Ethnic Life-Worlds in North-East India

An Analysis

PRASENJIT BISWAS
CHANDAN SUKLABAIDYA

Ethnic Life-Worlds in North-East India

An Analysis

PRASENJIT BISWAS
CHANDAN SUKLABAIDYA

SAGE STUDIES ON INDIA'S NORTH EAST

Contents

Acknowledgements

In the course of writing this book, the work of which began in 1992, we were in the midst of the after-effects of our learning of anthropology and philosophy bringing back to our minds all our teachers at Dibrugarh University and North Eastern Hill University respectively. The major part of the work, in a sense, was completed in 1998 as we were able to collate the anthropological observations with our search for an alternative way of philosophizing, guided by a polyphonic insurgency of voices and meeting of critics of such insurgency from the state and the bureaucracy. We owe a lot to them. The course of writing such a book had a fusion of horizons that happened only after a lived experience of dialogue with a number of partners.

We have special words of thanks and appreciation for Sushila and Guddu, who are not only partners in the dialogue but who bind us in gratitude by caring for us in the midst of difficulty. We owe our thanks and gratitude to T. Mapu Jamir, Fr. Rawlson, Suma Trite, Pu Vanlalanghak and others whom we have met during the course of field-work and study, for an enriching experience and their unreserved hospitality of ideas.

Our friend Jishnu is an invaluable gift of ideas and information. A rich source of knowledge with an encyclopaedic knowledge of history, he showed us the way to reach quite a few conclusions pregnant with historical and political correctness.

Both of us owe an immeasurable debt to Ashok Acharya, B.S. Butola, M.M. Agrawal, N.B. Biswas, Sarat Chandra Sarma and others who contributed to our growth and enrichment of ideas.

The intellectual influence of Hiren Gohain and Mrinal Miri, in the course of our writing is far from being appropriated, rather we express our inability to comprehend and fully grapple with these figures of twentieth and twenty-first century North-East. We also owe special thanks to Sugata Ghosh and his team at SAGE India

Preface

India's North-East or North-East's India—a coinage in terms of the peculiarity of the relationship between India and its North-East brings out the disjunction and the difference that pervades the balance of power and politics between the centre and its periphery Neither the question of belonging and non-belonging to each other, nor their existence as mere 'disjuncts' exudes any sense of contemporariness either in the context of India or in the territory of the 'North-East'. Contemporary social and cultural history of North-East India has marked a tense and contested terrain of political claims and counterclaims with all its cultural overtones. The claims of peoples belonging to the ethnic and cultural settings of the North-East, and a consequent national identity of their own, posited against the Indian national identity has generated considerable debate and controversy among scholars, intellectuals, social activists and others. There is quite a bit of indecisiveness in finally settling claims of specific ethnic and cultural identities that defy the dominant logic of identity, as propounded by the Indian State. The dominant logic is that of construction of an identity that consents to an inclusion within the Indian national identity and thereby lives in agreement with the territorial and constitutional authority of the Indian State. Most of the identities in India's North-East assume a space of difference for realization of their own aspirations, cultural and political, with all other economic and social ramifications.

The phenomenal rise and growth of various identities in North-East India presents a picture of the possibilities of multiple emergences of identities with many distinct claims. However, the Indian State uses its ideological and repressive organs to simultaneously persuade these identities to join the Indian mainstream and coerce them into submission. In response to such a two-pronged strategy of the Indian State, various identities reciprocate to the persuasion of

the former in terms of insurgency and resistance with their strategic alliances with the state. In response to repressive organs of the state, identities from North-East India bring up their own insurgent groups; and such groups take the lead voicing the identity concerns of their respective ethnic communities. As insurgent groups take the decisions of resistance away from the domain of the public, the gulf between insurgence and its popular support widens. There is also no gainsaying the fact that various people's' organizations, comprising of civil society members, have also joined the ideological struggle to protect human rights and democratic decision-making procedures in the course of this struggle, in order to stave the monopoly of insurgents. The latter also responded to such initiatives in a politically appropriate manner.

Insurgents and civil society organizations, on the one hand, and and the state comprising of the army, police and other governmental organs, on the other, clash over issues such as citizenship, sovereignty, ethnic and cultural identity and human rights, including the right to development. In all such matters it is not the strength of the group alone which legitimizes and rationalizes, rather a stronger undercurrent of concerns with respect to rights, democracy and security determines the shape of the struggle between the two sides. But such processes of determination often take forms of self-determination and constitutional determinism, thereby bring the open-ended struggles for rights to some kind of resolution.

The book asks a deeper question: how is cultural politics a determinant of ethnic- and identity-oriented struggles as it happens in the North-East? At a particular level, this book examines the instances of life-world moorings and their reflections in constructions of the ideas of nation-state and self-identity. It argues that life-world norms are subordinated to official discourses of anthropology by the state, be it the colonial or post-colonial Indian State, thereby reverting to a subtle discourse of colonial domination. Ethnic insurgencies respond to such colonial discourses by a complex reworking of the history of self-determination, which statist discourses cannot appropriate. In doing so, they give rise to counter-discourses that remains a constant worry for the Indian State in its goal of achieving legitimacy and development in the North-East region. Civil society organizations join issues in terms of hegemony of the state and ruling classes, and its formation at the local and

regional levels. As a matter of affirmation of their specific point of view, civil society organizations seek to establish the significance of voicing concerns that affect a specific community and society without being oblivious of larger issues at the national and global level. They simultaneously perform the role of crusader as well as vigilante in matters of conflict and concern between state, insurgency and civil society. While both the state and the insurgent groups carve out their distinct ideological and political agenda, the civil society organizations only require an agenda of empowerment, as opposed to voicelessness, dispossession and disempowerment. In a sense, civil society organizations represent those aspects of culture and ethnicity that are unaddressed in the course of struggle against hegemony and, therefore, allow a free space of articulation of issues of empowerment, by mobilizing key resources of the community. The community operates at the level of articulation, while at the level of struggle it is only an opposition between the state and the community that propels the struggle. Therefore, unwittingly, such struggles against the state gets diverted into a struggle for political and cultural recognition by the state. The engagement in the struggle between the state and non-state actors stipulates the place of an enemy within the struggle, which necessarily comes from the supposed breaches in the relationship with other communities resulting into inter-ethnic and inter-community clashes. It is at this moment of diversion from state to others that such struggles lose the strength of self-determination and fall into the trappings of constitutional determinism.

The key issues involved in two major ongoing struggles— (United Liberation Front of Assam and National Socialist Council of Nagaland, Isak-Muivah) in North-East India are that of sovereign homeland and internal colonization. Both these issues generate a severe conflict and clash with not only the Indian State but also with other sections of people. But the appeal of both the movements lies in their critique of the Indian State and the parliamentary politics of justification for the role of the state. Although the capability of any such insurgent outfit in creating a separate homeland is doubted, their uncompromising struggle for it generates a kind of enthusiasm among the people to fight harder for rights and justice, be it within the Indian union or outside. The strategy of mobilization of this support often meets with severe crackdown by the state

nevertheless the struggle goes on, citing instances of excesses done by the state. In effect, counter-insurgency operations by the state help sustain popular critique of the Indian State by the insurgents and develop waves of sympathy for militant outfits. This is a way of using the acts of the state in support of ethnic insurgency. In fact, it is a discursive strategy in garnering support towards insurgencies and the success of the strategy can be understood from how insurgent outfits withstand the onslaught of the state.

Recent happenings in North-East India could be a good point of discussion in our understanding of the situation there. The movement against imposition of Armed Forces Special Powers Act in Manipur, which is led by Apunba Lup, the apex body of 27 social organizations of Meitei community, brought out the complex relationship between state, insurgency, human rights and civil society. The demand for withdrawal of the Act is met with resistance from the army engaged in counter-insurgency, while insurgents and civil society groups critique the act for its arbitrary extra-judicial character. Indeed the truth does not lie either with the state or with the other side. The fact of repression of struggles, armed or unarmed, which goes with the domination of the ruling classes, retains its validity amidst such a contentious battle of ideas. What is put to severe test here is the concern for security and a healthy social life as part of a democratic political and moral order, for which both the state and the struggling groups acts as contingent players; and in a sense it is the autonomy of 'good life' in an Aristotlean sense, independent of state and insurgency, that poses a high stake for the political state and the civil society. The fear of losing the very idea of good, which is greater than the cause of the state or insurgency, is what raises the value of democratic self-governance, part of which could be recuperated in a relationship of responsibility, which lies away from insurgency and counter-insurgency. What Apunba Lup, as a civil society body is engaged in, is this reclamation of the right and the good, in its forced entry into a sphere of battle over human rights, legality and constitutional propriety. Nothing could be more neutral, and at the same time, more engaged than a voice like Apunba Lup, which is neither on the side of the insurgents nor on the side of the state, but, which voices the larger common good. Will the parties in conflict pay heed to its voice?

There is a kind of self-pity that emerges at this point. If the Indian State goes ahead with its counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations, and if the insurgents carry forward their struggle for sovereign, independent North-East India, how would the people of the region poise themselves? In fact it is a pity that the voices of the silent majority fall on deaf ears and there is a constant erosion of democratic sensibility and commitment to the larger good. Nothing seems to find its rightful place beyond a cause, even if the cause involves the interests of the silent majority. The practice of political and moral majoritarianism, in the drive for legitimacy for social and political action, leading the actors astray to a point of irreconcilable justification for one's own acts, often derives from a counterfactual response to the act of the other. This is an inversion of the moral sense of the self, into a politics of morality that prioritizes the act of the other, in order to overcome one's errors, make-beliefs and dogmas. Insurgency in North-East India has got diverted to this abyss of moral vacuum, in which it emerges only as a respondent of the state and vice-versa, in an uncanny silence about the larger common good.

Given this self-pity and self-criticism, there is a move from larger globalization oriented bodies to take away the burden of critique by the civil society groups *to* some global agenda of removing the borders and trading across the transnational routes.

The apparent challenge to the nation-state by the insurgents is bypassed by these sets of global actors, who, in the name of advancing development and bringing in a global regime of Capital, are now trying to make deep inroads into the ethnically protected and community-owned cultural and natural resource base of the region. The state is becoming party to such propaganda of liberalization of the frontiers and boundaries, beyond the reaches of civil society. Insurgents in their trigger-happy mood are also kowtowing to the idea that the state will lose its sovereign territory, and would possibly wither away in the winds of global market and liberal trade regimes, with the North-East having a taste of free cash, possibly dollars, and luxury goods from East Asia. Both the state and insurgents are jubilant about the cash value of such an idea of removing frontiers and boundaries, and coeval with such dissolution, the rigidly fought barriers of identity and ethnic boundaries shall give way to integration to a larger global community. This is

the other face of bypassing the larger common good that organizations like Apunba Lup, Naga Mothers Association, various human rights groups and other civil society bodies are trying to stand up to. It is in this context, one also needs to look at the indigenous debates surrounding matriliny, and its proposed changeover to patriarchy, a distinct possibility that goes into a struggle for redefining identities in North-East. In a much deeper vein than 'Vandemataram', the unrecognized ethnography of matrilineal societies of North-East needs to be pondered over, to really sing the ode to the mother!

The book, in its seven chapters, attempts to knit together this kaleidoscopic land, the culture and human scapes of North-East India. While doing so, the book keeps in view the importance of imaging an inside of thinking and imagination, as against an outside of struggle against the state and hegemony. The bigger picture that the book tries to draw is a 'phenomenological representation' of the North-East Indian articulation against the hegemony of power and self, while the smaller picture that it draws focuses on logic(s) of practice as it obtains in the life-world. The availability of life-world actors makes it also possible to articulate a counterhegemonic ensemble of difference, marginality and dominance in the book. The book further tries to widen the philosophical and political imagination of communities of North-East India, by way of locating a subaltern position of imagination, that of the nation-from-below. Whether such a construction extends the scope of understanding the struggles of various identities, not merely in terms of self-determination but in terms of discursive self-articulation, is an open question that the reader can delve into. The authors refrain from taking sides and discuss issues of increasing relevance to the North-East as well as to India.

November, 2006   **Prasenjit Biswas**
                                                              Chandan Suklabaidya

1

Reconceptualizing an Ethnic Life-World

North-East India, comprising of the seven sister states, presents a wide diversity of almost 400 tribal, ethnic and non-ethnic communities, with their distinct culture, language and economy. Social formations in this part of the country are marked by pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial transformations. One interesting area of transition is from the pre-colonial royal legitimation to the colonial production of division of cultural and economic labour, to the post-colonial distinctiveness of being 'such and such' in terms of self-definition. Such transitions are grafted on the institutional mechanism of reproduction of imagination of the collective self in the narratives bridging the past and the present. The most significant effect of an already existing specificity came in the two-fold policy orientation towards India's North-East in the continuity between the colonial and the post-colonial: leaving the tribes to adapt to the emergent order without any interference and the practice of a kind of neutrality by the state. Following this, the British for the first time introduced the Inner Line Regulation (restricting the entry of outsiders) and created excluded and partially excluded areas in various states of the region. The purpose of such segmentalism was to allow the tribes to grow in their own style without much outside interference. In time, it has resulted in

a form of exclusivism, while at the same time, it also strengthened the cultural and economic bases of these societies.

If one looks into the environmental and cultural niches that traditionally sustained the livelihood practices of the various tribes of the region, one would encounter a conflict between nature and culture. While ethnographers and anthropologists have emphasized on the preservation of ethnic and natural styles of living, politicians and planners have asked for larger public investments. There were clear divergences of goals: whether to pursue the path of model institutional development or strengthen the resource bases of the communities became an either-or question. As the choice of development was not left to the people themselves, but was delivered by the statist and market agencies, it has led to a dichotomy between choice and outcome. The whole region promises to hold indigenous ways of development that are somehow scuttled, and an exogenous model of development came in force. As the resource base of the North-East was gradually weaned away, it produced a displacement of communities from their life-world; at the same time, the introduction of various other ways of life could not involve a sustainable process of balanced growth.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE LIFE-WORLD

The life-world, as a bedrock of any society, presents and preserves a set of values and norms that are self-evidently real. Before anything could be known of such a society, there are unexamined grounds of this reality (Schutz, 1989: 55). This is not only a description of the foundational structure in which a human being is rooted, but this is what constitutes the common, communicative and surrounding world. Is such a foundational structure available in the construction of an ethnic identity? How do we get to know such a foundational structure? We cannot succeed in making sense of an ethnic identity through a process of construction and imposition of an ontological framework. Are we then going to construe a 'possible ontology' by which we mean nothing more than the stipulation of a world made of certain characteristics, the reality of which can be related to the world inhabited by the ethnic

identity? Donald Davidson (1984: 227–41) suggests that the determination of ontology does not take place in the world or in concepts or in the interpretation of the identity. David Lewis distinguishes between 'the way[s] the things could have been' and the 'way[s] the things are' with its obvious pointer that the 'ways' are inexhaustibly different and multiple, refusing to be conceptualized within an ontology (Lewis, 1973: 84). Thus, for Davidson and Lewis, the original problem of knowing the 'foundational structure' of an 'ethnic identity' boils down to constructing possible worlds of theory and interpretation.

The interpretations given to the concept of 'life-world' in Schutz, and later in Thomas Luckmann's phenomenological elucidation, termed it primarily as the repository bedrock of knowledge, of the world that includes self-knowledge (see Berger and Luckman, 1966: 70–84). Further, an individuated subject vested with consciousness of the world experiences the world because of a 'universal correlational' a priori of 'I and World' that gives rise to a 'background', which can be conceptualized as a surrounding world, consisting of objective, subjective and social, in the way Habermas (1987) had extended the concept. An 'ontology' calls for a distinction between the 'world' and the identity. The key question becomes, 'is the world itself a being (an identity) like multifarious beings (identities) in the world?' This reconception of 'life-world' as a possible way of world-making and making of possible worlds illuminates the social discourses of identity.

The Cartesian-instrumental idea of development that derives its objective value from reducing the 'observed subject' into a separable, quantifiable and disjointed means for attaining certain rational ends cannot really take into account the non-measurable, invisible and subjective aspects of historically and culturally embedded multitudes of North-East India, specified by their sense of place and belonging. They further give rise to praxis of holistic notion, of human–nature relationship that is irreducible in its wisdom, which remains as an unheard voice in a modern and postmodern nation space of India. Colonial and post-colonial nation-states have simply bypassed these stateless societies from the processes of cultural and political recognition, although they have been made a part of the constitutional and institutional framework

of India. Their recognition in terms of scheduled tribes, with attendant cultural and political rights, has certainly made them a part of the system, but not with a sense of belonging. At an anthropological and epistemological plane, the culturally embedded practices of the tribal life-world are still 'un-appropriable' in many ways—in terms of dresses, attires, languages, music and spiritual values, to name a few. Therefore, the question of tribal, ethnic and national identity, with all its attendant political, economic and cultural claims, has remained an unresolved paradox for the mainstream developmental-model, adopted throughout the country. The important question is, in what ways can the mainstream model of economic development in terms of liberalization—globalization be adopted in the context of North-East India? Inversely, in what ways can the dominant paradigm of development be enriched by tribal and ethnic specificities of North-East India? This question brings out the mutuality of the developmental processes that has to make a beginning in the life-world itself.

Keeping this perspective in mind, how the value of a complete identification between human-nature-culture as it prevails in the North-East can be accommodated/altered within the instrumental value of human-human, human-nature relationship that dominant models of development construe? An answer is the possibility of sharing of the life-world values between what is known as a culturally-constructed India and the area called 'North-East'. Given the current emphasis on indigenous knowledge systems and rights over intellectual and cultural property with a renewed sense of economic and social justice, a paradigm of recognition and redis-tribution can mitigate the problem of what is being construed out of this region. This makes us look at the very structure of identity claims that emanate from the region.

Producing a Subject

The divergence between an individuated subject and a collective subject arises in such a way that it problematizes the talk about collective subject types, such as ethnic identities. It is the particular mode of politics that arbitrarily determines the process of self-identification of the subject, without any 'universalizable' ways of

producing a subject.[1] For example, in the context of North-East India, the description 'North-East' sets up the faultline of our nation-building exercise, in terms of a strategy of exclusion/inclusion. Such a description is also a representation of the world that is made within the lived frame of social life. Treated as an excluded or partially excluded and scheduled area, the idea of the North-East emerged as a resistance to both exclusion and inclusion. As India's own North-East, it resists exclusion, while as the 'North-East' it resists inclusion in the mainstream pan-national identity. Indeed, it only is connected with the rest of India through a chicken neck between Bhutan, Nepal and North Bengal. So, the production of North-East as the subject resists universality and at the same time it suggests only a particular way of world-making.

There are various possibilities of making the world lie in the semantic representation of a possible world that generates a string of identities. One example of such 'possible worlds' is imagining very briefly the situation in which people live in certain cultural locations, without any deep commitment to it; 'but what matters is their mastery of and acceptability in a culture', something like sharing some characteristics of the world in which they live (Goodman, 1978). The notion of a 'possible world' is important in order to describe the making of an 'identity', in terms of certain determinate designations of characteristics; the presence of these characteristics gives rise to an identity. The furniture of such identities is culturally and contextually constructed by certain social and historical forces. This kind of construction is mediated in language[2] (see Caroll and Whorf, 1964: 36–38), and such expressions are 'artifactual'[3] (see Goodman and Elgin, 1998). Moreover, such language-conferred construction of identity presents itself as a self-subsistent entity with a shared background, which keeps on transmuting itself by some articulated features that ensure the continuance of such an identity.[4] Every time the identity expresses itself, it articulates itself using resources drawn from its specific location. This mode of representation through articulation often gets entwined with concrete interests, and hence the identity becomes a specific social construct with a particular mode of representation.

An attempt to reduce the 'identity' in terms of some characteristics does not capture its entire potential. Even if concrete interests

can be enumerated from the representation of an identity, the fact that it has been articulated cannot be reduced to those interests alone (Mrinal Miri, 2003: 62–63). The mode of articulation may as well be categorized, but the task of finding the agency that is involved in the making of the identity remains elusive[5] (see also Williams, 1990). The 'agency' performs several roles: artifactual construction of an ontology, identification, assertion and so on, which creates an identity that can ultimately distinguish itself from others. It performs and manifests itself in different ways; such acts always leave open possibilities of assuming roles in an uncharted terrain, so that the identity is never 'disarticulated' and never completely determined by certain limited roles.[6]

Let us take a contrasting look at the 'realistic' understanding of an identity, in terms of positive and normative necessities, and contingencies of social life that make it just a 'subject of power'.[7] In a way, this can be termed as 'repression of the social' under the imposing network of power.[8] Within such an imposing network of power, the monologue of describing identities as an articulation for rights and opportunities alienates the 'social' character of such identities by disposing off their own world, the specific artifactual elements of their make.[9] The identities are given some negative description, articulating some 'lack' without any 'positive' interior such that the reductionist realism does not stop short of fracturing the positive interior of an identity.[10]

The positive interior of an identity is not only its 'agency' role, but also its narrative potential; through which it does things such as symbolic invocation of social and material relations, and asserts definite positions within those relations. To understand how those definite positions are taken, a few specific cases could be discussed here. In the context of North-East India, the distinction between 'good' and 'evil' is drawn in terms of human qualities, such as righteousness and protection of life. 'Good' is symbolized in terms of such values embodied in human characters. Bad omens and destructive activities are symbolically invoked and attributed to evil. For example, in Khasi culture, *U Blei* becomes symbolic of the righteous, the clean and the good; *U Thlen* gets identified with the unclean, the dangerous and the *sang* (crime/sin) (Sujata Miri, 1998: 28).

Khasis and Centred Subjectivity

Clifford Geertz has commented, in the context of Javanese culture, on the nature of a prudent, wise man who tries to adapt a 'tranquil detachment which frees him for his endless oscillation between gratification and frustration' (1973: Chapter 5). Similarly, in the Khasi context, one can locate a 'tranquil detachment' arising as an effect of equilibrating correspondence between good and evil. 'Good' or 'evil' cannot be radically separated from each other in the psyche of an individual, and so the desired state of tranquility can come by exercising a kind of self-control in everyday life. The Khasi, therefore, creates a 'centred subjectivity' in the moorings of his/her self and never resorts to practices that would wean it out. This aspect of Khasi subjectivity empowers the Khasis to exercise their agency in a specific way to avoid pitfalls of life. This could be seen in the example of nature playing a generic role in Khasi imagination, as they fondly call it 'mother nature'—in their dialect, *Ka meirilung risan*—while the moral order of Khasi life is preserved in *phawars,* or self-regulated stories and norms. Both nature and tales of self-regulation create a 'centered subjectivity' and it is made possible by embedding the word or meanings in various layers of Khasi life.

Consequently, by being cautious about some evil effects, the Khasis pursue the path of good, which takes them to an 'emergent' consciousness of 'identity', in which they describe themselves as the bearers of the spiritual law of *Ka Hok*, meaning 'righteousness'. Identity is constructed through mobilization of one's imagination against the evil, symbolically expressed in terms of what is considered as a bad omen or happening. This sense of 'righteousness' combines the construction of 'nature' and 'culture' with an underlying principle of transference between them. Khasi scholar Morning Lyngdoh explains Ka Hok in its interrelatedness with *Ka Rngiew*—a kind of power bestowed upon man by God—both acting as 'complementary' to each other[11] (Lyngdoh, 1991). The principle of transference goes like this: righteousness is not a given and humans earn it by making use of the god given 'power' of Ka Rngiew within them.[12] Ka Rngiew, the concept of the capacity or power, manifests itself in action, and if the action is 'good', in the sense of not falling into the trap of doing something 'evil' (such

as endogamy in Khasi culture), then the person earns Ka Hok. Ka Rngiew remains as a variable power that depends upon whether a person is morally good, and the degree of her goodness determines the strength of Ka Rngiew in her. In other words, Ka Rngiew marks what is imbibed in human nature in the form of an intrinsic spirit; a spirit that is essentially constitutive of the human being and what is good about that human in an intrinsic sense. This is a kind of faculty that not only operates in ordinary human acts, but also in actions that determine the strength of Ka Rngiew in human beings. The circularity of the two concepts, Ka Hok and Ka Rngiew, portrays a fully explored Khasi understanding of 'virtue', while at the same time presenting the lack of a clear borderline between 'nature' and 'culture'. According to Khasi beliefs, Ka Hok is both a cosmic and moral law of order and harmony, with an effect of synthesizing the two in God's scheme of things. There is an indication of synchrony between Ka Rngiew and Ka Hok through which a balanced and good human nature is created.

Therefore, one can see the operation of a sense of 'autonomy' in the Khasi attitude towards morality that harps on being sensitive about what one is doing[13] (Sujata Miri, 1998: 48). Moreover, the creation of a 'self' is also linked with the realization of the conscious capacity of human beings. The creation of the 'self' blends the 'moral law', faculties of the self, and determination of good and evil by a cosmic law. Therefore, the creation of the self does not act upon humans as mere knowledge of what is good and what is not, but can undertake the interpretation of an act through a creative application of laws and principles conceived in the belief of a cosmic order. One can also get a sense of being-in-the-world as a 'human in history'. In the construction of Khasi morality, the 'self' emerges through self-conscious realization of thoughts and deeds that converge into the horizon of Khasi identity.

The horizon of Khasi identity involves the backdrop of the pre-interpreted life-world, but what it envelopes is the construction of the self-identity that draws its resources from the 'world', figured in the interpretative discourse of the community. The move from the pre-interpreted sphere of meaning available in the life-world to the interpreted discourse of meaning and relevance creates various modes of self-construction and self-understanding that go into the making of the world of the Khasis. But this move is not limited

within the closure of their life-world as it produces a variety of meanings by the invocation of a 'life-world' concept.[14] For example, the notion of U Blei, as the 'reality of meaning', creates an already present backdrop of the Khasi 'world-view' that operates as the law, the 'given' of meaning (Sujata Miri, 1998: 25). This clearly indicates the possibility of the expression of a variety of meanings that gives rise to a 'world' of possible meaning entities. What is essential here is to draw the distinguishing markers between: (i) pre-interpreted meanings; (ii) meanings created from the foundational reality of meanings; and (iii) meanings derived by application of laws and rules of meaning. For example, one should look for a way to distinguish between the pre-interpreted meaning of Ka Rngiew and the determination of the degree of its presence in a human. The conceptual interpretation of 'Rngiew' in terms of 'self experience of humans in history', takes a foundational route, while U Thlen devouring Ka Rngiew[15] unfolds 'meanings' at an applied level of human experience. While Ka Rngiew remains a pre-interpreted meaning, known as an intrinsic power of the human self, the way it manifests in concrete corporeal and embodied human beings bears a foundational relation with the human being in the world. As an applied concept, it further becomes a functional entity, in terms of the possibility of an alimentary relationship, as U Thlen may devour Ka Rngiew, marking the weakness of the self or its capacity to overcome the evil powers of Thlen. These multiple possibilities of meaning open up the interpretive–discursive realm of meanings that go beyond the pre-interpreted horizon of the life-world and transgresses the limits of the contexts embedded within the horizon. So far as the act of evaluating the nature of an action is performed in terms of 'good' or 'evil' guided by the principle of Ka Hok, these 'values' arise out of the sheer artifactuality of the principle that privileges a particular application of those notions. There is a simultaneous possibility of experiencing mutually-antinomic 'values', given the reality of both 'good' and 'evil'. But the interaction between the person, society and culture creates a particular possibility of 'actually' experienced meaning, and this possibility creates the 'world' for Khasis. Giving a Lewisian twist to such possibilities, one can say that the concepts like Ka Rngiew and Ka Hok operate in an interrelationship that creates the 'possible worlds' for the Khasis. Once again a Davidsonian understanding

of such meanings would harp on the capacity of encoding the elements of being a Khasi as 'anchorage points' that hold between the world and the life-world of Khasis. For example, concepts like Ka Rngiew and Ka Hok provide anchorage points to hold the inner potentialities of humans as manifested in their action. In Davidsonian metaphor, one can say that nobody could be 'bolted' to the world of the Khasis without the triangulating markers of concepts such as Ka Rngiew and Ka Hok. Such triangulation assures a 'bond' that loosens up the interrelated concepts by positing such concepts within the 'world' of a culture—here within the world of Khasi culture. In a similar vein, one can also see how the process of 'identification' takes place by interpolation of concrete individuals within such a world.

Apatanis and Life-Cycle Rituals

Symbolic performances link individuals. One very common, popular and universal celebration is the performance of the life-cycle rituals among the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh. The relationship between parents and their married daughter is symbolically reproduced in the former's wishes of well-being for the latter. The ritual is held to ensure the realization of the parental wish that their daughter has children after marriage. Apatani scholar Takhe Kani explains:

> The people do not appreciate and respect the wealth and status of the spouse in this society unless the couple has children....Thus barren parents died with a sad ballad, 'Oh! why they don't give us at least a son or daughter to have our wealth and status'(1996: 43).

What is framed here is the ethics of birth that determine the provisions of care and well-being. It further highlights the reflexive agency of parenthood that wishes an institutional realization of childbirth, which, put in the negative, represents an emotional and material marker of wealth and status. The ritual for the purpose of ensuring the birth of children is called *Mida*, which is not only a symbolic exchange of gifts but also a marker of the continuation of the generation. Mida functions to sustain marital relationships

and to prevent aberrations. It acts like a normative custom that ensures thwarting of all uncertainties that can crop up in a marital relationship. For example, Mida is performed in the cases of aberrations such as divorce, or the lack of a male child; it is resorted to when there is a challenge to the marital relationship. It reveals both a sense of serious desire to see something fulfilled as well as a jocular response to the need of ensuring the attainment of something that is necessary through its performance, which reflects the swing of such moods and temperaments, the rise and fall of which are related to situations in life.

Mida serves the purpose of bringing together the parents of the bride and the groom as a higher-order 'social intervention', which takes the presence of almost the entire clan and kinship ties into its ambit. Such holistic involvement is described by Takhe Kani (1996: 43) in the case of *datti Mida*, an elaborate ritual that requires the exchange of gifts such as a full grown Mithun ox given from the groom's family. The bride's family may not reciprocate immediately, but pays back as it suits them, when they desire to organize a Mida in order to celebrate the union. Mida coordinates several functions simultaneously—exchange of gifts, bargain between two sides, among others—all of which implicitly relate to larger societal arrangements. It reproduces the norms and rules that bind society and gives it a particular orientation.

The worship of the deity *Murung*, gives the name for a ritual that is celebrated to ensure the well-being of an individual. Takhe Kani quotes an Apatani proverb: '*Gyunyang tiggo mi ralyang mako da miyu sanko nyima*'—there is no way we can live without performing religious rites and ceremonies (Ibid.: 56). This proverb points to the evocation of lived experience, as also to a historic context. Murung bears the palimpsest of the moment of origin, which invokes a series of reversals as the Lacanian 'Real', the signs of danger that prompt its invocation. One should give a full-blooded representation of such signs resulting from certain unexpected happenings. Takhe Kani (Ibid.: 58) catalogues such 'real' signs:

(i)   When a couple is childless after many years of their marriage.

(ii) When a man has no sons, or a child is mentally or physically handicapped at birth.

(*iii*)   When a man's domestic fowls and animals are handicapped at birth.

(*iv*)   When bees, snakes or other strange insects and reptiles enter the house or granary.

(*v*)   When mushrooms grow in the hearth or in the hind of a pig.

(*vi*)   When any family member is sick for a long period of time and cannot be cured through other ceremonies.

(*vii*)   When a man has dreams of a banana tree or mushroom growing at the house and granary sites.

(*viii*)   When there are enough mature mithun and oxen.

The people believe that the reasons enumerated from (*i*) to (*viii*) above have sent a message to *Gyutii Gigro Wuhi*, the spirit-god, who has already entered the house of the performer of the ceremony. The reading of signs charted out as preconditions of the presence of Murung at someone's house bears both positive and negative characteristics. The catalogue consists of obvious natural events that perplex and yet are not wholly ominous, but rather are something of a mixture. There is ambivalence between apprehension and hope borne out of these events, which seeks its symbolic resolution in the invocation of various Murung gods. As we had already noted, the creation of a centred subjectivity in the Khasi making of the world is quite different from that of the Apatani ritual of Murung. It is a sense of 'lack' that places the Murung deity in the aporias of personal and community history. At some level, there is an entwinement of the personal and the natural, mental states and events, meanings and ritual framing of these meanings, to display a pattern of intermingling between personal and social. The text of Murung remains in an uncanonized form, in which the ritual performance does not bring about already anticipated results; rather it enacts a process of creation and sets up an ecological context. The context is symbolized in the form of judging a set of evidences that are not warranted in the animals, plants and human beings, that together constitute an ecological relationship.

The functional significance of Murung can be traced by reading of the omen by priests in determining the nature and timing of its celebration. The reading of an omen and deciding whether it is favourable or unfavourable establishes a sacral and ritual rule which then can be applied to the human–nature interface. Murung, and

its particular type, delimits the physical and symbolic space carved out of the human–nature interface in the rituals, such as the splitting of wood and the taming of the Mithun ox. The physical space is 'delimited' by several performances in spaces within and without. The large amount of firewood necessary for the month-long celebration requires a mode of gathering and collection in which the wood is ritually carried from the grove to the domestic sphere, and Mithuns are also caught from the forest for sacrificial rites. The sense of offence associated with the cutting of wood and the capture of the Mithun is compensated by oblations through hymns and chants that induce a sense of loss. Takhe Kani quotes such a chant recited by the priests: 'O Gods of trees, groves and other Gods of nature, don't harm us for the felling of these trees for this ceremony!'(1996: 57).

What is even more striking, is the 'ritual' associated with taming of the Mithun ox. The observation of the omen, the selection of the ox by a process of 'naming' and then dedicating it to a particular 'Lapang-God' are parts of the ritual of sacrifice. The taming of the ox is, in the first place, a process of domestication that requires the animal to grow to maturity. The process of domestication is fulfilled only when the Mithun lives almost its whole lifespan at the home of the solemnizer, signifying a sense of fulfilment of its own life, as well as that of its 'master'. It is only then that its master qualifies to sacrifice it at the altar of God. Therefore, one sees that the operation of a symbolic law of fulfilment does not allow an infringement on life, and the performance of sacrifice of a fulfilled life ensures the satisfaction of the Gods. In addition, the rite of sacrifice brings in the notion of being 'saved' in various forms. Through such 'forms' of gods and sacred deities, the ritual of Murung secures the well-being of the solemnizer. *Murung Bussi*, a 'text' of the performance, expresses the fulfilment of nature and man, as can be gathered from a song by Takhe Kani:

In this year, we heard that the solemnizers have got plentiful and gracious woods, leaves, cane, rice, rice beer and meat to appease men and deities through this ceremony...In this evening, you invite us into your house to have this gracious meal and beer just as a delicious fruit tree invites birds and a deep river invites fish, and our team is coming into the house like a joyful flock of bird[s] and fish (Ibid.: 88).

This song is an expression of 'deep ecology' involved in the celebration of Murung. The metonymic effect of the song in comparing the solemnizer's gracious offerings, with the sheltering of birds and fishes in trees and in the river comes full circle, when it devolves into how beautifully the guests are entertained by the solemnizers. There is a simultaneous spirit of joy that overcomes the physical and symbolic limits, constituted by Murung norms, to touch the whole of nature. Such expressions of collective participation in the celebration of a common practice of hunting and cultivation are stretched to the extent of recreating the familiar. The only distance that is maintained comes through the belief of the presence of some deities, who are ingrained in the imagination of the solemnizers.

A sense of location and direction also becomes a part of the imagination of Murung, especially in the distribution of meat. The meat is distributed by 'betrothal friends' (Kani, 1996: 94–95) of the solemnizer, signifying not only sharing, but also the socialization of the betrothal. The meat is carried round through the Apatani villages, in a clockwise or anti-clockwise direction, and is welcomed with respect. Thus, the various forms of Murung are associated with agricultural and food-gathering activities. The Apatani concept of nature is one in which nature is recreated through ritual performances in a sequence, thus turning nature into a force of shared communication and participation.

Domesticity among the Ao Nagas

J.P. Mills' (1926) extraordinarily supple description of Ao Naga culture provides a textual entry into the symbolic realm of the Ao Naga mind. The 'text' needs to be reconfigured and re-read by establishing the intricate links in its surface representation. The spheres of Ao Naga life are demarcated from the given configuration of the text, and one could try to separate the 'private' and the 'public' spheres of Ao Naga life even though such markers are not readily available (Mills, 1926: 71–161). What Mills names as 'domestic' could possibly provide a basis for wider arenas of life, by streamlining the values, practices and habits of the domestic sphere. Conversely, the domestic sphere can become a sustainable ground for continuance of the practices in 'public' life. Even

without strictly demarcated spheres of the 'private' and 'public', Mills' preferred coinages such as domestic and other spheres arranged the text in such a manner that it envelopes distinct spheres of life. We propose a reading of the Ao Naga domestic realm, as described by Mills, in order to experience the sphere of domesticity as the microcosm of intricate linkages of various symbols which also sustain practices in wider spheres, thus giving rise to their specific domesticity. What constitutes the sphere of domestic in the Ao Naga life? We designate two levels: (*i*) the material cultural resources; and (*ii*) the representational types available in language. We take these two levels of constitution of the domestic not because they erect the limits of a designated sphere but because they provide a route from the 'concrete' to the 'formal'; the specific transition to cognizable 'forms' that stand as the finished products of their 'domestic' realm. Further, the specific transition from one level to another bears the process of linguistic appropriation of their life-experiences that sets their horizon. Mills' textualization of their horizon provides an exploratory poetics of their lives, the meanings of which need to be disseminated.

The village as a place of inhabitation is 'surrounded by a belt of bamboo clumps and light jungle' (Mills, 1926: 71). The name of the village represents a spatial feature: *Changtongia* derives its 'root' from a kind of thin bamboo called *chuchuo*. In a way the name of the village and its surroundings get identified, and the name acquires its ostensible reference. But the demarcation of the village paths by fine spear-oaks brought during the present villagers' migration here retraces their long forlorn footprints in the well-ordered plantation of these trees. One can read an ecological balancing in a chosen place of habitation, the synchronization between the natural surroundings and the planned arrangements within a village that give rise to a creative imagination reflected in the acts of naming the place and its natural/cultural objects. Interestingly, a village name such as *Yongyimsen* recalls the memory of long-departed *Konyak* settlers with its new connotation as 'new village of the Yong people'. The Ao Naga way of naming reveals a synchronism between the present and the past.

Naming suffices the fundamental purpose of the binding together the settlers of the village and it spills over onto certain organized functions. The 'defence' of the village is secured by making

'fences'. 'The fence, made of wooden stakes lashed together and bristling with *panjis*, stretches right around the village (Mills, 1926: 72). Such fences are necessary for the safety of the village and are marked in a festival called *Atsutsu Kimak* or *Urang Kimak*. There is a strategic planting of long creepers whose tendrils are trained down the bamboo, which are used to thwart enemies. Such a defence strategy links up defence with certain beliefs and norms—such as the belief of growing creepers and the participation of the community in making fences. What is revealed here is the continuation of the practice of growing creepers as a custom, because its discontinuation would weaken village defences; thus many plants, which would otherwise have become extinct, are being preserved. How does the preparation for defence become a domestic affair? Firstly, by the participation of the community in the erection of the fences and, secondly, the day becomes one of celebration as every young male participant visits the dormitories of the girls and is offered rice beer, converting it into a 'domestic' occasion.

The observance of community works, and the customs related to it, is obligatory. Even the growing of certain plants serves the double function of defending the community, as well as being a symbolic ratification of defence plans. Moreover, such symbolic and customary observances, performed as a part of a common goal, partially constitutes the realm of the domestic, while an act of celebration of the real work through reception and festivity adds the 'intent' to the symbolic. A symbolic performance without its celebrating mode does not acquire a decipherable meaning in the domestic sphere of Ao Nagas. Therefore, the domestic sphere is in no way limited to a piecemeal symbolic act of the individual; unless it is opened up to a collective celebration of a work, meant to serve the common purpose, it is never completed.

As a part of the defence preparations, the Aos make a spacious building near the village gate but inside the fence, 'often over fifty feet long and twenty feet broad', which serves the purpose of a guard house as well as clubhouse (Ibid.: 73). These buildings are called *morungs*, and serve the special purpose of assembling the male members for war as well as for get-to-gethers. The morung symbolizes a special reassembling of domestic spaces compounded with the taking of collective decisions in the face of urgencies.

Moreover, it re-integrates one and all—the sharing of everyday moments of joy and sorrow and strengthens interpersonal relations. At the same time, by prohibiting the entry of females in morungs, society imposes among the members' readiness to act against any odd occurrence. Perhaps the prohibition of entry to women is enforced strictly because the main purpose is to keep the men in readiness for battle. Women do not take part in battles. Morungs signify a specific character of domestic defence so that the domestic is divided in terms of 'defence' and 'festive' purposes; both are sometimes strategically integrated and sometimes separated, in order to separate task-specific spheres of domestic life without affecting the general male-female relationships. This is reflected when morungs are rebuilt. On the last evening of the completion of work, the girls of the other phratries, with whom the young men of the morung consort, assemble in front of it and walk round it six times singing (Mills, 1926: 76–77). Afterwards, they are entertained to a feast outside.

It appears that the morung, with its frontal location near the village gate, acquires a kind of sanctity. Moreover, with its strictly defined norms of prohibition of entrance to females, while maintaining the homosocial world within, the morungs also becomes a site of celebration when the festivity takes place outside it. What, then, is the significance of the demarcation of zones of homosocial duty and companionship among the males, and of an outside space of celebration with women of other clans with whom the males are acquainted? It indicates a kind of self-discipline, both in maintaining the defence of the village as well as restraining the heterosocial relations with women who they are acquainted with. This act of self-discipline constitutes male domesticity, which is never complete without the celebratory moment of female participation. Further, it portrays the norm of permissibility for the self-disciplined males to socialize with females, and the moment of celebration signifies a fulfilled moment within the act of self-disciplining. It also shows the completion of an act as a moment of success that acts as a moment of celebration. This kind of normative regulation of festivity comports a learned and cultured behaviour. Thus, domestic life incorporates the aspect of discipline and learning, mixed with the pleasure of free-mixing and colourful celebrations.

Apart from the functional aspects of domestic life, its aesthetic component is no less fascinating. Music is an essential component in every aspect of their lives, representing the direct interrelationship between society and creativity. One can perceive that music consists not only of tunes and voices, but also contains the ultimate resonance of a sought-after mitigation of a materially-rooted necessity. There is a tale that tells us about the *Changis*, an Ao clan, trying to 'prove that they are in no way different from other Aos' (Mills, 1926: 76). They possessed a drum, but 'jealous of the tap-tap sound that the *Chanke* women produced when making pots, which rivalled its fine note, the drummer ran down a steep slope and turned into a stone'. This tale reveals an intrinsic attribution of 'value' in the creation of musical instruments; of the gratification of refined taste reflected in the apparent sense of contention between refinement in the tune of the 'tap tap' and the 'drum', in which the drummer is underrated and gets converted into another form. The end of this tale demarcates the identification of 'sensibility' and 'no-sensibility': a 'stone' representing the lack of sensibility and the 'death' bringing out the pathos of not being refined enough in the production of tonalities. Perhaps the subtle distinction between the tune of making pots—the vibrations of which had a greater frequency, producing a variety of notes, and being a female innovation, while the drums beaten by a male producing monotonous sounds, lacking the quality of music made by pot-making—generated an aesthetic angst that sought its end by turning into something beyond sensibility. This aspect of the refinement of task and aesthetic sense operates at the level of pleasure and satisfaction among the Ao Nagas. Later, every *khel* (clan) owned a drum. Let us reflect on Mills's elaborate description of the drums:

> They consist of huge logs, slit along one side and partially hollowed out. One end is carved to represent what is undoubtedly a buffalo's head, with horns lying back along the drum...The tongue of the buffalo often protrudes and turns up against the upper lip, and, as if to personify the drum still further, a human face is often carved on the tongue (Ibid.: 76–77).

This description of the drums and the personified motifs on it signify purposive social and cultural performances. At the level of

representation, these drums and the motifs closely relate to the domestic moorings of the Ao Naga life.

It is important to consider the spatial arrangements of domestic space and its functional correspondence with certain social and cultural patterns. Mills locates the organizing principle of division in the villages in terms of morung and *muphu* with the principle that its inmates can never be drawn from more than one muphu. A muphu often contains more than one morung, each occupied by one or more clans. According to Mills:

> ...a man usually describes himself as belonging to such-and-such a 'morung', rather than to such-and-such a *muphu*, for, though a 'morung' never draws its inmates from more than one muphu, a muphu often contains more than one 'morung', each occupied by one or more clans (1926: 83).

A muphu is like a cluster of members, sharing the same language or belonging to the same clan in contrast to members who have later migrated to the village. Customs also vary from one muphu to the other. Muphus are called khels in Nagamese, which, going by its Assamese meaning, would mean a village organization with distinct families, clans and individuals, ordinarily sharing a common geographical territory like the same village or locality.

This principle of organization leads to the distribution of settlements in various ways. What is significant is the difference in social and cultural behaviour that can be traced back to the different muphus within the village. The difference is maintained by the special location of the various muphus within the village, with trespasses leading to internecine warfare and trouble. There is a functional integration of society by its demarcated interior, without which differentiates could not have been maintained. Between one muphu and another there is a boundary that is constituted by a fireline.

Another significant area of domestic preoccupation is the performance of 'rituals' in which various functional divisions of society are assigned a definite role. The performance of certain common rites and rituals brings about the coordination between different muphus and morungs. In a way, these rites produce the societal whole at the level of their performance, even though the

rites often include the specific differential markers. *Phuchung* is a ceremony that is a ritualistic invocation of the corn spirit or field spirit, through an act of oblation at the end of the harvest season, in which the husband and the wife play distinct roles. Another important ritual is the reaping ceremony, during which the family undergoes the tension of whether or not it is going to get the expected amount of corn. There are occasions of sacrifice and ritualistic invocation of corn spirits in order to protect and ensure the reaping of the harvest (Mills, 1926: 112–113).

The sphere of the 'domestic' in Ao Naga life is an open space, where family chores are performed, involving participation in the community, on the one hand, and the determination of domestic duties based on community differentiations, on the other. The Ao Naga life never manifests itself without a community orientation, making a closed privacy impossible. Therefore the 'domestic' as described by Mills includes public acts; it becomes an extensional sphere that contains the functional distinctions of various family members.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF NARRATIVE SELF: ANGAMI NAGA MEANINGS

J.H. Hutton's remarkable work on the Angami Nagas discusses what he terms as Angami Naga superstitions. He describes these as: (*i*) whosoever approaches the foot of the rainbow will die; (*ii*) it is dangerous to plant cacti (*Euphorbia antiquorum*) as it will cause a storm; and (*iii*) a man's stomach aches when someone at a distance is ransacking his property. No concrete reasons were given for such belief-statements that apparently assume some form of closure (Hutton, 1921: 251). What is interesting is the narrative that links up of a statement of belief with another belief. The explanation given for the cause of death by touching the foot of a rainbow is that it is the work of the spirit residing in the rainbow. This interpretation gives primacy to the concept of the rainbow spirit that enacts death; another line of interpretation could be a narrative reconfiguration of the sight of a rainbow that suggests that the colour bands of a rainbow manifest a spirit. However, such

an explanation does not have an expected consistency and hence appears like superstition to an observer. Belief represents a narrative and fictional nature in which narrative becomes the medium to link up disparate phenomena and entities. The notion of the 'spirit' in the rainbow is invoked to explain the death caused by touching the foot of the rainbow. Again, the 'foot of a rainbow' is an imagined construction to signify its declining semi-circular arch, a visual illusion or spectre that gives rise to such narrative construction. It obviously lacks the usual narrative elements such as rhetoric or trope, but bears an important characteristic of the narrative, by presenting an explanation that leaves an 'inexplicable' that has to be accommodated by belief. In the same extract, the cause of stomach pain as someone is molesting one's property presents a metaphorical picture of one's mutual loss, which can be best described in terms of a physiological attack corresponding to the act of ransacking of one's property. Two kinds of explanations can be attempted in this regard. In the first belief, the visual representation gives rise to a strategy of containment, and in the second, causal correspondence between 'pain' and 'molestation' established through an analogous equivalence represents a belief about natural causation. How do these explanations acquire the status of belief?

Given this introduction to the nature of Angami Naga belief, one can try to see the play of such belief in the narrative construction of its genealogy. One can try to locate its internal connections and designate how certain specific concepts evolve in the Angami Naga mind. Hutton relates a tale about their origin which he titled 'Tower of Babel', obviously an elusive title. Hutton talked about *Ukepenopfii*, the primal mother, who, instead of dying, transmigrated to heaven. Her progenies thought of keeping in touch with her by building up a tower through which they would reach heaven and speak to her. At this, the primal mother thought of the hazard of everyone wanting to get a gift from her! So she advised them to build the tower in a manner that those working at the site spoke different languages, so that they would not understand each other. When one instructed his co-worker to bring a piece of stone, he would fetch water or a stick. As a result, total miscommunication and chaos prevailed amongst the workers with mutually unintelligible languages. The tower was abandoned, but what remained are the different languages of the tribes. One can read here a metonymic

connection between different tongues and tribes through the communicative confusion. In yet another version of the story, Hutton brought out the ethical quandary of reaching impossible heights within the self-inflating paradigm of power:

> There was once a country under a powerful chief with great armies and the people thought they would mount up to heaven by building a ladder of wood. So they builded [sic] a stair, and made the stair very high into heaven. Now the men who were up at the top asked for more wood and men who were below made answer [sic], 'There is no wood, shall we cut a piece from the stair?' So the men at the top not understanding what they said gave, 'Aye, cut it.' So they cut it and the ladder fell, and great was the fall thereof, and they that builded [sic] it were killed (Hutton, 1921: 265).

The ethnographic significance of this tale can be unravelled by turning to the narrative. One can perceive the play of symbolic and metaphoric events. The very act of constructing the tower in order to communicate reflects the descendants' sense of terrestrial space, a space in which they stretch out by climbing the tower. It represents an upward journey. This effort to re-establish the link with the originary mother produces a gradual upward displacement. This signifies an inversion of temporal sequence and the effort to go back to the beginning of creation, which is an imagined retreat in a terrestrial space. The making of the tower signifies continuity and a symbolic construction of the lost time path. The tower becomes a traversing symbol, and the stair signifies that the flight is never cut off from the ground. At the same time, the stair grounds the moment of climbing into the real space. Can the reader try to get an answer as to why the journey to heaven was never completed? Does the narrative give an answer? Clearly, the answer is not at all evident. It calls for a hermeneutic imagination to retract the layers of meaning in the incomplete journey to heaven. It presents a tale which is the ultimate in going back to the origin, but always remaining unfulfilled in the 'given' space and time. The kind of break introduced in the communication between Ukepenopfii and her descendents, and later the breakdown of the whole symbolic device, in an effort to complete and reach out to the ultimate goal of touching heaven is a voluntary acceptance of the impossibility of accomplishing the journey. The whole narrative is

a reconstructive effort to retrace the lost genealogy of the community. It simultaneously produces the effect of an imagined continuity of history and disorients the continuity with a rupture that desecrates the tower, with the disappearance of all the fantasies around it. This again serves the purpose of re-establishing narrative continuity with the descendents from the original Mother. The loss of the link in an interregnum is compensated by an imaginary journey through time that internally recaptures the depth dimension of continuity. Moreover, the final fall of the tower reveals the situation in the present outside the imaginary; but, at the same time, there is the symbol of historical continuity.

This is an attempt on the part of the Angami Nagas to reconstruct a lack or a loss through narrative explanation, the economy of which fills the gap between the present experience of an event, and another collateral event, without a mapped terrain of reproductive activity. The narrative also produces several events that give it a certain direction, communicating an intentional meaning of the community. But it is never the logical-causal relationship of events alone that determines the 'total' meaning of a narrative. Rather, it is a surplus over the cognitive and material resources introduced into it through a disposition of belief that regulates the flow of meanings. The Angami Naga narratives cover up the disjunction between events, not only to produce a belief at the level of ideas but also recontextualize it in the concrete practices of narration. The narrative hermeneutic sustains a belief in its currency. What is philosophically interesting is to think of a way to systematize the traces of belief in a comprehensive mode. Does the Angami Naga body of knowledge provide a way to form a chain of all such disparate and disjointed beliefs? Apart from a teleological resolution of disparity between the various sorts of beliefs and the amalgamating role of narratives, the gamut of social practices is the field in which beliefs are placed. Thus, it is apparent that beliefs form a set of praxis that determines the social interrelationship within the Angami Nagas.

Head-Hunting

Given this kind of belief–practice interrelationship, the 'queer' phenomenon of 'head-hunting' needs to be explored at length. How

are we to understand this phenomenon of head-hunting? Hutton's elaborate explanation of the phenomenon in possible terms, such as ensuring the death of the enemy by slashing the head, head-hunting as part of the game of hunting, the cult of human sacrifice, and so on, all covering from purposive to ritual necessities, does not give a precise explanation of the phenomenon. We would like to point out that head-hunting is visualized by ethnographers as an act of rage and barbarous cruelty, as experienced by the early colonizers who fell victim to it. This aspect of first falling victim to the practice and then observing it from outside makes it a subject of representation in English ethnography. Moreover, the British instituted a civil rule in order to stop the practice. This act of representation in colonial ethnography painted head-hunting in denigrating terms. However, it should be remembered that the Nagas always head-hunted in enemy terrain and human heads were celebratory symbols of their victory, which was associated with the number of heads one could collect from the enemy troops. Apart from this feeling of valour and prowess, there was nothing mysterious about it.

We can make an intertextual reference to a story that also gives an aestheticized representation of hunting, in which an event like cutting off one's head signifies an ecological sensibility, a return to an intimacy with nature. Hutton (1921) offers a tale, 'The Travelling Companions and the Grateful Doe'. It goes like this: Once upon a time, there was a hunter who used to go to hunt with his fellow countrymen and never missed a chance to collect a lot of booty. But whatever he used to hunt was taken by the fellow villagers, without giving him a share, though they themselves never killed many animals. One day he saw a big doe, a barking deer. While others asked him to kill the doe, he refused to shoot it. What happens then is almost magical. He was going along the road when a snake came out, turned into a beggar and asked him where he was going. The beggar expressed his wish to join him as a companion. Soon a frog came out in front of them, became a man and also asked where they were going. The frog-turned-human being and also desired to become their partner in travel. Then, as they were going along, the doe turned into a very nice girl, washing her hair in the river, and she wanted to know where they were going. They replied that they were going to travel and so the girl decided to join them.

After reaching a country, the hunter and the girl married, and the hunter went to a Sahib, and the Sahib said to him, 'If you don't make a water-field and make rice grow in it in one day, I will kill you with an hour's grace'. With this order from the Sahib, the man became very harassed and narrated it to his wife. Immediately, the wife told him that she would prepare the field for him, but he would have to cut her head off with a *dao*. But the man refused. According to Hutton:

> But at last she persuaded him to cut her head off, and when he had done it he felt very sorry and started weeping. But his wife had made the field and grew the rice and went back to their home and cooked their food and waited for her husband, but he did not come. So in her request the beggar man and the man who had been a frog went to call him, but he remained hesitant to come. Finally when he came to their house after a lot of persuasion, he, to his utter surprise found his wife there ready with food, as she used to be always (1921: 271–72).

She (the doe) offered all of them some food to eat. After they had eaten, she told them that they should now go back to their places of origin, their old homes. She told the man that once he had saved her life by not shooting her and now, she in return had saved his life and her job was over. Then she became a doe again and went off to the jungle. Similarly, the frog-man became a frog again and went back to the water, and the beggar became a snake and crept into the bushes. Finally, the man was left all alone and he came back to his own home.

Though the narrative has a number of clues, we shall examine only a few: the tale represents a transition from the hunting and food-gathering stage of life to settled agriculture. This is present in the hunter with a gun refusing to shoot animals and the huntsman not getting his share——a negative presentation of contempt for the life of hunting. The subsequent change into a traveller represents a moment of wandering in the process of transition. The accompaniment of various non-human species during the travel is the desire of those species to be freed from the domination of man. At the same time, this aspect of travel acquires a psychoanalytic depth, by re-enlivening the immediate past of hunting that moves

the hunter-traveller beyond the act of killing them, a transcendence from the baggage of the deposits from the acts of cruelty, a self-renewal that embraces a new mode of production. It is the Pauline capacity of men in expression that reconfirms man's intersubjective kinship with animals and other species through which they are transformed into human/huwoman beings. Therefore, the transition from the hunting–gathering stage to the agrarian stage is also a transition of human beings from negativity to complementarity.

We need to recall the moment in the narrative when the hunter refuses to cut off the 'head' of his wife, a doe in disguise, and then does so and is traumatized by the experience. This traumatic experience has to be underlined in understanding the practice of head-hunting. At one level, it is an act of bravado against one's enemy to succeed in a battle, and, at another level, head-hunting is the jouissance in the act of battle. What this tale expresses is that 'love' is the 'double' of hunting; that is, translated in sociological terms, kinship bonding through an act of marriage (here the marriage between the hunter and the doe) is the double of hunting. This is evident in the narrative as it mobilizes an instance of love and killing, the subject of which is the disguised doe, an apparent antinomy of action leading to an inverted relationship between man and an animal in disguise. The positions of the two different species occur in an identical place without the abolition of the already continuing relationship of Eater and Food, Killer and Killed. Hence, this chiasmus is invoked in the act of killing one's beloved, accompanied by a deep sense of guilt and pathos. This internalized sense of guilt and pathos goes into the weeping and apathy that the man went through when he killed his wife, but this whole event is necessitated by the 'dictate of the Sahib'. In the dictate of cultivating the field and growing rice, the colonial white man commands an action and the native Angami performs it, and in performing it he took recourse to a difficult arrangement, reflected in the symbolic acts of killing the wife and hunting of the head. These are no longer acts of jouissance, but gainful acts in the context of the given narrative which make possible an imaginary fulfilment of the wish of the sahib. It is also an act of sacrifice, consistent with the Angami belief that ensures a rich harvest. Incidentally, the same is believed to follow from an act of head-hunting.

This is only one way of linear reading of the narrative in which one can see the effect of transformation, by retaining some core aspect of the belief related to head-hunting. What is even more revealing from the narrative is the happy return of animals and other non-human species in their own form to their own homes, signifying the deliverance of all the sub-human species through the act of cutting off the head of the wife. One can read here the trace of the belief of deliverance of the dead if their heads are hunted, which treats one's returning to his own abode as a substitute for reaching heaven. The Angami Naga belief that head-hunting and the subsequent sharing of flesh leads to a good harvest is a mode of symbolic return. The metaphoric play of the word 'return' not only signifies return in terms of a rich harvest, but also a return to the victorious, in the spirit of being useful to them. In other words, in terms of the Angami belief, the appropriation of the 'head' in the course of head-hunting was a beginning of a new cycle of creation.

Another salient feature of the 'return' of the various species to the jungle signifies the distinction between the 'jungle' and the 'plain': the excursions of the traveller into the agrarian mode of life, and the cultivation of the land of the plain according to the dictate of the white colonial Sahib, marks the triumph of the modern mode over the traditional mode of living and the break with the life of the 'jungle'. The contentment that appears on being successful in the agrarian mode of life is a celebration of the Sahib's command and superiority, and the image of a dismal hitherto existent mode of life begins to prevail. It highlights a new predicament in Angami life. The image of a traveller, more significantly a wanderer instead of a hunter, implies a moment of transition in which the community is without a warrant. The warrant is from the Sahib who gives the command and the traveller conforms to it. This new relationship of carrying out commands is introduced in Angami life with the onset of the British presence in Nagaland.

What we shall read further is the sense of an end provided in the narrative, of course with the sense of a beginning. Between these two senses, there is no moment of stasis in which one can fix a moment for a practice that may seem evil to an observer. Hutton's (1921) narrative does not have such a moment of fixed figuration, and the narratives of the Angamis set a dynamics of self-creation and its mechanics of abandonment and replenishment.

What Hutton's text does is to represent the transition from hunting–gathering to settled cultivation as an episode of history, but without all the contingent features of how the community undergoes a moment of transition. The contingencies cannot be fully explored in a space of narrative representation.

EXPRESSIONS OF MAKING THE WORLD

Moving from the narrativized representation of ethnography, one can only peep into the modes of expression, creation and narrativization of the tribal populace by taking an interpretive effort. Verrier Elwin's *The Arts and Crafts of Nagaland* (1986) discusses the artistic expression and skills in representing Naga art. One interesting aspect is the removal of the differences of kind between, say, a work made of bamboo and a piece of poetry. The usual nationalist interpretation of creativity, in terms of labour in the process of production, cannot explain the act of artistic representation that remains as a special moment of creating another reality. A cultural explanation of the creation of art, in terms of the relationship between the artist and the art, needs to widen in order to encompass the artist's social conditions, labour and so on, and can be trans-cultural. But in the ethnographic representation of art, the descriptions involved in the act of creation help us interpret it. There is an ethnographic continuum between the world of the creator, the act of creation, and what is created; all singularly different and yet related as an inseparable continuity/discontinuity in the space of creation, to emerge into what is called 'Art'. This ethnographic continuum gets transformed into a work of art. A self-interpretive 'pre-understanding' preceding the work of art situates art in a cultural perspective. This ethno-specific pre-understanding act is simultaneously a hermeneutic backdrop and an experiential world of the tribal community. Verrier Elwin mentions an Ao folk tale about works of bamboo:

> Once there lived a magician, who was known by the name Changkichanglangba....When he was alive, he used to tell the people that if they open his grave on the sixth day after his death, they

would discover there something new. On the sixth day, after his death, when the grave was opened out, all the designs and patterns of basketry work were found there. The people copied it and started practising it (1986: 71).

In Ao Naga society, basketry or something made out of bamboo carries with it a cultural memoir. It represents an ingrained custom of discovering the art, designs of which arise from the grave, a house of finished endeavours of one's life. In a cultural sense, art works as copies of designs from the grave of the creator magician, and produces an altogether different meaning than its surface appreciation. Such a narrative backdrop provides the specific cultural context for understanding the specific criterion of art in a specific society. At a universal level, the connection between magic, discovery in the grave and new designs represent a discursive framework within which art, as the motif of death, is the 'gift' of death, a gift in an absolute sense. At the narratological level, the voyeuristic subconscious in a conception of a work of art is a different experience that subdues 'death' in the work of art, which otherwise remains as the ultimate existential motif of art in most universal-rational cultures. This kind of subsumption or sublation of specific human experiences in works of art, through a narrative appropriation in a tribal culture, arrests the precedence of anthropocentrism over art, euphemistically treated as a separate area of creation over life and death. The making of the world as 'creation' in a tribal context, frees creation from the pathos of life and death and makes it an 'experience' that remains immanent as a motif in a tribal-making-of-the-world, which is otherwise inverted as a transcendental realm in the rationalist tradition.

Another way of a making of the tribal world, as exemplified in the Konyak representation of human figures in Konyak woodcarving, is an act of inscribing the figure on something—piece(s) of wood (Elwin, 1986: 62). The inscription of human figures in this naturalistic mode presents an image of the human which is free from discursive spaces. It is an open presence before one's eye. Art here is bare human existence free from its 'essences', 'thoughts' and other nuances, and is also not a still object. Its vitality lies in its imprint without any extraneous experiences or nuances. Let us consider the Ao skirt which is woven to embody one's social

position and function. An Ao skirt that has three or four designs in each of its two breadths—which represent material richness, and its lack of such elaborate design represents poverty—stands as a mark of one's individual position in the society. Thus, what it makes visible is that the clothes are markers of social status not in an economic sense, but in a sense of socially celebrating ones role in society. The link between dress, design, colour and social position is a culture-specific artistic imagery, a symbolic demonstration of the social realm. In case of Chakrim and Khezama Angamis, the fourth line in their clan, according to Elwin's ethnographic representation, 'denotes process not in war but in love' and may be worn for any one of the four following achievements:

(*i*)   an intrigue with a married woman living with her husband;
(*ii*) a double-barrelled intrigue with two girls; or
(*iii*) with two daughters of one father; or
(*iv*) with a mother and her daughter (Elwin, 1986: 29)

These kinds of social and individual events find symbolic denotation in Angami clothes. Does it mean that they wear clothes to represent these kinds of events and motifs? One plausible answer could be that what the cloth presents in its lines and colours functions as a 'dominant motif' of society or the individual, thereby making the cloth or the process of making of the cloth an inseparable point of one's social world. Here again, artwork conserves and presents the life-world meanings, and without this necessary life-world meaning artworks cannot be understood. One can say that the artwork remakes the world for the tribals, not to live in it, but to give life to the artwork. The lines are typical indexes that are employed as the paradigmatic representation of tribal society.

The semantic of 'making the world' by the tribals in North-East India is contained in their oral culture. The reality is constituted by a collective memory archive that retains the thematic through collective 'speech-acts', 'narration' and 'recitation'. All these ways of retention through modes of communication are ways of speaking to the world. Elwin (1986) cited some of these oral poems in a translated form. His translation remains as an act of representing them in their ways of speaking. The poetic narration and its

accompanied rhythm and musicality sustain the spreading of the word. Speaking out in poetic narration is an act of the constitution of subjectivity, within which the speaker and the one who is spoken of are located. It is dialogical in the sense of presenting the subjectivities inscribed within the oral narration as subjects constituted by an experience of exchange and sharing. Poetry signifies a play of pretension and retention of this experience. This play of pretension and retention is a play exceeding and inhabiting the structure of experience in language, itself an experience of poetic movement holding a double register of a 'poetic intentionality' and the structuring of this intentionality in the play between signifier and signified. The poetic intentionality is manifested in the situational dialogue, while its structuring is a fictional reconstruction of the dialogue in a mode that expresses its rhythm. It is a sublimation of the poetic intentionality that arranges its signifiers at the level of the intentional, while its oralization recalls the movements within the intentionality to structure it in a poetic mode. Tribal poetry surpasses the initial dialogic intentionality by way of structuring this intentional in 'orality'. Orality surpasses the limits of the written and translated textualization as done by Elwin. An example of how it takes place can explain such a feature. A *Sangtam* song describing the process of building a new village reads:

> Building village anew, we Sangtam, first, of all, clear tiger's' excreta then cut the big trees. Sacrifice dogs, next enrich village bringing mithuns and bulls. Cut fields and cultivate after cutting big big trees. (...) Buy mithuns with end of harvest. Invite villages at feast in winter, slaughtering mithuns, spreading our name and fame thus far and wide (Elwin, 1986: 110).

Elwin considered the cutting of the jungle as a quotidian act performed to build houses, taking it as it is. Elwin's comment, 'Tiger's excreta, of course, does not carry any inner significance here except custom' (Ibid.), does not recognize the retention aspect in referring to clearing the Tiger's excreta. What other human custom can be a source of retention of such an essential act during the building of a new village? It indicates an invocation of memory as a part of the play of retention and pretension, as house building is an act of pretension. The effect of the whole narration is a

recollection of a life-world context that enters into poetic intentionality, producing a flow like 'cut big trees', 'cutting big big trees'. Poetic intentionality signifies an arousal represented in lines such as 'Buy mithuns with end of harvest'. Intentionality also puts into play archetypes of Sangtam life-world that acquires uniqueness in its exploration of the habitat. It is sung in the manner of coordination of the job of setting the new village. Hence the tonal variety arises from the variety of work that is actually done in the process of setting up of the new village. The fleeting impact of such a tactile motion is presented in a situation of joy that goes with the organization of village feasts with invitees who spread the name of organizers far and wide, a gentle gratification of Sangtam sense of hospitality.

This sense of reaching out to a tangible goal is an outflow of the event surpassing the limits of the text, as the desire of the community hangs like a dangling spectre. The last part of the song is even more 'cosmic', revealing the desire of attaining a universal home, appearing as a culturally informed determination of the completion of the village:

Look, O Sangtams Crying the universe.
Ongugo[16] the bird singing (and) singing human being alike.
Voice of the universe, you and yourself heard or not?
Step forward, universe for you [everybody].
On your death die not universal tune
[Hesitate not] Think and feel for humanity (Elwin, 1986: 110).

The motifs of 'crying the universe', 'voice of the universe' and 'feeling for humanity' present an elliptical movement of life, fulfilment and death, ingrained in the motif of the 'universe', in its stillness, permanence and infinite vastness. The motifs of the discrete qualities of life-world stand in passivity to the motifs of the illimitable universe and listen to them. Listening to the cry and voice of the universe is simultaneously the expression of an innermost desire and the desire to attain it; a drive to sublimate oneself in this universal cry or yearning, that is, a total merger in dialogue. One cannot but appreciate this mode of world making as an innermost act of dialogue in the tribal culture. As Elwin suggests:

The poem carries a deep meaning of harmonious character and philosophy of life. 'Universe crying' reflects a tragic sense here, for people are in isolation from each other that is against the law of nature...The bird's singing that enraptures human hearts, which in turn, cannot help responding to it, no matter in their own words, are this idealized and emotional atmosphere and spirit of feeling between the two (Elwin, 1986: 110).

What Elwin reads here is the tribal practice of singing themes that concern the universal and the cosmic, acting both as an inspiration and as a construction of the world in the highest form of yearning. Such themes are sung in a meeting with other singing creatures deriving enjoyment in responding to each other's tunes. It transmutes the relations between humans and other species and between humans and the world. The poetics of the Sangtam mind represents a universal humanity of coexistence and communion. This universalization of a home motif in poetic and musical form is 'architectonic'.

Apart from such architectonic constructions, the 'ways of world making' of the ethnic cultures lead to a fictional and artifactual reconstruction in ritual texts and codes. Tribal art is more artifactual than fetishized because it embodies those aspects of culture that desire to exceed its signification. The figures of tribal creativity culminate in the experiences of life and make it ready for living a life. Along with the living man and woman, the figures of tales, painting and sculpture in the tribal world live a life with the community and their meanings are ethno-ecological, entering into the discourse of collective memory and signification. This embeddedness of the world they make signifies the 'roots' of tribal culture.

Notes

1. Collective subject 'types' are produced as the 'Other', who is identified in a non-self mode. It is a way of putting the psychoanalytic question of desire of ethnic communities in their historico-cultural condition of being under domination.
2. Mediation in language takes place by way of distinguishing the 'actual', 'possible', 'contingent', 'concrete', 'non-concrete' and the relations of modal nature.

3. Artifactuality describes the fictional mode of construction of 'facts' that are multiple-dependent entities. It knits together various concepts and practices of a culture by way of their 'dependence' within a culture. For example, Apatani Mida as a generic name exists for ritual performances for the well-being of a married daughter and her groom from her parent's side. Mida also induces the gifts like seeds and its signification of children to be born out of the marriage in a ritual text and context. Ka Rngiew is another such artifactual generic construct that characterizes virtues both at the level of the individual and also of a collective.

4. The conditions of maintaining an identity can fail or be fulfilled independently of 'artifactuality', it can be maintained by way of transmuting dependent signifiers of a culture. Identity acts as a metasignifier for all the artifactualities of culture. Reduction to certain characteristics is a reduction to contingencies that does not require reduction, as it keeps open the possibility of assuming any of them.

5. This agency cannot be located within the public/private dichotomy, but only in the in-between spaces that cannot reduce the polarities of a relationship; the agency remains 'dialogic' and 'mediative' by decentring the 'subjects' of contestations.

6. The notion of 'agency' could be identified in terms of certain specific markers, but it could not be completely determined.

7. 'Subject of power' signifies a 'subject' in relation to what it is not by way of its will or repression of this will.

8. The social life of the subject is constituted by an exterior, which is repressed within an inscription of self or community

9. This disposition of/off specific artifactual elements of a world is a disposition of/off the idealized language of identity. Articulation invokes such idealizations.

10. Such fractures are produced out of cleavages between power and subject in so far as subject resists the differentiating logic of power.

11. 'Complementarity' is a Derridean concept which signifies the play of differential elements that do not allow any one of the concepts to represent without the Other and thereby displacing oppositions between them. This dependence between terms produces only an effect, not an opposition between cause and effect.

12. Principle of transference means an act of substitution of one concept for another in order to attain a common objective. In psychoanalysis, transference means substitution of one mental act in a mental state that does not produce the act.

13. From S. Lyngdoh's remarks on the concept of *un long briew man brion,* which means human in the fullest sense of the term

14. Habermas notion of 'life-world' as a closed concept signifying within one's language or within the possible tripartite division of the world between subjective, objective and inter-subjective spheres of life.

15. Remarks by J. Klongwir interpreting region as the 'person itself'. See Sujata Miri (1998: 52).

16. Elwin's note states 'local name of a bird like the weaver bird'.

References

Adorno, Theodor W. 1974. *Minima Moralia: Reflection from Damaged Life* (translated by E.F.N. Jephcott). London: New Left Books.

Ahmed, Fazal Ali. 2002. *Asomor Jatiya Sanghatit Ajan Fakir* (Assamese). Guwahati: Nandan Prakashan.

Ahmed, Rafiul and Prasenjit Biswas. 2004. *Political Economy of Underdevelopment of North-East India*. Delhi: Akansha.

Akoijam, A. Bimol. 2006. 'Towards A Wholesome Holistic Self: On Silence, Identity and Coloniality of the Postcolonial', First Arambam Somorendra Memorial Lecture. Imphal: Arambam Somorendra Trust: ix

ABSU. 1987. *Why Separate State*. Pamphlet Kokrajhar: All Bodo Students' Union.

ADB. 2003. *Assam Governance and Public Resource management Programme, India*. Manila: Country Strategy and Programme 2003–06, Asian Development Bank.

AIPRF. 1996. *Symphony of Freedom: Papers on Nationality Question*. New Delhi: All India People's Resistance Forum.

Allen, B.C., F.A. Gait, C.G.H. Allen and H.F. Howard. 1889. *The Provinicial Gazetteer of Eastern Bengal and Assam*. Calcutta: Government of India.

Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, Duke University Press.

———. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (revised edition). London: Verso.

Anonymous. n.d. *Mizo Inchei Dan*.

Appadurai, Arjun. 2006. *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*. Duckworth: Duke University Press.

Atem, V.S. 1998. Interview, *The N-E Sun*, 1–14 March.

Avineri, Sholmo. 1968. *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Balibar, Etienne. 1990. 'The Nation Form: History and Ideology', *Review*, 13 (3: Summer): 329–61.

Barbora, Sanjay. 2006 'Rethinking India's Counter-Insurgency Campaign in North-East', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 11 (35): 3805–812.

Baruah, Apurba Kumar. 1985. 'Regionalism and Student Power in Assam', in K.M. Deka (ed.), *Nationalism and Regionalism in North-East India*. Dibrugarh: Dibrugarh University.

Baruah, Apurba Kumar. 1991. *Social Tensions in Assam: Middle Class Politics.* Guwahati: Purbanchal Prakash.

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Bhuyan, Ajit Kumar. 1991. *A Report on Human Rights Violation and State Terrorism in Assam.* Guwahati: Manab Adhikar Suraksha Samiti.

———. 1996. 'Flames of Freedom Still Burning: A probe into the National Question in India', in All India Peoples Resistance Forum, *Symphony of Freedom: Papers on Nationality Question.*

Biswas, Prasenjit. 1996. 'Ethnophilosophy: Politics of Culture in North-East India', in M.M. Agrawal (ed.), *Ethnicity, Culture and Nationalism in North-East India.* New Delhi: Indus.

———. 2005. 'Politics of Recognition in North East India', *North East India Studies*, 1(1): 93–96.

———. 2007. 'Between State and Ethnography: A Paradigm for Everyday', *Man and Society: A Journal of North East Studies*, iv (Spring): 112–13.

Biswas, Prasenjit and Sukalpa Bhattacharjee. 2001. 'The Outsider, the State and Nations from Below: North East India as a Subject of Exclusion', in Kousar Azam (ed.) *Ethnicity, Identity and the State in South Asia.* New Delhi: South Asian Publishers.

Bordoloi, Lachit. 2001. *Atmaniyantran aru Ganobhotor Prastab* (Assamese). Guwahati: Uttaran Prakashan.

Brown, Wendy. 1993 'Wounded Attachment', *Political Theory*, 21(3): 390–410.

Burbaker, Rogers. 2004. *Ethnicity Without Groups.* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Butola, B.S. 1996. 'Sublimation of Identities in the North-Eastern Region of India', *Proceedings of North East India History Association*, Sixteenth Session, 3–5 December 1995. Shillong: North East India History Association.

Cabral, Amilcar. 1970. *National Liberation and Culture*, Occasional Paper no. 57. New York: Maxwell Graduate School, University of Syracuse.

Campbell, Aidan. 1997. 'Ethical Ethnicity: A Critique', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 35(1): 53–79.

Caroll, John B. and Benjamin Lee Whorf (ed.). 1964. *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Castells, Manuel. 1996–1998. *The Information Age: Economy, Society, Culture.* 3 Vols. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Chandra, Sudhir. 1992. 'Defining the Nation', in *The Oppressive Present: Literature and Social Consciousness in Colonial India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Chatterjee, Partha. 1994. 'Claims on the Past: The Genealogy of Modern Historiography in Bengal', in David Arnold and David Hardiman (ed.), *Subaltern Studies.* Vol. 8. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Chattaopadhaya, Partha and Gautam Bhadra (ed.). 2001. *Nimnabarger Itihas* (Bengali). Kolkata: Ananda Publishers.

Cohen, Josh. 2003. *Interrupting Auschwitz: Art, Religion, Philosophy.* London: Continuum.

Connoly, William. 1991. *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Connor, Walker. 1994. *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*. New Jersy: Princeton University Press.

Das, Parag Kumar. 1993. *Swadhinatar Prastab* (Pamphlet in Assamese). Guwahati: Seuj Sathirtha Prakashan.

Datta P.S., (ed.). 1990. *Ethnic Movements in Poly-Cultural Assam*. New Delhi: Vikas.

―――. 1993. *Autonomy Movements in Assam* (Documents). New Delhi: Omsons Publications.

Davidson, Donald. 1984. 'The Inscrutability of Reference', in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Deleuze, Giles and F. Gauttari. 1986. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.

Elwin, Verrier. 1958. *Myths of the North-East Frontier of India*. Shillong: Directorate of Research, North East Frontier Agency.

―――. 1959. *A Philosophy for NEFA, North-East Frontier Agency*. Shillong: North East Frontier Agency, Research Department.

―――. 1961. *Nagaland*. Shillong: Government of Assam, Research Department Publications.

―――. 1965. *Democracy in NEFA*. Shillong: North-East Frontier Agency.

―――. 1970. *A New Book of Tribal Fiction*. Shillong: North East Frontier Agency, Research Department.

―――. 1986. *The Arts and Crafts of Nagaland*. Kohima: Naga Institute of Culture.

―――. 1991. *A New Book of Tribal Fiction*. (Reprint). Itanagar: Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Directorate of Research.

Fanon, Frantz. 1963. *Wrteched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Weidenfield.

Favell, Adrian. 1999. 'To Belong or not to Belong: the Transnational Question', in Andrew Geddes and Adrian Favell (eds), *The Politics of Belonging: Migrants and Minorities in Contemporary Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate/ICCR.

Foucault, Michel. 1982. Afterword', in Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus (eds), *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Geertz, Clifford. 1993. *The Interpretation of Culture*. (Reprint). New York: Fontana Press.

Gellner, Ernest. 1995. 'The Importance of Being Modular', in John Hall (ed.), *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell.

Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity*. London: Polity Press.

Gohain, Hiren. 1995. 'Deshodrohi Kon?' in *Tejor Akhore Likha*. (Assamese) Guwahati: Lawyers.

Goodman, Nelson. 1978. *Ways of Worldmaking*. Indianapolis IN: Hackett.

Goodman, Nelson and Catherine Z. Elgin. 1988. *Reconceptions in Philosophy and Other Arts and Sciences*. Indianapolis IN: Hackett.

Gopal, S. (ed.). 1983. *Jawaharlal Nehru: An Anthology*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1987. *Theory of Communicative Action*. Vol. 2. London: Polity Press.

Haimendorf, Christophe von Furer. 1974. *Return to the Naked Nagas: An Anthropologist's View of Nagaland 1936–70*. Delhi: Vikas.

Hazarika, Sanjoy. 1994. *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India's North East*. New Delhi: Penguin.

———. Hazarika, Sanjoy. 2000. *Rites of Passage*. New Delhi: Penguin India.

———. 2006. 'Bangaladesh and North-East: Facing Migration, Ending Rhetoric and Embracing a Realistic Strategy for Change', in C.J. Thomas (ed.) *Engagement and Development: India's North-East and Neighbouring Countries*. New Delhi: Akansha.

Hobswam, Eric. 1992. *Nation and Nationalism Since 1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Horowitz, Donald. 1983. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hooghe, Liesbbet. 1997. 'Nationalist Movements and Social Factors: A Theoretical Perspective', in John Coakley (ed.), *The Social Origins of Nationalim*. London: Sage Publications.

Hutton, J. H. 1921. *The Angami Nagas*. London: Macmillan and Co. limited.

———. 1986. *Report on Naga Hills*. Delhi: Mittal Publications. (Originally published in 1932 as *Notes on two Unadministered Districts of Naga Hills*, Calcutta Home Department).

Imchen, Lima. 1996. 'Politics of Tribal Identity and Interpretative Monopolies', Paper presented in a seminar on Dynamics of Identity and Intergroup in North-East India from 12–14 November Shimla: IIAS.

International Working Group on Indigenous Peoples Yearbook, 1998. Copenhagen: United Nations Publications.

Iralu, Kaka D. 2000. *Nagaland and India: The Blood and the Tears*. Kohima: N.V. Press.

Jacobs, Julian (ed.). 1990. *The Nagas: Society, Culture and Colonial Encounter*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jameson, Fredric. 1992. *The Novel as the Political Unconscious*. New York: Routledge.

Kamuf, Peggy. 1991. 'Reading between the Blinds', in Peggy Kamuf (ed.), *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kani, Takhe. 1996. *Socio-Religious Ceremonies of the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh*. Itanagar: Frontier Publication.

Kant, Immanuel. 1956. *Critique of Pure Reason* (2nd edition; trnaslated by Norman K.Smith). New York: St. Martin's Press.

Kaviraj, Sudipta. 1994. 'Crisis of the Nation State in India', *Political Studies*, 42 (Special issue).

Lefort, Claude. 1988. 'The Question of Democracy', in *Democracy and Political Theory*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Lentricchiaa, Frank. 1982. *Reading Foucault (Punishment, Labour, Resistance)* Part Two, *Raritan*, 2:1

Lewis, David. 1973. *Counterfacturals.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Loyd, J. Meirion. 1991. *History of the Church in Mizoram.* Aizawl: Synod Publication Board.

Lyngdoh, Morning. 1991. *The Concept of Virtue in the Khasi World View.* Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation. Shillong: North Eastern Hill University.

Mackenzie, Alexander. 1979. *The North-East Frontier of India* (Reprint). Delhi: Mittal Publishing House. Originally published in 1884 as *A History of the Relationship of the Government with the Hill tribes of North East Frontier of Bengal.* Calcutta: Department of Home.

Mahanta, Harin. 1994a. *Amar Hiyat Kiyo Jwaliche Jui?* (Pamphlet in Assamese). Jorhat: Seuj Satirtha Prakashan.

———. 1994b. 'Chhabishe January Akal Natun Delhir Babe Sristhi' (Assamese), in *Sadin,* 28 January.

Manifesto of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland. 1987. Oking: NSCN.

Meetei, M.C. Birla. 1996 'Anti-Merger Movement', *N-E Sun,* 14 November.

Mignolo, Walter. 2000. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking.* New Jersy: Princeton University Press.

Mills, J.P. 1926. *The Ao Nagas.* London: Macmillan and Co.

Miri, Mrinal. 1997. 'Of Fusions, Alliances and Isolation', in *Grassroot Options,* bi-monthly published from Shillong, June–July: 49–51.

———. 2003. 'Identity, Tribesman and Development', in *Identity and Moral Life.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Miri, Sujata. 1988. *Khasi World View: A Conceptual Exploration.* Chandigarh: Centre for Regional and Rural Development.

———. 2005. *A Book of Paintings: Themes from the Hills of North-East India.* New Delhi: Mittal Publications.

Mishra, P.K. 2003. 'J.H. Hutton and the North-East', in T.B. Subba and G.C. Ghosh (eds), *The Anthropology of North-East India.* Hyderabad: Orient Longman.

Misra, Udayon. 1983 .'Naga Nationalism and the Role of Middle Class', in B. Datta Ray (ed.), *The Emergence and the Role of Middle Class in North East India.* Delhi: Uppal Publishing House.

———. 2000. 'The Quest for Swadhin Asom' in *The Periphery Strikes Back* Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study.

———. 2001. *The Transformation of Assamese Identity: A Historical Survey.* Shillong: North East India History Association.

Mukhim, Patricia. 1996. 'Conflict and its Resolution: A Case Study of a Modern Tribal Situation', in M.M. Agrawal (ed.), *Ethnicity, Culture and Nationalism in North-East India.* Delhi: Indus.

Nag, Sajal. 1993. 'Multiplication of Nations: Political Economy of Sub-Nationalism', *Economic and Political Weekly,* 28(29 and 30): 1521–32.

Nehru, Jawaharlal. 1946. *The Discovery of India.* Calcutta: Signet Press.

———. 1957. 'Foreword', in Verrier Elwin's *A Philosophy for NEFA.* Shillong: North East Frontier Agency.

———. 1973. 'The Tribal Folk', Speech Delivered at the Opening Session of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Areas Conference in New Delhi, 1952, pub-

lished in *The Tribal People of India*. Delhi: Government of India, Publications' Division.

———. 1986. *Letters to Chief Ministers*, Vol.1. Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division.

———. 1989. 'The Tribal People: Need for Love and Protection', in *Nehru and the North East*. Aizwal: North Eastern Hill University Publications.

Nora, Pierre (ed.). *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, Vol. 1, *Conflicts and Divisions*, (translated by A. Goldhammer). New York: Columbia University Press.

Omvedt, Gail. 1993. 'Social Movement and the Demand for Autonomy' (mimeo). NERC Special Lecture Series 3. Shillong: ICSSR, North Eastern Regional Centre.

Pakem, B. 1995. 'Politics of Identity, Conflict and Nation-Building in North-East India'. Unpublished paper. Dibrugarh University: Department of Political Science.

———. 1996. 'Inaugural Address', in M.M. Agrawal (ed.), *Ethnicity, Culture and Nationalism in North-East India*. Delhi: Indus.

Phanjoubam, Pradip. 2006. 'Manipur: Fractured Land', in Geeti Sen (ed.), *Where the Sun Rises When Shadows Fall: The North-East*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Phukon, Girin. 1985. 'Ethnic Nationalism in North-East India: Overview of its Legacy', in K.M. Deka (ed.), *Nationalism and Regionalism in North-East India*. Dibrugarh: Dibrugarh University.

Puthenpurakal, J. (ed.) 1996. *Impact of Christianity on North East India*. Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications.

Rev. Lalsawma, 1994. *Four Decades of Revivals: The Mizo Way*. Aizawl: Self-published.

Roy Burman, B.K. 'Land and Forest Rights', *Seminar*, 366: pp. 25–29.

Reid, Robert. 1983. *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam* (Reprint). Delhi: Eastern Publishing House. (Originally published in 1942 as *History of Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam*, Shillong: Government Press.)

Rupacahandra,Yumnam. 1997. 'Kuki-Paite Clash', *NE-Sun*, 15–31 July.

Sachdeva, Gulsan. 2000. *Economy of the North East: Policy, Present Conditions and Future Possibilities*. Delhi: Konark Press.

Sadin (Assamese). 1998. 10 (18): 1, 22, 17 July.

Satirth, Sachetan. 1996. 'The Nationality Question in the North-East', in AIPRF, *Symphony of Freedom: Papers on Nationality Question*, pp. 163–70 Delhi: All India People's Resistance Forum.

Schmitt, Carl. 1996. *The Concept of the Political* (translated by George D. Schwab). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schutz, Alfred.1989. *The Structures of Life-World*. 2 Vols. Evanston: North Western University Press.

Sen, Geeti (ed.). 2006 . *Where the Sun Rises When the Shadows Fall: The North East*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Shepoumaramth Regional Church Bulletin. 1995. Reprinted in *The Shepoumaramth in the Naga National Movement*. Shepoumaramth: Government of the People's Republic of Nagaland.

Simon, I.M. 2006. 'Arunachal Reminiscences', in *Reminiscence: Lest We Forget*. Shillong: Arunachal Pradesh Pensioners' Welfare Association.

Singh, B.P. 1987. *The Problem of Change: A Study of North-East India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Smith, Anthony D. 1993. 'The Ethnic Sources of Nationalism', *Survival*, 35(1): 48–52.

Swain, Nirmal Kumar. 1996. 'The Post-Colonial Indian State: A Paradigm for Identities', in M.M. Agrawal (ed.), *Ethnicity, Culture and Nationalism in North-East India*. Delhi: Indus.

Teitelbaum, Michael S. and Jay Winter. 1998. *A Question of Numbers: High Migration, Low Fertility, and the Politics of National Identity*. New York: Hill and Wang.

The N-E Sun. 1997. 'Isak Chisi Swu's Speech', 1–14 April.

———. 1997. 'We Discourage Communal Violence: Interview with Meiraba Luwang', 1–14 July.

The Telegraph. 2006. 'US Plans Asian Power Pipeline', 28 April (Guwahati, edition).

———. 2006. 'Manipur Reassured on Naga Fall Out', 1 October (Guwahati edition).

Thiong'o, Ngugi wa. 1993. *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*. Oxford: James Currey.

Ugresic, Dubravka. 1998. *The Culture of Lies*. London: Phoenix House.

ULFA. 1991. Press Release on the Eve of 1991 Parliament and Assembly Elections in Assam. *The Assam Tribune* (Guwahati), 25 April.

ULFA. 1996a. Statement at the All India Peoples' Resistance Forum's International Seminar, New Delhi, 16–19 February.

ULFA. 1996b. 'National Question In Assam', in AIPRF, *Symphony of Freedom: Papers on Nationality Question*, pp. 151–55. New Delhi: All India People's Resistance Forum.

ULFA. n.d. *History of Assam* (pamphlet).

Williams, Bernard. 1990. 'Politics and Moral Character', in *Moral Luck*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.