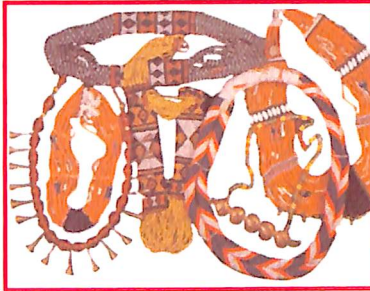


Encyclopaedic Studies of North - Eastern States of India

NAGALAND



Swapnali Borah
Deke Tourangbam
A C Meitei

**ENCYCLOPAEDIC STUDIES OF
NORTH - EASTERN STATES OF INDIA**

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Preface

THE most striking paradox in this age of globalization, when the globe has been hyped as a small global village, is the abundance of still unexplored wonderlands sprawling across it in the midst of unprecedentedly powerful scientific and technological facilities which enable us to explore the secrets of the universe one after another, on a daily basis.

For there to be peace and harmony among human beings co-inhabiting the earth, there has to be understanding among the members of this dominant species, and understanding one another and honouring the values of other communities, *i.e.*, their belief, culture, custom, religion, socio-economic conditions, literacy as well as geography, political situation, agriculture, industrial development, natural beauties and natural resources and environment of their land.

From this perspective, books contributing to building an atmosphere of understanding are an invaluable welcome and timely endeavour. The present volume on *Nagaland* is an attempt to explore the land and understand the people inhabiting it. Besides acquainting the readers with the geographical features of the land (a state in the north-eastern part of India), covers social, cultural, religious, economic, political, anthropological, environmental, geographical, agricultural, historical, educational as well as industrial development aspects of the state.

The volume is a part of *Encyclopaedia of Indian States and Union Territories*.

Planned for common, uninitiated readers as well as rich reference material for institutions, who would like to have an overview of Arunachal Pradesh and the people living in it, the volume will be an invaluable guide which will ultimately lead them to appreciate this little paradise with the diverse information provided in the volume.

The data provided in the volume are authentic. Not only the individual readers but institutional, public and educational college libraries will also benefit from the volume by using it as reference tool.

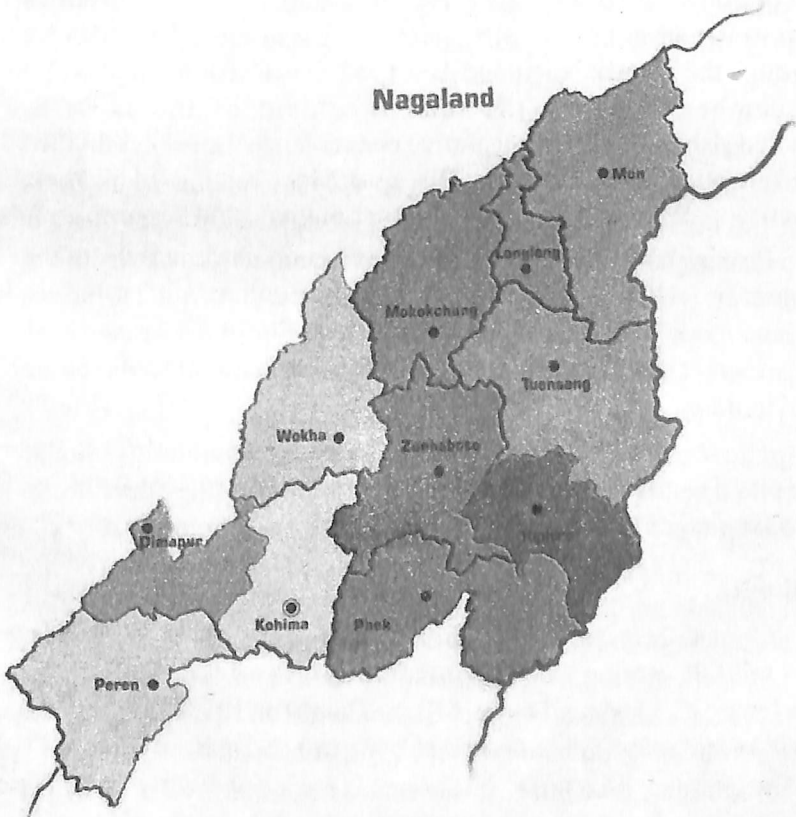
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Introduction

LYING between 2506 deg and 2704 deg of the equator and between the longitudinal lines 93015 deg E, Nagaland is one of the hilly states in the north-eastern part of India. It borders the state of Assam to the west, Arunachal Pradesh and part of Assam to the north and Manipur to the south. The state shares an international



border with Myanmar to the east. Kohima is the capital of the state and Dimapur is its largest city. The Barail range extending from the south-west via North Cachar runs up to Kohima, with its highest Peak, Japvo, attaining a height of 3,048 metres.

The territory of Nagaland is mentioned in some recent Sanskrit scriptures as 'Nag Bhumi', the land of serpents. But it is shrouded in mystery in what context the mention was made. Due to the extremity of its location, the inhospitable terrain, coupled with profusion of wildlife and vegetation, Nagaland remained for long, almost a virgin territory- where few mortals from the outside world dared to tread.

With an area of 16,579 sq.km, Nagaland is one of the smallest states of India and it has a population of nearly two million people (as of 2002). Nagaland was carved as a state out of the territories that were earlier known as Naga Hills - Tuesnsang Area (NHTA), through the State of Nagaland Act, 1962. It was inaugurated on 1st December, 1963 by the then President of India, Dr S. Radhakrishnan. For administrative convenience the state is divided into eleven districts: Kohima, Dimapur, Mokokchung, Mon, Phek, Tuensang, Wokha, Zunheboto, Peren, Longleng and Kiphire.

Being a hilly state, the most important economic activity of the state is agriculture. Principal crops include rice, corn, millets, pulses, tobacco, oilseeds, sugarcane, potatoes and fibers. Other economy boosters include forestry, cottage industries, insurance, real estate and tourism.

The state population dominated by Naga communities but as the plural word *communities* signify, it is difficult to string the cultures and languages of the Naga tribes into a common tradition.

Climate

Climate in the state is salubrious throughout the year. The state has rainfall varying from 2000 mm to 2500 mm. The main rivers are Dhansiri, Doyang, Dikhu, Milak, Zungki and Tizu. The highest peak is Saramati (3,841 meters above sea-level).

Beginning of winter in the state is marked by an almost 5 degrees Centigrade plummeting of temperature during December and January experiences the coldest temperature in a year. In

February, the temperature starts rising gradually. The monsoon lasts for five months from May to September with June, July and August, being the wettest months.

Handicrafts

Handloom and handicrafts of the state own a reputation both for their quality and beauty. The beautifully hand woven tribal shawls of various tribes such as Naga mekheles, Naga hand bags, which are exquisitely and intricately designed, have won worldwide appreciation.

The new generations of the Nagas have ventured into fashion designing on a commercial scale, reproducing fabrics that represent the past, fused with modern taste.

This is an affluent fashion station of the East. Their handicraft products include beads, earlands and baskets which are made of bamboo and cane.

Flora and Fauna

Due to variations in altitude and the resulting climatic conditions and the diverse types of soils, Nagaland is home of diverse forest types ranging from tropical evergreen to temperate evergreen and the coniferous. Bamboo groves are extensive everywhere. Among the common species, mention may be made of the Naga Bhe and plants such as *Mesuaferrea*, *Careyaarbotrea* and *Fiscus Electica*.

On the hill slopes are found oak, chestnut, birch, magnolia, cherry, maple, laurel and fig. Pine trees are found at high altitudes, varying from 3,000 to 4,000 ft. Such forest products as wild vegetables, roots, varieties of fruits and tubers are found abundantly throughout the state.

Due to the geographical position the state occupies, Nagaland offers as the confluence of the sub-Himalayan, Indian, Chinese and Burmese types of faunas. Elephants, tigers, barking deer and sambar are found in different places through the state. Monkeys, jackals, wild buffaloes, wild pigs, bear and wild dogs are sparsely distributed through the Naga Hills. Among the ritually most valued species is Mithun. Lizards, toads and monitors occupy a significantly large portion of the faunal population of the state.

Faith and Culture

The Naga inhabited belt or areas can be describes as a cultural zone on account of several ethno-historical factors. The state has 15 tribes viz. Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chang, Khiamniungan, Kuki, Konyak, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sumi, Sangtam, Yimchungru and Zeliang. The traditional faith, religious beliefs and practices of Naga tribes show signs of being animistic.

There is a belief of a supreme creator of mankind, and many deities, ghosts and spirits of trees, rivers and hills. The traditions have also priests and medicine-men who appease these spirits, banish those spirits that inflict diseases while attracting those that help and guard, attract those who help and guard. They take the lead in the rites and festivals, which are believed to stimulate the processes of agriculture.

There is a belief among the Naga tribes, particularly Chang, Sangtam, Khiamngan that the soul, after death, goes down a narrow path to the land of the dead with a spirit with whom it must struggle. Most Naga tribes regard the ultimate ancestors of man and the tiger, as very intimately associated. The ancient Kachari capital, Dimapur is one of the important sites of megalithic culture.

The ruins appear to be contemporaries with the Kachari civilization, established before the Ahom invasion in the 13th century CE. There are evidences of Hindu influence on most of them, though these are predominantly non-Aryan. As of the 2001 India census, Christians accounted for eighty-five per cent of the total population.

Transportation

The railway network in the state is minimal. The following data proves this statement.

Railway: North East Frontier Railway

1. Broad Gauge-7.63 km
2. Metre Gauge-5.22 km
3. Total-12.85km

[Data Source: N. F. Railway, CME Office, Guwahati-781011]

The length of National Highway roads is 365.38 km while that

of state roads is 1094 km. Details of national and state highways in Nagaland are shown below.

National Highways:

Length: 365.38 km

1. NH-61 - Kohima, Wokha, Tseminyu, Wokha, Mokokchung, Changtongya, Tuli
2. NH-39 - Kohima, Dimapur, Chumukedima, Medziphema
3. NH-36 - Dimapur

State Highways

Length: 1094.60 km

1. Chakabama-Mokokchung Via Chazuba and Zunheboto
2. Kohima-Meluri
3. Mokokchung-Mariani
4. Mokokchung-Tuensang
5. Namtola-Mon
6. Tuensang-Mon-Naganimora
7. Tuensang-Kiphiri-Meluri
8. Wokha-Merapani Road

Now the state has an airport in Dimapur, 70 km from the state capital and another one which will be in the state capital is being planned.

People

The state is inhabited by 35 major different tribes along with their sub tribes. Ethnically they belong to the Indo Mongoloid stock. Each tribe has its own customs, language and dress.

Each tribe with a rich tradition handed down through generations is distinct in character from the other in terms of customs, language and dress. The hills of the state are echoing throughout the year with folk music and songs praising the brave deeds of ancient warriors and folk heroes and love songs immortalizing tragic love stories sung in modern tunes.

Though many are the tribes and sub-tribes that contribute to

the cultural and traditional heritage of the state each of the tribes can easily be distinguished from one another by their traditional dresses and costumes including jewellery and beads. The State is a rich fashion centre of the North East reproducing fabrics that represent the ancestral motifs blended with modern appeal. It is a beautiful mix of past with the present, a paradise for those who are into fashioning designing. Most of the tribes have also their own traditional ceremonial attire.

In olden days Naga warriors went to war in their complete war gear. It included multi-colored spears and daos decorated with dyed goat's hair; the headgear made of finely woven bamboo interlaced with orchid stems and adorned with boar's teeth and hornbill feathers; ivory armlets etc. Nature could not have been kinder to any other land than to Nagaland, that with the exquisitely picturesque landscape, the vibrantly colorful sunrise and sunset, lush and verdant flora, this is a land of unimaginable beauty, molded perfectly for a breathtaking experience

Each of the tribes having a language of its own (there are about sixty different dialects), the population of the state have no common language. In some areas even dialects vary from village to village. Inter tribal communication is carried out in Nagamese, a combination of Assamese and the tongue spoken in Dimapur, the main commercial area of the state since olden days. Many Naga's also speak Hindi and English (being the official language of the state).

There are several different stories that the Nagas believe accounting to their origin. The Angamis, Semas, Rengams and the Lotha's subscribe to the Kheza-Kenoma legend. It is said that the village had a large stone slab having magical properties. Paddy spread on it to be dried doubled in quantity by evening. The three sons of the couple who owned the stone used it by rotation. One day there was a quarrel between the sons as to whose turn it was. The couple, fearing bloodshed, set fire to the stone which as a result cracked. The spirit in the stone is believed to have gone to heaven and with this the stone lost its miraculous properties.

After that the three sons parted their ways, went in different directions and found their own settlements and thus became the forefathers of the Angami, Sema and the Lotha tribes. According

to another legend, to which the western Angamis subscribe, the first man evolved from a lake called Themiakelku zie near Khonoma. The Rengmas believe that until recently they and Lothas formed one tribe. The Aos and the Phoms trace their origin to the Lungterok (six stones) on the Chongliemdi hill. There are some scholars who are of the opinion that these Indo-Mongoloid people are the 'kiratas' as are frequently mentioned in old Sanskrit literature.

The hill tribes in the areas now known as Nagaland had no generic term applicable to the whole race. The word 'Naga' was given to these hill tribes by the plains people. This proved to be a great unifying force to the tribes now classified as Naga. Nagas are of sub-medium height, the facial index is very low, the nasal index corresponds to a medium nose, the hair is generally straight, and the skin is brownish yellow. Their eyes are somewhat different from the common characteristics of those of the Mongoloids.

Of the Nagatribes, the Angamis are the group who are politically the most conscious. The Zeliang and Pochury tribes in Kohima district are comparatively simple and unsophisticated. The Tuensang tribes are un-spoilt children of nature. A striking characteristic of the Naga tribes is their hospitality and cheerfulness. To be greeted with a smiling face while traveling on the roads is a common experience. A visitor to Naga village is generally received heartily and entertained with a surfeit of rice-beer. The service to the guest is generally offered by the lady of the house or her young daughter.

Chakesang

This Naga tribe was previously known as the Eastern Angami. They inhabit the district of Phek.

Konyak

The Konyaks are famous for their valor and head-hunting practices. Their distinctive tattoos all over their face and hands distinguish from other Naga tribes. They are called the land of Angh's. They have the largest population among the Nagas.

The Konyaks inhabit the Mon district of the state. They also inhabit some parts of Myanmar, the Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal, Assam. They are known in Arunachal as Wancho Konyak.

Sangtam

The Sangtam is a Naga tribe living in the Tuensang district of Nagaland. They are believed to have migrated from Myanmar. Like many other tribal groups in Northeast India, the practice jhum, or shifting cultivation. Unlike other Naga tribes in Nagaland, many of the Sangtam have retained their traditional beliefs in spite of embracing Christianity at the same time. Sangtams celebrate twelve different festivals, in particular Mongmong, all of which are affiliated with their traditional culture and religion.

Tangsa

The Tangsa tribe, also known as the Tase, lives in the Tirap and Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh. A Naga tribe, they are well-built and of medium-stature.

They are divided into thirteen sub-tribes, namely:

- Lungchang
- Yogli
- Mosang
- Ron-Rang
- Khemsing
- Moklum
- Tikhak
- Ponthai
- Longphi
- Sna-ke
- Lungri
- Taipis
- Ha-ve

Dress

As of today, the younger generation have adopted the Burmese costume and no longer keep long hair. Traditionally, the Tangsa kept long hair in both sexes, which is tied into a bun and covered with a piece of cloth, known as the *Khu-phak*.

The menfolk wear a green lungi, which is lined with yellow, red

and white yarns, and accompanied with a sleeveless shirt. On the other hand, the costume of the womenfolk include an artistically woven petticoat, which acts as the lower garment, and a linen blouse.

Lifestyle

Practicing Shifting cultivation known as Jhum by using simple manual tools, the Tangsa raise crops that include paddy, millet, maize and arum, and vegetables. Rice beer, made from tapioca and rice, known as suwe, is consumed along with tea.

Owing to the climate, the Tangsa live in silt houses, which are divided into many rooms. Like the Nocte, the Tangsa have separate dormitories for men, known as *Looppong*, and *Likpya* for the female.

As an united tribe, the Tangsa believed in a joint family system, and property is equally divided between all family members. A tribal council, known as *Khaphua*, is administered by a Lungwang chief, who sees to the daily affairs of the Tangsa tribe.

Religion

Followers of the Donyi-Polo religion, the Tangsa believed in a supreme being that crated their existence, locally known as *Rangfrah*, although belief in other deities and spirits is maintained as well. The funeral festival of the Tangsa, Mol, asks for a bumper crop as food, in particular pig, is offered to the dead. A feast between villagers is held by the bereaved family.

After dusk, man and women start dancing together rhythmically with the accompanying drums and gongs. Theravada Buddhism has influenced the Tangsa, and a few have converted to the religion. Of late, a minuscule minority of converted Baptist Christians do exist as well.

Tutsa

Tutsa is a Naga tribe living in southern parts of Changlang and the eastern part of Tirap districts of Arunachal Pradesh. As of 2001 their population stood at 25,000. The harvest festival of Pongtu is the principal festival of the Tutsa.

The Tutsa are traditionally followers of Animism. Of late, Baptist missionaries partially supported by NSCN have converted some

Tutsa to Christianity. The sizeable Christian Tutsa community have formed the Tutsa Baptist Churches Council (TBCC).

Wancho

The Wancho are a tribal people inhabiting the Patkai hills of Tirap. They have a population of 35,000. A Naga sub-tribe, they are ethnically related to the Nocte and the Konyak Naga of the Mon and Tirap district. Their language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family.

Religion

Unlike the other Naga, the Wancho are an exception, together with the Nocte and a small minority of the Konyak, still loyally retained the belief of Animism. These Animist Wancho believe in the existence of two powerful deities, Rang and Baurang.

Small and scattered communities of Baptist Christians exist. Hinduism has little influence on the Wancho tribe, as they live on higher hills as compared to the Nocte, who live around the plains and are more exposed to Hinduism.

Culture

Tattooing plays a major role among the Wancho tribe. According to tradition, a man is tattooed on his four limbs and his entire face, with the exception of certain regions around the eyes and the lips. The women adorn themselves with necklaces and bangles, along with some light tattooing as well. The prime festival of the Wancho is Ojjele, a festival between March to April, for a period of six to twelve days interspersed with prayer, songs and dances.

Villagers exchange bamboo tubes filled with rice beer as a mark of greeting and goodwill. Pork skin is then offered to the village chief as a mark of respect. This festival continues for several days just sowing of Jhum paddy and Pigs, buffaloes and mithuns are sacrificed and feasts are arranged in each and every morungs (dormitories). Boys and girls, wearing ceremonial costumes, sings and dance during this Ojjele. People dances around a "Jangban", a long ceremonial pole planted during Ojjele.

Lifestyle

The Wancho are traditionally governed by a council of elderly

chieftains, known as Wangchu-Wangcha. Like most neighbouring tribes, the Wancho construct houses made out of wood and bamboo, and roofs were thatched with dry leaves. Dormitories, known as Murung, where the boys are trained to be men by their fathers.

Although the girls do not have dormitories like the boys, they sleep in one big, single house, with the care of an old lady. Until 1991, human headhunting was practiced among the Naga tribes, and both the government and missionaries have taken steps to ban the practice of headhunting, which is now restricted to animals.

Chakhesang

Chakhesang is a Naga tribe found in Nagaland, India. Chakhesangs are the former Eastern Angami, who have separated from the Angami tribe, and are now recognized as a separate tribe. They are a minority tribe in Nagaland. Most of the villages of this tribes falls under the Phek District of Nagaland. This tribe is basically divided into two groups known as "Chokri" and "Khezha".

Tourism

If one is looking for a quiet and peaceful retire far from the stirs, hustle and bustle of city life, there is Nagaland to quench the burning thirst of one's soul. The state provides the right ambience; as life here is laidback and slow - providing a tension free life.

Nagaland is becoming a charming tourist destination. Nagaland abounds in serene natural beauty and panoramic views of the hills which in fact are the eastern offshoots of the mighty Himalayas.

The beautiful hills Nagaland are ideal for trekking, rock climbing, jungle camping. The state also offers limitless exploration possibilities in its lush and verdant sub-tropical rain forests which are also a treasure trove of a plethora of medicinal plants. The Nagas being lovers of fun and frolic by nature, life in Nagaland is one long festival.

The Nagas with their joie de vivre, dance and songs are a part and parcel of all their festivities. Most of their dances are performed with a robust rhythm.

Green forests remain luxuriant throughout the year on the hill sides. In the Angami region, the terraced fields are a feast to the eyes. The war cemetery is a symbolic memorial raised in honor of

the officers and soldiers who sacrificed their lives during World War II. The epitaphs are moving. There are few mountains and peaks in Nagaland, which are worth seeing. The Japfu peak situated at a height of 3048 mts. above sea level is the second highest peak in Nagaland after Mt. Saramati. It is a memorable experience to watch the sun rising from this peak.

The main rivers that flow through the state are Dhansiri, Doyang, Dikhu, Tizu and Melak. There is no waterfall in Nagaland. The only lake well known is Lacham to the east of Mehiri.

Hotels in the state cater to the needs of various economic classes of tourists. Besides hotels, the state has also resorts, restaurants and cafés which offer enjoyment to all segments of travelers.

Languages

As has been noted above most of the Naga tribes have their own language. In actual practice, the language, even within one tribal area, varies from village to village. There are about thirty languages. In the past the Naga villages were much isolated from each other and thus not much interaction was there but for some barter and wars among them. Thus the multiplicity of Naga languages emerged.

Naga languages belong to the Tibeto-Burman family of languages and they are sub-divided into three groups: the western sub-group, the central sub-group and the eastern sub-group. The western sub-group comprises Angami, Sema, Rengma and Chakhesang languages; the central sub-group include Ao, Lotha and Phom languages; while the eastern sub-groups is made up of among others, Chang and Konyak languages. There are many Sanskrit loan words in Naga languages and these words came through Assamese.

Due to multiplicity of languages the Naga tribal communities cannot understand one another beyond their own tongue but they converse in Nagamese, a hybrid mixture of Assamese and Naga languages which serves as the lingua franca of the Naga people. It does not follow any strict rules of grammar and is easy to pick up. Nagamese has no script and therefore they use Roman script.

Hindi is well understood in Nagaland - even in the interior areas.

The state Assembly, in a resolution adopted on 18 September 1967, recommended that English be used for all official purposes within the state of Nagaland indefinitely, and that English be included as one of the languages in the VIII schedule of the constitution. However it is worth mentioning that only a fraction of the Naga population can speak or write this official with some degree of accuracy.

Food AND Drink

Like those of other north-eastern people of the country, rice is the staple food of the Naga tribes. It is generally taken with meat or vegetables. The Nagas are very fond of chilies and the Semas eat them with the greatest delight. Meat could be beef, pork and chicken. Nagas also eat mithun, dogs, cats, fish, spiders, birds, and crabs - in fact almost any living thing that he can lay his hands on.

Even the elephant is eaten and is considered a delicacy. No part of the animal is wasted. Even the skin and intestines are eaten. The skin is spared only if needed for making a shield. Sometimes the meat is smoke dried and preserved for a long time. Meat and vegetables are usually cooked together. The tribes generally boil their food.

The Naga tribes believe some food items are not clean and can transmit their bad qualities to the consumer; therefore such items are considered taboo by them. Most of the restrictions relate to women, and in case of items which are 'Genna' for men to take, the restriction is relaxed in respect of old people. Women are not allowed to eat monkeys lest they became extravagant. Pregnant woman was not allowed to eat a bear, as it is regarded as a stupid animal. The tribes believe that man, tiger and spirit were all brothers at the beginning of creation and thus they do not eat tiger and leopard.

The drink common amongst the tribes is rice beer. It is generally of three kinds, Zutho, Ruhi, and Dzutse and may be taken at any time. It is nutritive in content and if hygienically prepared is a desirable drink. All Nagas including the very young take this drink.

Social and Cultural Heritage

The cultural traditions of the Naga tribes have some features

common to all the tribes. They include head hunting, common sleeping house for unmarried men which are taboo to women, a sort of trial marriage, or great freedom of intercourse between the sexes before marriage, disposal of dead on raised platforms, the simple loom for weaving cloth etc.

The Naga tribes do not know any caste system. But each of the Naga tribes is divided into several or as many as twenty clans. Clans are mainly based on forefathers or such other things by which one group of people is differentiated from others. The bigger the tribe, the more is the number of clans. Of late, there has arisen a kind of **Gotro** or family lineage among almost all the tribes.

This has grown out of an important man of that family whose name is used by his progeny as the surname. This has got nothing to do with clan system, but in course of time, such family name may become a clan name. Marriage in the same clan is a taboo among the tribes but the modern educated youths are beginning to violate this age-old tradition.

As mentioned above, as there are several tribes with distinctive cultural traditions, Nagaland is replete with festivals throughout the year. They regard their festivals sacrosanct and participation in them is compulsory. They celebrate their distinct seasonal festivals with pageantry, colour, music and fanfare. Most of these festivals revolve round agriculture, which is still the mainstay of the Naga society. Over 85% population of Nagaland is directly dependent on agriculture. Naga inhabits the wild, wide-open pastoral countryside.

The cultural dances of the tribes reflect their inborn reticence. War dances and dances belonging to distinctive tribes, form the major art form in Nagaland. In colorful costumes and jewellery, the dancers go through amazing mock war motions, which could prove very dangerous, if one were to be a little careless. Festivals, marriages, harvests, or just the joy of the moment - are occasions for the Nagas to burst into dance. Some of the important festivals are **Sekrenyi**, **Moatsu**, **Tuluni** and **Tokhu Emong**.

The traditional Naga religion is animistic, though conceptions of a supreme creator and an afterlife exist. Nature is seen to be alive with invisible forces, minor deities, and spirits with which priests and medicine men mediate. In the 19th century, with the advent of

British rule, Christianity was introduced, and Baptist missionaries became especially active in the region. The Christian domination of the state population is a clear result of the conversion.

The present day Nagaland has some religious and spiritual sentiments interwoven into secular rites and rituals, but the festivals have the predominant theme of offering prayers to the Supreme Being which the diverse Naga dialects call by different names. At these festivals, the spirits and gods are propitiated with sacrifices by the village Shaman (priest) for a bountiful harvest either before the sowing or before reaping the harvest. All round the year, the people of Nagaland celebrate the festivals.

They start with the Chakhesang Sukrunye festival in January, followed by Kuki Mimkut; Angami Sekrenyi is celebrated in February. The month of April begins with the Konyak Aoling and Phom Monyu festivals in the first week. Ao Moatsu and Khamniungan Miu festivals are celebrated in May; Sumi Tuluni and Chang Nkanyulum festivals are celebrated in the month of July. In the months of August and September, the Yimchunger Metemneo and Sangtam Mongmong festivals are celebrated. The month of November witnesses the celebration of the Lotha Tokhu Emong and the Rengma Ngada festivals. The Zeling Nga-Ngai festival is celebrated in December and this marks the end of the year and the beginning of a new one.