



Angami Culture in Nagaland

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Abstract

There are so many tribes belongs to the State of Nagaland and Angami is one of them the major concentration of Naga Population is in Nagaland on which the present Study is centered. Nagaland is a land of Myth and legends, with festivals and culture richness, a world of interesting ancient rituals and practices.1

Introduction

The State of Nagaland, the 16th State of India is located in the far north east of India. It is bound by Myanmar in the East and Several Indian States like Assam in the west and North, Arunachal Pradesh in the North and Manipur in the South. The verdant homeland of the Nages, was formally inaugurated on 1st Dec 1963 as the 16th Sate of the Indian union by Dr.S. Radhakrishnan, the then president of India with P. Shilu Ao as the first Chief minister of Nagaland. It was the first not only in the North-east region but also in the country as whole having a great Majority of tribal population.2

Nagaland is divided in to 11 districts. These 11 districts are Dimapur, kiphire, kohima, Longleng Mokokchug Mon-peren, Tuensang, Wokha and Zunhe boto. Kohima is the Capital of the state to which the Angamis belong Historically, during the colonial rule, kohima the present capital of the state was the Head-quarters of the Naga Hills in 1878. Kohima is traditionally known as kewhira, which is believed to have derived from the name Whinuo who believed to have established the village.3 Kohima is a beautiful land, on its beauty, a short song is sung in following way :

Kewhira n za kide zivi mu!
N kezivi we pu hukelie ju;
N khawa di hie petse tuota rei,
Rukrakeshu ki noumvuyalie.
Kewhira n za kide zivi mu!
N kezivi pu hulie lho;

Hie ze balieyi kewhira, no.

(Kewhira, no zivilie).

Kewhira Teizeimetsi ngukesh,

Hie mho gei rei n kevi siyalie;

Hie kromia mu hie siedzuriemiako

Dziezie, Dziezie hie kie beiyalie.6

In English it means :

Kohima, how beautiful is your name;

Words cannot describe your glories.

Though I may wander far from you.

The most beautiful place in the world;

Stay with us. I look upon you every night and my

Dreams are full of you. In distance our friends and

Relative's wave and beckon to us.4

kohima, capital of Nagaland besides its natural beauty is also a testimony to the people with its glorious past the Angamis in this region stood for their rights against the colonial rule until it was occupied. It further came into time light when the Japanese invaded the Naga Hills during the Second World War in April 1944. It had a more devastating and for reaching effect. the war country in kohima is an important monument of Kohima, constructed and maintained by the Commonwealth war Graves Commission in the memory of Soldiers, of various nations who died in the Battle of Kohima.

It is true Naga have so much to offer not only in their Flora and fauna but also in their way of life. Nothing can be more undeniable when one comes across these words, stigmatises as 'head hunters' the tribal's of Nagaland, Considered wild and uncivilized,



have nevertheless a lifestyle that is fascinating and uncountable. Indeed their life style is so intriguing that they are complacent with their life and more so for the absence of monotony.⁵

Physical Features

The state of Nagaland lays in the Eastern most part of the India. It lies approximately between 2506' N and 2704' N latitudes and 9302' E and 950 15' E longitudes. It covers an area of about 16527 sq km (which constitutes 0.5% of the country's geographical area) with a population of 1.9 Million or population of 1980, 602 as per the 2011 census of India. It receives an average rainfall of about 200 cm to 250 cm annually. Among the rivers Do Yang is the largest and the longest river in Nagaland. The highest peak in Nagaland is Saramati which stand at the height of 3,841m above mean sea level in the district of kiphire. The state is bounded by Assam in the north and west, by Myanmar and Arunachal in the East and Manipur in the south and runs more or less parallel to the left bank of the Brahmaputra River. The topography is very severe, full of hilly ranges that break into a wide chaos of spurs and ridges. The altitude varies between 194 meters and 3048 meters. The place is hilly and the expanse of running its length

Flora and Fauna

Nagaland has is a rich Flora and Fauna: The Naga region is botanically one of the richest areas in the world having some of the riches beds of wild life, plants, and fruits.

The Rhododendron is the state flower that blooms in the month of March and April. It has different colors of red, white and Rink. A matter of pride for the Nagas is that the tallest Rhododendron (Nthou pu) is the world (10808') is found in mt Jappu. Orchids of different varieties are also found in the state. Besides these, numerous medicinal plants are also found. Indigenous trees of different families are found. Alder Pine, Oak, Birch, walnut etc are few of the common trees found in these hills. The fauna of this state is also immense. Methuen (Boss frontals), is

the state animal which is a wild and very graceful looking animal. Blyth's Tragopan or the grey bellied tragopan of the peasant family is a rare species which is the state bird.

A parallel culture

The Nagas as a whole are very much a like to Each other in their ways of living. The tribes living in Nagaland as known and district elements in them in matters of dialects and behavior. Neverth- eless they were also found tube closed to each other when one look into their cultural practices.

For a very long time the Nagas had been living in villages which were sovereign form each other and were located and established in different ranges at different intervals. Each sovereign village-state was poles apart without any closeness as one people as Nagas. However, with the span of time and with the introduction of new political machinery and developmental activates, the barriers were broken down and contact between them developed at present. Nagaland is a land of villages and instead of decreasing the number of villages due to development. It is increasing year by year. According to census 2011; there were 1317 villages in Nagaland. It an indication on now the Nagas lived showing one's attachment to his village and his community as such it can also be seen that the village remains as an important part of Nagas indetity even to this day.⁷

The state of Nagaland is described as the land of festivals where each and every tribe is seen to celebrate its festivals and different and unique manners and with different customes yet. The common relation to each and every celebration is seen to have been motivated according to the circle of agricultural seasons. They indulge in agricultural activities and are proud cultivators in their own respective regions. As such, most of their festivals were also seen to have been focused in propitiating the spirits for being ensured with a bountiful harvest. The festivals of the tribe in Nagaland differ in their timings of celebration



but are still found to be celebrated even today.

Important festivals and time of celebration

Tribe	Festivals	Month
Angami	Sekrenyi	February 25th
Ao	Moatsu	May 1st Week
Chakhe-sang	Sukhruhnye Tsukhenyie	January 15th April 24th
Chang	Naknyulem	July 29th-31st
Khiamm-niungan	Tsokum	October 1st Week
Kuki	Mimkut	January 17th
Konyak	Aoleang Monyu	April 1st Week
Lotha	Tokhu Emong	November 7th
Phom	Monyu	April 1st Week
Pochury	Yemshe	October 1st
Rengma	Ngada	November last
Sumi	Tuluni	July
Sangtam	Amongmong	September 1st week
Yimchungru	Metemiu	
Zelei-ang-rong	Meilinyi/Hega	February October

The Nagas were all animist by tradition. The all believed in the existence of spirits responsible for their life's activities. Therefore every Naga village and a specific religious priest (e.g. kemevo of Angamis, puthi of lot has) who practically performed all the necessary propitiations individually on behalf of the village or quided the people in all kind of religious observations it cannot be denied that Nagas were religious people in their own animistic life, though later on, their lives and belief's changed with the shriveling touch of civilization.⁸ In the Naga society a rich man was alone privileged to host feasts within the capacity of his wealth. It was a form of feast where all the villagers were seen to have taken part in the mercy making. The host and his wife were blessed by the village priest on such occasions. The fest was to acquire a social status. After the hosting of the feast one secures the privilege to build his house in a particular form and was allowed to wear dresses of social recognitions too. The Nagas loved music and dance which was always a part of their colorful festivals as mentioned earlier. They all had their own fold songs, musical instruments and rhythmic dances.⁹ they had

varied form of colorful but having a similar pattern and ways of wearing them. Both men and women participated to gather during festivals and rice beer was the most important servings during the ceremonies for all participants, which was traditionally prepared by women. This was practiced by all the Naga tribes.

Women in Naga society mostly had the same conduct of duty, which started from her youth. It was her duty to have knowledge on traditional customs such as house hold chores, weaving and making clothiers, participating with men in agricultural field works and festivities etc. As a mother she had to undergo certain rituals during the birth of her child to have a good future. Most of Naga tribes restrict women to have the right to possessions of wealth and restrict their presence in performing certain strict gennas (No work days). Most of Naga girls had to keep their and. Shaved until her marriage or attaining marriageable age. These were some of the few similarities found among the Nagas living in Nagaland since the olden days and till today's also and these Clements in them note only denotes their close relation racially and culturally among themselves but also with the other Nagas living in other parts of North east India.¹⁰

Trait of head hunting

Since time immemorial the Nagas were head hunters. The study of Naga history becomes incomplete without mentioning about this head-hunting activity. This was one of the chief characteristics of their daily lives. They had strong faith in the soul and the head being the holder of the soul, heads were acquired. Blessings were believed to be bestowed from above fertility in land as well as over the house held once head were brought home. The head of women was considered more precious as it would stimulate and abundance of food crape, the warrior's insignia.¹¹ Village feuds were not uncommon. Hitherto the village youth kept guard of their village in times of peril. Not only village feuds but feuds was also quite



frequent never the less, it has been reasoned that head-hunting was a part of their culture and not a sport, though some people say that it was a sport for the brave, the religious and the death defying warriors. Head hunting was the reason people lived in fear and the cause of many unnatural deaths. The other reasons for head hunting were subjugation of any enemy village, memorial benefits and also trade advantages.¹²

Language

Head hunting had not only influenced the history but also had influenced the language of the people in numerous ways. It was the reason villages were isolated from each other and was the cause for the variation in languages. They had very little communication among tribes. The variation in Naga language had grown vastly 'that two adjoining tribes cannot converse together except by means of a third language common to both.'¹³ Not only between adjoining tribes, even- within a tribe the dialects become incomprehensible. As for the Angamis not only does it differ in the four regions of Northern, western, southern and chakhro regions, but every village have their own slightly different dialects and 'this variance progressively increasing with the geographical distance. This vernacular difference had created immense inconvenience among the Angamis that 'Tenyidie' was adopted as the common language of the Angamis.¹⁴ linguistically speaking regarding the vernacular language, this common language, Tenyidie falls under the Sino-Tibetan branch. The philologists have classified the sino-Tibetan languages into two branches- (i) Tibeto-Burman and (ii) Siamese-Chinese.

Seeing the language condition of the people automatically the need arises for a common language among them. In order to solve this problem, a resolution had been passed by the state assembly to adopt English as the official language of the state of Nagaland in Sept 1967. Various reasons stimulated the selection of English as the official language.

The first and the foremost is with the arrival of the British and the missionaries, English was introduced in schools and English formed the language of the educated Nagas. On the other hand, the vernacular languages were not adequate to be adopted as a common language as the vocabularies were too deficient. Hence English became the most appropriate language for adoption as it suits the convenience of every tribe.¹⁵

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