case may be, it is not the stone monument, nor the forked wooden post, that is important; the importance is on the acquisition of glory, honor and social status that are intimately associated with the feast of merit. Those persons who can
afford to indulge in this kind of expensive gratification earn for themselves respect and reputation of being generous and resourceful. In fact those who have succeeded in performing the whole series of the feast of merit are perhaps respected more than those warriors who have brought maximum number of human heads. These successful performers of the feast of merit automatically acquire the social sanction to wear special cloths with distinctive embroideries on them, and to add house-horns on their dwellings.

5.7.1. Feasts of Merit practiced by the Southern Nagas

All the Southern Naga communities performed feasts of merit. Some of the Naga communities of Chandel district give feasts, the giving of which confers on the giver special consideration among his fellow-villagers and entitles his corpse to special funeral honors. All these feasts seem more or less connected with the erection of some form of memorial (either forked posts or monoliths or a heap of stones or a paved platforms) in which the erection of the memorial is the important part of the ceremony. All these are erected during a man's life and are quite distinct from the memorials erected in memory of the deceased. The Anal, Chothe, and Lamkang put up wooden posts. Mithun (*Bos frontalis*) and pigs are killed, and a feast given which lasts several days, the cost being met by the person ambitious of fame.

5.7.1.1. Mao Feast of Merit

Among the Maos, the aspirant for fame must perform the Yuhongba ceremony before he can do the greater one of pulling a stone. He must give notice of his intention to do so in the month of Bellu-kluh (October). He renews all his cooking pots and changes the hearth-stones, and for one month from the date
of giving notice he remains chaste. During this time he is busy getting zu (rice-beer) brewed; when all is ready he kills a pig and calls the villagers. His friends bring presents and contributions of zu. On the first of Chi-thu-ni-kluh (December) he again renews his cooking pots and changes the hearth-stones, and having eaten from the new utensils he may sleep with his wife. The next or any succeeding October he may give notice that he will perform the stone-pulling. New pots and new hearth-stones are procured and the stone-puller must keep himself away from sex for the next ten months. In the month of Chi-thu-ni-kluh he gives a feast called U-tuzur, killing a big cow or two small ones and, along with rice-beer, feeding the whole village. During the next month the village collects wood for zu making, and the puller has to provide them with zu. In the next month the stone to be erected in his honor is chosen. Having selected the stone, he goes home to dream; if he does not dream at all it is bad. When the stone has been approved of, the pulling is arranged. The puller wears a special dress with a head-dress, white cloth gaiters, and special cloths; the others all dress in their finest. After the stone has been put on the wooden sledge, two old men dressed as the puller, except that they do not wear the special cloth Zawshishu, go to the stone, and one of them places some ginger and zu in a leaf by the stone and then lets a white chicken go that the stone may move as easily as the chicken runs away. The young men chase it and kill it. The Mohvu (the stone-puller) now walks round the stone with a spear in his hand and then gives the first pull. Then two chaste young men who have followed the Mohvu holding wands and leaves and some cocks' feathers take up their position in front of the stone and throw the wands in the direction in which it is intended to go. They mount on to the stone and shout to it to go quickly, after which they rejoin the Mohvu and give a pull at the creepers. They get on to the stone a
second time, and then the hauling begins, and if possible the stone must be taken to the selected site on that day, but certainly by the next. This done, all go and drink. The Mohvu and the old men of each clan go into the puller’s house with him and an old man who has pulled a stone sits outside. Zu is distributed in leaves; those inside the house except the Mohvu drink theirs; the old sentry also does not drink his; the rest of the people assemble outside, and when they have drunk their portions all of them give out a loud shout. The old sentry then goes into the house and he and the Mohvu drink. Then all go home; the Mohvu and the old sentry must remain chaste that night. The next day one more zu is made, and five days later a pig is killed, and the day after a cow and a buffalo, and two days later whatever meat has not been eaten by the puller and his household is divided among everyone with zu. The village is cleared of strangers. The unmarried girls and all males are called and come with their zu cups, get them filled, take them home, and return and stand or sit in rows and are given drink in leaves; this goes on for four or five days, but the cups are not brought on the later days. The Mohvu receives small presents from his friends, to whom he gives a special drink. New zu is then prepared, and when it is ready everyone is again treated. Again zu is prepared, and when it is ready the villagers go and hoe the puller’s field and erect the stone (Fig. 25) which all this time has been waiting on the sledge. This ends the stone-pulling effort.

An identical stone-pulling ceremony of the Maos is carried out by some northern Tangkhul villages, especially Chingjui (Fig.20).

5.7.1.2. Maring Feast of Merit
The Marings perform the feasts of merit in two ways: (i) Thiltlhai, this way can be performed only by rich persons. The first stage lasts for ten days, during which period seven mithuns (*Bos frontalis*), a number of pigs and fowls, and huge quantity of rice and rice-beer are consumed. (ii) Longuinu: This way is more interesting because it is here the monolith known as *longuinau* is erected as a symbol of prestige to the performer of the feast. Human captives of both the sexes were used to be buried alive under these monoliths. But nowadays they use cat for the purpose. In the days when social status used to depend partly on head acquisition and performance of status-giving rituals, one who has performed thiltlhai feels obliged to perform pohling during the post-winter season in which six mithuns, one pig, one cow, and six fowls are killed. Three to four hundred jars of rice-beer and a large quantity of tobacco leaves are usually consumed for the purpose.

5.7.1.3. Zeliangrong Feast of Merit

Among the Zeliangrongs of Tamenglong district, who are noted for their cloths (*sarong*/skirt: Fig. 7; shawl: Fig. 8) and dance, the erection of monoliths is associated with the killing of a buffalo and a pig, and feasting the whole village. This expensive act qualifies a man for the title of Banrumei. This may be followed by a grand feast of two buffaloes, which entitles the performer to the title of Kaishumei. It is also meritorious to build a platform of stones in the village avenue for people to rest on. The building of such cairn is followed by a feast. These good deeds find their reward in the land beyond the grave.

Among all the Southern Naga groups, the house of the person who has given feasts of merit is decorated with *shimngachi* (*shim* = house; *ngachi* is the short form of *angachi*, meaning
'horn'), and the posts are elaborately carved with representations of human figures, heads, horns of seijang (Bos frontalis), and female breasts. Besides, he is also entitled to construct lengchengshim (lengcheng means 'shingle'; and shim means 'house'), a house whose roof is made of small, flat oblong pieces of wood used like tiles, in place of thatch. This house can be inherited only by the eldest son of the feast performer after his marriage.

5.7.1.4. Tangkhul Feast of Merit

Among the Southern Nagas, the Tangkhul is one of the communities that carries out this operation elaborately. Throwing of Feast of Merit with an erection of forked posts is considered as the highest form of achievement in life which only few people can accomplish. However rich a person may be, yet if the person is not from a noted clan and that too if he is not an elder of it, he cannot go for it. A person from a rightful clan with social standing when desires to erect these posts he, first of all, has to carry out certain processes before making his intention in public. He secretly propitiate and consult his shim kameo (shim = house; kameo = deity), through sacrifice of a dog, a pig, and a calf in series. When he goes for varieties of omens such as that derived from mang khangana (mang = dream; khangana = listening), kapa khayang (kapa = a wicker of split-bamboo; khayang = observation), harkho khayang (harkho = chicken feet), and listening to sounds of particular birds and insects. When all these omens prove positive, he sacrifices a cat (in place of human being that which was the prevalent practice before) and make his intention known to the people by throwing a feast.

Maran kasa, as the Feast of Merit is called by the Tangkhuls, is a very costly affair, for the performer has to slaughter
twelve water buffaloes (Bubalus bubalis), two cows, twelve pigs, a dog, and a cat. If a person erects the forked posts without killing this specified number of animals for the purpose, he is ridiculed by the general public and, in consequence, instead of earning honour it is shameful for him. Among the twelve buffaloes, two should be of great imminence from the point of fighting skill, size, appearance, etc. These two are called harashon (hara = egg; shon is the short form of kashon meaning 'protrusion') and khamongzaí (khamong = door; kazai = whittle) respectively. When the buffalo, which is called harashon, is about to be killed, its head is decorated with head-gear with an egg placed at the top. The egg is then broken, and the spectators give out a loud refrain. Then the sharra (priest), in accordance with the customary practice, pierces the buffalo with a spear, and the real killing and cutting up the carcass is carried out by others.

Of the twelve buffaloes, four are contributed by the four elders of the performer’s clan. Any one of these four elders who fails to come forward with his share of the contribution loses his right to khararsa sakhoshai (kharar = elder; sa = meat; sakho = foot of an animal; shai = tribute), a privilege enjoyed by elders of a clan in the form of legs given to them for every animal killed among the clan members. Of the twelve pigs, one each of them are slaughtered on each of these days: hanga raivao (hanga = village council; rai = war; vao = announcement. In other words "announcement of the performer’s intention to throw a feast of merit to the village council."). maranthing kapha (maran = feast of merit; thing = wood; kapha = search. In other words "searching of the five forked posts to be erected as symbols of the feast."). rakhong kakhon (rakhong = well; kakhon = digging. In other words "digging a well to commemorate the feast") , sam kashap (sam = rice; kashap = stocking. In other words "stocking up of rice to be
used during the feast."), *seipeng kashei* (*seipeng* = creepers for binding cattle; *kashei* = preparation. In other words "preparation of creepers to be used for binding the cattle during the time of their slaughter."), the biggest pig for *yangphut* (*yang* = yard/compound; *phut* is the short form of *kaphut* which means 'to open'. In other words "preparing the compound by leveling and cleaning the ground."), and *dharkat* (*dhar* is the short form of *kadhar* which means 'new'; and *kat* is the short form of *kachikat*, meaning 'offering'. In other words "inauguration of the event through propitiation to deity."). The remaining five pigs which are donated by the *yorlas* (women of the performer's clan married to other clan members) are killed one by one for each of the five posts while they are felled.

The *tarungs* (Fig. 21), as the forked posts are called, are shaped from unblemished trees; hollowed trees, trees with broken boughs, or split trees, etc. cannot be used for the said purpose. After the omens have proved positive and the formal announcement made to the *hanga* (village council), the donor goes to those trees, that have been secretly earmarked by him earlier, and places his axe handles against the trunks of the selected trees, do the necessary rites and, believing that the trees are now possessed by deities, says thus: "We will be together, you will come to my courtyard and guard my corns (that which are scorched to direct sunlight before subjecting to dehusking by wooden pestles in the mortars)." He then goes home, only to return the next morning to see the response. If he finds the axe handles removed from the original places, it is construed as rejection of his companionship by the trees, and he goes and repeat the same processes with other unblemished trees. In case of the axe handles found stationed in the same positions, he takes it for permissiveness on the part of the trees' deities. These trees
are then given names according to the revelation made in his dreams. After the names are thus given to each of these trees, they are chopped. The choppers, while engaged in the felling process, say that they are cutting them at the command of someone called Changlui (a fictitious name taken up by one of the wood-cutters) who, in turn, says that he is doing so at the command of the donor of the feast who, in turn, also says that he is being told to do so by the sharra (priest). The reason behind doing so lies in the fact, that if the deities get angry with the wood-cutters for chopping the trees which are their personifications, their wrath may be reflected from others to the priest where, because of his proximity with the deities as a priest, there is a chance of getting excuse from the angry kameos (deities). The wood-cutters then trim and engrave the trees with images of buffaloes' heads, women's breasts, etc., and, after tying them firmly with creepers, await the arrival of other villagers. The villagers, after eating and dancing the whole day, go and fetch these forked posts.

The pulling of these forked posts are divided among the wards of the village. Each of these ward-wise groups competes with each other to take their respective posts to the donor's compound earlier than the others. After four posts have been delivered, the whole villagers go and, again, ward-wise compete their strength in moving the fifth, which is the biggest and the main post. It takes days together for these posts to reach the village, and during all these days the fellow villagers continue to pull the posts, and eat, drink rice-beer and dance at the expense of the performer of the feast. After many days (about two weeks in most cases) of hard pushing and pulling, when at last the main post (which is considered as the leader of the group of five posts) reaches the gate of the village called harshang, a special treatment is given to it: an effigy, well-decorated with head-gear and
kongsang (a precious necklace of glass and shell beads), is placed on top of the post and, instead of pulling, it is carried inside the village on the shoulders of the enthusiastic villagers, accompanied by dance and melodious chanting known as thingrei mahon (thingrei = a big tree; mahon = dance). When this main post is about to reach the house of its owner, the donor, fearing that the deity of the post may harm him, makes himself incognito and hides inside the house; the doors are bolted tight with a spear pushed out from the cavity of the bolted main entrance door, a drum is beaten to scare away the kameo, and the house is guarded by warriors. The sharra, attiring himself with the costume of the feast-giver, then takes up position inside the donor’s house. A special feasting and dancing take place on this day where all the villagers are treated with maranra (maran = feast of merit; ra is the short form of ara meaning ‘liquid’. It is a specially prepared rice-beer for the occasion). The neck of five chickens are then chopped off, and each of these five posts are smeared with the oozing blood of the chickens, and the erection of the posts takes place. The biggest post, called Akhoka, is placed in the middle; the next nearest two posts to Akhoka are called Harpom; and the cornermost two are known as Anga. They then go for dharkat kaka (dedication of the posts) amidst heavy eating and drinking and, thus, the feast of merit comes an end for the general public. An exclusive feast is given to yorlas (women of the feast performer’s clan married to other clan members) the next day. On the third day after the erection of the tarungs (forked posts: Fig. 23), the close relatives, known as shimzanao, go for another feast in which the heads of the killed animals are eaten. On the fourth day (the last day), the sharra, at the invitation of the feast-giver, comes and perform a rite, known as Suikaham, in which feathers of chicken are chaffed with a
mat called yamkok. This is to drive away sins of the feast-giver.

5.7.1.4.1. Long Maran

Another variety of feast of merit known as Long maran is also performed. It is comparatively a small feast but, with the omission of some major facets of Maran kasa, they are almost identical in operation. The main differences lay in the number of tarungs (forked posts), people’s participation, and animals being killed; in Long maran only three buffaloes and three pigs are slaughtered, only three posts are erected, and the bringing of these forked posts are carried out by the feast-giver’s relatives and longnaobing (members of the dormitory to which he is affiliated). There is no contribution of animals from his clansmen or yorlas as is the case with Maran kasa.

This kind of show-off of power and wealth is often an outcome of challenges that usually take place during hot argument or quarrel when each of the opposing individuals tells the other that he is more powerful and richer than the other. So, in order to decide the truth of their respective assertion, various competitions are taken up. They start with combats between their cocks, followed by dogs, then buffaloes. Then, lastly, depending on their economical status, comes either Long maran or Maran kasa.