

NAGALAND

Past and Present



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HARGOVIND JOSHI

NAGALAND PAST AND PRESENT



Edited by
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Nagaland: Past and Present

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PREFACE

Nagaland, the sixteenth State of the Indian Union, came into being on December 1, 1963. The state has an area of 16,579 square kilometres, extending on the north-east frontiers of the country. It is bounded by Assam in the west and north, and in the north-east by the Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh. The southern boundary is shared with the State of Manipur, while the eastern limits of the State are on the international boundary between India and Myanmar.

Nagaland, the land of enchanting beauty and charm with its rich diverse cultures, festivities of its various tribes and sub-tribes inhabiting the eastern most state bordering Myanmar is endowed with rich natural flora and fauna, lush green hills and valleys, rivers, resounding echoes of music, dance and gay festivities make it a special place in our nation of diverse cultures. Nature has also gifted this land with many rich resources like forest, minerals, fertile soil, abundant rainfall, moderate cool climate and dust free environment which are waiting to be utilised for economic development of the state and its people.

The State is divided into seven districts: Kohima, Phek, Mokokchung, Wokha, Zunheboto, Tuensang, and Mon. The maximum length of the border State is about 255 km while the breadth does not exceed 145 km. The terrain is hilly, rugged and mountainous.

This book is designed to present the state and all related issues in one place. Amidst the plenty of literature on Nagaland, this book is unique—which presents the entire discussion in encyclopaedic way.

Once a hot bed of insurgency—Nagaland remained dis-

turbed for years. And thus, the developmental efforts were hampered badly. What are the actual Naga problems? The chief causes of insurgency and hostility are elaborately discussed in the chapter 'A state of Union.' As 'cease-fire and Nagaland problem' is a hot news currently, this book gives the interpretation of the issue.

In preparing this book we have liberally drawn the material from different authoritative sources. Hence no claim of originality. The aim of reproducing the material is to share the erudition and fruits of painstaking research of all those great scholars by a wider readership.

I am deeply beholden to all those men of letters whose writings I have cited or substantially made use of. I am also grateful to my friends and family members who have inspired me for the present venture. Last but not the least, I am thankful to Sri M.P. Misra for undertaking publication of this book.

— HGJ

NAGALAND: CURRENT SCENARIO

Area:	16,579 sq km
Population:	12,09,549
Capital:	Kohima
Principal Languages:	Angami, Ao, Chang, Konyak, Lotha, Sangtham, Sema, and Chakhesang.

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

Like other inhabitants of the north eastern region, the Nagas too have their share of legends and folklore regarding their origin and evolution through the ages. Nagas are basically tribal people and every tribe had its own effective system of self government from times immemorial. In the 12th and 13th centuries, gradual contact with the Ahoms of present day Assam was established, but this did not have any significant impact on the traditional Naga way of life. However, in the 19th century the British appeared on the scene and ultimately the area was brought under British administration. After Independence, this territory was made a Centrally administered area in 1957, under the administration of governor of Assam. It was known as the Naga Hills Tuensang Area. This failed to quell popular aspirations and unrest began. Hence, in 1961 this was renamed as Nagaland and given the status of State of the Indian Union which was formally inaugurated on 1 December 1963. Situated in the extreme north-east of the country, Nagaland is bounded by Arunachal Pradesh in the north, Assam in west, Manipur in south and Burma (Myanmar) in the east.

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AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the main occupation of 90 per cent of population in the State. Rice is the important staple food. Area under *jhum* cultivation is about 73,000 hectare and under terraced cultivation is 61,000 hectare during 1993-94.

INDUSTRY

The process of industrialisation in the State is in its infancy but the need to have more industries has been well recognised. The Nagaland Sugar Mill at Dimapur has an installed capacity of 1,000 tonnes per day. There is a pulp and paper mill at Tuli and a plywood factory at Tizit. A *Khandsari* mill with a daily crushing capacity of 200 metric tonnes is in operation. Handloom and handicrafts are important cottage industries which are mainly being managed by cooperative societies. An industrial growth centre near Dimapur is under construction. The Nagaland Industrial Development Corporation is the premier promotional organisation in providing guidance and capital assistance to entrepreneurs. The Mini Cement Plant at Wazeho has commenced production.

IRRIGATION AND POWER

Minor irrigation works are mostly meant to divert small hill streamlets to irrigate valleys used for rice cultivation. Under minor irrigation, surface minor irrigation covered 1,070 hectare and ground water covered 150 hectare during 1992-93. Number of electrified villages stands at 1,200. Nagaland has achieved cent per cent eletrification of rural areas. A 24 megawatt hydro-electric project is under erection at Likim-ro.

TRANSPORT

Roads

Road network consists of national, state and district roads with total length of 9,351 km. The Nagaland State

Transport operates on 111 routes daily with a total route kilometrage of 12,932 km.

Railways/aviation

Dimpaur is the only place where rail and air services are available. There is a bi-weekly Indian Airlines boeing service connecting Dimpaur with Guwahati and Calcutta.

FESTIVALS

Some of the important festivals are *Sekrenyi*, *Moatsu*, *Tuluni* and *Tokhu Emong*. All tribes celebrate their distinct seasonal festivals with a pageantry of colour and a feast of music.

Area, Population and Headquarters of District

<i>District</i>	<i>Area (sq.km)</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Headquarters</i>
1. Kohima	4,041	3,87,581	Kohima
2. Mokokchung	1,615	1,58,374	Mokokchung
3. Mon	1,786	1,46,699	Mon
4. Phek	2,026	1,,02,156	Phek
5. Tuensang	4,228	2,32,906	Tensang
6. Wokha	1,628	82,612	Wokha
7. Zunheboto	1,255	97,218	Zunheboto

NAGALAND PROFILE

Nagaland, the land of enchanting beauty and charm with its rich diverse cultures, festivities of its various tribes and sub-tribes inhabiting the eastern most state bordering Myanmar is endowed with rich natural flora and fauna, lush green hills and valleys, rivers, resounding echoes of music, dance and gay festivities make it a special place in our nation of diverse cultures. Nature has also gifted this land with many rich resources like forest, minerals, fertile soil, abundant rainfall, moderate cool climate and dust free environment which are waiting to be utilised for economic development of the state and its people.

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The State is divided into seven districts: Kohima, Phek, Mokokchung, Wokha, Zunheboto, Tuensang, and Mon. The maximum length of the border State is about 255 km while the breadth does not exceed 145 km. The terrain is hilly, rugged and mountainous. The average height of the peaks is between 900 and 1,200 metres. The highest point is Saramati in the Tuensang district which is 3,840 metres above sea-level. In Kohima district, the highest peak is

Japfu with a height of 3,014 metres. The Barail and the Japfu ranges form the watershed of the State and as they are close to the western boundary, none of the rivers that come rolling down the slopes attains any sizeable proportions until it enters the plains of Assam. The Dhansiri river starts from the south-west corner and receives most of the drainage from the north-western slopes of the hills Doyang is another important river. It originates near Mao, flows in a north-easterly direction for about 70 km and thereafter changes its course to the north-west. The other rivers of some importance are the Dikhu, tizu and Melak there is no waterfall in Nagaland. The only lake well known is Lacham to the east of Meluri.

Geologically, the area is composed of "pretertiary rocks overlaid by tertiary strata". Oldham described the hills for about 32 km north of Mao and east of Kohima as axial.

The hill-sides are covered with green forests, though much of them have been felled in recent years. In the Angami area particularly, the terraced fields are a feast to the eyes. L. W. Shakespear's description of the idyllic countryside is worth quoting:

To a stranger suddenly arriving in the Angami country nothing strikes him with greater surprise and admiration than the beautiful terraced cultivation which meets the eye everywhere, on gentle hill-slopes, sides and bottoms of valleys, in fact, wherever the land can be utilised in this way. In preparation, upkeep, and irrigation, the greatest care is taken, far in excess of anything seen in the north-west. Himalayas. The appearance of the countryside for miles south of Kohima, for instance, is such as to suggest the handiwork and labour of a far higher order of people than these wild Nagas. These terraced fields are often bordered with dwarf alder bushes, are carefully irrigated by an elaborate system of channels bringing water down from mountain streams, and luxuriant crops of rice are grown on them. To

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pass through the valley where stand the two powerful villages of Khonoma and Mozema during late October when the crops are ripe is indeed a delight for the eye—a veritable golden valley.¹

A rich variety of wild life is found in the Naga Hills. The animals include tigers, leopards, elephants, deer, sambar, boars, monkeys, wild buffaloes and bear. These are connected with the social and economic life of the people in different ways.

Rains are heavy in Nagaland. The average rainfall is between 175 cm and 250 cm. Most of the rainfall pours down during the four months from June to September winds blow from the north-west in February and March. The climate, on the whole, is salubrious.

The total population of Nagaland of 12,155,73 (1971 Census) represents 0.09 per cent of the total population of the country. The population of the State showed a growth rate of 39.68 per cent during the decade 1961-71: this was the highest growth rate for all the States of the country. Actually the population of the State has consistently shown a steady upward trend. During the period 1901 to 1971, it increased by about 408 per cent. The majority of the population in Nagaland lives in the rural areas (4,65,055). The population in the urban areas (1,74,233), Mokokchung (17,423) and Dimapur (12,426). The average density of population is 31 per square kilometre. Literacy is 27.33 per cent as compared to 29.35 per cent for the country.

The fourteen major Naga tribes are the Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chang, Khemungan, Konyak, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sangtam, Sema Yimchunger and Zeliang. Some of these tribes are of comparatively recent origin. The Chakhesangs were earlier known as Eastern Angamis and are a combination of the *Chakri*, *Khezha* and *Sangtam* sub-tribes, the word Chakhesang being an acronym. Now the Chakhesang tribe is split further, Pochurys, who were earlier a part of it, now claim a distinct entity.

The Nagas belong to the Indo-Mongoloid family. Opines Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, these Indo-Mongoloids are none else than the *Kiratas* frequently mentioned in the old Sanskrit literature. The earliest reference is to be traced in the *Yajurveda*, where we find the following lines:

*Guhabhyah Kiratam: sanubhyo Jambhakarn:
parvatebhyah Kimpurusam*

A *Kirata* for the caves; a *Jambhaka* (long-toothed man?) For the slopes; a *Kimpurusa* (an ugly man, a wild man, an ape?) For the mountains.

The *Atharvaveda* also mentions a *Kirata* girl digging medicinal herbs from the mountains:

*Kairatika kumarika saka khanati bhesajam;
hironyayibhir abhribhir girinam upa sanusu*

The young maid of *Kirata* race, a little damsel, digs the drug; digs it with shovels wrought of gold on the high ridges of the hills.

In the *Mahabharata*, the *Kiratas* are the hillmen living in the Eastern Himalayas. Bhima, the Hercules among the Pandavas, is mentioned as having defeated seven *Kirata* rulers in the course of a triumphant tour. The *Mahabharata* also mentions Bhagadatta, the king of Pragyothisa (Kamrup), who fought on the side of the Kauravas in the epic battle of Kurukshetra along with his *Kirata* warriors and was defeated. The *Ramayana* also mentions the *Kiratas*:

*Kiratasca tiksna-cudasca hemabhah priya-darsanah
Antar-jala-cara ghora nara-vyaghra it srutah.*

The *Kiratas*, with hair done in pointed top-knots, pleasant to look upon, shining like gold, able to move under water, terrible, veritable tiger-men, so are they famed.

Dr. Chatterjee summarised his observations on the *Kiratas* in the following words:

The ways of the *Kirata* were simple. They lived mostly on fruits and tubers, dressed themselves in skins,

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wore their hair in a pointed top-knot, and were a pleasant-looking people, but terrible with their weapons, and cruel in war . . .

It would appear that during the centuries immediately before Christ, and in the early Christian centuries, the *Kiratas* were known to the Hindu world as a group of peoples whose original home was in the Himalayan slopes and in the mountains of the East, in Assam particularly, who were yellow in colour and presented a distinct type of culture. They had spread all over the plains of Bengal up to the sea, and appear to have penetrated as far as West Bengal. They were rich with all the natural wealth of minerals and forest produce with which the mountains and hills and jungles where they lived abounded, but they were adepts in the art of weaving cloth (as their descendants still are), the cotton and woolen fabrics they made being very much in demand. . . .²

The Nagas themselves have different stories about their origin. The Angamis, Semas, Rengmas and the Lothas subscribe to the Kheza-Kenoma legend. It is said that the village had a large stone slab having magical properties. Paddy spread on it to be dried doubled in quantity by evening. The three sons of the couple who owned the stone used it by rotation. One day there was a quarrel between the sons as to whose turn it was. The couple, fearing bloodshed, set fire to the stone which as a result crackled. It is believed that the spirit in the stone went to heaven and the stone lost its miraculous properties. The three sons thereafter left Kheza-Kenoma, went in different directions and became the forefathers of the Angami, Sema and the Lotha tribes. According to another legend, to which the Western Angamis subscribe, the first man evolved from a lake called *Themiakelhu zie* near Khonoma. The Rengmas believe that until recently they and the Lothas formed one tribe. The Aos and the Phoms trace their origin to the *Lungterok* (six stones) on the Chongliemdi hill.

The origin of the word 'Naga' is shrouded in mystery. Different scholars have expressed different views. According to S.E. Peal, the word is probably derived from *Noga* by which these hill tribes were known to the Assamese for centuries, while *Noga* itself is derived from the word *Nok* which means 'fold' in some of the hill dialects. L.W. Shakespear and Robert Reid think that Naga is only a corruption of the word *Nanga* meaning 'naked'. Another theory is that the word Naga is derived from the Sanskrit *Nag*, a mountain, thus Naga meaning a 'hill man'. Be that as it may, it is interesting to reflect that the appellation 'Naga' was quite foreign to the Nagas themselves until very recent times. Capt John Butler³ tells us that the hill tribes living in the areas now known as Nagaland had no generic term applicable to the whole race and that they merely used specific names for a particular groups of villages; thus the men of Mezoma, Khonoma, Kohima, Jotosoma and other neighbouring villages called themselves *Tengimas*. The others, if asked who they were, would merely say that they belonged to such-and-such village; they were quite ignorant of any distinctive tribal name connecting them to any particular group of villages. This was due largely to the state of internecine warfare and the resulting isolation in which the tribes lived. Even as late as 1954 Verier Elwin found the people of Tuensang seldom speaking of themselves as Nagas but as Konyaks, Changs, Phoms, and so on. The appellation 'Naga' was actually given to these hill tribes by the plains people. This indirect and unconscious contribution proved to be a great uniting force to the tribes now classified as 'Naga'. This is, however, not to suggest that there were no common ties binding the diverse tribes. Far from, that a common denominator did, in fact, exist and it is generally agreed that the Naga tribes are by and large derived from the same racial stock.

Dr. H.E. Kaufmann, a German ethnologist, carried out anthropocentric measurements of the Nagas in 1956. He studied a hundred and sixty-six male Nagas (94 Konyaks, 38 Semas, 26 Aos and 8 Angamese). The analysis revealed

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that the Nagas are of sub-medium height, which is true of the majority of the hill tribes of Assam. The head is mesocephalic, which is also common to all the Assamese. The facial index is very low; in fact, it is the lowest in South-East Asia. The nasal index corresponds to a medium nose (mesorrhine), which is the rule among the hill tribes of Assam. The hair is generally straight. The skin is brownish-yellow. The eyes, significantly, do not show Mongolian form.⁴

On the other hand, there is an interesting account in the book *The Wild Tribes of India*. It states that the word "Naga" means a serpent, but it is not pretended that the Nagas are of serpent or Scythic descent. "The name was more probably given to them originally as being best expressive of their character, for of all wild tribes they are held to be the most subtle and treacherous. There are about a dozen septs of them, who differ considerably from each other in several respects, each having some distinct peculiarity of its own and often a distinct language. Those of the upper ranges are generally light-coloured and handsome, and their women pretty though beauty of form is not the rule of the hills; but those of the lower ranges, such as the Lotah Nagas and others, are dark, dirty, and squat. The differences in character also are equally prominent, for, while the Rengma Nagas are spoken of as being good natured, peaceful, and honest, the Lothas are known as unsocial and sulky, and the Angamis as contentious, vindictive, and perfidious. The Nagas *par excellence* are the last, whose name *Angdmi*, or the "unconquered," is their boast. They live high up the mountains, and have always distinguished themselves as caterans and murderers, and also for being perpetually at feud with each other, their feuds going down from generation to generation. Their villages are accordingly planned for everyday defence and stockaded as hill-forts, from which barbarous onslaughts are made, in which neither age nor sex is spared. They gave a world of trouble to the Government by the many plundering inroads they made on the peaceful tribes occupying the loots of their hills' and several expeditions had to be sent against them,

commencing from 1835. In 1855, the location of a special officer in their hills was determined upon, and the country taken under direct management, after which its history was rather uneventful for a long time, though never altogether peaceful. Subsequently some outrages were perpetrated in 1879, in connexion with an attempt to dislodge the British authority from the hills, and culminated in the murder of the special officer, Mr. Damant, and his escort, which led to an expedition being undertaken against the savages by General Nation, and to their punishment. Peace has since been ostensibly restored; but it is hardly to be supposed that it will be long preserved. The bellicose disposition of the race has not yet been mastered, and what seems calculated to master it in the future even more than Government interference is tea-planting, the operations connected with which are gradually spreading British rule over the immense wastes now held by these people, the limits of which are likely to be extended in the end to Muni-pore on the south, and on the east to the Patkoi range and the borders of Burmah and China. The Nagas are carrying on a most profitable business with the tea gardens, and those so engaged have already been partially humanised, at the same time that their occupation has forced them to neglect their internal bickering.

The Nagas are a fine, stalwart race, though inferior in *physique* as compared with the tribes inhabiting the north of the Brahmapootra, having smaller bones and much less of muscular development. Their faces are lozenge-shaped, features flat, eyes small complexion dark; and of hair they have none in the shape of beard, whisker, or moustache, while that on the head is cut short and trained to stand erect. But, despite these drawbacks, their carriage is dignified, and they have over all a wild expression peculiar to them, which distinguishes them from all other tribes in their vicinity. The females are short and waistless, but not necessarily ungainly, though they are too hard-worked to retain any shade of comeliness long, having every employment, apart from fighting, hunting, and traffic, saddled on

them. There is no clothing for either sex in the higher elevations, and hence some imagine that the name Naga may, perhaps, have been derived from the word "Lunga," or naked. At the foot of the hills the limb are usually covered with a small piece of cloth dyed with indigo, a larger piece of coarse cloth being also used for covering the body when needed; while nearer the tea gardens the men wear kilts of different patterns and colours, and the women picturesque petticoats, and a cotton *cheddar* thrown across the back and chest. They are very fond of ornaments at all places, and both males and females go loaded with them, the trinkets consisting of necklaces, bracelets, and armlets, made mainly of cowries, and more rarely of greenish beads which are particularly prized. What the Naga most of all delights in, however, are his weapons, which are his constant companions, awake and sleeping. These are: the *dao*, or battle-axe, the spear or javelin, and the shield—for he never uses the bow and arrows. The Angamis have also long known the use of firearms, of which they have got a considerable supply. Fighting and hunting, however, are not their sole occupations at the present day. They understand the advantages of trading and frequently come down to the markets of Assam and Cachar heavily laden with ivory, wax, and cloths manufactured from the nettle-fibre, in exchange for which they receive salt, brassware, and shells, and, by preference, matchlocks and gunpowder if they can get them. Their only other occupations are dancing and debauch, both of which are sometimes, not always, shared in by their women. The war-dance in particular is performed by the men alone, with spear and hatchet in hand, while all the circumstances of battle are acted, namely, the advance, retreat, wielding of weapons, and defence with the shield, accompanied by terrific howls and war-whoops.

As the Nagas are not a migratory people, like the other hillmen around them, their villages are stationary and unchanging, and those marked in Rennel's Maps of 1764 are still to be found. Some of them are very large, containing

as many as five hundred houses, and there are none which have less than fifty. The houses are built after a peculiar fashion, having the caves down to the ground, while one gable-end forms the door to enter by. Every family has a separate house, and each house generally contains two rooms, one for sleeping in, and the other for all other purposes, including the custody of pigs and fowls. The accommodation is necessarily straitened, and the unmarried young men of the family have to sleep out of it, all the bachelors of a village being accommodated in one common building, furnished with a series of bamboo beds covered with mats. In this house are also exhibited the spoils of the chase and the implements of war belonging to the community; and it is further used as the village inn, in which travellers from other villages are allowed to put up. The separation of the sexes in youth, if intended, is not, however, actually very rigidly enforced, young men and women having every facility given to them to become well acquainted with each other; and when they have made up their minds to marry they are at once united, the only form gone through being the execution of a contract of union by both parties, unattended by any religious ceremony whatever. Presents are then made by the bridegroom to the family of the bride, and there is a grand feast given to the whole village, in return for which the villagers have to build a house for the accommodation of the youthful pair. Divorces and remarriages are both allowed and freely availed of, and open infidelity is necessarily not of frequently occurrence.

As a rule the Naga woman is a model of labour and industry, and is mainly valued on that account. She does everything the husband will not, and he considers it effeminate to do anything but fight, hunt, and cheat. The cultivation labours are all performed by the wife, the crops raised consisting of rice, cotton, and tobacco, as well as several kinds of vegetables. She also weaves, both with cotton and with nettle fibres, and manufactures salt from the many salt-springs in the country, though she is not able to make it at less cost than is charged for the salt sent up

from Bengal. The tending of cows, goats, pigs, and fowl likewise devolves on her in most places, and she of course cooks and performs every other household work besides. One curious way of cooking with some clans is thus described in Owen's *Naga Tribes*: "Their manner of cooking is performed in joints of bamboos, introduced into which are as much rice, chillies, and meat, with water, as each will hold and can be thrust tightly in by the aid of stick. A couple of bamboos placed on the ground, with a third connecting them at the top horizontally, constitutes a fire-place, against which those holding the food rest. By continually turning the bamboos the food becomes well roasted, and is then severed out on leaves from a neighbouring tree." Neither milk nor any preparation thereof is appreciated by the Nagas generally, but they eat animals of all kinds, including rats, snakes, monkeys, tigers, and elephants; and the roast dog in particular is regarded as a great delicacy. Another article equally prized is a liquor manufactured from fermented rice, which is drunk by both sexes in great quantities; they are inveterate smokers also, and are especially fond of the oil of tobacco, which they mix with water and drink.

The Nagas have no kind of internal government, and acknowledge no supreme authority. If spoken to on the subject they plant their javelin on the ground and declare that to be their Rajah, and that they will have none other. The *Gaon Boora*, or elder of the village, has some authority conceded to him; but it is very moderate, and is often resisted and defied. A council of elders is suffered to adjust petty disputes and disagreements, but only in the way of arbitration. There is no constituted authority lodged anywhere in the community; every man doing what he likes and is able to perform. The Naga is by nature fierce as the tiger, and matters are necessarily made worse from the total want of control over his passions. His other vices are drunkenness and thieving, in the latter of which he glories, though it is held very dishonorable to be discovered in the act. His religion consists in the worship of a plurality of deities, or

god and evil spirits, to whom sacrifices are made, and in the belief in omens, by which his conduct is mainly guided. The chief religious festivals called the Genna, a Sabbat extended generally over two or three days and nights, when all the inhabitants of the village celebrating it live in complete isolation from others, sacrificing and drinking, but not permitting any one to witness their debaucheries. There is no fixed time for this ceremony, which is frequently repeated in the course of the year—that is, whenever it is considered necessary to make propitiatory offerings to their gods. The dead among them are buried at the doors of their own houses, and the spear and *dao* of the warrior are always buried with him.”

The district which had suffered most from the Naga raids was Cachar, which, within a small confined area, holds several tribes pushed into it from different directions. Of these the most important are: the Cacharese, the minor Naga tribes, the Meekirs, and the Kookies.

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1. L.W Shakespear, *History of Upper Assam, Upper Burmah and North-Eastern Frontier*, London, 1914, pp. 206-207.
2. 'Rough Notes on the Angami Nagas and their Language', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Part I, No. IV, 1875.
3. Those harping on the ethnic affinity of the Nagas with the Chinese would do well to take note of the above findings, especially the absence of epicanthic (or Mongolian) fold in the eyes of the Nagas.