CHAPTER II
LAND AND PEOPLE

Nagaland is the sixteenth state of the Republic of India. The former Hills District of Assam and the Tuensang Division of the North East Frontier Agency were merged to form the State of Nagaland. The Lok Sabha of Indian Parliament officially announced the formation of Nagaland state on August 1, 1960. The Prime Minister of India introduced the State of Nagaland Bill on August 21, 1962. The Lok Sabha passed the Bill on August 29, 1962. Nagaland State became a reality on September 4, 1962, when the President of India gave his consent to the State of Nagaland Bill and Constitution Amendment Act. The State was officially inaugurated on December 1, 1963 at Kohima by the then President of India Dr. Radhakrishnan (Philip, P.T., 1976).

It is a land of exotic charm and diverse culture, the homeland of the Naga people, a family of Mongolian race.

Nagaland is indeed a beautiful and long narrow strip of hill country with high rugged mountains, hills studded with villages, slopes, narrow deep valley, dense forest, wild beasts and rushing streams. Most villages stand at three or four thousand feet above sea level.

The state is situated on the north-eastern part of India, bounded by the plains of Assam in the west, Tirap Frontier of NEFA in the north, Burma in the east and Manipur in the south. Geographically, the regions of Nagaland in its original state, as it was before its disintegration under
the British and Indian administration, covered a wide range bounded by Hawtong valley in the north-east, China to the north, the Brahmaputra valley on the north-west, Manipur to the south and the valley of Chindwin river on the west. Thus, the Naga inhabits an enormous tract of mountainous country occupying the entire hill country bordering the plains of Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur in the north, crossing over the great main watershed between Irrawady river and the Brahmaputra in the south, and extended into the valley of Kainwin or Ningthi to the north-eastern corner of Manipur to the Patkai range (Ao, Tajen., 1986).

The State of Nagaland lies between 25°60' and 27°40' latitude north of Equator and between longitude lines 93°20’ E and 95°15’ E having an area of 16,579 sq.km. The altitude varies between 194 metres and 3048 metres (Government of Nagaland, 2000).

The population of Nagaland, according to the 1991 census is 12,09,546. Out of this, 82.78% of the population is rural. The average density of population is 73 per sq.km. Workers constitute 42.68% of the total population of the state, 61.65% of the population is literate (Government of Nagaland, 2000).

Kohima is the administrative headquarters of Nagaland. It is about 4800 ft above the sea level (Philip, P.T., 1976). The capital town of Nagaland is witnessed by the battle of Kohima fought between the allied forces and the Japanese army, during the World War II. Kohima is also known for its common wealth war graves of the Second World War, in memory of the soldiers who gave their lives in defending the country.
Nagaland has a very pleasant climate in summer, cold in winter and windy especially in the higher hills. Days are generally bright and clear. Nagaland has an abundant rainfall which averages about 100 inches per year (Philip, P. T., 1976).

The State of Nagaland comprises of eight districts namely, Kohima (state capital), Mokokchung, Wokha, Zunheboto, Tuensang, Phek, Mon and recent upgradation of Dimapur. The main Naga tribes residing in the state are Angami, Ao, Chakesang, Chang, Konyak, Khiamungan, Lotha, Pochury, Phom, Rengma, Sema, Sangtam, Yimchunger and Zeliang (Government of Nagaland, 1981). There are also some non-Naga tribes like Kuki and other communities inhabiting the state, but overwhelming majority of the people in the state are the Nagas.

Before the Naga country has been bifurcated by foreign invasions there are altogether about 50 different tribes residing in the Naga inhabited areas. However, out of which only 14 tribes are found in actual state of Nagaland (Imchen, Panger., 1993).

Originally, inhabitants of Nagaland were known as ‘Nagas’. However, the origin of the word ‘Naga’ is obscured. Some thinkers hold that the word ‘Naga’ means a ‘snake race’ for ‘Nagam’ in Sanskrit means snake. But this cannot be accepted for the Nagas eat snakes. It is a delicious food for some Naga tribes.

It is not supposed that the Nagas are of serpent or scythic descent. The name was more probably given to them
originally as being best expressive of their character, for all wild tribes they are held to be most subtle and treacherous.¹

The word ‘Nagam’ is another Sanskrit word which means ‘hill’. Some think the word Naga may be derived from this Sanskrit word to mean ‘hillsman’ or the inhabitant of a hill. The Kachar people called the hill people ‘Nahngra’. This word means ‘warrior’ or ‘fighter’. Assamese pronounced the word as ‘Nugha’ or ‘Noga’. Probably English people found it easier to say ‘Naga’ which could denote their characteristics as warriors (Verrier, Elwin., 1969). As for J. P. Mills, the expression ‘Naga’ is a corruption of the Assamese Naga (pronounced Noga), probably meaning a ‘mountaineer’ from Sanskrit ‘Nag’, a ‘mountain’ or ‘inaccessible place’ (Mills, J. P., 1922). According to A. Z. Phizo, the legendary Naga leader, the most closely related meaning of the word ‘Naga’ could have been derived from the Burmese word ‘Naka’. In Burmese ‘Na’ means ear, ‘Ka’ means pierced; i.e., one whose ear is pierced (Imchen, Panger., 1993). In fact, among the Nagas a man who does not have lobe in the ear is considered inferior in social status. Thus the word ‘Naka’ in Burmese is the closest meaning related to the word ‘Naga’ for the Naga people.

Lotha Naga

The study of the Lotha Naga was first taken up by the British who undertook various expedition into the Lotha territory or were assigned administrative work therein. The earliest account was given by members

of the first topographical survey like Robert Brown (touring among the Lotha, 1874). R. G. Woodthrope (visit to Wokha, 1874) and A. W. Davis (The Lothas in 1891). By the second decade of the 20th century, J. P. Mills brought out the first monograph entitled, *The Lotha Nagas*, which was a compilation of the work on the Lothas initiated by J. H. Hutton, the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills in 1922. Verrier Elwin in his writings on *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, 1969, inserted all the pre-independent publication and provide a dependable source book to know the past work on the Nagas including the Lothas. *Wokha District Gazetteers*, 1979, by Dr. B. B. Ghosh is a work exclusively on the Lothas. But these works do not focus on tradition and change in different aspects like society, political institution and material life of the people pertaining to be colonial and the post colonial period.

**Location and Area**

Wokha district which is the homeland of the Lotha Nagas, prior to 1973, was a part of Mokokchung district. During the year 1957, when the Naga Hills Tuensang Area (NHTA) was formed, the present Nagaland was divided into three districts such as Kohima, Mokokchung and Tuensang, and Wokha became one of the sub-divisions of Mokokchung district. On 1st December 1963, Nagaland became the 16th state of Indian Union and in December 1973, Nagaland State was further divided into seven districts and recently the eight district of Nagaland, Dimapur, was upgraded. Thus Wokha became one of the eight districts of Nagaland (Ghosh, B. B., 1979).
Wokha district is situated on the mid-east of the State of Nagaland. The district is intercepted at the middle by 26°8' north latitude and 94°18' E longitude. It occupied an area of about 1300 sq.km (Ghosh, B.B., 1979).

The district is bounded by the Mokokchung district in the north, Zunheboto in the east, Kohima district in the South and the State of Assam in the west. There are more than 95 Lotha villages within the Wokha district. Almost all the villages are situated on the top of the hills. The two important factors taken into consideration for locating a site for settlement are, one from the Naga point of view that it must be easily defensible from enemy, second it should be located near a spring.

Ranges
The Wokha district consists of three ranges. Wokha range falls in the upper area of the district lying in the western and northern parts of the district. It is also called upper range. It is a long chain of ranges and has emerged from Rengma area in the Kohima district. Wokha, the district headquarters, is situated in the middle part of this range.

The Sanis range is also called Middle Range. The middle range comes in between the Bhandari sub-division and Wokha district which appear to have merged up with the Changkikong range on the north in the Mokokchung district.

Bhandari range is the outer range which is also called lower range. This range extends upto Japukong range of Mokokchung district in the
north and in the south-western side, the range gradually slopes down to the plains of Assam.

**Mountain**

The mythological mountain called *Tiyi-elong* is the highest peak in the district. Wokha, the district headquarters is situated at the foot of this mountain. The altitude of this peak is 1,969.61 metres (Ghosh, B.B., 1979). This peak is believed to have been the repository of the deceased ancestors of the tribes like Lothas, Semas and Aos. On its summit, it is said, lies a fine and mysterious fruit garden. The summit of the peak is thickly wooded with evergreen vegetation. The lower portion of the hills have been deforested owing to the practice of jhum cultivation.

**Valley**

There are not many valleys in the district as it was a hilly region. However, bordering to the plains of Assam where hills are low, there are a few valleys which are found useful for terrace cultivation. The most important of them are Baghty valley of Jüragang valley. The Baghty valley is comparatively big and the land is fertile. It adjoins the plains of Assam state. The Jüragang valley lies in Akuk and Mekukla village area.

**River**

The district is drained by several hilly rivers of which Pofü (Doyang), Chübi and Nzhü are more important. The Pofü is the biggest and also largest and most important river in the district. It flows across the entire district of Wokha. It flows from the western part to the southern part of the district and finally falls in the Dhansiri river. Many hill streams from other districts fall into the Pofü (Doyang) river. In the
valleys along the Doyang river the modern system of cultivation like
terrace cultivation is being carried out successfully, especially in two
particular areas near Pangti village called Pofū-hayi and Jūrang-hayi.
The Jūbi is the second largest river in the district. It flows southward
from Mokokchung district and joins Doyang in the south of Pangti
village in this district. Nzhūi is another important river in this district. This
river rises from the Nerhuma area in the Kohima district and flows
through Miphong village in Rengma territory. This river covers the
whole south-eastern portion of the district. This river is also one of the
most important tributaries of Doyang river.

However, no river of this district is navigable in any season. In dry
season they become almost dry and in rainy season they become
torrential. Moreover, due to rocky nature of the terrain and deep valleys
navigation is not possible.

Mineral Wealth

Geographically, Wokha district is rich in mineral resources like
petroleum and coal. This district has been surveyed by Assam Oil
Company and subsequently geological and geophysical surveys have
been carried out by the ONGC. The result of this survey revealed that
there has been a good deposit of petroleum and coal in this district
(ONGC, 1975). Coal deposits has been located in different places such as
Lo-Longidang and Yanpha village of Wokha district. Some amount of
the clay deposits are also found in this district. Sandstone suitable for
road and metal also occurs in abundance in the district.
Climate

Wokha district enjoys monsoon type of climate with a difference. Winters are cold, but summers are warm. In winter night temperature drops down to $4^\circ$ C to $2^\circ$ C in December. January and February are the coldest months of the year. During the hottest part of the year (July and August), the temperature is in the range of $27^\circ$ C to $32^\circ$ C (Ghosh, B. B., 1979).

Rainfall in the district is on the average 2000 mm (80") and it falls from about six months of the year with greatest concentration in July and August (Ghosh, B. B., 1979).

February and March are the windest month in the year. This time high wind blows almost throughout the day and night. The wind generally blows from south-west and at times its velocity rises upto 100 km per hour. But towards the end of March the wind dies out. The monsoon sets in from the month of June. South-west monsoon sets in the middle of June and the same continues upto the middle of September. During the summer season the average relative humidity is 85% which goes sometimes upto 95% to 100% and as such is very damp in this district (Ghosh, B. B., 1979).

July is the hottest month but due to heavy rain it is not very hot. The pleasant season starts from the month of October. Then the winter sets in by November. From December to February are the coldest month of the year.
Vegetation

The average altitude of the Wokha district is 1200 m. The Wokha district consists of both deciduous and ever green forests. Most of the trees are deciduous. They shed leaves from November onwards and grows again in March. But some trees do not shed all their leaves and thus keep green all throughout the year.

In the lower altitude the trees are more ever green than deciduous. Thus, we can say that the district consists of the following kinds of forest:

1. Ever green up to the altitude of 1000 m, and
2. Mixed deciduous and ever green from above 1000 m.

Besides these vegetations, the district is rich in a collection of varied and rare orchids and other species of flora in the jungle which bloom on all the seasons of the year.

Various species of trees are found in this district. Some of the important trees and their uses are given below.

1. Champa (Michelia champa) – Used for plywood furniture making, house construction, planks, doors and windows.
2. Bonsum (Ploebes goolparesis) – Mostly used for building construction and bridges.
3. Amari (Amoora wallichii) – Used for construction of houses, furniture, doors, windows, weaving industry and pencil slit.
4. Simul (Bombax ceiba) – Used for plywood, match boxes, match splint, ceiling etc.
5. Sam (*Artocarpers chaplasha*) – Used for building, construction, carpentry work.


8. Hollock (*Termineha myriocarpa*) – Used for building construction, furniture, doors, windows, post and beams.

9. Bagra (*Shima wallichii*) – Recently used for plywood, also used for post and pencil slit.

10. Walnut (*Guglans regia*) – Used for making gunboat, ornamental, furniture, pencil slit.


12. Urium (*Bischofia Javanica*) – Used for all sorts of constructions, boats, building, railway sleepers etc.


17. Jia Poma (*Lannea coromandelica*) – Used for ordinary purposes, timber mostly.

Fauna

The district of Wokha has the sub-Himalayan, Indian, Chinese and Burmese types of fauna and therefore it is much varied. Wild elephants are found in lower range of the district at the foothills but elephants are not domesticated for any purpose of transport.

Tiger has its lair in the dense forests. The deer family comprises the barking deer, sambas and serow. The monkey and jackal are also found but sparsely distributed. Other species comprise wild mithun, wild buffaloes, wild pigs, wild bears, wild dogs, squirrels, bats, musk-rats etc.

Among the reptiles mostly found are vipers, kraits, rat snakes, grass snakes, cobra, lizards, pythons etc.

The lower region of hills have very few birds and fowls but the best species are found in the higher altitude which include patridge, night jar, warbles, robin, quail, wood pecker, hornbill, pheasant, swift, haulk, crow etc. Even the lower hills are a home of mynah, cuckoo, sparrow, sunbird, parrot, parakeet and other colourful wrens.

PEOPLE

Origin and Migration

The early history of the Nagas is obscure, so also of the Lothas. The early history can be constructed mainly on the basis of the oral tradition collected from different villages.
The problem of the ultimate origin and composition of the Naga tribes still awaits solution. There are various traditions as to how the Lotha tribe of Nagaland migrated to the present situation.

One of the traditions states that, the Lothas and the plainsmen (Assamese) were once one people who migrated from a place called Lengka somewhere north or north-west of the Naga Hills, the exact site being unknown. They soon split up into two bodies, one of which became the plainsmen of the Brahmaputra valley and the other the Lothas of the hills. This tradition is not the commonest. The curious long-halfted dao called 'Yandüng', which is still kept as highly-prized heirlooms at Akuk village, has a special connection with this tradition, and are said to have been given to the Lothas by their 'brothers' of the plains.

Another tradition says that the Angamis, Rengmas, Semas, Lothas and Ao migrated together and occupied the present habitat. These tribes maintain that their paternal ancestors were brothers of the same parents.

The first to set off, according to this tradition, were the Aos who, the story says, went out of north-west trail as far as Mokokchung (but the Aos have also a separate tradition of their ancestors emerged from the 'Longtrok', meaning six stones, which is not accepted by all the Aos). Next came the Lothas. They were followed by the Semas who were in turn followed by the Rengmas. The Angamis and the Chakesang tribes were the last to come and they settled in the adjoining Mao area.

Yet another tradition says that the common ancestors of the Lothas, southern Sangtæms, semas and Rengmas came from somewhere
near Mao. The first to split off were the Sangtams with whom the Lothas claim close affinities. From the Mao the ancestors of the Lothas moved towards a place called ‘Phitson-long’ where they halted. There they used a stone for basking paddy. It is said that the paddy so basked over this stone became double at sunset when the household came to collect the paddy. Other tribes such as the Angamis and Maos also have a similar tradition of magic stone at Khezakenoma in Mao area. According to this tradition, they moved from ‘Phitson-long’ to ‘Merang’ (somewhere in Mao area) where they halted again. Later on they left Mao area and travelled along the foot of the ‘Japfu’ mountain and slowly migrated towards Kohima. On their north trail, they halted at ‘Khayima’ (the present Kohima). At this place, the Lothas were many in numbers. They were so many in numbers that the chief could not enumerate them and so called as ‘Khayima’ which in Lotha means uncountable. From there the tribe reached the neighbourhood of ‘Lozema’, where the Semas are said to have split off. Hence the Lothas moved slowly on till they reach the hill known as ‘Hono-ho-yonton’ (Fowl-throat-cutting-village). At this point the Rengma split off and occupied the present territory, while the Lothas pressed on till they settled at a huge village called ‘Tiyilongchüm’. Here the doubt begins to clear as most Lothas claim to trace their descent back through nine or ten generations to some ancestor who lived at ‘Hono-hoyonton’. As they pressed on, one group went through Phiro and Shaki villages towards the lower ‘Pofü’ (Doyang river) as far as Koro village, and the larger group towards Wokha hill (Mount Tiyi), where a huge village called ‘Tiyi-longchüm’ is said to have been found a little to the north of the present site of Niroyo village. So vast was the crowd of warriors that at feast and ‘Gennas’ there was never enough ‘Soko’ (rice
beer) to go round. So they began to split up the crowd and founded villages. Also another reason of abandoning this village was due to scarcity of water in the area. That way the Lothas had travelled and finally settled down in their present territory.

**Physical Appearance**

The Lothas like other Naga tribes, have Mongoloid features. In skin colour, it varies from light to medium brown, the inhabitants of the lower ranges tending to be darker than those of high villages. The complexion even of the fairest girls is sallow, and the almost rosy cheeks one sometimes sees among the Angamis, and more rarely among the Semas, are unknown in the Lotha country. Majority of the Lothas have high nose, oblique eyes and straight hairs having no beard. They are generally slim and moderately tall and women as used are a little shorter than their male counterpart. Though all the Nagas have Mongoloid features there are differences in minute details between one and the other tribes. The difference is so explicit that the people of one tribe can easily be distinguished from others by facial appearances and physically structure, not to speak of dress and language.

Baldness and grey hair are both uncommon and disliked. All children have the lobe of the ear pierced at the conclusion of the birth 'genna'. At the first 'Ramvüa' genna, a boy who has a hole pierced in the upper part of the helix. This is done with a pointed piece of bamboo, and no special ceremonies are attached to the operation. Among the southern Lothas, and occasionally among the northern, another hole is pierced in the middle of the concha at the next 'Ramvüa'. The holes in
the helix and concha are for the cotton wool with which ear is adorned and often become much distended in the case of elderly men.

**Demography**

The Lotha population showed a downward trend before 1940. In 1941 they numbered 22,000 but dwindled to 18,000 in 1931. In 1951 their numbers rose again to 22,392 with 11,102 males and 11,290 females. In 1961, they numbered 26,327 and in 1971 it was 36,000. In 1981 it became 57,583. Finally in 1991 it became more than 82,612 with decennial growth of 43.47% (Government of Nagaland, 2000). It may be noted here that the Lotha population and the population of Wokha district are not the same because other people also live in this district besides the Lothas, as well as some Lothas live outside the district. Details of the present population of this district is not yet available. However, on the basis of 1991 census, which is the latest available information, the total population of this district is 82,612.

**Language**

The Lothas have got only one language which is called 'Kyong-yi' by themselves. Unlike Aos in the adjoining Mokokchung district the Lothas are not having any difference among the Lotha between upper and lower Lothas except some slight differences in accent.

Nagamese, a form of broken Assamese which is used in other districts of Nagaland is also used here as a medium of expression and also as a means of communication between the Lothas and non-Lotha speaking people in the district. Nowadays broken Hindi is also
commonly used in the district. English, the official language of the State of Nagaland, is generally used among the educated Lothas.

The Lothas, Aos and Semas believe to have possessed in the past a Naga script which is said to have been written on dried skin of an animal and it was carried by their forefathers during migration through the Patkai ranges. But as the script was not kept under proper custody, a time came when it was eaten up by a dog. Unfortunately owing to the loss of memory, the script could not be written again. However, it was towards the end of the 19th century that the Lotha language was reduced to writing in the Roman script.

According to different philologists, the language and dialects of the Naga belong to the Tibeto-Burman and not to the Siamese-Chinese or the Sino-Tibeto language spoken by the Phakials, Khamtis and a few Ahoms or Tibeto-Chinese speech family.

Society

Being the fundamental basis of society, the Lotha family comprises of father, mother, sons and daughters living together in the same house. Among them father is the head of the family who also performs certain political, social and religious duties.

A son sets up a separate family after getting married whereas daughter goes to another clan leaving her original clan or marriage. The clan comprises of a group of consanguineous families descended from a common ancestor by whose name the clan is known. The tribe is segmented into phratries and clans. There are three distinct phratries.
which are divided into ‘Jibo’ (clan). The ‘Jibos’ are further split into ‘Mhitso’ (kindreds). The three phratries are the ‘Tonphyaktsi-rüi’, the ‘Ezomontsi-rüi’ and the ‘Miphongshan-rüi’. Under the phratry of Tonphyaktsi-rüi we have clans like Kikon, Patton, Ovung, Tsopoe, Jungi, Jami etc. Clans like Ngullie, Shitiri, Humtsoe, Kithan, Mozhüi, Tungoe, Enie etc., come under the phratry of Ezomontsü-rüi. The Miphongshan-rüi consists of clans such as Ezung, Yanthan, Odyuo, Murry, Sungphi, Khuvung, Tsanglac, Lapon and Echungmong rüi.

The three phratries, Tonghyaktsi-rüi, Ezomontsi-rüi, and Miphongshan-rüi, are said to be descended from the three brothers such as Limhachan, Limhathung and Rakhandan, who were the first men to come out of the earth.

Some clans remain undivided. Others have split into two kindreds which intermarry and call themselves ‘big’ and ‘small’, i.e., Ezung-tsüphoe and Ezung-Teriwoe.

The Lothas consider marriage as a vital institution of the society. Through marriage legitimate children are obtained which contributes to the continuation of social unit. The boys and girls have a considerable freedom in choosing their lifelong partners. Marriage within the same clan is strictly forbidden.

Dormitory or ‘Chümpho’ is considered to be an important educational, political and social institution mainly for the unmarried men. All the unmarried boys in the village, say from seven to eight years onwards till they marry and set up their own houses, sleep in the
bachelor's dormitory. Every Lotha village, except the very small ones, is divided into two or more 'Khels' (Yankho). In every 'Khel' there is a common bachelor's house or morung (Chümpho), a building which plays an important part in Lotha life. In it no woman must set her foot. At the 'Chümpho' raids were planned and discussed, and to it all heads taken were first brought. It is the sleeping place of every Lotha boy from the time he first put on his dao-holder till he marries, this rule being only relaxed in the case of boys who are allowed to remain at home and nurse an ailing and widow mother or when the 'Chümpho' falls into such a state of disrepair that it is no longer habitable.

**Character**

The Lothas, like any other Nagas, are by nature free and independent, scornful of control, impatient of criticism. By appearance the Lothas are reserved type and do not readily open their hearts to a stronger, but they are a fine people, friendly and cheerful with a keen sense of humour. Their sense of humour is well developed and they are always ready with a laugh, but, like all Nagas, they hate being laughed at and believe that misfortune or sickness is likely to fall upon anyone who is the object of derision. Though the tribe contains a few habitual criminals they are, on the whole, very honest. Petty theft is rare, and a man can leave his spear and cloth by the side of a village path knowing he will find his property untouched when he comes to pick it up on his way home. In warfare they were probably no more cowardly than their neighbours, and when hunting tigers and other dangerous game they show extraordinary courage. The standard of morals varies from village to village, but the Lotha husband does not imitate the habitual
unfaithfulness of the Aos, nor does he, like the Semas, boast of his immoralities and decorate the grave of a deceased person (Mills, J. P., 1922). Children as they grew up and marry leaves their old parents but they are usually ready to help to support them.