CHAPTER VI

RELIGION
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6.1. WAYS OF WORSHIP: Rites and Rituals

Religion is an important aspect of life from ethnoarchaeological point of view also. Many aspects of life undergo changes with technological development but it is religion which does not change easily and we are bound to get some clues from archaeological sites about the way of life of these communities. These clues help us understand better their past history.

The traditional religion of the Nagas is labelled as "animism". The spirits which the Nagas revere are divided into two distinct classes: (i) Kasa Akhava, the Supreme God, who is usually beneficent but somewhat remote Creator interfering little in the affairs of men; and (ii) the Kameo, the spirits of earth, the true earth-spirits of the occultist, often harmful, beneficent only when propitiated.

When we come to the Kameo we find a tendency to specialise certain named and definite spirits as having definite functions. Ameoa, who is held to be the most important spirit, Phunghui Philava, the goddess of crops and wealth, Sahkameo (game-allotter), who presides over all wild animals, Kongratuiyon (Echo), and Kokto, the Monarch of the underworld, are some of them.

Ameoali khamachut (worshipping Ameoa; the god): It is not appropriate nor possible for Ameoa to communicate face to face with mikumo (the earthlings) and, therefore, he lets them know what he wishes them to do, or not to do, and what is good, or what is not good, through signs, namely, (i) Kapa khayang
(divination through bamboo slits), (ii) Harkho khayang (chicken omen), (iii) Chikrenkhon khanganah (bird omen), (iv) Chihaikhon khanganah (insect omen), (v) Raihai (war-charmstone), (vi) Makho kazang (pot omen), and (vii) Hara khayang (egg omen).

6.1.1. Necromency

Kazei kazang, the arrest of the soul of a living person by certain dead person and kept as a prisoner in Kazeiram (the land of the dead), is one of the phenomena that interest us. In such situation, the person whose soul is imprisoned in Kazeiram losses an appetite and consequently becomes very pale and thin. Here the khunong (shaman) is summoned who kills a chicken and propitiates the Kameo along with rice-beer. After chanting the necessary hymns is over, he embraces a live chicken and calmly lays down on the mat already spread near the hearth and he becomes possessed along with the chicken. After remaining in that possessed or a sort of dead stage for about twenty minutes, when the khunong is about to revive, the chicken starts crackling. Then the persons waiting around the shaman start pulling, twisting and massaging his now stiff hands, legs, etc. It takes some three or four strong young men to restore him to his normal condition. As he regains his body normalcy, he tells the expectant family members and neighbours whether the soul of the sick man was imprisoned out of love or anger by one of the deceased, and that, on his persuasion, the sick man's soul is released now. He also tells whatever message he was asked to convey. Sometimes, these shamans are found possessing leaves and twigs of pine tree which they explained were plucked on the way while returning from kazeiram, the land of the dead. Even their tobacco juice containers which were full were sometimes found either half-empty or completely dried up, which they said were finished up by the kazeinaos (people of the land of dead) who came to inquire about their respective living family members and friends and pass messages.
6.1.2. Nature and Ancestor Worship

Naga mythology never evolved the ideas of a heaven or hell. So in antique Naga was the greater gods of communities evolved from ghost-cults; but those ethics of ancestor-worship which shaped alike the earliest societies of the world, date from a period before the time of supreme gods — from the period when at the dead were supposed to become gods, with no distinction of rank. The ancient Nagas thought of their dead as still inhabiting this world, or at least legends did speak of an underworld, where mysterious evil beings dwelt in corruption; but this vague world of the dead communicated with the world of the living: and the spirit there, though in some sort attached to its decaying envelope could still receive upon earth the homage and the offerings of them.

Before the advent of Christianity, there was no idea of a heaven or hell. The ghost of a departed were thought of as constant presence, needing propitiation, and able in some way to share the pleasures and the pains of the living. They require food and drink and light; and in return for these, they could confer benefits. Their bodies had melted into the earth; but their spirit-power still lingered in the upper world, thrilled its substance, moved in its winds and waters. By death they had acquired mysterious force. But inspite of their supernatural force and power, the dead are still dependent upon the living for happiness. Though viewless, save in dreams, they need earthly nourishment and reverence and homage in the forms of food and drink. Each ghost must rely for such comfort upon its living kindred; only through the devotion of the kindred can it ever find repose. Each ghost must have shelter, a fitting tomb, and each must have offerings. Among the Southern Nagas, the Maos, the Zeliangrongs, and the Tangkhuls provide honourable shelters and
nourishment to these spirits who, in turn, aid in maintaining the good fortune of its propitiators. But if refused the sepulchral home, the funeral rites, the offerings of food and fire and drink, the spirits will suffer from hunger and cold, and will act malevolently and contrive misfortune for those who neglected them.

6.1.3. Stages of Ancestor Worship

There are two stages of Naga ancestor-worship: the first stage is that which existed before the establishment of a settled life, when there was yet not village or tribal chief; and when the unit of society was the great patriarchal family, with its elders or war-chiefs for leaders. Under these conditions, the spirits of the family-ancestor only were worshipped; each family propitiating its own dead, and recognizing no other form of worship. Later on, as the patriarchal families became grouped into tribal clans, there grew up the custom of tribal sacrifice to the spirits of the clan-rulers. This cult being added to the family cult, thus comes the second stage of ancestor-worship.

Though in the present stage of our knowledge, the evolution in Naga society of these two stages of ancestor-worship is faintly traceable, we can surmise tolerably well, from various practices and legends, how the permanent form of the cult were first developed out of the earlier funeral-rites. Among the Nagas it was an early custom to bring the family dead within the limits of the family estate. Some Nagas of remote areas expose their dead near their houses, while others bury the dead close to the house. At regular intervals after the burial, ceremonies were performed at the graves; and food and drink then served to the spirits everyday. The nature of the offerings and character of the prayers depended upon the religion of the household, but the essential duties of the cult were everywhere the same. The duties
were not to be neglected under any circumstances; their performance in these times was usually instructed to the elders or to the women of the household. There is no long ceremony, no imperative rule about prayers, nothing solemn: the food offerings were selected out of the family cooking; the murmuring of whispered invocations were short and few.

Originating in those dim ages when fear was stronger than love, when the wish to please the ghosts of the departed must have been chiefly inspired by dread of their anger, the cult at last developed into a religion of affection, and this it yet remains. The belief that the dead need affection, that to neglect them is a cruelty, that their happiness depends upon duty, is a belief that has almost cast out the primitive fear of their displeasure. They are not thought of as dead: they are believed to remain among those who loved them. They guard the home and watch over the welfare of its inmates, they hover nightly on the glow of the family hearth. They dwell mostly within their family tombs and observe and hear what happens in the house; they share the family joys and sorrows; they take delight in the voices and the warmth and the evening greetings of the family which are enough to make them happy. These ancestor spirits require nourishment but the vapour of food contents them. They are demanding only as regards the daily fulfillment of duty. They are givers of wealth, the makers and teachers of the present: they represent the past if the race and all its sacrifices; them, to treat them with rude indifference, is the proof of an evil heart; to cause them shame by ill conduct, to disgrace their name by bad actions, is the supreme crime. They represent the moral experience of the race: whosoever denies that experience denies them also, and falls to the level of the beast, or below it. They represent the unwritten law, the traditions of the commune, the duties of all to all: whosoever offends against these, sins against the dead because each member of the family supposed himself, or herself, to be under perpetual ghostly surveillance. The eyes of the spirits
were watching and listening their every act and word. Thoughts too, not less than deeds, were visible to the gaze of the dead: the heart must be pure and the mind must be under control, these within the presence of the spirits.

The religion of the household rules each individual in every action of domestic and village life in all its relations to the outer world. Like the religion of the home, the religion of commune was ancestor worship. Every house has its spirit, known as Shimkameo in Tangkhul, and there is a khunong (priest) for every village who represents the community and through him they worship their clan ancestors. Every village had its religious festivals and holy days. These village priests represent the religious sentiment of their villages. It is to the local or clan ancestral spirit that prayers are made for success in all communal undertakings, for protection against sickness, for victory against the enemies in time of war, for succor in the season of famine and epidemic. The ancestral spirit is the giver of all good things, it is the special helper and guardian of the people. The cult of the ancestral spirit embodies the moral experience of the community; representing all its cherished traditions and customs, its unwritten laws of conduct, and its sentiments of duty. Just as an offense against the ethics of the family must be regarded as an impiety towards the family-ancestor, any breach of custom in the village or community must be considered as an act of disrespect to its local ancestor-god. The prosperity of the family depends upon the observance of the filial piety, which is identified with obedience to the traditional rules of house-hold conduct; and, in like manner, the prosperity of the commune was supposed to depend upon the observance of ancestral custom and upon obedience to those unwritten laws of the village and community, which are taught to all from the time of their childhood. Customs are identified with morals. Any offense against the custom of the community is an
offense against the gods who protected it and, therefore, a
menace to the public wealth. The very existence of the community
is also endangered by such crimes and, therefore, every member is
held accountable by the community for his conduct. Every action
must conform to the traditional usage of the village and
community: independent and exceptional conduct is a public
nuisance.

They do not hide anything from their own people: everything is
open for them. Unusual behaviour is judged as a departure from
the traditional standard of conduct; all oddities are condemned
as departure from the established custom.

We have seen that in the Naga belief the world of the living is
everywhere ruled by the world of the dead, that the individual,
at every moment of his existence, is under ghostly supervision.
All about him, and above him and beneath him are invisible
powers. In his conception of nature all things are ordered by the
dead, light and darkness, weather and season, winds and tides,
mist and rains, growth and decay, sickness and health. So it is
now evident to us that the ethics of the Nagas are all comprised
in the doctrine of unqualified obedience to customs originating
from religion and, thus, from the village chief to the ordinary
villager, every person is subjected to the law of tradition.
Morality in Naga society consist in the minute observance of
rules of conduct regarding the household, the community and the
village authority all of which roll into one.

In common with other communities the Southern Nagas regard the
supernatural in general from a point of view that is rather
vague. So vague is their idea of the deities and spiritual beings
in which they believe, that they make no attempt whatsoever to
reproduce in carving or in visual image the mental image which
they form of them, if indeed any clear formation takes place in
his mind. Polytheist or pantheist they may be, but they are not
idolaters. They have a very clear idea of how gods should be served and that whosoever serves them otherwise shall be harassed. There is no definite personal beings to whom they offers their services, but is associated merely with such supernatural forces as may influence their destiny or their daily life. Though they do not classify and departmentalise their notions of the supernatural, they recognise some sort of distinction between souls of the dead and deities of a more or less definite nature, ranging from household deities to vague spirits of the jungle, paddy field and stream. All these deities are clothed to their mind with so much entity as to be capable of propitiation or, if occasion warrants it, of challenge and defiance. Although the Kameos are invisible and intangible, they, or their malicious influences may be arrested through prayers and propitiation. Diseases may also be averted by offering a substitute in the form of live chickens or other animals. During influenza epidemic many chickens are turned loose in the jungle so that they may carry away the element of sickness or misfortune.

When it comes to treating the sick, the Nagas in general opt for four methods: (i) the propitiation by ceremonies of unknown spirits which are responsible for disease, (ii) the exorcism of disease by the magical arts of the professional healer, khunong, (iii) the cure or avoidance of ailments by the consumption of certain foods or use of certain specifics which work on principles which can only be termed magical, and (iv) the use of surgical methods or specifics which have empirically been found useful. One thing to be noted while going for rites and sacrifices is that, only domesticated animals are killed. In cases where a sacrifice is made on behalf of a sick person, the animal sacrificed is not given to him to eat.

6.1.4. The Religion of the Maring Nagas
Besides believing in the existence of many spirits with supernatural power in the jungle and to whom they propitiate occasionally, Kholhaman (the village deity) and Chimthray (the house-hold spirit) are the two main deities the Marings worship. Chimthray is the spirit of the deceased person of the family and is believed to dwell at the foot of a pillar which is located at the centre of the house. The spirit is brought into the house from the burial ground. They pour rice-beer and invoke the spirit and request it to come and stay in the house. They do not have definite rule as to when the deity is to be worshipped; they do that as and when they are faced with emotional crises and when they suffer from natural or man-made calamities.

6.2. MORTUARY PRACTICES OF THE NAGAS

All the Southern Naga communities bury their dead. The Tangkhuls possess family vaults. For the Zeliangrongs, the village and its immediate precincts form their graveyard. The Marings keep the village burial ground at the proximity of the front gate of the village called Palthung.

All the dead, however, are not buried inside the village or in the usual burial ground that varies from village to village. In the first place, children below five years of age are often not buried in the ordinary grave but close to the house.

In the second place, those who die outside the village must as a general rule be buried outside the village, though there is either a ceremonial burial in the usual place or the burial of some part of the remains or belongings of the deceased. For example, in any case where a Tangkhul dies away from home and where there is a difficulty in getting the dead body back, the person is buried near the place of death, but the skull is
brought to the village. While burying the skull they cover it with a black cloth, and in place of the trunk, which was left behind at the place of death, a piece of wood, generally the wooden head-rest used by the deceased, is attached to the skull, and covered also with a piece of cloth, to represent the whole body.

In the third place, those who died due to battle or snake-bite or by drowning in the river or by a fall from a tree or killed by a wild animal in the jungle or by thunderbolt, and women who die in child-birth, are buried away from the common graveyard of the village, which the Tangkhul call chikhul.

Among the Koirengs and the Zeliangrongs a woman who dies in childbirth is buried inside the house. Of the usual three room house, the middle one which serves as bedroom-cum-kitchen is the place where the corpse is buried. The place under the bed, where she usually slept, is chosen for the purpose. The Koirengs in such cases bury all the movable articles and utensils in the house, while the Zeliangrongs abandon the house with its contents.

The Anals make a distinction between death in childbirth and deaths by accident or in war. In the former case the body is buried in the cemetery, the grave being dug by those of her family, and food and drink and domestic utensils are deposited therein. The husband has to sacrifice a pig and feast the village before the burial, and the village observes holiday for that day. The first stones and earth are placed in the grave by aged men, and the filling then is completed by young men. The priest having muttered some chants, the young men and women sing and dance for the deliverance of the soul.
In cases of ordinary death the grave is dug by men not of the household, but in case of unnatural death only old grey-headed men may perform the task, and the grave is dug in the jungle and no dance or song marks the funeral, and the village does not observe holiday.

The Lamkangs follow the same customs as the Anals, but the bodies of women who die in childbirth are not buried in the village graveyard but in a secluded place.

On the death of a Chiru, gongs are beaten, and a fowl, pig, and goat are killed at once. There is the usual funeral feast, and food, and personal belongings, including his comb, are buried with him. The house is considered impure for three days, during which rice is placed in a small basket in the house and then thrown on to the grave everyday. On the third day the house is purified by the priest by sacrificing a cock. In nearly every Naga community of Chandel district the house has to be purified by the priest by sprinkling it with either consecrated water or rice-beer, and in many cases the funeral party are also similarly purified.

The Chothes make their cemetery some distance away from the village. The dead are buried on the day of death. A mound is raised over each grave and is fenced with bamboo. A small post carved faintly to resemble the human form is placed over the grave of a man, while a hoe, an axe, and a winnowing fan denote the grave of a woman. A flat basket containing some flowers and a small jar of water rest on each grave. Behind each grave a rough representation of a house, raised some 1.2 m from the ground is constructed, which is also ornamented with flowers, and also with some of the deceased's clothes, while inside are placed a segment of bamboo full of rice-beer and a small cup filled with water and a handful of raw rice. These are replaced every third or fourth
day till the Thi-duh ceremony comes round in May, when there is a feast, and portions of meat and some rice-beer are placed on each new grave.

The Tarao Nagas bury their dead in a cemetery situated to the west of the village, while the corpses of those who have died due to unnatural causes are buried elsewhere without any ceremony. Women dying during childbirth are buried far from the village by old men, who have no further hope of becoming fathers, while persons killed by wild animals, or by some accident, such as a fall from a tree, are buried at those spots where they died. Persons who are drowned are buried on the bank of the river where the body is found. Generally the funeral takes place on the day of death except in the case of old men, whose corpses are kept for a day while their friends eat, drink, and dance before them. Whatever animals can be spared are killed in honour of the deceased, and viscera of the sacrificed animals are offered to deities and are buried with the dead body together with some rice. Every day till the Papek feast (a farewell feast given to the dead), held in honour of those who have died within the year, rice and rice-beer are placed on the grave. A platform of bamboo is constructed near the grave, and on it are placed offering of meat as much as the concerned family can afford. Large quantity of rice-beer is consumed and the people dance vigorously throughout this feast.

Among the Tangkhuls, the dead are buried outside their houses. If there has been no burial during the past year or for some years, the family vault is opened. But before doing so, a sort of ceremony has to be conducted with the bones of the departed. On opening this family grave, the bones are collected, cleaned with rice-beer, and then wrapped in a new traditional shawl called luirim, and put on one side of the grave. When a great number of bones are collected and also when there is no sufficient room for
a fresh corpse, they are taken out of the tomb. When the fresh corpse has been interned and covered to the depth of about 1 m, the bones are thrown in to help fill up the grave.

The size of the grave of the Tangkhul, like those of the Zeliangrongs, is about 1.4 m X 2.4 m and usually 2.4 m deep. It resembles the letter “L”, inasmuch as a horizontal hole of about 1.4 X 1.4 sq m is excavated at right angles to the vertical trench into which the coffin is placed along with the dresses, spear and dao (machete) used by the deceased, and a live dog and a live cock. A long bamboo pipe is inserted into the burial so that the crowing of the cock and barking of the dog can be heard till they die. According to the Tangkhul tradition the cock is buried along with his dead master to tell him the time and the dog to distract the attention of the huge tiger which guards the gate of the underworld, Kazeiram (the Land of the Dead), so that his master can cross the gate without the knowledge of the tiger and enter the underworld without any harm.

6.2.1. Digging the Grave

In normal cases of death, the grave is dug by the friends and relatives of the deceased. In cases of abnormal death among the Tangkhuls only the immediate relatives dig the grave. The corpse of a Tangkhul killed by a tiger is not buried in the village cemetery. The soul of the tiger's victim is not included even in the sending off farewell feast given to the souls of those persons who died in the current year. This is so because they believe that since the tiger who killed him will be going ahead of his soul, it may imperil the safety of other souls on their way to Kazeiram.

A Tangkhul woman who died during child-birth is buried only by old men and women who have entered the stage of menopause. The
popular belief is that young men and women who attend the burial service of such unfortunate woman will be inflicted with the same misfortune that killed the woman. Among the Koirengs when a woman dies in child-birth, the digging of grave is begun by old people and is finished by the young men. The Zelangrongks assign this duty to the immediate male relations of the woman. Among the Chirus this duty is carried out by childless old men, and for other extraordinary death the elders dig the grave. Among the Marings it is a general task where every household participates.

Except in the cases of children or where death occurs in the wee hours, burial takes place on the same day.

6.2.2. Associated Grave-Goods

All the southern Nagas place various articles in the graves for the use and comfort of the deceased in the next world. Cloths, spears, daos, ornaments, shields, drinking cups, and supplies of food and drink are buried with the deceased.

The Tangkhuls bury a number of torn shawls with a man for his own use, and a new complete shawl as a present for Kokto, the Monarch of the underworld. He is much feared, inasmuch as anyone who displeases him will be denied entrance to Kazeiram, the abode of the dead. It is believed that Kokto does not like shawls which are torn, and hence the practice of tearing off the sides of the shawls that are not for him. Tobacco and a pipe are kept at the hands of men so that they can go and smoke in the underworld. In the grave of a woman are placed food and drink, her tail of false hair, her cooking utensils, her hoe and the browband which she used to carry loads. It is customary to place food and drink, as gifts from his relatives, on the grave of a man whose parents have died before him. If a man is killed by a tiger, they put a bugle in his grave to scare away the tigers which may be
encountered on the way to Kazeiram. Sometimes they kill a dog to give him a company on his journey to Kazeiram.

The Maos do not put anything in the grave. The moveable belongings of the deceased are usually placed on the graves. The Zelianrongs too, except wrapping the corpse with cloths, put nothing in the grave. The Marams bury the body with a white cloth on it and place a thorn and spear in the grave.

Among the Maos, when death occurs in a village, the whole villagers do not go to their fields that day. The body is washed and dressed in fine clothes. The grave is dug by the son of the deceased or a near relative. The grave is oriented east and west direction; males are placed head facing east, females facing west. Cows and pigs are killed depending upon the wealth of the family. The grave is a simple pit, no coffin is employed, the body is carried out on a plank. With a man are buried two spears, a dao, a shield, an empty rice-beer gourd, his smoking pipe, and a bow; with a woman, her iron staff, an empty rice-beer gourd, weaving apparatus, and her rain-shield (known as nampho in Tangkhul). After the burial is over, a small chicken is strangled and then hung by the neck from a small stake on the grave so that its feet just touch the ground, and some chaff is placed before it and set on fire. The family members of the deceased place a little of the food at all meals in each of the corners at the back of the living room for five days and then once a month until the last month of the year.

If a person from the Mao community is killed by a tiger or dies from drowning, the corpse (which is wrapped with a mat) is given a simple burial. No animals are killed in honour of him/her, nor are offerings of food placed on the grave. In such cases, all the sixteen Mao villages observe genna (taboo). Children dying within five days of birth are buried in an old pot wrapped in old
clothes under the floor of the living room of the house without any ceremonies.

6.2.3. Funeral Rites Practised By The Tangkhuls

The Tangkhuls perform many rituals for the dead, inasmuch as they believe that life passes on to death when the breath leaves the body and that death may be a moment when one is translated into another form of life. Like the ancient Greeks in whose belief Thanatos (death) is the twin brother of Hypnos (sleep), and from which conceptional relationship come the view that death is merely a sleeping state in the passage from this life to an afterlife (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica. Vol. 5. 1980: 526-539), the Nagas in general and the Tangkhuls in particular believe that death is simply a transitional period from this upperworld to an underworld. A Tangkhul, who can afford, always kills a water buffalo (Bubalus bubalis) at his father's funeral, because of the belief that Kokto, who keeps the gates of Kazeiram, appears to entertain reluctance in accepting the dead, and prefers to keep the gate shut. Hence the sacrifice of a buffalo which butts the gate open and lets the souls of the deceased and of the other expectant crowd in.

The Tangkhuls do not show much enthusiasm in killing a pig at a funeral because it is considered as a tiresome animal to manage and likely to wander off with its master to some very undesirable spot on their journey to Kazeiram. A couple of pigs are killed before the grave is dug, and are left whole until the grave is finished. It is then cut up, the relatives of the dead take one half of the intestines, and the grave-diggers the other half. The head is given to the nearest male relative, the right hindleg is taken by the eldest daughter, the left hindleg to the next daughter. In the absence of daughter, the nieces receive them. The forelegs are given to other distant female relatives. The
heart, liver, kidneys, spleen and lungs are then handed over to the village priest, sharra, who divides them into eleven portions (six for males and five for females), and takes them to the next-door neighbour's house for cooking. He then brings them to the deceased's house and places them on top of the rice and vegetables which the relatives have brought in during the morning, and placed near the head of the corpse. He then offers this food to a deity, kameo, and calls upon the dead to eat this offering. Then he takes the offering on a plate and throws the food away in the front yard of the house, where the spirit of the dead and the deity are supposed to have taken the meat before it reaches the ground. Normally, the dogs of the neighbourhood, that assemble in big number during such occasions, eat it. Rice beer is also offered and, here again, a small quantity is thrown away for the kameo. After this ritual is conducted by the sharra, the rest of the meat and rice are distributed to all the assembled members and eaten before the burial.

The next act of the priest is to inspect the bier, and if the bier is found too large for the grave, he alone is entitled to cut off any portion. The bier is a simple plank of wood and it is kept ready outside the house. The body is then covered with a clean white cloth before taking it out of the house. In the meantime one of the relatives takes a pine torch from a house nearby, and descends into the grave, and twirling it round asks the ancestors of the dead to come and meet him on his way to the underworld. Then the priest, according to custom, slightly raises the head of the bier and hands it over to the relatives who carry it outside, and put it on the plank of wood, whatever cloths are to be taken to the underworld are kept on top of the deceased. Except the top shawl, meant for the monarch of the underworld, all other shawls are torn. Then the hands of the corpse are washed with water. The bier is then lifted by hands and taken to the side of the grave. All the relatives now gather round and
lament, and tramp around the grave two or three times. After a final burst of the mourners' refrain by one of the old braves of the village, those who wish to stay and mourn stay on, and the rest leave. Then, after tightly fastening the body to the plank, it is placed, with all the gifts, in the grave. The wife is allowed to enter and remain till the moment when it is time to fill the grave with soil.

Then around and over the body, to prevent any earth touching it, is built a cist. After filling up the grave with earth, the priest is again called to place a pole above the mound, while others place six prongs of wood around a small hole made in the mound, wherein is placed a pine torch. On lighting this they all leave the grave and enter the house.

Nobody is allowed to stay in the house once the body is removed; the fire is completely extinguished and the hearth is levelled. On their entering the house after the burial, a fresh fire is made. Before doing so, the hearth is checked thoroughly in order to detect whether any footprints of insects or birds are present. The presence of footprints is taken to indicate that more deaths will take place in the house, and the absence of the same is considered good as no more death will occur.

As the final wind-up for the night, a portion of meat that was given to the relatives is cooked and eaten along with the leftover from the morning's feast. At the same time, small portions in five and six pieces, with a small quantity of beer, are offered to kameo near the bed of the deceased by the nearest relative.

The pine torch on the grave is again lighted on the next morning and evening of the burial. This process is continued for three days. The spirit of the deceased, after having had its meeting
with the monarch of the underworld and handing over the shawl to the monarch and other gifts to the ancestors, is supposed to return to the house on the following day after the burial. For this reason the family keeps open all doors from morning to night, and from that day onwards until the final disposal of the soul from the village at the feast of Thisham. This feast is held every year in the month of December to bade final goodbye to all those persons who have died in the preceding year. The family prepares with their own meals a similar one for the soul everyday until the Thisham feast arrives. It is served on the plate used by the deceased, and placed on his or her own stool, pamkhong. The whole process is known as Thikhong Khalung (Thi = death; khong = plate; Khalung = keeping). This food, called thilazat (food for the dead), is collected when they think the soul of their dead relative has finished eating and the same is given away to children for consumption; it is a taboo for the elders to eat the thilazat.

The funeral ceremonies are however not really completed till the spirits of the deceased have been given a final farewell ceremony by a second rite in which the community as a whole takes part. With the exception of a few Naga communities, like the Mao, this practice is quite prevalent among all the Naga groups. Among the Tangkhuls it is known as Thisham, meaning "farewell to the dead". This rite, which is held after the harvest, consists of three parts, namely, Wonyaithing kashun ceremony, that lasts for two days; Long mahon, a one day dancing festivity, performed by the deceased's dormitory mates in his honour; and the final Thisham ceremony that lasts for twelve days.

6.2.3.1. The Wonyaithing Kashun Ceremony

This ceremony is conducted for two days after the harvest in November is completed and after all instruments in connection
with the harvesting activity have been put away in the attic called changbong. On the first day, woods and creepers are brought from the jungle, and in the evening the rich kill buffaloes (*Bubalus bubalis*), the rest, cows and pigs, and those who lost their children boil eggs. After the cooking is over, the priest is called in, who offers a small portion of the food to the deity, kameo.

On the next morning, the priests from each ward of the village gather together in a compound and receive from the relatives of the dead rice beer and portions of the meat from the animals killed in the previous night. The plates and cups of all those persons who died during the past months of the year in each cluster of the village are brought and put in a row before the priests. They then put a little meat and rice beer on each of these wooden utensils (dishes-on-stand), carry out the necessary rituals, and return them to the persons who brought them to be taken back to their respective houses.

This being done, all friends and relatives who come forward to help in erecting the wonyaithing (a wooden platform) are given a liberal supply of meat and rice beer. They then go off, and bring in the wood and creepers to construct a structure which is shaped like a shield with a platform in front. It is a lightly made structure, built outside the door of each deceased's house. On the platform are kept beans, yams, and corns as an offering to the deceased. A large clump of orchid (*Cymbidium giganteum*) is placed at the side of the structure.

The platforms that are constructed with the killing of buffaloes are called *Mayaiting kashun*, and the ones that are constructed with the killing of cows and pigs are called *Wonyaiting kashun*. 
6.2.3.2. Long Mahon Ceremony

This dancing event takes place nineteen days after the Wonyaithing kashun ceremony, and it lasts for a day. On this day, the members of the Longshim (youth dormitory exclusively meant for males), to which the deceased belonged, come to their dead friend's house and perform a dance, specifically meant for the occasion. The Tangkhuls call this dance Kathi Long Mahon which means "a dormitory dance for the dead." However, it is not performed for those who failed to participate in Longra kashak, the annual seven-day festival held in the early part of December every year, organised by each dormitory separately. This dance is also performed for those persons who, though affiliated to another dormitory, took part in their Longra kashak at one time or the other when they were alive. It is believed that the deceased take these "dance-parcels" with them to the underworld which, in consequence, demonstrate their popularity in the above world.

6.2.3.3. Thisham Ceremony

It is a twelve-day event, and one of the two biggest festivals (the other being "Luira Phanit") of the Tangkhuls. All the rituals carried out in this ceremony are done so with the utmost care; failing to do so invites the wrath of Kokto, the cruel monarch of the underworld, under whom all the dead people go and live. Given below are the particulars of each day's work:

First Day: People go to jungle in search of the resinous pine wood (Pinus khasiansis). They usually bring home a basketful of pine wood to be used throughout the ceremony, and especially for burning on the day of Kazeikata, sending off of the souls to Kazeiram. The day is known as "Kathi Meira Kapha Zimiksho" (Kathi
Second Day: The creepers for binding up the animals before killing are procured from the jungle, and also the poles for hanging up cloths which will be received on the sixth day. This day is called "Seipeng Kashat Zimiksho" (Seipeng = creeper; Kashat = cutting).

Third Day: The creepers brought on the previous day are prepared by twisting and intertwining so as to withstand any strain by the animals during the process of killing. The works of the second and third day are performed by the males, and the women in the meantime gather and stack wood in their respective houses. The day is called "Seipeng Kashei Zimiksho" (Kashei = preparation).

Fourth Day: This is the day for slaughtering buffaloes and cows, and is called "Thishamsei Taikathat Zimiksho" (Thi = death; sham = pushing down; sei = cattle; Taikathat = slaughtering). After the initial customary piercing of the animals by the priest, other male members do the killing. Those who can afford neither buffaloes nor cows, kill either dogs and/or pigs. When the process of cutting-up these carcasses are over throughout the village, and the usual division and distribution are accomplished, the priest is called in to offer the meat to a deity, kameo.

Fifth Day: The female members of the deceased families find their first duty on this day by collecting leaves of greater cardamom (Amomum subulatum) from the jungles for wrapping unleavened rice cakes to be made on the next day.

The menfolk erect long bamboo poles, with pieces of bamboo about 1.2 m in length attached horizontally to each of them, outside
each house of the dead. They then hang a white shawl to each of these poles; the horizontal protruding hands of these poles will be filled up with multicoloured cloths on the next day. The day is called "Thiphān Kakhālap Zimiksho" (Thi = death; phan = pattern; Kakhālap = binding).

Sixth Day: Small pieces of bread called khamul are prepared from rice, and pigs and dogs are killed and cooked and offered to a deity, kameo, and then, along with the pieces of bread wrapped in the leaves of greater cardamom, distributed amongst the mourners in each section of the village. This day is, therefore, known as "Khamui Kasa Zimiksho", meaning ‘a day of making bread’.

Also on this day shawls of all kinds, presented to the deceased by friends and relatives, are attached to the poles that were erected on the previous day. The more cloths displayed the greater one’s prestige is thought of.

Seventh Day: This day is preoccupied in preparing the rice-beer which has been fermenting for some days in large casks and, hence, the day is called Zam Kasang Zimiksho, meaning ‘a day of preparing rice-beer.’

Eighth Day: This is the day when the real excitement commences. Friends and relations from villages around come on this day to pay their homage to the deceased. Before their arrival, the females prepare sandwiches of bread, hanshi (sesame seed concoction), and slices of pork, which after being offered to a deity by the priests, are placed on the wonyaithing/mayaithing (wooden platforms to receive presentations to the deceased). Along with them are also placed four pots of rice-beer (both weak and strong) on each of these platforms.
After the arrival of friends and relatives from other villages, each family of the dead calls for its representative called Thila Kaphung (impersonation of the dead person). A person of the same age and sex of the deceased is required for this purpose. There are certain families who carry out this type of work, and they are hired for the said purpose by giving money, cloths, etc. It is considered as a low profession and, therefore, Thila Kaphung families are looked down upon by others.

The person who is going to impersonate the dead, in the meantime, is decked with bright head-gear, bead necklaces, armlets, and leglets. On his/her arrival at the house he/she performs a dance outside, and then is introduced to the seat of the dead on entering the house. From this point until the end of the feast he/she is looked upon by the family and treated accordingly. He/she is presented with all the choicest food, and as the head of the house for the time being dispenses hospitality. High jinks are performed in each house on this evening. And as they consider it their last chance to shower love and see the dead, the impersonated person is invited by the deceased's relatives for meals and present gifts in the form of cloths or money.

Before the day is over, the cloths hung upon poles in each compound of the dead, after having been seen and admired by the villagers, are taken down and brought into the house to be given to the impersonated persons. The day is called "Thiphan Kasut eina Kha Kashok Zimiksho" (Thiphan = 'poles with patterns for the dead'; Kasut = pulling out; eina = and; Kha = village; Kashok = arrival).

Ninth Day: On this day the effigies of the dead are taken out in the village ground, and dances performed in honour of those rich and powerful dead persons in whose names buffaloes have been
killed and distributed to each household of the village and a buffalo to each dancing groups.

The in-laws of the deceased perform this dance called Thisham Mahon (Thisham = 'farewell to the dead'; Mahon = dance). As one has to offer a number of buffaloes (the offerers of cows and pigs are not entitled for this Thisham Mahon) and spend money for arranging costumes for the dancers, ordinary persons cannot afford this dance.

No woman can participate in this dance. The dancers take up position according to their status in the clan; the head of the clan takes the leadership of the dancing called "honkok". He is followed by the next six others according to their rank in the clan set-up called "honreo", "mipuk", "honyo", honkom, and "meihai" respectively. These dancing officers are followed by about fifteen to twenty-five ordinary clansmen. All these dancers follow the action of the leader or "honkok"; they stand, sit, hop, and lift their legs according to the movement of the "honkok".

Before the well-decorated dancing group leaves the courtyard of the deceased, two young warriors from the party are dispatched to the "Leingapha", a plaza or a public ground located at the centre of the village. These two young braves take up a position at the sides of the ground facing each other and perform a dance which is a prelude to the coming event. After sometime, the main body of the dancing group, along with the villagers, enter the ground ho-hoing led by the "honreos", the second most important leaders of the clan do the dancing.

The well-decorated effigy of the dead is than placed on a mat in association with meat and gourd-containers filled with rice-beer. The dancers throw down two shawls each which are taken away by
spectators in a free-for-all contest. Some rich dancers even throw down money which are similarly taken away by the spectators. It should be noted here that such elaborate dancing is carried out for those who belonged to well-off families.

The children, especially the eldest sons, of the deceased have to kill buffaloes, cows, or pigs, and carry out the expensive operations either on their own accords or in accordance with the vows they have given to their fathers when the latter requested them. In fact, most of the old persons start saving their wealth in anticipation of their death, so that the 'The Dance for the Dead' is not denied to them owing to non-availability of buffaloes, cows, etc.

For poor persons, whose families cannot afford giving the expensive feast, such dance is performed on the day they die. The in-laws of the dead sing and dance around the bed on which the corpse lies, and no other dancing is carried out afterwards for him.

The Thilakaphunga moves along with the dancing party. Along with the tune of the ho-hoing and movements of the dance, the parents of the deceased follow the Thilakaphunga all the time sobbing and, as a sign of love, provide rice-beer to him/her every now and then. After dancing the whole day the function comes to an end with a final loud refrain and, at this time, the Thilakaphunga throws down a shawl or two and a few coins for the common people. The day is known as "Kayang Kakhai Simiksho" (Kayang = open-ground; Kakhai = 'coming out').

This is also a day of commercial pursuits: cloths, pots, salt cakes, etc., are brought by outsiders and sold at the "Leingapha".
Tenth Day: This is the most important day of the feast. Fetching of plantain leaves to cover the pine torch handles and their heads and shoulders so that the flying sparks of the pine torch would not harm the people who carry them, is the first work of the day. A few such large torches are made and kept aside for use after sunset.

The bereaved families then place the Ngalamas (images symbolising the women whose sexual favour the deceased enjoyed) on the effigies of the dead. Empty dishes and big bowls containing gummy rice, meat and rice-beer are then brought to the village main ground or at one of the courtyards of the dead, and placed in a row on a big mat.

Next a great gathering of all friends and relatives with their respective Thilakaphungas takes place. Everybody is dressed up for the occasion, especially the representatives. The representatives are then lined up with the two strongest among them taking the front and back positions, placing the women, children, and old infirm in between them. This is done so because they believe that the dead will go to "Kazeiram" (the underworld of the dead) in this same arrangement, and that, in case of any danger on their journey, the weaker ones will be protected from head-hunters, tigers, and other dangers that may be awaiting on the way.

After that empty dishes and gourd containers are filled up from those vessels that contain gummy rice, meat and rice-beer meant for the dead. After sometime when they assume the dead must have consumed their "last community meal", one of the village priests gives a great shout in this manner: "Eh-he-he-he-he...O..zatulo-oh, hieina tatang tarangsei. Hooh..huih ! 0..0..O..hooh...aoh ! Hooh..huih !", meaning 'let us depart from here, you go'. At this, every representative
hurriedly takes hold of the plates and gourd containers because it is supposed that the last one to take hold of the utensils encounters head-hunters and other dangers on the way to Kazeiram. On this day it is a taboo to remain hungry and unbathed for they think such starving people are liable to go and join the feasting of the dead and, thereby, die too, and unclean persons may be mistaken for meirong (root of an alter tree) and, unintentionally, bulldozed away to Kazeiram.

After the ho-hoing is over, the impersonated persons take the place of receiving guests, friends and relations who wish to say farewell, as they are now on the point of leaving. The head of the deceased’s house is the first to receive a shawl as a parting gift from the Thilakaphunga. Then comes the widows of the village to receive a gift of meat and rice-beer. They are followed by female relations who entertained the Thilakaphunga the day before, and receive the same gifts as the widows.

It is sunset now, and a procession consisting of males and females, well-dressed for the occasion, is formed. While the ‘representative’ is spoon-fed with thishamra (the farewell drinks of rice-beer given to the dead), others dance for the last time outside the house of the deceased.

After the dance is performed, the crowd gets ready for the march. At the head of the procession go the torch-bearers, with the leaves gathered early in the morning wound round their heads and shoulders to keep off sparks from the flaming torches. Behind them march a crowd of elders dressed in their war garb, and lastly the Thilakaphungas follow with relations crowding around them and, with much lamenting and grief, the procession proceeds slowly on its way towards Zeiphar, a spot at the northern end of the Hunphun village (present Ukhrul Town, the headquarters of Ukhrul District).
On reaching the place, all these torches are thrown down the hill slopes. The spirits of the dead are supposed to enter into these lighted torches as soon as they are thrown down at Zephar. By the time these torches have reached this place, the Thilakaphungas have already reached the limit of the village boundary, and on the supposition that the spirits of the dead have left to proceed on their way to Kazeiram, the role of 'representatives' is over and thus are at once denuded of all their fineries and the head-gears are broken on the spot. All the villagers return to their homes, running as fast as possible lest they be caught by the spirits of the dead, the torch-bearers having already returned by another route.

Before entering their houses, the Wonyaiting/Mayaithing, wooden structures erected outside the houses of the deceased, are dismantled and the poles over the grave are pulled out and thrown away. At the front door, just inside the house, a pine torch is lighted and placed on a stone. Then a fowl is killed in each household and the mother of the family offers it to the deity and says: "Kazeiramli vasharkho. Okathuili pamrakho. Ithumwui li kashakkazah, khor tara kala sirah yakha leidaleiya" ('It is a taboo to go to Kazeiram. We will continue living on the aboveworld; we have food and drinks like water and stars').

In case of someone falling on the way while going and coming from Zephar, his mother takes a fowl to that very spot, kill and offer it to kameo, saying: "Let us go home. It is a taboo to go to Kazeiram". This is done for the purpose of not allowing the spirits of the living to go off with the spirits of the dead just got rid of. They then go to bed and sleep for some hours.

At midnight, all the villagers get up and assemble at some prominent spots that give clear view of the facing hill slopes
located on the north-east direction of the Hunphun village, and here they see the torches marching in line, occasionally some torches going astray to bring back their buffaloes (that which were killed for rich persons to be carried to "Kazeiram"), towards the north-east where they believe exists "Kazeikhul" (Kazei = dead; khul = hole), a hole for the dead that leads to Kazeiram. Here the dead is believed to perform their last dance, break their head-gears, and enter the hole and vanish forever from the world of living. This day is known as "Zeirun Kharung eina Kazei Kata Zimiksho", which means 'a day of giving the last feast for the dead and the final farewell'.

Brown (1873) made an observation thus: "In the month of December every year, each village holds a solemn festival in honour of those of their number who have died during the preceding year. The village priests conduct the ceremonies which culminate on a night when the moon is young; on this occasion, it is said, the spirits of the departed appear at a distance from the village in the faint moonlight, venting their way slowly over the hills and driving before them the victims they have slain or the cattle killed during their funeral ceremonies."

Eleventh Day: The day is called "Kazei Kuireo Zimiksho", meaning "a day when the dead shave off all their hair." It is supposed that the incarnated spirits in Kazeiram shave off their hair and have a wash and brush up to remove all connection with mother earth. The living are, therefore, forbidden to take bath or touch water on this day.

Twelfth Day: This is the concluding day of the Thisham Phanit, and is called "Kharing Phanit Zimiksho", which means 'a day of feasting for the living'. On this day the relatives of the dead assemble and overcome the pang of separation by eating the left over meat, food and rice-beer of the Thisham Phanit.
The living start engaging themselves in the fields, construction of houses, and hosting 'Feasts of Merit' right from the next day of the Thisham Phanit. These things go on for a month, and then finally the last duty towards the dead is performed, namely, Chikhul Khamathai, cleaning the surface of the graves.

6.2.4. The Afterlife

Death, often defined simplistically as the absence of life, has always been viewed with mystery, superstition, and fascination by man (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica. Vol. 5. 1980:526-539). Perhaps when man first discovered that certain slumbers were irreversible, he questioned the difference between that profound sleep and the daily slumbers he experienced. Manifest in ritual, symbol, and philosophical perspective are countless efforts throughout history to rationalise this final reality, and the philosophical "why" still defies explanation (ibid.).

Primitive man lived in a world beset by death to the degree that fertility and other life symbols often were the focal point of his worship. He did not deny death's reality but interpreted death as a transition from one phase of life to another. Burial, then, became a rite of passage similar to puberty, from one mode of participation in life to another (ibid.). To this conclusion, one point is clearly evident from the fact that the disposal of the dead from the earliest times was of a ritual kind. The Palaeolithic people not only buried their dead but they provided them with food and other equipment, thereby implying a belief that the dead still needed such things in the grave. In such provision for the dead, Palaeolithic man had been anticipated, inevitably in a cruder manner, by his predecessor, the Neanderthal or Mousterian man, so that this very significant
practice can be traced back to an even greater antiquity, possibly to about 50,000 B.C. (ibid.: 533).

The ritual burial of the dead, which is thus attested from the very dawn of human culture and which has been practised in most parts of the world, stems from an instinctive inability or refusal on the part of man to accept death as the definitive end of human life (ibid.).

The belief that human beings survive death in some form has profoundly influenced the thoughts, emotions and actions of mankind. The belief occurs in all religions, past and present, and decisively conditions their evaluations of man and his place in the universe. Mortuary rituals and funerary customs reflect these evaluations; they represent also the practical measures taken to assist the dead to achieve their destiny and sometimes to save the living from the dreaded molestation of those whom death had transformed into a different state of being.

In one form of necromancy, which the Tangkhuls call "kazei kazang" (kazei = 'the dead'; kazang = possession), a khanong (shaman) is summoned to deliver the soul of a living person is imprisoned in Kazeiram by certain dead person. In such event, the person whose soul is imprisoned in "the land of the dead" losses appetite and, consequently, he becomes very pale and thin. The shaman then kills a chicken and propitiates the kameo (deity) along with rice-beer.

6.2.4.1. Relevant Concepts and Doctrines about Death

The evidence of Palaeolithic burials shows that already, in the remote past, various ideas were held about death and the state of the dead. The provision of food, ornaments, and tools in the
graves implies a general belief that the dead continued to exist, with the same needs as in this life (ibid.).

Death was sometimes regarded as transforming those who experienced it into a state of being balefully different from that of those living in this world is evident in later mortuary rites and customs. Indeed, the proper performance of funerary rites was deemed essential by many peoples, to enable the dead to depart to the place and condition to which they properly belonged. Failure to expedite their departure could have dangerous consequences. Many ancient Mesopotamian divinatory texts reveal a belief that disease and other misfortunes could be caused by dead persons deprived of proper burial. The idea that the dead had to cross some barrier that divided the land of the living from that of the dead also occurs in many religions: the Greeks and the Romans, for example, believed that the dead were ferried across an infernal river (ibid.).

**6.2.4.2. Belief in Afterlife**

Inhumation naturally prompted the idea that the dead lived beneath the ground. Often, however, the grave has been thought of as an entrance to a vast, subterranean abode of the dead. In some religions this underworld has been conceived as an immense pit or cavern, dark and grim (ibid.: 534). Sometimes it is ruled by an awful monarch, such as the Tangkhul underworld god Kokto, or the Greek god Hades. According to the view of man's nature and destiny held in a particular religion, this underworld may be a gloomy, joyless place where the shades of all the dead merely survive, or it may be pictured as a place of awful torments where the damned suffer for their misdeeds. In those religions in which the underworld has been conceived as a place of post-mortem retribution, the idea of separate abode of the blessed dead became necessary (ibid.).
The Nagas believe that after death, the souls continue to live in another world known as Kazeiram in Tangkhul dialect. This is the realm of the Kokto, the undisputed monarch of the underworld. He is supposed to be very cruel and lives in a grand mansion, with sentries guarding all sides and nobody from the upper world dare enter. That is why a special present is taken by the deceased for this underworld monarch in order to get his mercy, and the rites at the Thisham Phanit (farewell festival for the dead) are performed meticulously so as not to displease this dreadful king of the Land of Dead. On the appearance of spirits from above before the entrance to his kingdom, the first duty of the underworld monarch is to see what kinds of thing the spirits have. He judges them all and, after appropriating for himself all the best shawls brought by the spirits from above, he allows them to pass through the gate. Their life here is same as the one they have left behind.

Their ideas of a future state are that, after death they go to the east, where there is another world ruled by a ruthless monarch called Kokto. It is believed that if a man has been brave and courageous in this life, he is welcomed in the after world by those who have gone before, but the coward is met with groans and jeers. In this future state they live and die, men six times, and women five times; after this they are turned into clouds and remain in that condition forever.

It is, therefore, not surprising to know that the Tangkhuls always associate number six with males and five with females and, more often than not, men and women finish their works by counting their respective numbers. For example, to close up the day's work of digging the field, the males dig six times more and the
females five times after they have decided to call the day off, which are usually the strongest strokes. Besides, the annual weeding of graveyard is also carried out continuously for six years for males and only five years for females. On such occasions, Tangkhul feast on pork and/or chicken washed down with liberal quantities of rice-beer.

Again in a ceremony of praying to a deity for rain, the Tangkhul villagers of Khangkhui village prepare eleven pieces of bread for each family, six for the husband and five for the wife.

The Tangkhuls construct memorial cairns in commemoration of their great men. These cenotaphs called wonrahs consist of great platforms about 7 m in length and 1 m in height. They are in general about 2 m broad, and are paved all over with slabs that which are brought from far-off places, and in time become most convenient resting places. Recently constructed ones bear at the further end five carved wooden posts, three in front and two behind, upon which are placed the skulls and horns of those animals offered at the feasts given in honour of the dead and those eaten during the time of construction. The two shorter pillars are each forked at the top.

The wonrahs, found near the Tangkhul villages, are built at prominent spots so that, according to their belief, the spirits of the dead would come, take rest and have a look at their paddy fields and the surrounding landscapes. Each evening, while returning to their homes from the fields, the relatives of the deceased pour the rudiments of their rice-beer at these places. This is done mainly to propitiate the spirits of the dead whom they fear lest they get angry with the living for negligence and indifference and cause harms. Ucko (1969) sums up this concept well when he says: "It is clear that many peoples do indeed place offerings in the tomb, and in some cases these are certainly to
provide for the needs of the dead." When the memories are still fresh, Tangkhul women who are relatives of the deceased kill pigs and/or calves and eat them with food and rice-beer when cleaning these platforms; later on, when the memories fade, only simple food such as rice-beer and fowls, etc. are used. These cairns are cleaned once a year for six consecutive years. They are not constructed for females.

The Anals and the Lamkangs believe that, after hovering around the grave for some time, the spirit is reincarnated in some new-born child, but that of an unnatural death prevents this, and the spirit passes away skywards and returns no more. Perhaps these are the only two Naga communities that believe in reincarnation.

The Zeliangrongos of Tamenglong district believe that the spirits of the dead go to Nongmaiijing hill, whereas the spirits of those who die by accident, which are called Tashikasabo, go nowhere.

6.2.5. Burial Practices Of The Neighbouring Naga Communities

Man is the only creature known to bury his dead (ibid.: 533). Different Naga groups practise different modes of burial practices. Among the northern Naga groups, the Konyaks bury their dead on platforms after being smoked, but the head is wrenched off later on and put in an earthen pot which is thatched with palm leaf and put under the machan (a small hut on a raised bamboo platform where the corpse is kept), the heads of the dead being ultimately collected in one place. The Aos too smoke the dead in the porch of his/her house and wrap the dried corpse with a mat and places it under the machan (platform made of bamboo) along with ornaments, utensils, weapons, and/or with wooden imitation of the deceased (Personal Communication. Yachen Ao of Changki Village, Mokokchung District, Nagaland State. 1997).
The Yimchungers bury their dead beneath the deceased's bed, throwing out the bones of his ancestors that are encountered in the process. Among the Lotha and Angami Nagas, accidental deaths necessitate the throwing away entirely of all the dead man's property, and his house must be vacated and left to fall to pieces, its occupants going to live in a rough shelter in the jungle near the village for thirty days.