

A HISTORY OF NAGAS AND NAGALAND

(Dynamics of Oral Tradition in Village Formation)

Visier Sanyu



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INTRODUCTION

It is now widely established that there is a missing chapter in world history—the history of the indigenous people. History has been the study of the growth of nation states, of imperialism, colonialism, 'civilization', Marxism, and ideologies of all shades and colours. For the last two decades, however, the indigenous peoples all over the world are asserting their right of place in the world community and are becoming equal partners in shaping the future course of history. It is significant that the United Nations declared 1993 as the International Year of the Indigenous People, and further declared 1994-2004 as the International Decade of Indigenous People. This Decade could be an important landmark in the history of mankind.

But the study of indigenous history has not so far received the adequate attention of scholars, and this serious neglect cannot be attributed to them alone. One has to appreciate the equally serious lack of knowledge in handling the subject because of an unfamiliarity with the dynamics of a methodology geared to probe and understand this aspect.

Reconstructing the history of societies dispossessed of any written records is an extremely difficult task requiring

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unique and unconventional methodology geared to meet this particular problem. In spite of all the difficulties however, methodologies such as that developed by Jan Vansina have proved useful in understanding such societies. To quote Vansina,

“Whether memory changes or not, culture is reproduced by remembrance put into words and deeds. The mind through memory carries culture from generation to generation. How it is possible for a mind to remember and out of nothing to spin complex ideas messages and instructions for living which manifest continuity over time is one of the greatest wonders one can study, comparable only to human intelligence and thought itself. Oral tradition should be central to students of ideology, of society, of psychology, of art, and finally, of history.”¹

Jan Vansina has brilliantly demonstrated the pertinence of the oral approach to areas where very little exists in terms of written source materials. His efforts in reconstructing the history of the kingdoms of Savanna depended primarily on hearsay, visions, dreams, hallucinations verbal art, personal traditions, traditions of origin and genesis, epics tales, proverbs, sayings, memorized speeches and so on.² He believes that “traditions are perfectly congruent with the society. Any alteration in social organization or practice is immediately accompanied by a corresponding alteration in tradition.”³

There are various theoretical attempts to characterize the Nagas, but the generally accepted view is that they are a powerful indigenous nation consisting of about 40 tribes or

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1. Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, Wisconsin, 1985, p. xi.
 2. Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, Wisconsin, 1975.
 3. Jan Vansina, *op.cit.*, p. 120.

sub-nations that have for centuries inhabited the Naga Hills at the tri-junction of China, India and Myanmar. Their home is the meeting place of the so-called brown and yellow races of Asia. Their intriguing history and culture has always baffled western scholars. According to Julian Jacobs, "Here was a culture which might provide clues to the great movements in human history".⁴

The Angami, a prominent tribe of the Nagas, occupy the heart of Naga ancestral domain. Although the Angami were one of the earliest settlers here, there is an extreme paucity of written records on them. The only authoritative work exclusively focussing on them has been left by J.H. Hutton, who served as an administrator in Naga Hills from 1917 - 1935.⁵ Hutton tried his best to include all aspects of Angami work in his account, but when the question of singling out the essential features of their life arises, his account reveals certain inadequacies which probably can be attributed to his colonial culture and his ties with the government he came to represent. However, his account continues to retain its significance particularly for those who are still unfamiliar with the Angami Naga.

The application of oral tradition varies from place to place. While pursuing this study, detailed work and interviews of the older generation and traditional story tellers was conducted. This stock of folk tales, poems, legends, sayings, prayers and proverbs has not only enriched our understanding of this phenomenon but has also urged us as to which question to pursue. The various festive occasions and traditional performances were also carefully observed to yield the analysis. At the same time, it

4. Julian Jacobs, in *Nagaland : A Contemporary Ethnography*, Editor: Subhadra Channa, Delhi, 1992, p. 297.

5. J.H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, London, 1921.

has not been possible to go into analysis in detail and some aspects will remain unsettled at this stage. Since this work has been a micro-level enquiry and only two villages have been chosen for study, discussion with regard to politico-judicial, ideological and superstructural aspects remains limited particularly during the pre-colonial times.

It needs to be further specified that attempts have been made to avoid reduction of analysis of the proposed aspects solely to the definitions of the mode of production which would possibly have led to widen the basic dialectical unity but dismiss the importance of the socio-economic formation as a coherent of social organism. Generally, the process of the origin of the Angami Nagas has been examined with a view that all cultures have taken elements from other cultures. Various changes were effected through borrowing concepts and practices and migration of families from village to village.

The objectives of the British in subduing the Angami and the process involved in their subjugation has been illustrated with different variables, that is, force, persuasion, role of missionary activity and the nature of the self determination of the Nagas. An estimate of the representatives of colonialism *vis-a-vis* the Angami Nagas is also accounted with the idea of observing transition and transformation which has been further taken up while viewing the nature and process of modernization.

All these concepts have been based on the empirical studies of two villages of KOHIMA and KHONOMA—two prominent Angami seats. The understanding that these two Angami villages show—a considerable degree of peculiarity in their varied phases of transition and transformation forms—the basic discussion in this book.

MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

The migration of peoples and tribes has been an important aspect in history since the very inception of human society. There has been migration from one country to another and from one continent to another. This movement has always shaped and reshaped human history. In the European continent, the Germanic and Celtic tribes crossed over to Rome and laid the foundation of early medieval society in Europe.¹ A classical example of the history of migration was that of the *Maori* people who migrated from *Hawaiki* in the Eastern Pacific to *Aotearoa*—"Land of the Long White Clouds"—which later became New Zealand when the Europeans migrated to the islands and defeated the *Maoris*.² India also has its long history of migrations.

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1. Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*, E.A. Thompson, *The Barbarian Kingdom in Gaul and Spain*, Medieval Studies, Vol. viii, Nottingham, 1963, p. ii.
 2. Robert Paul Jordan, "New Zealand: The Last Utopia?" in *National Geographic*, Vol. 171, No. 5, May, 1987. The history of the *Maori* people was also told to the author by *Te Rangi Huata*, a *Maori* from New Zealand. *Hawaiki* was a legendary island which no longer exists, but the famous voyage of the *Maoris* by canoes formed an interesting part of the *Maori* history of New Zealand.

Aryans crossed over from Central Asia and settled in India.³

The non-Aryans came both before and after the Aryans to the Indian sub-continent. The non-Aryans who were in mainland India before the advent of the Aryans are generally described as aborigines, but their ancestors too must have migrated to India in different phases. The social categories described as tribal had also migrated in various streams. There are varied definitions of 'tribe', but the generally accepted version is that it is a small group of people who can trace their origins to a common ancestry, possessing a communal social organization peculiar to their custom and tradition, and remaining integrated because of their singular ethnicity. These days they are also described as indigenous. There is evidence to show that some of the tribes of non-Aryans origin migrated to India much before the arrival of the Aryans. In the Indian context, the North Western and North Eastern frontiers have been the main entry points from very early times.

On the North Eastern Frontier, we find that the *Boros* were one of the first major groups who migrated to the plains of Assam. Their language was fundamentally Tribeto-Burman. The other early groups which, perhaps, preceded them were speakers of the Austric group of languages. They may have been akin to the present *Khasis*.⁴

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3. J.W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes*, edited by R.C. Jain, Delhi, 1972, pp. XIII-XLVI.
See also his appendix 4, pp. 235-236.
R.C. Majumdar, *Ancient India*, Delhi, 1971 (6th revised edition), pp. 29-32.
 4. Rashid Yusuf Ali, administrator and scholar, who has studied the migration of indigenous to the North Eastern region, was kind enough to provide materials and information on the subject. See also W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Assam*, in two Vols., Delhi, 1975 (reprint).

Those tribes who came after these early groups and settled in this region were the various tribes of Koch, Hajong, Dalu, Garo, Mikir, Dimasa, Arleng, Chutiya, Moram, Lalung, Rabha, Mech, Adi, Apatani, Mishing, Nishi, Ahom, Singpho, Khamti, Kuki, Mizo, Naga, Meitei and so on.⁵

The Nagas who settled in the Naga Hills have various theories of their migration, often recorded by foreign writers. However, the earliest specific reference to the Nagas was made by Claudius Ptolemy in 150 A.D. in his *Geographia* where he referred to the Naga country as "The Realm of the Naked".⁶

On the basis of language, their origin is assigned by Sir G.A. Grierson to that of the Tibeto-Burmans, who came with the second wave of migration from North Western China between the upper waters of the Yangtse-Kiang and Hoang-Ho rivers. According to Grierson, the Angami Naga language is of the Tibeto-Chinese family.⁷

Huang Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim who visited Assam during Bhaskarvarman's rule in 645 A.D. said,

"the east of this country is bounded by a line of hills, so that there is no great city to the kingdom. The frontiers are contiguous to the barbarians of south-west China. These tribes are in fact akin to those of the Man people in their customs."⁸

Ahom Buranjees also recorded that by the time the Ahoms came to Assam in the thirteenth century, Nagas were already settled in Naga Hills. They wrote of Naga resistance

5. Asoso Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, Delhi, 1974, pp. IX-X.

6. Claudius Ptolemy, *Geographia VII*, ii, p. 18

The original text is in Greek.

7. G.A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. III, Part II, Varanasi, 1903, p. 11.

8. Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, (A.D. 629-645), London, 1904, Delhi, 1973 (reprint) p. 186.

to Sukapha, the founder of Ahom Kingdom.⁹ Of course, the exact date of the arrival of the Nagas into the Naga Hills cannot be established with precision, but at the same time their entrance before the Christian Era cannot be ruled out.

While discussing the history of Naga migration there emerge some important questions:

- (a) What was the original home of the Nagas before migrating to the Naga Hills?
- (b) What are those circumstances that forced them to migrate from their original homeland?
- (c) What was the nature and route of migration?

The sources do not provide the exact answers to all these questions at present but some of the legends, folktales and mythology examined with the help of the oral approach, do help to a great degree in solving these problems. Due to the lack of written or recorded sources it makes it exceedingly difficult to analyse the history of the Nagas particularly for the pre-British period. However, the indigenous societies had their own ways of recording events from generation to generation through professional storytellers. It is the information extracted from them which lends credence to our analysis.

Basically, for much of its history, South East Asia has been oriented towards the two great world cultures—China on one hand, India on the other. In South East Asia, the earliest settlers were Paleolithic or pre-Paleolithic food-gatherers, hunters, fishers and folk who had not made the transition to a stone-using culture.¹⁰ The units of this social organization seem to have been small. Often the hunting group or the clan, though in its infancy, were nomadic in

9. E.A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967 (reprint), pp. 78-79.

P. Gogoi, *The Tai and the Tai Kingdom*, Gauhati, 1968, pp. 256-258.

10. Williams Watson, *China Before The Han Dynasty*, London, 1961, pp. 22-54.

habit and generally moved in a defined hunting territory. A traditional division of labour existed between the sexes. The men concentrated on hunting while the women and children collected insects and vegetables for food. By and large, the people could be labelled as primitive.¹¹ Yet in some of their practices one can glimpse the beginnings of agriculture. For example, the Semang of Malaya devised a rudimentary form of tree cultivation and put back into the ground the tips of wild yams in order that a fresh crop might grow.¹² Some of the groups did not use hoe or plough but remained satisfied with digging sticks while other groups practised sedentary agriculture with the hoe as the basic implement. In fact, there were racial contacts between these groups in spite of the technological contrasts. Those who practised the more primitive type of agriculture belonged to some of the earlier stock like Negrito and Nesiots, who originally occupied much of the region but who were increasingly displaced by later groups.¹³

In course of time some of the tribes in upland areas inserted themselves into the existing ecological equilibrium

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11. S.D. Marshall has clearly maintained a distinction between the peasant and primitive. He mentions that "in primitive economies most production is geared to use of producers or to discharge of kinship obligations rather than to exchange and gain. A corollary is that de facto control of means of production is decentralized, local, and familial in primitive society..."
S.D. Marshall, "Political Power and the Economy in Primitive Society" in *Essays in Science of Culture in Honour of Leslie A White*, edited by G.E. Dole and R.L. Carniero, New York, 1960, p. 408.
 12. John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Resichauer, and Albert M. Craig, *East Asia Tradition and Transformation*, London, 1973, p. 18 "Rice, which is the chief cereal of Asia today, is a plant of Southeast Asian origin, and its cultivation was already well established in the Yangtse Valley in pre-historic times".
 13. C.P. Fitz Gerald, *A Concise History of East Asia*, London, 1966, pp. 218-236.

and created for themselves a living space with minimum disruption of that equilibrium incapable of mastering nature. There was a passive adjustment to the environment. In generalized terms these groups would not reach the age of stable agricultural systems based on furrowing. The shifting cultivation was more a shifting of fields rather than a shifting of crops. The amount of land for shifting cultivation was not enough to correspond to the growing population. The ratio of agricultural land must have also been maintained at a low rate due to the nature of technology. Keeping in view the claims of the clan, the kinship obligations, particularly at a time when everything was to be made from the produce of the land and in view of the primitive agrarian technology and the means of irrigation, there clearly was a low land to man ratio. The growing population pressure necessitated an increasing area of land which caused some of these groups who could not cope with the environment to migrate to other parts in search of more favourable conditions. As this stage the migrants were directed by the intervening barriers of mountains and jungles southwards along the seaways of the Malayan world.¹⁴ The other factor which added to this migration within Asia was the expansion of the Chinese Han people pushing southwards as population grew in the cradle area in the valley of the Yellow River.¹⁵ They filled up sub-tropical and tropical China and the pressure of population triggered the momentum which set off great ripples of migration which affected the whole of Asia.¹⁶ As Buchanan remarks :

14. C.P. Fitz Gerald, *The Southern Expansion of the Chinese People*, London, 1972.

15. *Ibid.*

16. D.R. Sardesai, *South East Asia—Past and Present*, Delhi, 1981, pp. 7-10.

“over hundreds of years the pre-Chinese peoples of Central Asia were displaced into the upland areas of Indo-Chinese lands far to the South and their pressure in turn triggered tribal movements which affected the whole of mainland South East Asia and the adjoining island worlds.”¹⁷

These immigrant tribes took different routes. Some took the Himalayan section which extends down through the Patkai, Arakan Yoma, and Banda Arch towards Sumatra and Java, and some took the Pacific section which extends from Formosa through the Phillipines, Borneo and on to Japan.¹⁸

From the above description it can be argued that perhaps the Nagas were among those tribes who migrated from China through the Patkai section and settled on the way in the Naga Hills. There are living examples to illustrate how during migration some of the tribes broke away and settled down enroute. In Borneo and Formosa, there are some indigenous groups who still have the same traditions, culture, socio-religious organizations as the Nagas in the Naga Hills.¹⁹ Some of the mountain tribes of Vietnam also have much in common with some Naga tribes, particularly in manner of dress and food habits.²⁰

17. Keith Buchanan, *The South East Asian World*, London, 1967, p. 26.

18. W.C. Smith, *The Ao Naga Tribe of Assam*, London, 1925, pp. 153-160.
See also, D.E.G. Hall, *A History of South East Asia*, London, 1958.

19. Keviselie Hans Mathisen, a Sami from Norway has conducted a comparative study of the Nagas and the indigenous of Formosa and found many similarities in cultural and social organizations. He visited both the places in 1977. But unfortunately his travel accounts have not been published. The author of this book met him personally in Norway in 1984 to get this information.

20. The scholar visited South Vietnam in 1974 and met members of the mountain people, and noted certain striking similarities between the two tribes, particularly, some weaving patterns were identical.

The Naga scholar, Horam, has his own views about the original home of his people. He writes:

“There can be little doubt that at one time the Nagas must have wandered about before they found their permanent abode; from their myths and legends one gathers that there is a dim relationship with the natives of Borneo in that the two have a common traditional way of headhunting; with the Phillipines and Formosa through the common system of terrace cultivation; and with the Indonesians, as both use the loin loom for weaving cloth. The embroidery on the Naga cloths resemble the kind done on Indonesian cloths”.²¹

According to the Burma Census Report, successive invasion of Tibeto-Burman peoples came from the region of Western China, between the sources of the Yangtse-Kiang and Hoang-Ho rivers.²² Marshall writes:

“the early home of the people of Eastern Asia was in the upper reaches of Hoang-Ho or the Yellow River of China and that from this centre the Tibetans moved westwards; the early tribes of Indo-China southwards; and the Chinese south-eastwards. According to this view the progenitors of the Karen probably formed a part of their southward migration”.²³

Another Naga Scholar Alemchiba, says:

“We can conclude that, the original stock starting from the centre of dispersion in Sikiang Province first moved westernly and upon reaching the headwaters of Irrawady and Chindwin rivers, bifurcated into several directions, ultimately leading to Tibet, to Assam, to the hill ranges between Assam and Burma. That branch which came to

21. H. Horam, *Naga Policy*, Delhi, 1975, p. 28.

22. *Burma Census Report of 1911*, p. 252.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 6. The Karens of Burma are closely related to the Nagas.

the hill range moved further west and entered Naga Hills. Another wave from South East Islands taking a north-westerly direction and entered Naga Hills using Burma as a corridor".²⁴

Another scholar whom we have referred to earlier is Hutton. He wrote:

"The history of how the Naga tribes came precisely to occupy their present position has, of course, passed into the dim obscurity of vague traditions. But enough of them remain to give some indication of the course which the migration took. The legends of the Aos and of the Semas give those tribes a more or less autochthonous origin, though these legends are probably the old legends of the race which have been given a local value. The Angamis, too, spring from ancestors who emerged from the bowels of the earth, but that not in Angami country, but in some land to the south. And all the weight of tradition points to migration from the south, except in the case of Kacha Naga".²⁵

All these observations suggest very important solutions to two aspects: (a) the origin of the Nagas, and (b) the route of migration. It becomes amply clear that the Nagas came from the Mongolian stock who migrated from China before the Christian Era. This also suggests that the migration of these Nagas did not take place in one wave. It must have continued for some centuries in various groups because the oral sources, folklore and other legendary sources do support us in suggesting that all the Naga tribes did not split up into different tribes only from Naga Hills itself. There are some tribes like *Angami*, *Sema*, *Lotha*, *Rengma*, and *Chakhesang* who

24. M. Alemchiba Ao, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, Kohima, 1970, p. 19.

25. J.H. Hutton, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

have branched out from Khezhakenoma.²⁶ But there are other tribes too who branched out either enroute to Naga Hills or in their early homeland. The former tradition seems to be more probable, so far as the question of the racial symptoms of the Nagas are concerned, there is no doubt that they are a Mongolian race and a distinct unit in themselves, but the centuries of migration on their route must have certainly brought them into contact not only with some other races but must have also been influenced by their technology and varied social, political, and religio-cultural traditions. To accept Horam's view that they are of a mixed blood and that "no Naga tribe is of pure blood"²⁷ is historically intelligible. It is difficult to believe that the art of terrace cultivation practised by the Angamis and the *Igorot* of Phillipines is the same and that they could be one as has been put forward by W.C. Smith.²⁸ The way the art of cultivation is carried out does not always depend on the way man wants to carry it out, but often depends on definite environmental and ecological conditions. Eric Wolf has profoundly established how such environmental factors play a role in evolving a diverse society.

"Civilization has a long and involed history; the archaeological record indicates a great diversity in the processes which allowed men in different parts of the world to make the transition from primitives to peasants.... From these or similar original centres, cultivation spread out with variable speed in different directions, being adapted to demands of new climates and new social exigencies".²⁹

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26. *Khezhakenoma* is the original home of many Naga tribes. It is named after *Koza* the founder of the village. *Khezhakenoma* villagers still call their villages *Kozani*, which means 'man of *Koza*'.
Source: from *Khezhakenoma* villagers tales.
27. H. Horam, *op.cit.*, p. 28.
28. W.C. Smith, *op.cit.*, pp. 153-160.
29. Eric Wolf, *Peasants*, London, 1966, p. 4.

• However, the influences of the races they came into contact with cannot be completely ignored.

A thorough examination of sources leads one to believe that the Nagas took the route of the Patkai Himalayan section and it could be possible that some branch of the tribe did not settle in Naga Hills but continued their march to Borneo, Java, Sumatra and the Phillipines. The view that they took the Pacific section and then reached the Naga Hills is not historically convincing and in appropriate.³⁰ Although the possibility of some branch having taken a different direction through the Pacific cannot be ruled out, yet Alemchiba on the basis of Marshall's view and the Burma Census Report, derives the conclusion which is not far from our view so far as the as the origin of the Naga is concerned.³¹

Apart from this written record as a source material, we have some oral source—folklore, legends and traditions which throw light on the subject of migration. Today, almost all the Naga tribes, trace their origin back to the village of *Khezhakenoma* in Nagaland.³² *Khezhakenoma* is a village in *Chakhesang* area near the present Manipur border.

30. W.C. Smith, *op.cit.*

31. Alemchiba Ao, *op.cit.*, pp. 18-19.

32. The legends of *Khezhakenoma* are very popular in Nagaland. The author met many elders from various villages to get this information during field work in 1987. It is impossible to mention them all by name but the main informants are the following from *Khezhakenoma*:

From Chisomi clan:

Mr. Vivotso (63), Area Council Member

Mr. Lhouchinyi (61)

Mr. D.K. Ngone (53), Ex-Village Chairman

Mr. Selu (52) Gaon Bura

Mr. Mebemvu (90), the eldest man in the village

From Zeipfemi clan:

The legend recounts that a person named *Koza* came from the East and after reaching Mekroma (Maikhel) in Manipur he rested for some time and pondered on which way his steps should lead him next. Ultimately, he prayed to his God for guidance. Suddenly a bird flew by and alighted on the horn of his mithun³³ and then flew off again in the direction of *Khezhakenoma*. In order to doubly check this guidance from above, he placed his walking stick on the ground and the stick fell down, pointing in the same direction towards which the bird had flown. *Koza* took this to be direct guidance from the Spirits to continue his journey in that specific direction. He set off for *Khezhakenoma* and upon reaching his destination, legend has it that he saw the very same bird that had appeared to him earlier resting there upon a stone.³⁴ Later on, *Koza* found that a frog had brought a grain of rice and left it on the Stone where it multiplied into two. *Koza* also brought a basket of rice which doubled when placed on the Stone. He

(Contd. from previous page)

Mr. Khalo Ladu (58), Area Council member

Mr. C. Kedonyi (52), School Teacher

Mr. Kepfelhou, Gaon Bura

From *Komino* clan:

Mr. Chelo (64)

Mr. Ngode (75), Ex-Gaon Bura

Mr. Kodova (50), Gaon Bura

Mr. Kevekha Zehol, research scholar NEHU, who also acted as interpreter for the author.

33. *Mithun* is the most valued and prestigious animal among all the Naga tribes. It is the status symbol demonstrating wealth and power. The original word for *mithun* is not known but perhaps originates from the Angami word *mithu* meaning cow. *Bos Frontalis* is its Latin name.
34. According to legend, *Koza* stuck his rod into the ground where it took root and grew into a tree. There is still a tree in *Maikhel* village which is supposed to be an off-shoot of the original tree. This tree is much revered by the people of *Mikhel* because of its connection with *Koza*.

KOHIMA

After a long drawn process of migration and settlement, the important centres which emerged in the Angami country are Kohima and Khonoma. In this chapter we shall be focusing on Kohima. Kohima is said to be the second largest populated village in the world and the biggest village in Asia in terms of population.¹

One of the oldest legends still surviving in the minds of the villagers is that this area was first discovered and chosen for settlement by a man called *Whio* and that Kohima in course of time came to be termed as *Kewhimia*, named after *Whio*, which means 'men of Whio'.²

The other version of the origin of this village is that the first settlers were *Usou* and *Rhieo* who came with their sister *Mesei-u* and her son *Tsiera* from *Kigwema*.³ These people saw from afar a huge tree on a hillock on the land where Kohima now stands. The tree appeared to be in the centre of the area, and they searched for seven days to locate it.

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1. Kohima is presently the capital of the hill state of Nagaland.
 2. There is a section who attribute the origin of Kohima to this legend. Shurhozeli (50) of Kohima told the scholar this legend.
 3. Salhouthie (70) of Kohima told this folk tale to the scholar.

When eventually they found the tree they came down to settle in Kohima. The legend also reads that the first settlers had a dream where they saw plenty of white and black ants mixing. This dream was interpreted to mean that this place was a land where the population would increase and that strangers would come and settle here. Notwithstanding the dream, it becomes very clear that a group of the early settlers did realize that Kohima was a place which would assume a central character and welcome people from various directions. This is strongly supported by the fact that in the Angami language "Mia bu u Kehi kepfu-u chutuo" means "we shall welcome people" or "people shall come to us". The name *Kewhimia* was adopted by the British as Kohima, and was eventually accepted by the Nagas thereafter.⁴

Tradition shows that the early settlers found Kohima to be a land of seven lakes and seven hills.⁵ Later, Kohima developed into a village with seven gates. Curiously enough it is to be noted that from earliest times the number seven has figured prominently in its history and tradition. Seven is a mysterious and sacred number for the Angami. Much of the folklore is connected with the number seven, such as seven days, seven years, seven clans, and so on. For instance, even to the present day, the fine for theft is fixed at seven times the value stolen. The reference to the seven lakes is a clear indication of the fact that the land had a good water source to start terrace cultivation which was very important to the early settlers for permanent occupation of the place.

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4. Visietuo Linyu narrated the history of the first settlers of Kohima to the scholar.
 5. Shurhozelie, *A Ra Kezevi*, Kohima, 1984, p 2.
The original word used here denotes 'lakes'. But from all geographical information, the existence of lakes in this area is highly unlikely. The reference must, therefore, have been to springs or ponds.

Kohima, from ages past, continues to be in the heart of the Angami country and is surrounded by eleven villages: *Jotsoma, Rukhroma, Secuma, Ciedema, Mima, Merema, Chieziema, Nerhema, Phesama, Pfuchama* and *Chakhaba*. The traditional village has a population of more than twenty thousand and the capital city which has grown around Kohima village has a population of around one lakh. Kohima, the capital of Nagaland, has grown out of the original Kohima village. The original village still stands with its own tribal social organization. Since in the early process of settlement and evolution of various Angami villages we do not find any evidence of both the village of Kohima and Khonoma, it becomes all the more important to probe thoroughly and establish the various factors that led to the evolution of these villages.

We have seen how over a period of time more fertile land and the subsequent growth of population, and search for sustenance split the early Naga tribes into various settlements of *Semas, Lothas, Rengmas, Mao, Maram, Tangkhul, Zeliang, Chakhesang*, and so on. After these processes of splitting up into various tribes took place, each tribe fixed its own perimeter for carrying out their struggle for sustenance with communal labour. Each tribe developed its tribal or clan social and economic organization under the supreme authority of their chiefs or elders. But in course of time each tribe aspired for maximum land, forests, pasture and it became necessary to push back each others borders. This phenomenon being strongly supported by the gradual growth of population, introduced in-fighting among various tribes which had branched out from the same root.

In due course some of the weaker and smaller tribes carried out a defence against others by intra-tribal alliances. In this intra-tribal warfare, we find that the Angamis emerged powerful due to some important historical

reasons. It was at this stage that the early foundations of material culture were being laid down. The first and foremost reason for their emergence as a dominant tribe was the geographical character of the territory they occupied. When we look at these settlements we find that the Angami settlements were well connected with the region of Assam on one side and Manipur on the other.⁶ The history of Assam reveals that the process of agrarian organization had started much earlier with comparatively developed farming and agricultural technology. Besides, Assam was easily linked with India. So penetration of any influence into Assam was part of the usual historical process. The area bordering Manipur was also occupied by the Angamis or by related tribes and, like Assam, they continued to be influenced by the developing technology in agriculture, craft-making and other fields.⁷ It appears that the situation proved to be an added asset to the Angamis because they were the first to receive the waves of development from the outside world through these two directions.⁸ As Assam and Manipur were the two states with advanced culture, economy and politics from ancient times.

The other important factor that helped in imposing their dominance was the environment they were in. When the process of settling down was taking place, they chose to

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6. B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Shillong, 1905.
T.C. Hodson, *op.cit.*
M. Horam, *op.cit.*, pp. 5-7, 42, 43.
 7. Lakshmi Debi, *op.cit.*
 8. Assam and Manipur were the states with advanced culture, economy and politics from ancient times.
S.K. Bhuyan, *Studies in the History of Assam*, Gauhati, 1965, pp. 1-77.
S.K. Chatterjee, *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India*, Gauhati, 1955.
K.L. Barua, *Early History of Kamarupa*, Gauhati, 1966, pp. 96-103.

settle in an area which was endowed with rich forests, pastures, flora, fauna, springs and streams which continued to irrigate their lands for terrace cultivation almost throughout the year. Naturally, a clan endowed with all the possibilities for their hunting exercises and some amount of land for settled agriculture to supplement their hunting increased in number and posed their authority over smaller and relatively poorer clans over a period of time.⁹ Another factor that proved the growth of the Angamis as a powerful tribe was the support provided by the *Tenyimia* group. In the earlier chapter we have illustrated how the Angamis evolved out of *Tenyimia* as a separate tribe. We find that given the above mentioned advantages, the *Tenyimia* tribes settled in the immediate neighbourhood of the Angamis. They gave all support to the rising Angamis and always provided defence from other tribes. These are some of the factors which favoured the emergence of the Angamis as a prominent tribe in the Naga hills. In fact, we do not have any literary or even oral evidence for the earlier period but it appears that there must have been mutual assistance between rulers of Manipur, Assam and the Angamis.¹⁰ It was these factors which appear to have favoured the emergence of the Angamis as a powerful group able to subject other tribes and levy tribute from them.

Before we proceed further, it becomes historically essential to probe the emergence of Kohima into an

9. David Laibman in his thesis regarding modes of production has brought out the analysis of this aspect clearly wherein he also stresses the accumulation of surplus as a necessary though not sufficient condition for evolution of the preliminaries of class antagonism in the tribal formation. D Laibman, "Modes of Production and Theories of Transition" in *Science and Society*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 3, Fall, 1984, New York, pp. 268-269.

10. Milada Ganguli, *A Pilgrimage to the Nagas*, Delhi 1984, pp. 1-15.

important Angami centre. Why did the Kohima settlement of the Angamis emerge so important? What are the various factors responsible for its development? For explaining this development we have no other alternative but to examine the emergence of various clans which led to the formation of Kohima the intra-clan alliances, feuds and mergers of those various social and material processes which linked and de-linked these various clans together. Earlier in this chapter we have demonstrated how Kohima was selected by some of its first settlers because of its resources and how they perceived that this place would welcome and accommodate more people in course of time.

Let us first look into the history of this clan formation as told by the Kohima folk themselves.¹¹

LHISEMIA — As mentioned earlier, the first settlers in Kohima were two brothers—*Usou* and *Rhio*.¹² These two brothers lived together in harmony. But one day, *Rhio's* hunting dog killed his brother *Usou's* child. The ancient Angami customary law known as *themu* required that *Rhio* be exiled from the village as the consequence of this, and accordingly *Rhio* made preparations to do so. His grief stricken brother, *Usou*, begged him to stay and not leave him bereft of both child and brother. But *Rhio*, in keeping with the ancient law, left the village and settled at a nearby place called *Mouthuzhu* which falls in the present *Lhiesemia* area. He had five sons, three of whom—*Soukhrie*, *Linyu*, and *Khielie* formed *Rhiepfumia* clan which was named after *Rhio*.

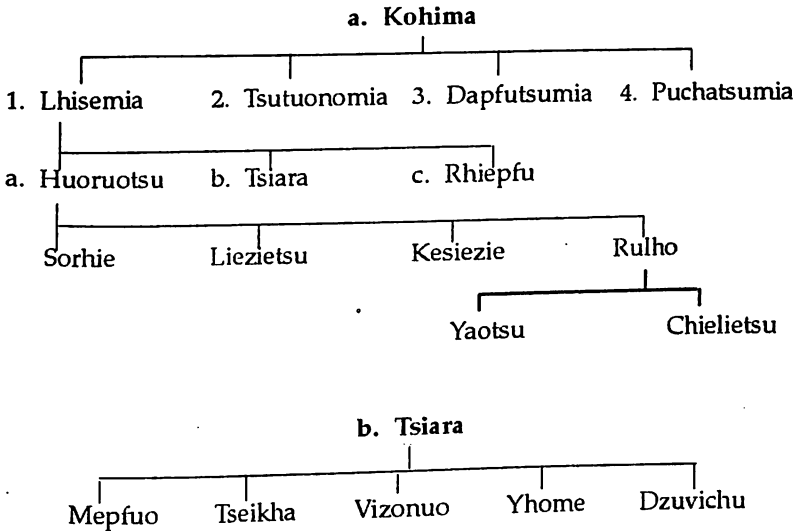
When *Rhio* and *Usou* came to Kohima, they were accompanied by their sister, *Mesei-u*, and her son *Tsiera*. *Tsiera* became a successful man and it is said that he and his

11. See Table on Clan Organization at the end of this Chapter.

12. Salhouthie (70) of Kohima village related to the history of *Lhiesemia* clan.

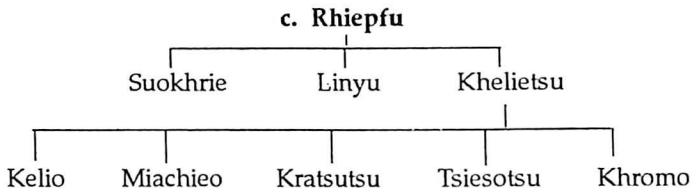
influence exercised by outside economy, with the decline of Ahom rule, a closed nature of economy was imposed and Kohima seems to have closed its doors to developing contacts from Manipur on one hand, and Assam on the other, for a period until British made Kohima headquarters in the later part of the nineteenth century.³⁵ Though initially the British entry in the Angami country met with strong resistance, the British were gradually able to establish themselves in Nagaland with their main centre at Kohima.³⁶ It was with the establishment of colonial rule that Kohima assumed prominence from every point of view, until Kohima became the centre not only of political activity but the hub of the socio-cultural and political life of the Nagas.

1. CLAN ORGANISATION OF KOHIMA

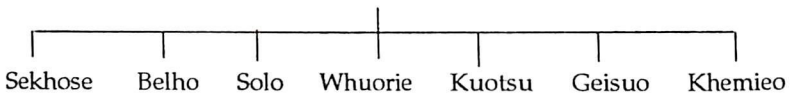


35. H.K. Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes: North-East Frontier, Gauhati*, 1981, pp. 50-69.

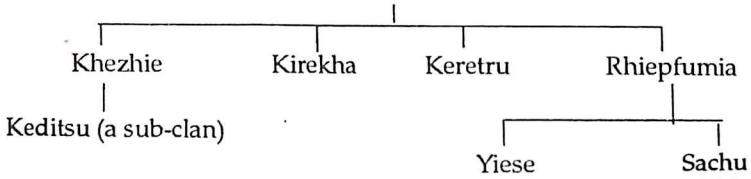
36. Robert Reid, *op.cit.*, pp. 99-175.



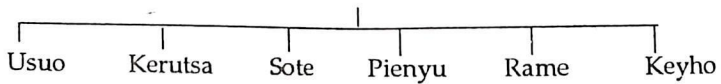
2. TSUTUONOMIA



3. DAPFUTSUMIA



4. PUCHATSUMIA



KHONOMA

The village of Khonoma has played an unparalleled role in the history of Nagaland. Although a small village situated in harsh and rugged terrain, it had long been considered to be the most powerful and feared in the Naga Hills.¹ Dreaded by the *Zemi* villages for its barbaric and ferocious attacks, it meted out cruel harassment to these villages, and caused the *Zemi* to compare it with a hurricane or storm. It is probable that the word 'Angami' was coined by the *Zemi* from their word 'gami' meaning 'invaders',² although this point is strongly disputed by the other Angami groups which have their own version of the origin of the name. The tradition of warfare continued to colonial times when Khonoma stubbornly and valiantly resisted the British advent into the Naga Hills.³ Khonoma played a most significant role in nurturing the growth of the Naga

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1. James Jhonstone, *Manipur and the Naga Hills*, Delhi, 1971 (reprint), p. 47.
 2. This information was given to the scholar by Haigwang Zeliang of Gaili Village.
 3. J. Jhonstone, *op.cit.*

struggle for independence and it is also the village of A Z Phizo, the Father of Naga Nationalism.

The name of the village is derived from *Khwuno*, a native plant which grows wild in these hills. The original name, *Khwunomia*, meaning 'Men of Khwuno', has come to be called *Khonoma* in more recent times. It is believed that the original name was given by settlers who preceded the present inhabitants, but moved on because they found the climate 'too cold to grow rice'.⁴

When we look at the source materials regarding the formation of Khonoma, the factors appear similar to those that led to the establishment of other Angami villages.⁵

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4. This information was given by Theyieviso (87) of Khonoma village.
 5. Since childhood, the scholar had participated in many festivals and special occasions where the history of Khonoma was narrated and discussed—a usual customary practice from early times. As a child, the scholar attended the *Thehu* (morung), a traditional institution and dormitory where the young boys are taught the culture and traditions of the tribe by the elders. For over a decade, the author had interviewed hundreds of people in Khonoma with a specific purpose in mind. It is impossible to mention all their names. Listed below are a few names of persons representing various clans who narrated the history of Khonoma to the scholar.
 - Bizo (62), *Gaon Bura* of Thevoa clan.
 - Dietho-u (63), of Thevom clan.
 - Khotonyu (61), of Thevoma clan.
 - Yieto (90), of Thevoma clan.
 - Visieu (65), of Thevoma clan.
 - Visesie (45), of Thevoma clan.
 - Theyievizo (87), *Gaon Bura* of Merhuma clan.
 - Pusieto (68), *Gaon Bura* of Semoma clan.
 - Keriu (60), of Semoma clan.
 - Khu-u (69), of Kuthotsu clan.
 - Vivor (80), of Kuotsu clan.
 - Krulhubi (65), of Semoma clan.
 - Petenihu (48), Merhuma clan.
 - Thoniu (48), Merhuma clan.
 - Sebi (62), Merhuma clan.

Khonoma is situated in the extreme west of Angami country. Although most of the area is mountainous, Khonoma also has considerable stretches of valleys within the hill tracts. The various hills determining the nature and topography of Khonoma are *Ho Phera*, *Mhoziekha*, *Nikriba*, *Sikhri*, *Virhiecha*, *Gagidzuthi*, *Thekhwecathi* and *Kradi*. In the south, Khonoma borders the *Zemi* territory and the romantic *Dzuku* Valley which stretches to Manipur.⁶ The northern side faces *Zubza*, and in the east is the village of *Jotsoma* while the village of *Mezoma* lies to the west.

The population of Khonoma is around 6000.⁷ The village land stretches to over 20 km in length from east to west. The whole area is rich in forest resources and has innumerable varieties of trees. The forests are of a mixed deciduous and evergreen type, with vast areas of jhum-stands predominated by *Alnus Nepalensis*, locally known as *Rupo*. Among the varieties of forest products, *Rupo*, *Alnus Nepalensis*, occupies a dominant portion. *Rupo* is popularly known as *alder*. The tree plays a very important role in the economy of Khonoma. It has a unique capacity for regeneration. After felling, when the stump of the tree is so treated by the villagers so as to allow fresh shoots to grow out of the cut stump, five to ten such shoots sprout up

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6. Unfortunately, there is a serious lack of detailed geographical accounts on Nagaland. Evidence of the village boundaries has been derived from the long fieldwork carried out in the area of study.
 7. According to the Khonoma Baptist Church Census 1985, out of the total population of a little over 6000, only 1945 were living in Khonoma in August, 1985. This shows that more than half of the population were living outside the village. Many have jobs in Kohima and others have migrated elsewhere—mostly to Dimapur area, but most of them keep a close link with the village and are registered in the church membership and electoral rolls. This makes it extremely difficult to give the precise population of Khonoma.

from each stump. These then grow to maturity within a period of three years after which they are cut for firewood. This leaves the stump of the tree ready again for the growth of a fresh batch of shoots. Since the cycle of jhum cultivation follows a three-year course, the next harvest of firewood would be again after three years. However, if larger branches are desired, the tree may be cut instead after six years, i.e. during the next jhum cycle. In addition, the alder plays an important ecological role in maintaining the balance of the fertility of the soil. Its leaves serve to form a rich natural layer of topsoil. Almost all the hills have a young sedimentary rock formation and there is a possibility of coal and uranium in some areas.⁸ Climatically, the area is pleasant although winter can be cold with mild snowfall on the hilltops. However, the factor which seems to have proved a major attraction for settlers is the terrain of Khonoma which provided large scope for terrace cultivation, and the steep hills, particularly *Mhoziekha*, which provided a natural defence. The terrace cultivation is considered to be a great achievement in Angami civilization. "The unique rice terraces, built through centuries, are famous for their advanced engineering."⁹

Since the beginning of human history, the search for food has been part of the struggle for survival among all

8. Unpublished Official Records, Department of Geology and Mining, Government of Nagaland, Kohima.

9. Keviselie Hans Ragnar Mathisen, *Arbervirolas Naga Mussihkka*, Tromso, 1985, p. 8.

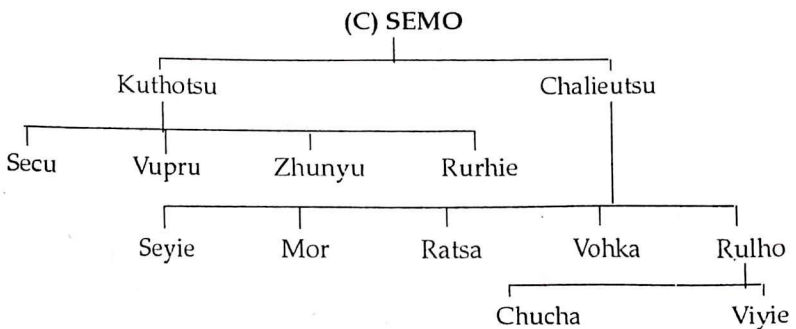
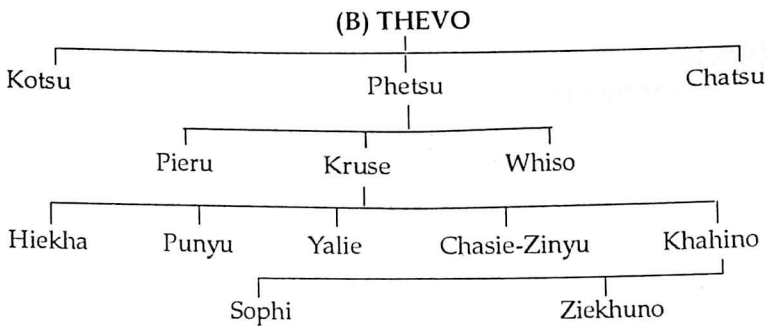
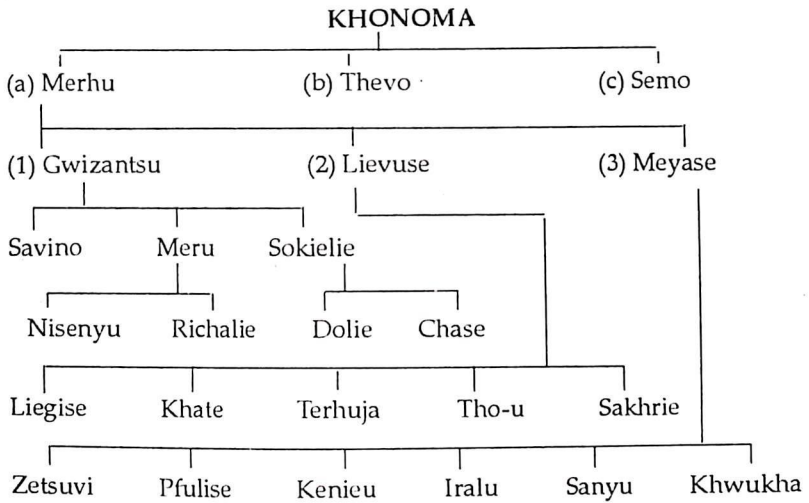
See also C. von Furer-Haimendorf, "Nagas" in *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mankind*, Vol II, London, 1978, p. 142A.

"The Angami... have developed a system of irrigated rice terraces second only to the famous terrace fields of the Ifugo of the Philippines. The Angami terraces are remarkable feats of engineering, carved out of hills slopes over drops of thousands of feet".

peoples. As we discussed in the chapter on Migration and Settlement. *Koza's* descendants went out of Khezhakenoma and formed various villages and tribes in the Naga Hills. One of his descendants was *Vadio*. Tradition narrates that *Vadio's* sons *Zuonuo* and *Keyhonuo* founded the villages of Southern Angami and formed the *Zuonuo-Keyhonuo* clans.¹⁰ One of their descendants by the name *Mekhu* lived in *Kigwema* village.¹¹ *Mekhu* had two sons—*Merhu* and *Pfukha*. *Pfukha* is said to have lived and died in *Kigwema* but his brother *Merhu* migrated to *Khonoma* with his youngest son, *Meyase*, following his two other sons, *Khwukha* and *Khate*, who were among the founding fathers of *Khonoma*.¹² The oral history of the village records that it was during a hunting expedition that *Khwukha* and *Khat* discovered *Khonoma*.¹³ It is indicated that the emergence of *Khonoma* into a village settlement was due to the fact that the Naga indigenous organization depended by and large on hunting for their subsistence, although efforts were also made to supplement it by agriculture. After *Khwukha's* and

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10. N.K. Das, "Land Management, Dual inheritance and Redistribution Among the *Zuonuo-Keyhonuo* Naga", *Agrarian Situation in India*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1982, p. 85. This evidence is collaborated by oral sources as well.
 11. *Visa*, an old man of 79 years, from *Kigwema* village, is a traditional storyteller and was kind enough to give this information.
 12. Please see the geneological table at the end of this chapter.
 13. There are many different versions regarding the history of *Khonoma* which is a sensitive issue, and each clan stands firmly on its own version. The different interpretations can even lead to clan feuds, the author has come across many heated arguments on this matter in the course of his studies. However, after cross examination of all these versions, the scholar has been in a position to evolve some sort of consensus which was accepted in the light of historical details by almost all the clans of *Khonoma* and this stands devoid of any traditional bias.

Khonoma Clan Organization



BRITISH COLONIZATION

With the commencement of the nineteenth century. British colonialism had touched the highest particularly in terms of territorial expansion and exploitation of resources. The conquest of Bengal after the Battle of Plassey (1757) had given them a great advantage in conquering the rest of India as the rich revenue could be utilized by them.¹ In fact, they did it so schematically that rulers of various parts of India were gradually dislodged to add to the strength of British dominion in India.² In the North Western region of India, British colonialism made great progress by liquidating the Sikh rule in Punjab and Kashmir in 1846, trying to establish their residency in Gilgit bordering China.³ As a

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1. R. Mukherjee, *The Rise and Fall of East India Company*, Bombay, 1973, p. 257-268.
 2. R.C. Majumdar, *British Paramountancy in Indian Renaissance*, Vol. IX, Part I, Bombay, 1970.
 3. The British occupation of Kashmir was desired more from the security point of view. To stop the Russian and Chinese advance the British felt the necessity of containing the Sikh Kingdom. F. Drew, *The Northern Barrier of India*, London, 1877. Herbert B. Edwards and M. Herman, *Life of Sir Henry Lawrence*, London, 1873, p. 261. See also R.L. Hangloo, *Agrarian System of Kashmir*, Delhi, 1995, pp. 1-10.

matter of fact, China and Burma figure prominently in British-Indian politics since the beginning of the nineteenth century when they made all-out efforts to promote their mercantile interests.⁴ It was this Anglo-Burmese commercial question that lifted the position of North East India very high in British maneuvers.⁵

The North Eastern region was divided into a number of monarchies, kingdoms and village states. Assam, Cachar, Jaintia, Tripura and Manipur were monarchical states.⁶ In Khasi Hills there were a number of petty states under *syiemship*.⁷ The Naga Hills and Arunachal Pradesh were either under tribal chiefs or managed by the tribal councils and were left untouched by Indians.⁸ The British colonists had the advantage in many in annexing the North Eastern region to their empire. The monarchies were on the decline. To make matter worse, in Manipur and Assam there were rival claimants to the throne. The contesting parties sought either British or Burmese intervention.⁹ Burma was then a

4. M.I. Sladkovsky, *The Long Road: Sino-Russian Economic Contacts from Ancient Times to 1917*, Moscow, 1981, pp. 158-162.

5. H.K. Barpujari, *op.cit.*

Charles Allen, *A Mountain in Tibet*, London, 1983, pp. 98-119.

6. John Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, Delhi, 1985.

H.K. Barpujari, *Political History of Assam*, Vol. One, Gauhati, 1977, pp. 1-6.

7. Hamlet Bareh, *History and Culture of Khasi People*, Shillong, 1964, pp. 51-134.

H. Lyngdoh, *Ki Syiem Khasi Synteng bad ka Niam Khasi*, Shillong, 1937.

P.R.T. Gurdon, *The Khasis*, Calcutta, 1914.

8. H.K. Barpujari, *op.cit.*

9. This was the usual phenomenon with the decline of Ahom power. When the Manipuris drove out the ruler of Cachar, he went to seek British protection and ultimately all such moves by various chiefs and rajahs gave the British the upper hand in subjecting these areas. H.K. Barpujari, *Political History of Assam, op.cit.*, p. 5.

powerful state with political ambitions in North East India. The Burmese occupied Assam, Manipur and Cachar.¹⁰ Their army marched towards Jaintia and assumed a stiff attitude towards the British territory of Bengal.¹¹ In spite of their policy of non-intervention, the British declared war against Burma in March 1824.¹² The Burmese were badly defeated and the British emerged as the most dominant power by the Treaty of Yandabo (1826). Under the terms of this Treaty signed between the king of Ava on the Burmese side and the British, "His Majesty, the king of Ava surrendered among others his claim over Assam and the neighbouring states of Cachar, Jaintia and Manipur to the British."¹³

The occupation of the indigenous territories bordering Assam was now important to the British from various points of view. As J.B. Bhattacharjee puts it,

"Ever since their ascendancy in Assam valley, the British aimed at using the tribes of eastern fringes as a screen between the newly acquired territories and the kingdom of Burma."¹⁴

Apart from this strategic position, it was important for commercial reasons as well:

"The discovery of tea (1823), coal and petroleum (1825), had already impressed upon the company the prospects of promotion of its commercial interests."¹⁵

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5. See also Asoso Yonou, *op.cit.*, 62-85.

11. H.K. Barpujari, *op.cit.*, pp. 4-5.

12. E.A. Gait, *op.cit.*, pp. 232-240.

13. H.K. Barpujari, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

14. J.B. Bhattacharjee, "The Eastern Himalayan Trade of Assam in the Colonial period", Proceedings of *North East India History Association*, First Session, Shillong, 1980, p. 178.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

Moreover, Assam was exposed to the Naga raids and the British ultimately decided in favour of the forward Policy.¹⁶

The first British contact with the Nagas was established in 1832 when Francis Jenkins and R.B. Pamberton travelled through the Angami territory in search of a route between Manipur and Assam.¹⁷ To quote Moffat Mills,

"The first time the Angami Naga country was ever visited by Europeans was January 18, 1832, when Captains Jenkins and Pamberton with a party of 700 soldiers and 800 coolies or porters of carry the baggage and provisions marched from Manipur in progress to Assam. The route pursued was via Sengmae, Myungkhang, Mooran Khoohoo, Moheelong, Dhaseree river, Mohang Dejoa and Ramsah which latter place they reached about the 23rd of January 1832."¹⁸

Thus the territories inhabited by the Nagas, which first came into contact with the British were those of the Angami

16. A Mackenzie, *op.cit.*, 129.

In 1876 Col. R.H. Keatinge, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, with the prior permission of the secretary of State adopted the Forward Policy for preventing future raids and exacting reparation for the past outrages.

Ibid., p. 130.

17. The contact of the British with the Nagas should not be taken to imply that the British established themselves in Naga Hills in 1832, but it was the earliest reference made in our sources about the British entrance into the Naga Hills in search of a road link between Manipur and Assam. However, their political motivation cannot be ruled out.

18. A.J. Moffat Mills, *Report on the Province of Assam*, 1854, pp. CXLV-CXII.

Political Proceedings, 5th March, 1832, Nos. 67-71, India office Library, London.

See also V. Elwin, *Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, Bombay, 1969, p. 114.

tribe. The Angamis, fearing British invasion, put up a tough resistance in the beginning and fought with whatever primitive weapons they had. But the well-organized British forces with the latest and superior fighting weapons finally succeeded in penetrating through the Naga country.¹⁹

Thereafter, a series of expeditions followed. In 1833, Lieut. Gordon conducted the second expedition.²⁰ The series of expeditions carried out by the British demonstrate clearly that they could not register much success although they were well equipped in terms of soldiers and armoury. But their frequent attempts laid the foundation for the process of detribalization in the traditional Naga political and social organization.²¹ Some years after the expedition of 1833, the Assam Tea Company, which at the time was the most prominent one, established its foothold in areas of Upper Assam bordering the Naga Hills.²²

The ex-rajah of Upper Assam, Purander Singha (1836), seems to have felt insecure at this increasing British penetration. He therefore granted the territories of Gabharu Hills in Upper Assam bordering Naga territory to the British.²³ This act proved to be of great significance to the British, because it was from this permanent establishment that they could easily penetrate and make

19. *Ibid.* The Nagas used bows and arrows and spears. They also rolled boulders on the advancing British troops.

20. *Ibid.*

21. It was with the British entrance that the new administration tried to erode the political strength of the traditional tribal institutions by running a kind of parallel system, though extremely limited in the initial phase.

22. The Assam Tea Company was founded by London merchants on 12th February, 1839.

R.C. Majumdar, *op.cit.*, p. 1099.

23. H.K. Barpujari, *op.cit.*, p. 1.

MODERNIZATION AND ITS IMPACT

In the previous chapters our analysis has focused on those developments which transferred the political control of the Angami possession from indigenous to colonial hands. To safeguard their colonial interests in India, the British found it necessary to control the territories of the North Eastern Frontier. The occupation of these areas not only provided them with the natural resources of tea, oil, minerals and forest products, but also adequately equipped their efforts in the expansionist design. On this North Eastern Frontier, the Naga Hills occupied a prominent position. However, as we have already dealt with this aspect in the precious chapter, we shall look into those processes which transformed the Angami society into a modernized one.¹ A

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1. The studies devoted to the nature of various indigenous societies of the world have recorded the clear demarcation of various phases of transition and the process involved therein. But in the case of the Angami Nagas, the transition appears to be a prolonged one. This cannot be merely attributed to their isolation from the rest of the world but also to the inherent strength of the race people which sustained this prolonged transition. For studying this transitional phase, the Sage Series on African modernization and development has developed a perspective which will certainly prove rewarding for studying all indigenous societies.

See *Modes of Production in Africa*, Vol. 5, edited by D. Crummey and C.C. Stewart, London, 1981.

careful study of all the mechanisms, changes and forces which were involved in this process of transition shall figure in this chapter. Since the study is devoted to the two villages of Kohima and Khonoma, the main centres of the Angami Nagas, the pivotal focus shall be on the development taking place in them. However, the influences which this process of development worked over the entire Naga society cannot be ignored altogether.

Generally our sources illustrate that the transition from the traditional to contemporary society was accompanied by various forces of confrontation and conflict.² When we deploy the principle of historical materialism, one finds that this transition from pre-modern to modern was always historically inevitable. But this historical inevitability forms the critical link in these two phases (pre-modern and modern) which was further strengthened by the British occupation of the area.³ It has become necessary for the British to have a complete political control over every part of the Indian sub-continent to project their colonial dominion and when they discovered India's indispensability for their colonial ends,

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2. The Angami society was tempted by the manifestations of colonial culture on the one hand, but was keen to preserve their autonomy, social organization and indigenous culture on the other. This has been the case with many indigenous societies in the world. Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Lineage Mode of Production, Social Inequalities in Equatorial Central Africa", in D. Crummey and C.C. Stewart, *op.cit.*, pp. 70-93.
 3. Steven Feierman, *The Shamba Kingdom*, Wisconsin, 1974.
3. Prior to the British appearance, the Angamis had already established contact with the Indians in terms of the exchange of goods. But with the British occupation their mobility increased tremendously because the construction of new roads and other means of communication was the first thing the British took over to strengthen their foothold. Robert Reid, *op.cit.*

they gradually tried to erode its territorial and political structure, in which, of course, India's own weakness made no less a significant contribution.⁴ However, the increasing efforts in the expansionist design brought them into conflict with other nations in the world apart from the smaller communities which initially were not prepared to part with their system. In this connection, Naga Hills was no exception to the rule. The annexation of the Naga Hills meant the control of the entire North Eastern Frontier and the protection of their interests in Burma and China.⁵

It was not only by force that the British succeeded in subduing the Angami Nagas, but their powers of persuasion, their sense of duty, religion and other welfare activities made their task easier.⁶ The Angamis until then had not been exposed to the temptations of material culture

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4. K.K. Datta, *Survey of Indian Social Life and Economic Conditions in the Eighteenth Century, 1707-1813*, Calcutta, 1961.
S. Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court*, Aligarh, 1959.
Although the process of deterioration had set in much earlier, after the collapse of the Mughal Empire, the infighting among various regional kingdoms and the subsequent exploitation of the Indian masses weakened the personality, laying the ground for transfer of political power to the British.
 5. Nari Rustomji, *Imperilled Frontiers*, Delhi, 1983.
 6. Other than political agents, the contribution of the American Baptist missionaries with medical facilities and other welfare activities also worked as a potential mechanism in bringing the Angamis under British authority because the Angamis at that stage did not make the distinction between British and American interests but saw them both as one race—the 'White Man'. The trust that the missionaries instilled in them was therefore transferred to the British as well. At this juncture, there were also two contradictory forces at work. On one hand, the British trying to develop some kind of a centralized system for subjecting all the Nagas and on the other hand, the Nagas trying to preserve their indigenous autonomy.

which the Burmese and the Indians had experienced for centuries under various changing dynasties and maharajas.⁷ The societies in India has started stratifying intensely on caste and religious lines from ages past. The communal ownership of means of production had long since disappeared in India.⁸ The other socio-religious mechanism of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism had established new trends in an organized form of worship with its complicated set of rituals, in some cases dehumanising man. The rulers would indulge in religious conversion of their subjects to create a mass base for their persistence of kingly institutions.⁹ But the Naga areas were unfamiliar with all these material manifestations. They still retained in their clans the chiefs as heads of their communities and managed their affairs on communal lines.¹⁰ The indigenous organization had its own socio-cultural past, hence this nature of Angami society proved a great advantage to the British in building up their base in Angami area. Among the various operative forces which

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7. The Angami society had a peculiar nature. It did not enjoy the status conferred on most such frontier tribes by intra- border trade which could help the growth of transition even without its own agrarian or other economy.
 8. R.S. Sharma, *Material Culture and Social Formation, op.cit.*, pp. 8-19.
D.D. Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilization in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1977, pp. 96-108.
 9. Religion was used as an ideological mechanism from early ages. To obtain the mass base the kings fostered conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism, Islam or Sikhism. All these measures changed the conditions of the people. Thomas Arnold, *Preaching of Islam*, London, 1896.
 10. Since the Angami society remained untouched and uninfluenced by Brahmanical and Buddhist rituals, varna orientation or by the Islamic tenents, the society was fertile for work of the Christian missionaries.

CONCLUSION

The discussion in the foregoing chapters warrants the conclusion that the indigenous social formation of Khonoma and Kohima, was a succession of socio-economic formations, surpassing the earlier one in social, political, cultural and other spheres. However, what the analysis of the chosen aspects reflects in this study needs to be considered at greater length.

The waves of migration from western China and South East Asia to these hills were many and spread over a long period of time. These waves of migration were chiefly necessitated by the incompatibility that was rapidly developing due to shrinkage of resource potential and the population growth. These conditions were given further impetus by aggressive rulers. But before these tribes could complete their march to settle down in these hills which came to be named after them, they cut across different politico-cultural regions. However, that should not be seen as an ascent from one socio-economic formation to another. The Nagas passed through a complicated and protracted process of settlement. The Naga hills were not endowed with rich resources to attract the Angami particularly with such a geographical remoteness, but in this regard their history was determined by their own circumstances.

In fact the history of indigenous people all over world has clearly revealed that wherever they settled they preferred to remain isolated as far as they could from the relatively more developed societies. For all the mongoloid tribes who migrated to this area the climate and the terrain which seems to have played a significant role in their process of settlement in this region.

The Angami villages of Kohima and Khonoma in Naga hills had similar factors in their entire process of formation. In this entire process the role of productive forces was of course most crucial, but this fact need not be overstressed, for their spiritual, cultural and ethnic mechanisms had also run ahead of the development of productive forces in the establishment of these villages. In the pre-colonial phase they continued to lag behind in most spheres of political, social and economic life in the South East Asian context. But that did not prevent them from producing great warriors, craftsmen, agriculturists in such harsh and unsuitable terrain. The formation of these villages strengthened the Angami social organization and generated a cohesiveness and cooperation among its members to reproduce their relations of production with gradual improvements in hunting and agriculture, animal husbandry and craft-making. But the mode of appropriation continued to be communal in character and a dominant feature of Angami society. This did not usher in complete transformation of Angami society into a class society. Though the process of generating surplus was not completely absent, the channels through which it was extracted lay more on spiritual and cultural rather than on purely economic lines. The *Zievo* (priest) was the most important figure among the Angamis before the evolution of the institution of Angami *Peyumia* (chiefs) at the village level. The *Zievos'* demands, which were mostly on the pretext of pleasing deities through sacrifices and other rituals, were satisfied by the share from hunting, harvest and human

labour. Since the *Zievo's* materialistic tendencies were limited because ultimately he was a part and parcel of the same village or clan, the extraction did not take place solely for economic purposes. It was as a result of this that most of the Angami *Zievo* did not get transformed into a political group and instead legitimized the position of the village chiefs when the transitional forces penetrated. Possibly this would have been one of the factors in prolonging transition. Lack of material forces also contributed to this slow transformation of the Angami society but the simultaneous existence of institution of priesthood and chiefs did play a greater role in the entire picture and the village formation continued to rest on its laurels. The other factor responsible for the slow transition was the slow growth of technology and other productive forces. The structural phenomenon of these villages revolved around the priesthood and village elders with a more democratic apparatus which alone possessed the political-judicial authority to settle the conflicts. In the pre-colonial period it is historically inconceivable to think of the Angami villages in the form of state at any level. The Angamis of Kohima and Khonoma did emerge powerful at times even to the extent of exercising their authority not only on Angami villages but stretching over to non-Angami Nagas as well, but this super-imposition cannot be translated into the existence of a full-fledged superstructural phenomenon. Though western scholars have formulated various theories with regard to state formation often widely testing the empirical situation of Africa, all these studies failed to persuade us in following any of them because the case of Angamis is a case of a purely non-state society with some elements necessarily involved in the tide of historical advance. These elements of cohesion before reaching a stage and assuming new dimensions were disrupted by the penetration of colonial forces. This suddenly arrested the developmental processes in that direction and super-im-

posed a new apparatus with two tendencies of persuasion and subjugation at the hands of Baptist missionaries and the British colonialists respectively.

This opened up an important and transitional phase in the entire history of Angami society. The Angamis fought all through to preserve their independence for almost half a century. The strength with which the Angamis countered the British has been recognised as unique by the British themselves in their history of colonization. In this struggle, the Angamis derived immense strength from their singular ethnicity and exhausted their potential in their attempt to stop the British from disrupting the rhythm of their indigenous social formation. The subjugation of the Angamis by force was much helped in its advance by the persuasive forces of the missionaries who sincerely carried out their programmes of economic welfare, medical care, education and religious activities. These developments were an entitlement to the Angamis and were certainly not linked directly with attempts to control the Angami country. They did not represent the British colonialism but were purely American Baptists who made centres in the Angami villages of Kohima and Khonoma. This process led to an unevenness in social and economic affairs but did not delink the cultural values.

Advanced socio-economic formations do not class with the vital interests of the people and act for the development of new social relations as opposed to reactionary formations. It is interesting to note elements of both in the process following British intrusion. The imposition of the British political apparatus and the missionary culture which followed in its wake resulted in detribalization. The new Angami converts did away with much of the old religious traditions, some of which were now superfluous, but some of which are now seen to be an irreplaceable loss. Christianity⁴ could not cut across cultural barriers completely and could not delink some of the traditional

practices, some of which continue even to this day as part of the indigenous past.

The colonial political structure which was a temporary phase because it was short lived did initiate the destruction of social organization to the extent of leaving it utterly powerless in its affairs in the long run. The British appointed their own officers to settle the affairs concerning Nagas in general and Angamis in particular. The creation of new Angami village chiefs (Gaon Bura) by them curbed their tendency to revolt. The succession of a chain of officials, the limitation of boundaries of the areas and other reform activities connected with the cultivable and non-cultivable land resulted in the dilution of a singular ethnic and tribal strength. Thus began the gradual process of class formations which were ultimately fostered by the process at the hands of independent India's central structure. When finally the British colonialism came to an end, their distinct ethnicity posed serious problems for the Indian government because the Angami voiced their feelings again with the rest of the Nagas for preservation of their independent political identity and for their past history. This struggle for independence continue still today. But a section has chosen to co-exist as a part of Independent India by accepting a state within India. However, events did not run that smoothly and many temptations were offered to the newly created state under various developmental programmes. Unfortunately the development continued on more uneven lines bringing in easy money to transform a few into the nouveau riche and the rest dependent on them for their daily bread. The growth of population was a simultaneous process which helped to intensify the social stratification of Naga society on class lines. Hence a non-state of Angamis got transformed and directly linked to the capitalism which gave room for much faster growth.



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