CHAPTER 1
ETHNOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION
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1.0 **Introduction:**

Ever since the phrase ‘Look East’ has been coined North East linguistics is now being viewed as the next opportunity for the linguists. On analyzing the phonology and morphology of Phom, which forms the subject of this work, it is de rigueur, at the outset, to discuss linguistic ecology of India. This also emphasizes the fact that languages must be frequently investigated as immediate expression of the interaction between humans and their environment. It goes without saying that theoretical approaches always consider the social, man made environment. It is essential because Phom, situated in the extreme east, is the part and parcel of the India's linguistic Ecology. Such explanation will help us in identifying the ‘value’ of Phom in overall realm of Indian multilingualism. Moreover, ‘language ecology stands to be a determining force’ in dealing the language value (Singh, 2001: 89). Haugen (1953: 329) rightly says:

Ecology suggests a dynamic rather than a static science, something beyond the descriptive that one might call predicative and even therapeutic, what will or shall be, for example, that role of “small language”; and how can they or any other language may be made “better”, “richer” and more “fruitful” for mankind.

We must look for a theory of language ecology in India, which can integrate naturalist and critical traditions across many disciplines. It could rightly be pointed out that notion of ecology in the field of linguistics has come into fore
recently. The metaphor and notion of ecology can fit into all areas of linguistics. Diversity is a defining characteristic of all functioning of languages. In diversity, one can always find an enormous potential for development of human ideas.

In the words of Singh (2001:85):

Language values are constructed transformed and implemented in concrete and given linguistic ecology through certain processes. The values of language are compounded in their intrinsic and extrinsic constitutive utility framework. The intrinsic fact of language stands for the inherent property of language. As every individual is born with certain inherent qualities, languages are born with these inherent qualities as well. The symbolic value of one's mother tongue is an inherent quality. Extrinsic utilities of language are adoptive. Languages acquire extrinsic qualities through ecological conditions. Today, English, for example, has accumulated communicative, institution and economic values because of favorable ecological conditions. In order to understand extrinsic facts of 'language value', it is essential to understand those variables, which assign values to language.

India shows the world's greatest linguistic diversity. India is the seventh largest country of the world and it is one of the seven nations of South Asia. It is the second largest populated country in the world with the biggest democracy. India is also known for its multi ethnic, racial, linguistic and cultural diversity and it has one of the oldest civilizations in the world.

Geographically, Indian land is divided into four different regions: (a) the great mountain zone, (b) the Indo-Gangetic plain, (c) the desert region, and (d) the Southern Peninsula. Linguistically, it is also divided into four linguistic groups: Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman and Austro-Asiatic. It is hard to establish
one to one correspondence between the two, but such boundaries sometimes overlap.

India has a total population of 1,027 million according to the census of India, 2001. There is a growth of 1.93 percent of total population from 1991-2001 and the density of population per square mile is 324. There are twenty-eight states and nine union territories in the Indian Union. Many religious practices, faiths and boundaries are functional in India. The major religions are: Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism. It gives clear evidence that diversity is not confined at linguistic level but also at socio-cultural and political levels. There are about 1,652 languages and dialects that are spoken in India and twenty-two of them are the scheduled languages. According to the Ethnologue: Languages of the World (2005), the listed languages in India are 428 in numbers, of those 415 are living and 13 are extinct languages and among the four major language families in India; the numbers of Indo-Aryan speakers are 76 percent, Dravidians are 21.6 percent, and the numbers of Austro-Asiatic speakers are 1.2 percent and Tibeto-Burmans are 1 percent. India's social, economic and cultural diversity makes it an interesting point of reference for studying language value within the linguistic ecology.

1.1 Nagaland:

Nagaland is one of the independent states of the Indian Union. It is in the northeastern part of India. Nagaland came into existence on December 1, 1963. It
was the sixteenth state of the Indian Union. Nagaland is situated between 25°6 and 26°4 North latitude and between 93°20 and 95°15 East longitude. It is surrounded by Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur and by external border of Myanmar in the east. Nagaland has an area of 16,759 Square Kilometers. The State has altogether eleven (11) recognized districts: namely, Kohima, Mokokchung, Tuensang, Zunhebuto, Wokha, Phek, Mon, Dimapur, Peren, Longleng and Khiphere. The main tribes of Nagaland are- Angami, Ao, Chokri, Chang, Khiamniungan, Kheza, Konyak, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sangtam, Sema, Tikhir, Yimchunger and Zeliang. The ethnic people of Nagaland are called Nagas. The Nagas belong to the Indo-Mongoloid family.

The capital of Nagaland is Kohima. It is a hill station, which is situated at an altitude of 1,444.12 meters above sea level. It is a beautiful town with a touch of nostalgia. There are many places that have history of their own. The Kohima War Cemetery was constructed in the memory of the people who sacrificed their lives in Second World War. There is a state museum that has rare collections of artifacts of almost all the Naga tribes of the state to depict the various aspects of the lives of the people. The Catholic Cathedral at Aradurah Hills is an important place at Kohima. There is a Khonoma village which lies 20 Km west of Kohima. It is known for its strength of fighting in the past. The British infiltrated the Naga Hills in 1879 from Khonoma village. In order to protect an endangered pheasant (a wild bird) of the state Blythe's Tragopan, and other wild lives, the Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary (KNCST) was set up in the year
1998. This sanctuary covers an area of around 70 Square kilometers. Dzúoküo Valley, which is also called the valley of eternal charm, is situated at an altitude of 2438.4 m behind the Japfü ranges that is about 30 kilometer at the south of Kohima and 40 kilometer at the west of Kohima and at 2133.6 meters above sea level. Japfü Peak, the second highest peak in Nagaland is situated at 3048 meter above sea level and is about 15 kilometer far from south of Kohima. In the Japfü ranges, the tallest Rhododendron tree, which is featured in the Guinness Book of World Records, can be seen. On the National highway of Dzüokoü, Japfü, some Southern Angami Villages such as Jakhama, Kigwema, Viswema, Phesama are seen where the remnants of the ancient cultures are present.
The Shaded area is the district of Longleng where the Phom speakers are predominantly found.
1.3 Emergence of the state of Nagaland:

Nagaland was created on the linguistic basis after the recommendation of the State Re-Organization Committee in 1956. It was formed by the thirteenth Amendment Act passed by the Parliament in 1962. It was inaugurated as the sixteenth state of the Indian Union by the President, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan on December 1, 1963. The Amendment Act provided the constitutional and legal framework for the state. The statehood of Nagaland gave birth to a new trend of smaller state formation. Prior to the formation of Nagaland, the State Re-Organization Commission and the governing bodies of India believed in bigger states. There were never ending demands for the formation of other smaller states in India after the formation of Nagaland. The first Assembly election was held in Nagaland in 1964. There was provision for sixty members in the Assembly but only forty members were elected from the Kohima and Mokokchung districts and the rest were nominated from the Tuensang district. With regard to the emergence of Nagaland, B.B. Kumar (1996) has pointed out the following:

(i) The states were formed on linguistic lines on the recommendations of the State Re-Organization Commission of 1956 and also after that. The Nagaland was the first state, which was not formed on the linguistic lines.

(ii) The state Re-organization Commission and Indian leaders believed in bigger states prior to the formation of Nagaland. Nagaland was the first state with smaller area and smaller population.

(iii) It was for the first time that economic viability was not the main consideration in the formation of a state and the state was to run mainly on the grants received from the consolidated fund of India.

(iv) The Nagaland was the first state in India, which had the insurgency, and under-ground movements in the background of its formation. The
insurgency of Nagaland was the forerunner of insurgency in other parts of the country.

(v) The formation of Nagaland gave birth to the never ending demands for smaller states on ethnic lines in North-East India and elsewhere. The insurgency by Mizo National Front under the leadership of Laldenga, and the formation of Mizoram was much on the same line as we witnessed in Nagaland. The formation of Nagaland encouraged All Party Hill Leaders Conference to demand a hill state. The Manipur and Tripura leaders, who demanded statehood, were also encouraged by the formation of Nagaland. Thus, the formation Nagaland was forerunner of the re-organization of North East India and the formation of smaller states.

(vi) The sixth schedule based on Bordoloi Committee recommendations was framed to give district level autonomy. The formation of Nagaland made it ineffective.

1.4 The Formation of the Naga Hills Tuensang Area:

Prior to the formation of the state of Nagaland, Naga Hills Tuensang Area was formed on August 1, 1957. It was funded by the general amnesty fund of the Assam government. It was advised that the Naga inhabiting areas of Manipur should also be the part of the Naga political system. There were regulations formed for the exercise of the powers as conferred by the Article 240 of the Indian constitution for the better administration of the Naga Hills Tuensang Area. The Act recommended that the area should be divided into three districts of Tuensang, Kohima, and Mokokchung. The administrative powers were laid upon the government of Assam but the President's decisions were to be final. There was the provision that the Central government may appoint observers to facilitate the Governor to carry out the action of the administration. The Governor may appoint a Deputy Commissioner who was to work under the supervision of
Commissioner in the administrative actions of each of the districts. According to B. B. Kumar (1996),

Nehru was sympathetic to their demands and conceded their main demands. The Naga Hills Tuensang Area (NHTA) came into being on 1st August 1957. The Assam Government granted general amnesty. It is worth-noting that the Nagas of Manipur in a largely attended meeting under the chairmanship of Mr. Anal, a prominent Congress leader passed a resolution to merge Naga areas of Manipur also in the political set up. Naga Hills Tuensang Area was formed basing on the Naga Hills Tuensang Area (Administrative) Regulations, 1957 promulgated by the President of India in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 240 of the Constitution read with sub-paragraph (2) of paragraph 18 of the sixth schedule to the constitution.

The articles which were important were also laid down by B.B. Kumar (1996) in the sub paragraphs; they are also quoted here:

The Naga Hills Tuensang Area shall be divided into three districts to be called Kohima District, Mokokchung District and Tuensang District; each comprises the areas respectively set out in the schedule. The administration of Naga Hills Tuensang Area shall be carried on by the Governor of Assam as the agent of the President. The Central Government may appoint a Commissioner for the Naga Hills Tuensang Area to assist the governor of Assam; and the Governor may appoint a Deputy Commissioner for each of the districts therein and the Deputy Commissioners shall perform their functions under the supervision and control of the commissioner. The existing provisions of law and taxation were to continue in the NHTA till modifications were by competent authority.
1.5 Population of Nagaland:

The Population of Nagaland according to census of India, 2001:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Scheduled Tribe Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,990,036</td>
<td>1,774,026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>1,047,141</td>
<td>913,203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>942,895</td>
<td>860,823</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (i)

The population of Nagaland is 1,990,036 in 2001 of which 1,774,026 are the indigenous Nagas compose 95 percent of the total population of the state.
Population of Scheduled tribes (Naga) in Nagaland according to the census of India, 1991:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total (Naga)</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angami</td>
<td>97,433</td>
<td>49,108</td>
<td>48,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ao</td>
<td>169,837</td>
<td>86,752</td>
<td>83,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chakhesang</td>
<td>29,669</td>
<td>15,566</td>
<td>14,133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chang</td>
<td>32,369</td>
<td>16,943</td>
<td>15,426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khezha</td>
<td>8,091</td>
<td>4,126</td>
<td>3,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khiemnungan</td>
<td>23,543</td>
<td>12,239</td>
<td>11,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konyak</td>
<td>137,539</td>
<td>71,499</td>
<td>66,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotha</td>
<td>84,384</td>
<td>43,180</td>
<td>41,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phom</td>
<td>65,336</td>
<td>34,980</td>
<td>30,356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pochury</td>
<td>10,758</td>
<td>5,618</td>
<td>5,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rengma</td>
<td>32,811</td>
<td>16,427</td>
<td>16,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangtam</td>
<td>47,447</td>
<td>24,525</td>
<td>22,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sema</td>
<td>152,123</td>
<td>76,346</td>
<td>75,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yimchunger</td>
<td>45,880</td>
<td>23,590</td>
<td>22,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeliang</td>
<td>33,825</td>
<td>17,563</td>
<td>16,262</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total population of Nagaland according to the census of India, 1991 was 1,990,036 of which the scheduled tribe population was 1,774,026.
The distribution (%) of the scheduled tribe population of Nagaland according to the census of India, 2001:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total (Naga)</td>
<td>1741692</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angami</td>
<td>124696</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chakhesang</td>
<td>134646</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ao</td>
<td>231823</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chang</td>
<td>60885</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chirr</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>N (Negligible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khiamniungan</td>
<td>38137</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konyak</td>
<td>243758</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotha</td>
<td>148210</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phom</td>
<td>115389</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pochury</td>
<td>15908</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rengma</td>
<td>50966</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangtam</td>
<td>83714</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sema</td>
<td>241806</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikhir</td>
<td>10377</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yimchunger</td>
<td>75983</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeliang</td>
<td>71871</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naga*</td>
<td>79273</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified Naga</td>
<td>14231</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (iii)

The total population of Nagaland as per 2001 census is 1,990,036 of which 1,774,026 is the total Scheduled tribe population. There is a total decadal growth
of 6.2% in the Scheduled tribe population from 1991-2001. The population of Nagaland is 0.19% of the total population of the country and it grew by 64.41% from 1991-2001.

1.6 Sex Ratio:

The sex ratio of the Scheduled tribe is 943 females per 1000 males. There are nine tribes whose sex ratio is more than 950. Angami tribe has the highest ratio of 1004 and Phom tribe has the lowest ratio of 891.

1.7 Literacy:

The literacy rate of Nagaland is 65.8% and it is the 6.6% of the total literacy rate of India. Ao Nagas has the highest literacy rate of 85.9% and Konyaks have lowest literacy rate of 40.2%.

The percentage of the population with or without education:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below primary level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matric / Secondary level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending educational institutions (5-14 age group)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (iv)
1.8 Climate:

The climate remains pleasant throughout the year. Nagaland has a moderate climate. The temperature do not exceed more than 38 degrees. The average rainfall is between 175cm and 250 cm. The heavy rainfall is during the 4 months from June to September. The rain during April to May is low. Strong winds blow from the North West in February and March.

1.9 Phom: The People and the Language:

Phoms are one of the major tribes of Nagaland. They were also called by the name Kahha, Tamlu and Chinmengnu. Phom is the name of both the people and their language. Sreedhar (1974), says, “Phom is the name of the language as well as the people speak it. Yongyasha is a dialect of Phom.” Hutton (1921) says, “they are closely related to the Changs. Tamlu was an old name of Phoms. They were also known as Chingmengnu.”

Phom language is spoken in the Longleng district of Nagaland. Longleng is the head quarter of Phom people. Longleng district was established in the year 1950 under the administration of Tuensang district in an area of around 660 Square Kilometers. It was under Tuensang district earlier but now it has the status of independent district. Longleng is situated at an altitude of 1066.30 meters above sea level.

There are differences among the writers and even among the native people about the name of the tribe. Most of the people think that the meaning of the word ‘Phom’ is ‘cloud’. Phom area mostly remains clouded even in sunny days and
because of this reason, the name PHOM came into existence. Some say that since Phom area is clouded specially in winter mornings, Britishers might have named the area and their language as Phom. There is another opinion regarding the name of the people, as Britishers visited the Phom villages and they found that on the gate of every household, the rubber trees were planted. They asked the name of that particular tree, and the rubber tree is called ‘Pham’ in Phom language. So, they coined the name PHOM from PHAM. L. Mongnyei Phom (1993) says:

As Britishers were visiting the Phom villages, they found ‘Bham’in every main gate of the villages. When they asked the name of the tree, the natives replied them Bham. Britishers told them that they would be called Bham. Henceforth, the name ‘Phom’ came into existence and in use.

It is believed that Phoms have migrated from Burma and settled in Yingnyushang.

In this regard L. Mongnyei Phom (1993) has commented:

Phoms are believed to have migrated from Burma and settled in Yingnyushang. In course of migration, Phoms seperated themselves from Yimchunger and Chang tribes at Langa village (in Yimchunger area) and with Aos at Jungliyimti from where the Aos went to Longkhimhong and Phoms to Alitsubo and the to Yingyu village.

Some of the Phoms also believed that they originated in Yingnyushang itself and they have not migrated from any other place.

The Phoms are surrounded by the neighbouring tribe called the Konyaks as their neighbour in north east and they are bounded by a river called Yongon or Dikhu river. In north, they are surrounded by the Changs and they are bisected by a long range of river called Yingnyushang and at the west they have Ao tribe as their neighbour. Sreedhar (1974) presents the geographical sketch of Phom in this way:
The Phoms are bounded on the south by the Changs, on the west by the Aos, on the North by the lower Konyaks and on the east by the upper Konyaks. The Phoms are located on the East of river Dikhu on the North-Western part of the Tuensang district. They reside predominantly in four villages, viz., Hukpong, Pongching, Orangkong and Mongnyu.

Phoms have lots of similarities with the other tribes of Nagaland. They are believed to be more close to the Chang tribe, who are their neighbours. There are thirty three villages of Phoms namely:

(1) Yongnyah  (12) Sakshi  (23) Nyan
(2) Yongshei   (13) Yimching (24) Orangkong
(3) Tangha     (14) Yongphang (25) Yoang
(4) Tamlu      (15) Yangching (26) Yechem
(5) Kangching  (16) Pongo    (27) Lushei
(6) Anaikhai   (17) Hukphang (28) Mongkong
(7) Shemnyuching (18) Namching (29) Yonglok
(8) Ngetching  (19) Bongching (30) Namha
(9) Auchiug,   (20) Mangktang (31) Alayong
(9) Kongchi.   (21) Bhumnyu  (32) Noksusosang
(10) Shetap (Moijongching) (22) Yongam  (33) Netnyuching

and Buranamsang

There are 5 dialects of Phom and they are spoken in 33 villages. They have a common dialect which is spoken in ten villages of lower area. The villages of the lower area are- Yongnyah, Yongshei, Tangha, Tamlu, Kangchimg, Anaikhai,
Shemnyuching, Ngetching, Buranamsang and Shetap (Moijongching). The common dialect is understood by all the people from different villages.

1.10 Status of the Language:

Phom language is one of the sixteen Naga languages spoken in the state of Nagaland. The language is taught in the schools up to the level of sixth standard. In some schools, the language is used as the medium of instruction and it is also taught as a subject in few schools. The script used for the language is Roman script. They have primary grammar books, short stories, career counseling book, dictionaries written in the language (cf. literature review 4.1). The language is used in public meetings, churches, sermons etc. The Bible is also translated in Phom language. There are hymns written in the language. They are keen for the development of their language. The people hold meeting after every few days for the development of their language and for the revision of the syllabus of the subjects taught in Phom language. They have changed some of the letters, which they used for writings (cf. education 1.14.15).

The language has five different dialects and one dialect varies from the other dialects and there is also a common dialect, which is understood by all the speakers of the other dialects as well. Some of them can even converse in English and Hindi as well and Nagamese is the lingua franca. Sreedhar (1985) says:

Nagaland has another important language named Nagamese, redesignated as Naga Pidgin by this writer. The importance of Naga Pidgin arises owing to the fact that it is the only language which has the currency across the entire state.
1.11 **Phom Population:**

The total Phom population according to 1971 census was 18,017 i.e., 3.48% of the total population in the state, the total tribal population of the state was 457,602 i.e. the 88.70%. In 1981, the total population was increased to 25704 and in 1991 was further increased to 65,350 out of which 34,986 were males and 30,364 were females.

According to Statistical Hand book of Nagaland, 1965, the Phom speakers in three districts (based on 1961) census are as follows:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KOHIMA</th>
<th>MOKOKCHUNG</th>
<th>TUENSANG</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13361</td>
<td>13385</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table (v)**

**Population of Phoms according to the census of India, 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18,017</td>
<td>24,487</td>
<td>65,350</td>
<td>115389</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table (vi)**

Assentiation of claiming Phom as the mother tongue is very high. The percentage of increase in the table reveals the ideal situation of one's mother tongue cherished by a group or an individual.
No sign of virtual extinction of Phom is observable. This regulates the basic characteristics of Indian multilingualism. As Pandit (1972) says:

A second generation speaker in Europe or America gives up his native language in favour of the dominant language of the region; language shift is the norm and language maintenance an exception. In India language maintenance is the norm and shift an exception. American sociologists start their enquiry with the question, why are the languages maintained? Indian sociologists should start their enquiry with the question, why should people give up their languages.

It is noticeable that the increase of population is matching with overall increase in the mother tongue.

### Decadal percentage (increase):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971-1981</td>
<td>35.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-1991</td>
<td>166.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-2001</td>
<td>76.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (vii)
1.12 **Language Choice:**

The issue of language choice in the Phom-Naga context requires the interpretation of the various domains, which are the causal factors in determining the choice of languages. Therefore, various possible domains are discussed here.

![Diagram of Language Domains](image)

- **Societal Domains**
  - Home
  - Co-place
  - Market
  - Phom
  - Assembly
  - Panchayat
  - English
  - Phom
  - Phom

- **Religious Domain**
  - Church
  - Rituals
  - Festivals
  - Phom
  - English
  - Phom

- **Cultural Domains**
  - Phom
  - Phom

- **Educational Domains**
  - Primary Schools
  - Secondary Schools
  - College
  - University
  - Phom
  - Phom
  - English
  - Phom
  - English

They study outside the area

*Figure (i)*
The language is maintained in all the domains except at the higher educational level.

1.13 **Language Maintenance Trend:**

The table given below (viii) shows that attitude towards the maintenance of mother tongue is very high among the people.

**Phom Persons who retained the language as their mother tongue in 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18,017</td>
<td>24,487</td>
<td>65,350</td>
<td>1,15,389</td>
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</table>

Table (viii)

Drop in the mother tongue under any level can not be detected. There are more than one lakh speakers of the language and the decadal percentage of the speakers, who retained the language as their mother tongue has increased in recent decades. This seems to be a healthy trend.

1.14 **THE PHOMS (life, culture, occupation, practices):**

The socio-cultural life of Phom people can be described by their social set-up, food habits, religious and social practices, dresses, rituals, festivals, occupation transport system etc.
1.14.1 **Social Set-up:**

A society of the Phoms starts with family and then the families make a clan and many clans make a village. Like any other Naga tribes, the family is the most important social institution. T. Ao (1999:43) rightly says:

> It is universally accepted truth that the family is the first social unit in any culture. For the Aos too, the family is the most important social institution. The norms regarding the family are therefore the basis on which the Ao-Naga society is founded. The first consideration is about who can begin a family. Only members of different clans can marry.

In the Phom community a family structure is either nuclear or joint. The father is considered to be the head of the family and is regarded very high in the family. He is the one who decides matters concerning the family. Not only father but also mother and all elders of the family are respected. The head of the family takes all the decisions and every one has to abide by the decision of the head. When a father becomes old then the eldest son takes the responsibility of the father with his consent and if the father expires, the eldest son becomes the head of the family. The husband and wife have the equal responsibilities towards their family in decision-making and other activities of the family but husbands are more responsible for external affairs and wives for the domestic affairs.

Many families combine together to make a Clan. The members within a clan are blood related by the patrilineal relationships. They have very strong bond of relationship within a clan and the members abide by the rules and regulations of the clan. Every clan has its elders to look after the welfare of the members. All
matters related to marriages and divorces are looked after the clan. This appears to be a common practice in the Naga tribes. While talking about Ao Naga society, T. Ao (1999:30) says:

The foundation Ao Naga society is the concept of the clan and its ramification in the general day-to-day life of the people. Just how, where and who formulated this concept is now lost in the mists of time.

1.14.2 Villages:

Each of the Naga villages was independent village before the advent of the Christianity. They were not responsible to each other. They had a fixed demarcation of boundary. They depended on their own resources for their food, agriculture and other necessities. The Naga villages were located on the hill tops as they could see their enemies from the top when they came to attack them. In a village there are many clans and each family is identified to its clan and each clan maintains its identity.

1.14.2.1 Village administration:

A village consists of many households. According to Amop (2002:23) “a village may consist of 10 to 350 households.” Every village has five to ten clans, which are governed by the village head elected by the villagers. The villages follow democratic system of governance rather than dictatorial. The village head settles the disputes and matters related to property, quarrel etc. Some of the members are elected for particular administrations and each member is delegated with a particular responsibility.
A Phom village is divided into Sectors or Khels. A village is divided into two to five Khels. In a village, the three head are elected to perform the actions of administrations. They are, Ngongpa, Methupa, and Chinlong.

1.14.2.1.1 **Chinlong:** Chinlong looks after the land disputes both inside and outside the village and also all types of criminal cases.

1.14.2.1.2 **Methupa:** Methupa is appointed to see after the sacrificial duties in a village.

1.14.2.1.3 **Ngongpa:** Ngongpa is the one who takes part in the worship ceremonies.

At present, these types of village administration are known as Village Council. Each council has members to look after the executive, judiciary and administrative matters. These members are elected democratically. There are some qualifications to be a member of Village Council. The qualifications are:

(a) a person must be a citizen of the village.

(b) a person should be a son of legitimate father.

(c) a person should have a good moral character.

(d) a person should be a respectable man.

The age for the retirement of the members of the council are not fixed, they may continue to perform the actions as long as they are fit.
1.14.3 Status of women in Phom society:

The women in Phom society are respected and considered very high. The females are allowed to earn their livelihood. Most of the women work in fields. They sell their commodities in the markets. They have a major role in the earnings of the family. They take part in religious activities, marriage ceremonies and other functions but they are not allowed to be a part of the administration in the village. Women do not have any right in the property. They are protected by the male members of the society. They cannot be sexually assaulted as the guilty are punished severely. The married daughters get gifts and other items of households in different festivals from their parents. The daughters are also allowed to get education along with the sons. The widows and divorced women are allowed for remarriage.

1.14.4 Morung or Pang:

Morung or Pang is the dormitory where the young boys stay together before the marriage like other Naga tribes. Each village has its own dormitories. Morungs can be said to be those training centers where the youths are trained for their future lives. And also they learn their culture at those training centers: like folk songs, folk tales, and folk dances, manner of living, arts and crafts, techniques of war etc. They also discuss the matters relating to Pang, or village as a whole. After every three to four years the old batches are promoted and the new batches are recruited. The juniors serve their seniors by serving them water, making fire,
providing tea, betel leaves, lime, tobacco etc and bringing canes and bamboo leaves to weave baskets. Morungs have their own rules and the violators are highly punished.

‘Girls also had their dormitories in earlier days called Yow’ (L.Mongnyei, 1993). The Yows were constructed according to the clans so that the young men of other clan could come for singing, chatting and even to sleep together. Marriage within the same clan is considered to be an evil and any couple violating this rule is even ex-communicated from the village. Amop (2002:25) says:

Girls also had their own dormitories, which was called ‘Ywo’. Each clan had a ‘Ywo’ of their own, the young men would know which clan Ywo to visit and court because men and women of the same clan members was a great shame.

There is difference in the orthographic representations of Yow and Ywo between the two writers but it is pronounced in the same way.

1.14.5 Distribution of the property:

In the Phom community the property is equally distributed among the male members or brothers. Female members have no right to inherit the family property but the father can give some property to his daughter in the form of gift. If there is no male child in a family then the property is inherited by other male member of the same clan. The adopted sons do not have any right to have any share in the property of his adopter. There are ancestral huts of the people and the person who takes care of aged parents and bears the funeral expenses of the
parents get the ancestral huts. If a person from a different clan bears the funeral expenses of some one then he has the right to get a good plot of land. ‘The ancestral lands are not distributed but it is collectively inherited by the male heirs of the family’ (Henshet, 2005).

1.14.6 The Land System:

According to Henshet (2005), there are five different types of lands in Phom society. They are:

a) Clan land
b) Individual land
c) Village land
d) Village reserved forest
e) Khel land.

If there is need for the disposal of any type of land then the permission is required from the village council but their consent is not mandatory. The individual occupied land is always smaller than other types of land. All the villagers of that particular village know the boundary of the village land. It is usually a river, valley or mountain ranges, which demarcate one village from the other. The land owners do not have any kind of paper records of the land; it is transferred or distributed orally. The land taxes are not paid to the government but they pay house taxes. If a loan is required, the land ownership document can be acquired from the village council. The land compensation is paid to the owner if a government institutions or company acquires the land.
1.14.7 Food:
Phoms are basically non-vegetarians. Their meals consist of items like meat of cow, goat, buffalo, pig, chicken, fish etc. They also eat rice, maize, yam and various other vegetables. They take lots of wild fruits and vegetables, which are grown in the area. But their staple food is rice and it is generally eaten with meat or vegetables. They take chillies with their staple diet. They also like sticky rice. They prefer the boiled food than the foods, which are prepared with lots of spices. Meat and vegetables are usually cooked together. Sometimes the meat is smoke dried and preserved for a long time. They chew betel nuts and consume tobacco. Some of them also smoke.

1.14.8 Drinks:
Phoms are very fond of beer. Their common drinks consist of tea and rice beer. Now a day, they also like taking the cold drinks especially the younger generation but rice beer is the main drink. It is taken at any time. It contains nutrition and if it is prepared hygienically, it is a desirable drink. Even the younger ones can take it.

1.14.9 Dress and Ornaments:
The art of weaving and knitting are known to Phoms. They make colorful dresses for themselves. The dresses of each village are different in color and designs. Phom males dress themselves differently from females. They wear shawl called NyÜm or HenÜ and cap known as Humlu athan. They wear feathers of hornbill on their heads called wangshau and necklace made of wild boar’s teeth called
**Meilapha.** Their earrings are called *Shokchû* and armlet is called *Meinyupha*. They wear belt known as *Shüngmung*. They wear a thin strip of cloth to cover the front part of body below the waist called *Kaplak*. They also take with them the ‘dao’ (sword) known as *Yanlu* and spear called *Ngo*.

The dress of Phom females consists of a cloth that is worn around waist known as *Shûnang*, *Shakha*, and *Mûkho*. *Lakshong* is a shawl that is wrapped around the breast. Their hair clips are called *Mûkhen langnyu*. The necklace and earrings worn by females are same as those of men.

**1.14.10 Religion:**

Religion is called *Ngaipu Nanglem* in Phom and it means ‘the way of faith or belief’. All the aspects of lives are related to the system of belief and religion for the Phoms. Phoms believed in the worship of nature before Christianity. They had the faith in the power of moon, sun and other natural powers. But with the introduction of Christianity in 1929 their way of belief had changed. Now, almost all the Phoms are converted to Christianity. Their religious occasions now consist of Christmas, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter and even New Year.

**1.14.11 Festivals:**

The Phoms celebrate four major festivals each having its unique significance apart from other religious festivals. The festivals are Monyu, Moha, Bongvum and Paangmo.
(a) **Monyu:**

Monyu is the biggest and most popular festival among all the festivals. Monyu is celebrated for six days from 1st to 6th April to mark the end of winter and the beginning of a new season. This festival is celebrated after the seeds are sown and the season of sowing is over. Prior to the festival, log drums are beaten in all the villages with tunes known as *Lan Nyangshem*. These tunes are specially made for the festival. These tunes are different from one village to another. This is the time of prayer for the better harvest and bidding farewell to the year ended and the welcome of the New Year. As this is the biggest festival of the Phoms and it is celebrated with all the enthusiasm. They celebrate it by dancing, singing, consuming beer and playing games. This is also a time when the village elders make plans for the welfare of the village. The male members of the family show the renewal of their affectionate feelings by presenting purest rice beer and the specially prepared food prepared for the occasion to their married daughters.

The first day of the festival is for the preparation of the festival and besides this all the households go for collecting wrapped leaves and bamboos. The second day is for the brewing of all kinds of rice beer. The third day is for the folk dance, singing, merry making, and taking feast together despite the age groups. The fourth and the fifth day is meant for general feasts and the tea arrives from all the neighbouring villages. The final day is for the elderly people to exchange purest rice beer and meat with each other and a game is played to swing out of rope,
which is made up of coiled rope. The whole process of the festival is carried out in a ritualistic manner.

(b) **Moha:**

It is a one-day festival celebrated in the month of May for the better growth of plants and seeds. The elders of the village keep their new crop plants of various kinds in an altar known as **Moidu**. The **Ngongpathu** or a priest blesses these crop plants, so that, they may have better harvest for the year.

(c) **Bongvum:**

This festival is celebrated in the month of October for a day. It is celebrated as a day of Thanksgiving to the unseen Almighty God for the good yielding. On this occasion, blood of a chicken is sprinkled in at the outer surface of the container of the grains. The feast prepared for this occasion is prawns mixed with ginger and bamboo shoots and sticky rice. These prepared foods are put on the leaves and are tied to the main post of the house. This is also a festival of Thanksgiving to their Lords for whatever they have yielded and also asking blessings for the next harvest. Another part of ritual, which is performed on this occasion, is that the father, who is head of the family, takes out the intestine of the chicken and he predicts the future of the family.

(d) **Paangmo:**

This festival is also a very important occasion of the Phom people. This is celebrated with great enthusiasm. This festival is celebrated after the harvest is
over in the first week of November for over three days. All homes are decorated and villages are cleaned. People dance, sing and consume rice beer called Yu which is specially prepared for the occasion. Apart from preparing rice beer they also kill animals. The Parents present gifts and also the food that is prepared for that special occasion to their married daughters who are called Doidaiby Yukha to show their love and respect for them and the daughters also reciprocate in the same way.

Apart from these festivals Phom Day is celebrated to mark the end of Head Hunting. It is celebrated on 6th June every year and with all the enthusiasm.

1.14.12 Phom Day:

Before the advent of the Christianity in the area, Phoms practiced Head Hunting. They use to chop off the heads of their enemies. Some scholars believe that the people learnt it from the spider. It is believed that a man saw a spider crossing the stream and brought home the head of the mantis. L. Shaupang says (as quoted in Amop, 2002):

Phoms learnt the idea of head hunting from the spider. One day a man witnessed a spider crossing a stream and after killing a mantis brings home its head. This is how a man learnt to take the heads of their enemies.

Head hunting was considered to be very prestigious among most of the Naga tribes and so in Phom. This gave rise to more inter-villages and inter-tribe rivalry. People thought it to be an honor, as the more heads a man brought for his village; the more his respect and honor grew. According to Amop (2002:40),
the ritual of heads hunting rested on the belief that it contribute to the fertility of their women-folk and the prosperity of their fields. Head hunting was an heroic act for the Phoms. The practice of head hunting is supposed to have originated for more than one reason. Some of them are as follows:

1. The desire for popularity as a hero in their village or society.
2. The desire of annexing one village to other’s control.
3. The settlement of dispute on land and rivers etc.
4. When vows were not kept between the villages.
5. Human sacrifice to god for the dedication of ‘Morung’ (bachelor’s dormitory) etc.
6. Divorce of a wife belonging to a different village (break-up or problem in an inter-villages marriage).

The head hunters were honored at the village gate. The warriors were given high positions in the communities. There used to be grand receptions in their honors. A kind of particular design was tattooed on the chest of the warrior. The edges of the roofs of the warriors and the huts of the paddy fields were trimmed, to make a distinction between the house of a warrior and that of the ordinary persons. A man, who took the head of an enemy, was given the title ‘Hamba’ which meant ‘Hero’.

1.14.12.1 The end of head hunting:

This prevalent system of Head Hunting immensely retarded the lives of the people. The people wanted this to be changed and there were many initiatives taken when the leaders of the tribe with the government officials gave a serious thought to it. The people were told to stop violent practices. A meeting of all the heads of the villages was convened. According to Amop (2002:50),
The founding fathers of this peace effort were late Shri. Hamnyei, Yongtau and Anyak, the then Head Dobashi. They were accompanied by all 2nd D. Bs, G. Bs and village elders. These leaders acted as the spoke persons of the tribes and as mediators between the government and the people.

The British government and Christian missionaries also played an important role for the end of this practice. It was formally declared on June 6, 1952, a peace day in the Phom area, when the practice came to an end. Since then every June 6, is celebrated as 'PHOM DAY'. The state government also recognizes this day and a special fund is also granted by the government.

This occasion is celebrated to remember the past and also to forgive and forget the deed of the past. It is also celebrated as a day of enlightenment. They make commitments to live in peace. Phom day is a week-long celebration culminating on the most significant day-6th June. On this day, people perform folk dances and fold songs. The senior people are asked to narrate the story that how the day come into existence. The football matches, games and sports between villages are organized throughout the week. There is a Phom day flag which has significant feature of meaningful symbols. The flag has red, white color and a rising sun. On Phom Day, all the villages bring the flag and put it in the playground.

1.14.13 The Log Drums:

The log drums are called Shem in Phom. Before the advent of modern science and technology in the area, people used the log drums to communicate with each other. Shem is one of the very important parts of the Phom people as they use it on every occasion and on festivals. The tunes of the log drums are different from
one village to the other. People can differentiate the messages by listening to the rhythm and beating of the log drums. The tunes will be different for feast, arrival of the enemy, victory or defeat in a war, the death of a rich man, or a warrior or a common man. They are kept in the middle of the village so that everyone can listen to the beating of the log drums.

1.14.14 Occupation:

The main occupation of Phoms people is agriculture. They had lands that were fertile and thick where they cultivated. But, now with the practice of Jhum cultivation, the lands are not that fertile. In Jhum cultivation, the trees are cut down and the bushes are burnt. A Jhum cycle completes in between six to ten years depending on the fertility of the soil. Their main crops are paddy, maize, yam millet, chilly, banana, oranges and different kinds of vegetables. They also grow some kind of fruits like oranges, bananas and other wild fruits. Their traditional occupation includes hunting, fishing and bamboo crafts and weaving. They make utensils, spears, ornaments, chairs, tables, knives’ handles, combs, utensils etc. from bamboos. They make baskets and ornaments from woods and musical instruments from horns of the animals. They are good hunters. They hunt mostly deer and birds and sometimes they kill tigers. The skins of the animals are kept, if needed for making a shield.

They have a market in Longleng where they can sell their products. They also import things from Assam and also buy goods from Dimapur to sell in their
market. Nowadays, the people have taken up various kinds of business and are also engaged in construction works.

1.14.15 Education:

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<thead>
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<th>Schools</th>
<th>Number of schools/ colleges</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Primary Schools (government)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Schools (private)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Schools (upto class IIIIV)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government High Schools</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private High Schools</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (ix)

Each village has primary schools and a middle school for every three to four villages. The schools are both vernacular and English medium schools. Private and government high schools are in the district. Yingli Arts College is the only college in the whole area. The percentage of literacy is very low. But nowadays, with the advancement of education, the scenario has changed and the people are more interested in educating their children rather than engaging them in their traditional occupations. The boys and girls after their school education go to other places for their higher education. (see 1.10)

1.14.16 Literacy:

The literacy rate of the Phom people is 44.82 percent in the Longleng district. It is below the level of literacy rate of Nagaland.
1.14.17 Marriage:
In Phom society, a marriage is settled through negotiations where the proposals are made from the boys’ side. They preferred age for marriage was 16 for a girl and 18 for a boy. But now it has changed. They are allowed to marry when the girls and boys complete their education. There are also cases when boys and girls get married by elopement. Marriages within their own communities are preferred in this community but the marriage outside the community and outside the religion are also allowed though not encouraged. They do not allow the marriages within the same clan. No dowry system is practiced in Phom society. Monogamy is in practice and child marriages are not allowed. If someone breaks the engagement without any valid reasons then the person responsible are fined as they have to return the doubled number of gifts then it was exchanged during the engagement. Marriages are registered in the churches and after the marriage a formal meeting is organized to recognize the marriage. Divorcee, widow, widower are allowed to re marry but preferably after the gap of one year of the separation.

1.14.18 Divorce:
The divorce in Phom society mostly happens with the mutual consent. But it rarely happens. A husband or a wife has the right to divorce partner on the grounds of adultery, conflict of opinion in the family. If someone divorces his wife without any valid reason then he is penalized and has to give land, pig or moveable and immovable property to the wife. If a wife divorces her husband
without any reason then she has to go with empty handed. After a divorce, the custody of the child remains with the father but with the mutual consent a mother can also take the custody of the child but can not claim for it.

1.14.19 **Dances and Folk:**

Phoms are very rich in traditions. As R.S. Raypa (1994) rightly says, “Folk literature is rich, but they are more inclined towards modern songs and music. The Oubu is popular folk dance.” Henshet (2000) has discussed the folk dance and songs in detail. He says:

The different types of dances of Phoms are war dance, bamboo dance, harvest dance, lovers dance, and group dance. The folk songs are the means by which people can express their feelings, thoughts, and beliefs. Some of the types of folk songs are-

i. kongkaii- (a political ballad) Song for the event of war, peace, victory etc.
ii. oha- song for merriment
iii. mailok- song of love and romance.
iv. ham asho- song for the warriors' heroic deeds.
v. kahsho asho- song sung in the paddy fields.

1.14.20 **Rituals:**

There are different kinds of rituals in Phom society. These are performed on certain occasions and are practiced as tradition. They love to make tattoos on their bodies from earlier times. The tattoo marks on the bodies, mostly on the arms of the male members of the society, can be found. There are arrangements of feast in almost all the occasions. A feast is arranged at the time of the naming ceremony of the child. The child's naming ceremony is held on the fifth day for a girl and on
the sixth day for a boy. There are arrangements of a grand feast on the occasions of marriages. There are also certain rituals on the deaths of the people. At the time of funeral, if the deceased happens to be a common man, then the funeral would be a simple and small one, but if a rich man dies, then a big feast is prepared by killing all the animals owned by the deceased. The history of the deceased is also presented during his funeral. A ritual is also followed at the time of festivals for presenting rice beer, foods specially made for the occasion to their married daughters and sisters. Before the Christianity came into the place, the dead bodies of the people were not buried but were kept on the top of a tree. A cross stand were made with the bamboos on which the bodies were kept and a fire was burnt from the below. It took a long time for the bodies to get decomposed. Now, the dead bodies are being buried on the burial grounds. R.S. Raypa (1994) says:

When a child is born in the Phom community, a small feast is arranged. The naming ceremony is observed on the fifth day for a girl and on the sixth day for a boy, along with feast for villagers or friends. No rituals are observed at the time of conception, pregnancy and adolescence. On the occasion of marriage, a grand feast is arranged. The rituals following death, and methods of funeral for rich man, a warrior and a commoner vary. In case of a rich man, all animals owned by the deceased are killed and a grand feast is arranged, and one of the relatives is asked to narrate all the courageous deeds that are done by the person when alive. In the past the dead body of a person, was kept in the open and then put over a tree to be decomposed. In some cases skulls were buried also. After the adoption of Christianity, marriage ceremonies are performed in the church and the dead bodies are buried in the graveyard according to the Christian religious rules.
1.14.21 Flora:

Phoms are mostly cultivators. Their fertile lands have thick and green forest. The forest was the source of livelihood for the people in the earlier days but now, with the practice of Jhum cultivation the green forests are turned into barren lands (cf occupation). As mentioned earlier they mainly grow maize, millet, yam, paddy, tapioca, ginger, mustard, pear, bananas, oranges, pineapple, papaya, guava etc. and many other wild fruits.

1.14.22 Fauna:

Phoms are mostly meat eaters. They rear the animals for the meat and they are also domesticated for earnings. The common livestock found in households are buffalo, cow, goat, pig, mithun, goose, duck, chicken, pigeon etc.

1.14.23 Transport:

A road was constructed from Changtongya to Tuensang, Longleng in 1984. Phom areas are connected to other places through roadways by means of buses and other vehicles. Villages within the area are linked both by foot tracks as well as roads though the roads are not pleasant especially in the rainy seasons. The food items and other necessary goods are transported through the buses meant for the plying of the passengers.