

**REPRESENTING THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE NAGAS:  
A CASE STUDY ON THE HORNBILL FESTIVAL OF NAGALAND**

**Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the award of the Degree**

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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## CERTIFICATE

Certified that dissertation entitled, **“REPRESENTING THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE NAGAS: A CASE STUDY ON THE HORNBILL FESTIVAL OF NAGALAND”**, submitted by **Therila Sangtam** in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University and is her own work to the best of our knowledge.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiner for evaluation.

  
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## Declaration

I declare that the dissertation entitled “REPRESENTING THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE NAGAS: A CASE STUDY ON THE HORNBILL FESTIVAL OF NAGALAND” submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

5 January, 2011

  
Therila Sangtam

*For otzü, obo, ajü & amü...*

*I miss you all*

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## INTRODUCTION

### **The Hornbill Festival – The reference to conservation and heritage:**

The Hornbill festival was started in the year 2000 by the Government of Nagaland as a platform where all the major tribes<sup>1</sup> of the State participate ~~in the event~~. The festival is named after a bird, hornbill which is closely linked with the social and cultural life of the Nagas<sup>2</sup>. Such that there are references of the hornbill in the tribal folklores, dances, songs, etc. However, practices, such as the use of hornbill feathers as headgears and their skulls as decorations have threaten<sup>ed</sup> the bird's existence and has led to creating a congenial atmosphere so that hornbills which had held so much awe and admiration in the Naga culture is thus conserved for posterity. The idea of the Hornbill festival can be understood as originating from this aspect of creation of an amiable environment for the conservation of the hornbill. Each tribe exhibits their distinct traditional heritage: dance, music, costumes, arts and crafts, *Morungs*<sup>3</sup>, also progress of the Nagas in the fields of modern music, handlooms and handicrafts are showcased within the confines of the 'Heritage village'. The 'Heritage village' ideally is a show place where the assumed 'ideal' is showcased from the lives of different Naga tribes.

The entire phenomenon of the Hornbill festival can be analyzed as the performance to assert the ethnic identity of the Nagas. Through my case study on the Hornbill festival I will look into the showcased presentations of the cultural performances to form a basis for my analysis of the Naga identity. The purpose of my research is to provide an understanding of the cultural identity of the

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<sup>1</sup> The sixteen participant tribes of Nagaland at the Hornbill festival are Angami, Ao, Chakesang, Chang, Kachari, Khiamniungam, Konyak, Kuki, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sangtam, Sema, Yimchunger, and Zeliang.

<sup>2</sup> Explanations in p. 3

<sup>3</sup> The Morung (an Assamese term) system also popularly known as the dormitory or bachelors house was the training center for young boys who enter the Morung when they attain the age of seven to ten years and above (the age of initiation into the Morung however varies among each tribe). The Morung system played an important role in the socio- cultural life of the Nagas. Their culture, customs and traditions were passed down from generation to generation through oral tradition. Folk music and dance, and folk tales were thus transmitted to the youths in the Morung. It was once the hub of all social and cultural activity until Christianity and education was introduced. Other purposes of the Morung are: it acted as the meeting house where weapons and prizes of war were stored, it was also adapted as guard houses (Morungs are usually located at the village entrance or on a spot from where the village could be guarded most effectively), recreation clubs and as a center for education, arts and crafts, and discipline. (cf. N. Talitemjen Jamir & A. Lanunungang, 2005; Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, 1938b; J. P. Mills, 1973)

Nagas while looking at its identity in contrast to the different newly emerged multiple identities of the Nagas and how this aspect is played out in the Hornbill festival.

According to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995, pp. 369, 370):

Heritage is not lost and found, stolen and reclaimed. Despite a discourse of conservation, preservation, restoration, reclamation, recovery, recreation, recuperation, revitalization and regeneration, heritage produces something new in the present that has recourse to the past. Such language suggests that heritage is there prior to its identification, evaluation, conservation, and celebration.

UNESCO has more recently adopted the Convention for safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, safeguarding the non-material cultural heritage, defined in Article 2. 1 (see Susan Keitumetse, 2006, p. 166)

This intangible cultural heritage ... is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

The origin of the 2003 UNESCO Convention on Intangible Heritage has been attributed to the 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore which was adopted by the General Conference at its twenty-fifth session in Paris on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1989. The adoption of the Convention can be looked at as a step towards safeguarding the non-material cultural heritage. Here, the word 'Safeguarding' in Article 2. 3 has been defined as "measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage". Article 15 also makes reference to issues relating to the "Participation of communities, groups and individuals". (ibid)

The role of the human body as brought about by Christoph Wulf (in Christiane Brosius and Karin Polit, (eds), 2011) as the carrier of intangible cultural heritage, in terms of oral traditions, performing arts, of the social practices, rituals and celebrations, the skills and knowledge of traditional arts and crafts, etc, in contrast to architectural monuments are more difficult to convey and conserve. The bodily practices which are determined by the passage of time and temporality

of human body are thus subject to processes of transformation linked to social change and exchange.

This research looks at the Hornbill festival focusing on the participation of the sixteen Naga tribes in the festival and also attempting to analyze the way in which it is advertised and marketed to the tourists as well as the Naga people themselves. As this festival at once tries to address and bridge the distance the Naga people have felt *vis-à-vis* the rest of the Indian population, both geographically and culturally, it builds a sympathetic inter-tribal relationship between the different tribes, and finally addresses and rectifies as much as possible, the complete distancing from their own cultural and social practices. It therefore becomes essentially critical to understand the importance performance holds in playing out the identity at different levels while attempting to address all the responsibilities attributed to it.

#### Looking at the history of the Naga identity:

The Nagas (M. Alemchiba, 1970; Milada Ganguli, 1984; U. A. Shimray, 2007) ~~of Mongoloid race~~ are indigenous groups of people inhabiting the Naga Hills<sup>4</sup> in India. Research studies in the history of the region show that the early Indo-Aryans, Mongoloids in Kamarupa and Bengal and the Ahoms in Assam had collectively called the primitive tribes occupying in the North-Eastern regions as the 'Nagas' (Milada Ganguli, 1984, p. 6). Naga scholars have agreed that the first reference of the term Naga is found in the writings of the Greek philosopher and historian Claudius Ptolemy in his *Geographia* Volume (ii) page 18, as "Nagaloi" meaning "the realm of the naked". This was in the second century A.D. There are several theories and interpretations<sup>5</sup> on the origin of the name "Naga" each with a foundation but with no unanimity of opinion. The controversies and confusions that have cropped up in the derivation of the term "Naga" no doubt produces a dichotomy between an outsiders view (colonial assumptions) and an insider's view. It

Please do not  
mention race.

<sup>4</sup> The Naga Hills stretches from the Chandel district of Manipur to Nagaland and up to the eastern part of Tirap and Changlang district of Andhra Pradesh.

<sup>5</sup> The different opinions about the derivation of the term Naga are – from the Sanskrit words *Nanga* or *Naaga*, meaning naked or mountain which would mean the Nagas are highlanders or hill men, and also the history of being semi-naked; another Sanskrit word *Nag* is closely related to the term Naga which means snake or snake worshipper, however, this view has been rejected by many scholars as there is no trace of snake worship in Naga history; the Burmese word *Naka* which means people with pierced ears; the Assamese word *Noga* meaning naked; in Kachari the word *Nahngra* meaning warrior or fighter; in Tangkhul language *Naokhoka* which means a brave child, etc. (cf. M. Alemchiba, 1970; M. Horam, 1975; U. A. Shimray, 2007; Inato Yekhetto Shikhu, 2007).

is an accepted fact that the Naga history was officially documented first during the British rule, prior to which it was recorded only via the traditional oral system. Nevertheless, it is agreed that this term was not used by the Nagas themselves. As observed by Hokishe Sema (1986, p. 2):

For long, this appellation of “Naga” was resented by these people, till political expediency caused it to be accepted as describing the separate identity of these people as distinct from other ethnic tribal people and also from the people in the country at large.

The ‘Naga’ is a generic term referring to a group of tribes inhabiting the States of Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, and Assam. There are forty Naga groups based on the list provided by Naga Hoho (the apex Naga social organization) of which the Government of India recognized thirty-five Naga groups as Schedule Tribes according to the Indian Population Census of 1991. Of this list of thirty-five Naga groups – seventeen are from Nagaland<sup>6</sup>, fifteen from Manipur<sup>7</sup> (in the district of Senapati, Ukhrul, Tamenlong and Chandel), three from Arunachal Pradesh<sup>8</sup> (in the district of Tirap and Changlang). Also some of the Zeliangrong Nagas fall under the administration of North Cachar Hill district in Assam. (cf. U. A. Shimray, 2007, pp. 25, 26).

U. A. Shimray (2007) talks about the Nagas as one of the largest ethnic groups in the North Eastern region consisting of several communities – each community possesses distinct languages and well-demarcated territory. The issue of ‘demographic domination’ – domination and subjugation of the minority by the majority, created a feeling of fear and insecurity among the minority groups. As such the process of ethnic expansion, viz. development of the generic name ‘Naga’ along the contiguous geographical territory has been viewed by Shimray (ibid) as a political measure to project a larger unified identity. This formation of the ethnic Naga identity by merging together several smaller groups is based on their belief in common historical origin, their cultural affinity, geographical and political aspirations.

The prehistoric movements of people towards the North Eastern India came from South-Asia, South-East Asia and South China. Despite research by scholars the origin and migration of Nagas still remains obscure. As opined by Hokishe Sema (1986) the lack of substantive

<sup>6</sup> Angami, Ao, Chakesang, Chang, Chirri, Khamniungam, Konyak, Lotha, Makhori, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sangtam, Sema, Tikir, Yimchunger and Zeliang.

<sup>7</sup> Anal, Chiru, Chothe, Kabui (including Puimei), Kacha Naga (Zeme & Liangmei), Koirang, Lamgang, Mao (including Poumai), Maram, Maring, Monsang, Moyon and Tangkhul.

<sup>8</sup> Nocte, Tangsa and Wancho.

evidences and the wandering nature of the tribes over the centuries have added to its obscurity. The migration of Nagas to the Naga Hills has been speculated as coming from China and South-East Asia using the present Myanmar as a corridor (cf. J. H. Hutton, 1969; M. Alemchiba 1970; M. Horam 1975). It is noted that the migration of the Naga tribes took place in successive waves from different directions. However, the history of how each tribe came to precisely occupy their present territorial position is yet to be established (M. Alemchiba, 1970, p. 19).

The origin of the Nagas as pointed out by Dr. H. Bareh in *Nagaland District Gazetteers* (1970, p. 19):

Nagaland exhibits racial inter-mixtures in a great range, it forms a meeting centre of the Himalayan, Burmese, Japanese, Thai, Malaysian, Philippinian, Polynesian, Indonesian and Melanesian cultures; its history preserves instances of assimilations and of fusions in blood and race among the varied tribes. The Nagas point out to the association of their parent tribes with the sea-shore.

The affinities in cultural traits and physical characters of the Nagas to the native Dyaks of Borneo<sup>9</sup> and Bontoc Igorots of Philippines have been studied by William Smith (2009). Some of the similarities pointed out included the traditional method of head-hunting, common sleeping houses for the unmarried men which were taboo to women, agricultural practices, tattooing by pricking, disposal of the dead, betel chewing, etc, were mentioned. Thus, presuming the Nagas as belonging to the same ethnic group and as they migrated from their primeval home they carried these cultural elements with them. Also as mentioned by M. Horam (1975, p. 28) along with the association of Nagas to the natives of Borneo, like the Indonesians the Nagas also use the loin-loom<sup>10</sup> for weaving cloth, and there is also resemblance in embroidery of the traditional Naga clothes to those of Indonesians. Other affinities among the Nagas with the more distant tribes, the aborigines of Melanesia<sup>11</sup> has been noticed in respect to the head dress (including decorations of plumes), the use of coral shells for ornamentation and the similar style of spears (Dr. H.

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<sup>9</sup> The third largest island in the world, the island is divided among three countries, namely, Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia. Its population consists of mainly Malays, Chinese and Dyak ethnic groups.

<sup>10</sup> The loin-loom or the backstrap or body tension loom is a simple and mobile weaving machine which is built out of bamboo. Weaving is done without mechanical parts, it consist of a continuous warp stretched between two parallel bamboos, one end tied to a post and the other end held by a strap worn around the weaver's lower back to regulate the tension with her body. (see *Handmade in India – An Encyclopedia on Crafts on India*, 2007, p. 519)

<sup>11</sup> The term Melanesia is used in the anthropological context to refer to one of the three regions of Oceania whose pre-colonial population generally belongs to one ethno-cultural family as a result of centuries of maritime migrations. Its original inhabitants were likely the ancestors of the present-day Papuan speaking people (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesia> Accessed on 13/12/2010).

Bareh, 1970, p. 20). The use of conch-shells as a part of their ornamental dress indicates that the Nagas had once lived near the sea as these shells are not found in the hills. As quoted by M. Alemchiba (1970, p. 16):

Some old men in the village vaguely mention of a story of crossing a 'Wady' river the name of which is found neither in Nagaland nor outside. Is it to mean Irrawady? In any case, these are simple speculations.

The distinctive characteristics of the tribal religion of the early Nagas has been the absence of a sacred scripture and no great historical person or founding father figure as such and was centered on earth and creations (A. Wati Longchar, 1995, pp. 6, 7). Belief in the existence of the Supreme Being is common to all the tribal people. Most of the tribes perceive the Supreme Being as a male deity who comes to their village from time to time, visits their homes, eats rice and drinks rice beer with the inmates (ibid, p. 33). The Naga ancestors also believed in the existence of lesser gods and spirits – god of wealth and fertility, the ancestors, the tigers, the fruitfulness, spirit of the hills, the stone, and the house spirit, to whom animal sacrifices were offered for blessing and protection to prevent ill health of the family (Inato Yekhetu Shikhu, 2007, p. 14).

Before the advent of the British Empire in the nineteenth century, the Ahoms<sup>12</sup> had entered into North-East Assam from Burma through the Patkai Range and ruled Assam from 1228 A.D. to 1819 A.D. The history of Nagas relation with Ahoms is a blend of both friendliness and hostility; there used to be regular trades<sup>13</sup> and intermarriages, as well as hostilities accompanied with frequent raids by the Nagas. The relation between Ahoms and Nagas, as M. Alemchiba (1970, p. 39) writes:

[...] was maintained through a confederation which was periodically held in the capital of Ahom kings. It was established mainly for trade purposes of the Nagas in the plains and in return the latter were restrained from committing outrages in the plains.

The speaking language and dialects of the Nagas, according to philologists, belong to Sino-Tibetan speech-family. Linguistically, the Sino-Tibetan languages have been classified into: 1) Tibeto-Burman, and 2) Siamese-Chinese of which all the Naga dialects have been classed in the

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<sup>12</sup> The Ahoms were also Mongoloid people of Tibeto-Burman but of Siamese-Chinese speech from the eastern most part of the Brahmaputra valley.

<sup>13</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century raw rubber was produced for the plains, a product which had no use for the Nagas themselves. However the rubber trade declined by the beginning of the twentieth century. (William Smith, 2009, p. 39)



former group, in the Census Report of Assam in 1891 (see W. H. Furness, 1902, p. 445). To undertake a comprehensive grammatical study of the tribal Naga languages would be rendered hopeless owing to its multiplicity of languages, this view is clearly brought out in W. H. Furness notes (ibid, p. 446):

Not only has each tribe a distinct form of speech, always liable to rapid changes, but also, in several instances, the clans, notably the Mongsem and Chungli clans of the Ao tribe, living in the same villages and working in the same field, speak almost totally different dialects; each understanding the other, to be sure, but the member of one clan speaking his own clan language, until, in the case of marriage, the woman adopts the speech of her husband's household.

The difference in the language barrier was bridged during the inter-mingling of the Nagas and Ahoms with a new spoken language which has been termed as 'Nagamese'<sup>14</sup>. It is a combination of simplified Assamese words and syntax combined with Hindi and English influences with pronunciation and accentuation derived from the Tibeto-Burmese Naga languages (B. Boruah, 1993). Although English has been accepted as the official language of Nagaland since 1967, Nagamese still remains the major *lingua franca* of the Nagas.

The dawn of the British rule in the Naga Hills can be traced back to the Peace treaty that was signed between the British Government and Burma<sup>15</sup>, 'The Treaty of Yandabo' in 24<sup>th</sup> February, 1826. However, the first British contact with the Naga's took place in January 1832, when Captain Jenkins and Pemberton with a party of 700 soldiers and 800 porters were marching towards Assam from Manipur. The party was opposed in its progress by the Angami<sup>16</sup> Nagas when they started rolling down stones from the summits of the hills, threw spears and did their utmost by yelling and intimidation, little did they know of the effects of fire-arms, and their village was occupied by the British troops (M. Alemchiba, 1970, p. 41).

The establishment of the British rule in the North Eastern Hills was further intensified when the British realized the economic potentials, with special importance to the tea plantations in Assam.

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<sup>14</sup> The common language Nagamese has no script and does not follow strict rules of grammar.

<sup>15</sup> The Treaty of Yandabo was an outcome after the defeat of Burmese in the First Anglo-Burmese War (1823-1826). With this treaty the British became the *de facto* guardians of the Naga Hills, Assam, and Manipur. These regions were earlier under the direct influence of the Burmese rule since their invasion in 1816, 1817, and 1819 respectively.

<sup>16</sup> The Angami's are one of the major tribes in Nagaland. Their territory in the present Kohima is divided into four regions; Southern Angami consisting of regions on the foothills of Mount Japfü, Western Angami in West Kohima, Northern Angami consisting of villages in the North, and Chakhro Angami consisting of the smaller villages on the lower foothills towards Dimapur district.

Since the first contact with the Nagas, the British continued sending several punitive expeditions against Nagas villages leading to frequent raids on the tea estates. The persistent attacks continued which necessitated the British to gradually annex the Naga Hills. Resultantly, the Nagas remained for many centuries in virtual isolation from the historic civilizations of Hinduism, Buddhism or Jainism; untouched by outside influences they had their own characteristic style of living and ideology. By the end of nineteenth century, owing to the process of inculturation<sup>17</sup> during the British administration the Naga society underwent rapid transformations leading to the gradual disintegration of their age old customs and traditions.

The missionary activity in the nineteenth century has been classified as an agency of imperialist politics as argued by Eric Hobsbawm (1992, p. 71), to quote:

This was the classic age of massive missionary endeavour. Missionary effort was by no means an agency of imperialist politics. Often it was opposed to the colonial authorities; pretty well always it put the interest of the converts first. Yet the success of the Lord was a function of imperialist advance. Whether trade followed the flag may still be debated, but there is no doubt at all that colonial conquest opened the way for effective missionary action.

The Western Christian missionaries began their evangelical activity after the establishment of a church in the Naga Hills in 1876, which spread further into the entire Naga Hills region of Nagaland. The process of enculturation in the Naga society brought about cultural transformations, researchers viewed this aspect both in terms of positive and negative impacts. The effort of the Missionaries, in terms of tribal unity, introduction of western education, prohibition of head-hunting and inter-tribal feuds, has been viewed positively. This initiated in the transformation of the natives from being primitive isolated tribal's to a united nationalist tribe.

Surajit Sinha (1981) has talked about how in the former Naga Hills District the distinct ethnic groups lived as socio-cultural and political isolates, even within clans of each ethnic group they used to live in virtual isolation. Talking about the impact of Christianity, he asserts that although Christian conversion tended to uproot the tribal's from their traditional norms, it provided a basis for developing a larger scale of tribal unity. On one hand while the church provided a wide

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<sup>17</sup> The term inculturation refers to the adaptation of the way Church teachings are presented to non-Christian cultures, and the influence of those cultures to the evolution of these teachings.

platform by recruiting people of an inter-tribal Naga identity, on the other hand, the Nagas were branded as a barbarous race, uncivilized, ignorant, heathen, savages, and uncultured, hence not allowed to integrate their culture with the Gospel. The Nagas were thus left with almost nothing to re-express their Christian faith culturally. The cultural feasts and festivals which could have been the thanksgiving and celebrations to God; *Morung* which could have been not only a social and political institution but also a meaningful worshipping place and symbol of identity; cultural ordinances which could have been a discipline and standard for new Naga faith, cultural beliefs and concept of God, gods, spirits, and angels which could have been culturally relevant explanations and concepts – all vanished in the course and progression of inculturation (Inato Yekhetto Shikhu, 2007, p. 171).

While the Missionaries aimed at imposing on the tribal's an entirely different identity far removed from their native identities, ~~with respect to~~ the anthropologists ~~they~~ were interested in preserving and studying their customs and traditions. J.H. Hutton, then Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills (1917 - 1935) and also an anthropologist has written about his experiences of working in the Naga Hills in which he notes the marked differences in language, customs, dress, appearance and psychology among the tribes that obscured its inherent unity. J. H. Hutton (1969, p. vii) writes:

With the Ao's and Lhotas matters have gone even further. Old beliefs and customs are dying, the old traditions are being forgotten, the number of Christians or quasi-Christians is steadily increasing, and the spirit of change is invading and pervading every aspect of village life.

Another anthropologist of repute, J.P. Mills (1973, p. 420) taking a similar stand, questions the issue of identity, in his opinion, the gravest mistake that the mission has made and “the one most fraught with danger for the future is their policy of strenuously imposing an alien western culture on their converts.” The converts, thus, become different entities altogether and were no longer allowed by the church to don their ornamental fineries, their traditional clothing and they were exempted from singing their folksongs and participating in any kind of native festivals. Even the way they wore their hairstyles were dictated by the Mission.

Initially a missionary, Verrier Elwin was determined to bring progress among the aboriginal people of India through evangelization and education, but found himself captivated by the old

and rich cultural values of Tribal India but later he argued against Christian civilization as he found it destructive to primitive tribal life. Elwin was against the assimilation of other cultures by the tribal's. He pleaded for allowing the aboriginals to live their lives in the way they knew best. He said that the aboriginals of India had their own life, their own form of art and culture, and their own religion, which was by no means to be despised (see Anand Mahanand, in Sachidananda Mohanty, (ed), 2003, pp. 142, 147). However, despite close relationship and sympathy for the tribal's, he remained just another defender of the colonial enterprise. 72

Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf during his stay in the Naga Hills in between 1936 and 1937 for his research, wrote an account of his experiences among the people, and reflected the impression of a western observer exposed for the first time to close contact with Indian tribal people persisting in an archaic way of life. The developments of rapid transformation of the cultural and social conditions of its inhabitants and the fortunes of Nagaland prompted him to republish the book with two new chapter's dealing with his experience during his second visit to the Naga Hills after thirty four years and the developments that had taken place during that period. In his book "*Return to the Naked Nagas*" (1976) he describes a way of life which in part no longer holds correct.

There has been much written on the Naga history, migration, culture and social organization, religion, and customs as well as their educational and economic progress under the influence of the Christian missions and the British and Indian administrators. However, there have been tremendous change since the Christian missionaries and British officials wrote about them.

While talking about how the British administration that brought a traumatic change in the traditional world of the Nagas which affected every aspect of their tribal life – political, social, economic and cultural, Fredrick Downs (in T. K. Oommen, (ed) 2010) gives 'cultural synthesis' as the reason behind the attraction of the tribal people of North-East India to the Christianity movement in the first half of the twentieth century. According to him, it provided them with a new world view while maintaining their traditional values. By the end of the twentieth century despite the withdrawal of the British administration, conversion to Christianity intensified and became a stronghold in the three North-eastern States of Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya.

The Census of India (2001) has recorded a total of 89.1 per cent Scheduled Tribes of the total population in Nagaland, out of which 98.5 per cent were Christians.

A comparatively new influence in the last few decades in Nagaland owing to westernization through popular culture has been integrated into the Naga society. The whole process of cultural dynamics, flow of ideas, perspectives, styles and images coming from the western countries and more recently also from the near East influence of Korean sub-cultures through mass-media is visible among the younger generation of Nagas. Such influences are observed to be more of life style than material advancements (Zhokusheyi Rhakho, 2010). This borrowing or modification of cultural elements, that of, acculturation<sup>18</sup> has further deepened the loss of traditional culture, values, behavior, and most importantly the understanding of the essence of the Naga identity. However, as one would well conclude from the given history of events that there is barely anything substantially established regarding the Naga culture which the younger generation can inherit (N. Talitemjen Jamir & A. Lanunungsang, 2005, p. 332).

### **On Naga ethnicity:**

In general, approach to ethnicity (John Hutchinson & Anthony D. Smith. (eds) 1996, pp. 8) has been divided into two broad camps. Firstly, the approach of the primordialists, here primordality is attributed by individuals to the ties of religion, blood, race, language, region and custom, and not as that which inheres in these bonds. This view has been criticized in terms of malleability of ethnic identity, its overlapping with other kinds of social identity, and people's capacity to assume various identities in different situations. Frequent migrations, colonization, and intermarriage, particularly in the modern world, have undermined the view of ethnic communities as immemorial, discreet, persisting units. In contrast to this approach, the instrumentalists treat ethnicity as a social, political and cultural resource for different interest and status groups. The central idea of the instrumentalists as discussed by Cohen, Bhaba, Hall, R. Cohen (ibid, p. 9) is the socially constructed nature of ethnicity, the ability of individuals to 'cut

<sup>18</sup> "Acculturation is a process in which members of one cultural group adopt the beliefs and behaviors of another group. Although acculturation is usually in the direction of a minority group adopting habits and language patterns of the dominant group, acculturation can be reciprocal – that is, the dominant group also adopts patterns typical of the minority group. Assimilation of one cultural group into another may be evidenced by changes in language preference, adoption of common attitudes and values, membership in common social groups and institutions, and loss of separate political or ethnic identification" (<http://www.rice.edu/projects/HispanicHealth/Acculturation.html> Accessed on 30/11/2010)

and mix' from a variety of ethnic heritages and cultures to forge their own individual or group identities. However, they were also criticized for defining interests largely in material terms and their failing to take seriously the sense of permanence of their ethnies.

The Naga's belief in their group affinity for the formation of their political community can be viewed through Max Weber's idea on 'ethnic groups' (ibid, 35):

Those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists.

The notion of ethnicity when applied to the identity of the Nagas becomes rather complicated when we take into consideration its diverse tribal identities, and also taking into account the cultural markers or the basic structures of ethnic groups and their differentiation. It then becomes obvious that each tribe of the Nagas have its own system of customs and tradition. For an example the language which marks a difference amongst the Naga community.

The studies on 'identity' in the past few decades have taken a shift from the traditional concerns of the formation of 'me' to that of group agency and political actions. Karen A. Cerulo (1997, p. 386) in this respect says that the studies on the social and national movements have resulted in the relocation of identity studies to the site of the collective with regard to gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity, and class forming the "holy trinity" as referred by Appiah & Gates (see ibid). Apart from this, the intellectual concerns with agency and self-direction have also re-energized the study of identification processes. At the collective level, scholars are now examining the mechanics by which distinctions are created, maintained, and changed.

### **Research objectives, chapterization and methodologies:**

My objective is to take a closer study of the circumstances in which traditional practices of the Nagas have come to be regarded as a cultural heritage. While making attempts to understand what exactly is the notion of heritage that the Government of Nagaland is trying to promote, is it to be understood in terms of what the UNESCO defines heritage as or is there something more to

it that needs to be understood. Thus, bringing to the fore the idea of Naga heritage/ identity as it is presented and performed through the Hornbill festival.

David C. Harvey (2003, pp. 474, 475) with reference to Lowenthal, Graham et al, and Johnson talks about how the study of heritage has increased in scope and scale over the years. However, much of the heritage presentation is focused around late twentieth century which reflects on the overwhelming rise of the 'heritage industry' showcasing postmodern economic and cultural concerns. He talks about heritage as a 'process related to human action and agency, and as an instrument of cultural power in whatever time one chooses to examine.' Heritage is considered in terms of people engaging with it, re-working on it, appropriate it and contest it, and as such it "always reflects the circumstances of its production, and so an examination of its history (one might say, the 'heritage of heritage') can reveal much about the society that produced it."

In this regard I have analyzed how the strategy that is being adopted by the State Government of Nagaland to promote its 'cultural heritage' works within the framework of its political, social and economic agenda through the conscious effort of performing the Hornbill Festival as a whole. The festival space needs to be seen as an arena where a new way of performing identity has been devised. In planning of this festival the efforts of the tribal people along with the State and Central Governmental needs to be analyzed in order to understand the process of structuring the new understanding of 'self' of the Nagas. Thus, this study attempts to view this festival not just as merely a performance but as a platform for the establishment of the otherwise loosely assembled historical data bringing forth the ethnic cultural identity of the Nagas.

In Chapter 1 – *Hornbill festival: Performed/ Projected cultures*, a description of the festival itself as a thorough ethnographic exercise has been followed to identify with the construction of identity as differently attempted at by the people themselves and by the planners of the festival. Following an ethnographic approach, my study thus takes into account the different performances, inter-weaving and discovering within it the otherwise suspicious Naga identity. Taking into account the social and economic transformation that has taken place over the years I have analyzed how through such artistic expressions the Nagas are trying to retain its old form while discarding its purely ritualistic context for the benefit of the larger community. The question, what are the characteristics of the Naga cultural identity and how is it manifested

through the performance of the Hornbill festival has been addressed in this chapter. I have actively engaged myself looking at not only the functioning of the dance performances and the representations of the *Morung* system within the festival space but also outside the festival space so as to implement a broader understanding of the cultural context of the festival. Hence, it would be appropriate to say that the understanding of the culture that follows in the forthcoming chapters has been developed through my insider/ outsider perspective.

I have conducted my fieldwork during the Hornbill festival 2010 studying the festival in its naturalistic settings. Focus was on one particular tribal group – the Sangtams<sup>19</sup>, and while doing so I not only followed their performance in the festival but also conducted a more detailed research on their life and performances in terms of times and spaces other than the Hornbill festival. If one is to understand the performance of this festival as a rejuvenation of cultural elements, then it becomes important to assess and analyze the processes that are being followed to bring about this rejuvenation which I have tried to the best of my capability to achieve in this chapter.

In Chapter 2 – *Community consciousness/ Representation of Identity*, the community aspect in this research has been addressed through my ethnographic fieldwork. I am looking at the community in terms of the Nagas as a network of people sharing a common identity that emerges from their shared historical relationship, which is in turn based on the practice and transmission of or engagement with their cultural heritage. The act of revival of the declining age old traditions of the Nagas in the Hornbill festival can itself be looked at as contributing to the opening up of new channels for solidarity and identification. Alberto Melucci (in John Hutchinson & Anthony D. Smith, (eds), 1996) has also talked about revival of ethnicity as a response to a need for collective identity. The ethnic identity of the Nagas has been analyzed in

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<sup>19</sup> The eleven districts in Nagaland are headquarters to the different tribes of Nagaland. The Tuensang district is home to the tribals belonging to Changs, Yimchungers, Khiamniungans, Sangtams, Phoms and partly Sumis of which the Sangtams are one of the major tribes in the district. Earlier there were only eight districts, of which three more districts were formed, of which the ninth district Kiphire was carved out of the Tuensang district of which the Sangtams (Eastern), Yimchungers and Sumis are the predominant tribes, hence, the Sangtams are considered as hailing from Tuensang as well as Kiphire districts. With regard to its language the Sangtam dialect exhibits some variation from region to region, however, for instructive purposes the Longkhim variety is considered as the standard Sangtam dialect. Of their many festivals the most important festival is the Mongmong which is celebrated on the first week of every September. Like other Naga tribes, they are practitioners of Jhum and shifting cultivation, as such their festivals are celebrated to mark sowing, transplanting, harvesting, etc.



terms of the symbolic entities of its cultures and through which I have brought about an understanding of how the identity is being represented.

With the advent of Christianity practice, old beliefs and customs were abandoned by the Nagas. It became improper to relate to age-old traditions even if they are not forgotten and practices of traditional dance performances were performed only on a few cultural occasions. However, the awareness of the heads of the State and cultural policy makers about the reality of the present times has led to the initiation of the Hornbill festival as a platform for the past which needs to be recaptured, used, interpreted, and exploited to resolve the current problems. Thus, more than a means of preserving the past, ethnicity also has the potential for giving direction and providing a group identity during change, to move ahead into the future and embracing modernity by reacquainting themselves with old tradition.

The methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology has been employed for investigation of ethnicity as well as identity through the understanding of the present day social, cultural, economic and political complexities of the Nagas. The hermeneutic aspect concerns the life, world or human experience as it is lived and as such my being as an insider, as a Naga, has shaped my pre-understandings of the meanings or social organizations of the Naga culture. The interpretative process that follows centers on the study of the philosophical base, taking into account the understanding on issues of ethnicity and identity, as well as looking at the performance of identity within the festival space and outside the festival space.

Chapter 3 – *The idea of Heritage: Nation/ State/ Community* is an attempt to bring about a clear understanding on the definitions of heritage and also the idea of heritage as promoted through the Hornbill festival within the community as well as outside. While dealing with the idea of heritage I have also looked into the question of authenticity, as such the validity of the represented Naga culture.

Heritage is being used by the Nagas as an instrument to unite people through the process of outlining a common inheritance from their past and its way of communicating it for their common imagined future. In this sense, the idea of heritage has been dealt with in terms of how it has come to take an important part in the agenda of political groups and organizations and its

contribution towards bringing the sense of identity. The question of the role employed by the State Government in the construction of heritage as well as the images that are being represented through the idea of heritage is also addressed. With regard to authenticity my investigation into – for who is the festival performed, what are the representations that are being showcased and finally who is authorizing what is to be performed are some of the issues included in this chapter.

To address the heritage in question the methodological approach includes an active engagement in the performance of history along with the incorporation of the hermeneutic thought process. The historiography of the cultural heritage of the Nagas in terms of the Nation / State / Community has been studied upon to re-describe and re-interpret what the traces from the past had outlined, exhibited, described and interpreted. And the hermeneutic approach is based on this historiography and data collected from interviews at the Hornbill festival which has shaped my analysis on the idea of heritage.

The studies of relevant texts have been reflected upon along with information gathered from the research participants who were selected on the criteria of those who have lived experiences. Documentation of the processes was conducted for an effective research which has been referred to. Information gathered from field notes, participant observations, visit to the libraries, online researches, in/formal interviews have all proved helpful in my research.

I have referred to the historical records and documents such as journals and publications of the British administrators, anthropologists and missionaries. These have been useful in my study of understanding the cultural traditions that were prevalent in the past for they were the first agents to document the lives of the early Naga tribes. Other additional sources include informal discussions, informal phone interviews, Government publications, newspapers, travel brochures, magazines, videos, journals and written discourses on topics appropriate for this research.

The dissertation will thus attempt to serve as a useful entry point to re-discover and comprehend the characteristic identity of the Nagas, thereby gaining new insights on the influences of cultural identity within the Naga society and outside through the performance of the Hornbill festival.

## CHAPTER 1

### **Hornbill Festival: Performed/ Projected Cultures**

The annual Hornbill festival celebration by the Nagas is very recent and contemporary event with its first celebration in the year 2000. The festival was adopted by the State Government of Nagaland to bring all the festivals of the different Naga tribes together under one roof. It is to be noted that there are sixteen official tribes in Nagaland and each tribe has its own way of maintaining its distinctive cultural traditions and customs through various forms of performing arts which are an important features in this festival. The different tribal communities with their colorful and intricately designed costumes and ornaments make them distinct from the other tribes within the State as well outside.

The following passage as stated by Khekihe Chishi, the Commissioner Secretary of Nagaland Tourism, in a documentary film (2006) on Hornbill festival brings out clearly the reasons for the foundation of the Hornbill festival:

All Nagas with so many tribes have different festivals and even among Nagas apart from our own tribal festival that we have, it's not very much known to the other tribes the reasons why we celebrate certain festivals and so on. Now it is important that the Nagas must learn to understand and know ourselves and therefore we had conceived of possible options for which an opportunity is opened out where all cultural activities of the various different tribes that we have in Nagaland should come together and show a little bit of their own traditional activities that they have over the years brought out from their ancestral periods and this is one ground in which I think we have brought in all the tribes to therefore showcase their own traditional, cultural and handloom, handicraft, all the varied talents of the Nagas in terms of customs and traditions everything put together as a showcasing platform where to start with Nagas begin to learn about ourselves while at the same time we give the opportunity to outside world also to learn about the various aspects of the Naga culture and that's the beginning of the whole program of this hornbill festival and I hope it is proving useful.

The idea of Hornbill festival is thus to bring together all the tribal festivals under one roof as each tribal festival is held at different place and month spreading throughout the year and making it impossible for anyone interested to attend each and every tribal festival. The State Government has termed the Hornbill festival as the 'Festival of Festivals' as it is the culmination of all these festivals (Table 1). Over the years, and, with the recognition of the Hornbill festival as one of the National cultural events by the Government of India, the festival, in the recent years has

achieved an international stature<sup>1</sup>. Thus over the recent years, the festival has integrated the participation of not only of other North Eastern Indian States but also of countries like South Korea, Japan, Myanmar and Thailand.

| District          | Tribe        | Festival    | Period                         |
|-------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| Kohima            | Angami       | Sekrenyi    | February last week             |
| Kohima            | Rengma       | Ngada       | Nov. last week                 |
| Peren             | Zeliang      | Mileinyi    | March 2 <sup>nd</sup> week     |
| Peren             | Kuki         | Mimkut      | January 3 <sup>rd</sup> week   |
| Dimapur           | Kacharis     | Bushu       | January last week              |
| Phek              | Chakhesang   | Sukrenyu    | January 3 <sup>rd</sup> week   |
| Phek              | Pochury      | Yemshe      | October 1 <sup>st</sup> week   |
| Mokokchung        | Ao           | Moatsü      | May 1 <sup>st</sup> week       |
| Mon               | Konyak       | Aoling      | April 1 <sup>st</sup> week     |
| Longleng          | Phom         | Monyu       | April 1 <sup>st</sup> week     |
| Tuensang          | Khiamniungan | Tsokum      | October 1 <sup>st</sup> week   |
| Tuensang          | Chang        | Nkanyu Lem  | July 2 <sup>nd</sup> week      |
| Tuensang/ Kiphiri | Yimchunger   | Metumniu    | August 2 <sup>nd</sup> week    |
| Tuensang/ Kiphiri | Sangtam      | Mongmong    | September 1 <sup>st</sup> week |
| Wokha             | Lotha        | Tokhu Emong | Nov. 1 <sup>st</sup> week      |
| Zunheboto         | Sumi         | Tuluni      | July 2 <sup>nd</sup> week      |

Table 1

With each passing year, the Hornbill festival has shaped itself as a benchmark event for showcasing the diverse traditional cultural identity of the Nagas. This is done through the cooperation and coordination between different stakeholders like the various tribal *hohos*<sup>2</sup>, organizations and the various departments of the State Government. The projected aims of this festival are to:

- revive, protect and preserve the richness and uniqueness of Naga heritage,
- promote tourism in the state, and,
- encourage inter-tribal interaction amongst the Nagas,

It is the aim of this chapter to view this festival as a space for performing identities. In understanding this, an ethnographic account of the Hornbill festival based on field survey and observation during this period was undertaken. In the process of an analytical and ethnographic description this chapter will try to bring about an understanding of the construction of the Naga identity by the Nagas people themselves. The construction of this identity by the various

<sup>1</sup> Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio's welcome address at the inauguration of the Hornbill festival of 2008.

<sup>2</sup> The apex body of each tribe.

stakeholders and planners of the festival is thus to showcase a common unified Naga identity and an uncontested identity.

The Hornbill festival as mentioned earlier, is an annual feature, a mega tourism event that showcase Naga culture and heritage through the performances of the age old traditional customs which otherwise become less relevant or are not practice anymore.

As mentioned in the introduction the Nagas have remained for many centuries in virtual isolation from the historic civilizations of Hinduism and Buddhism, untouched by outside influences they created their own characteristic style of living and ideology. However the establishment of British rule over the Naga Hills by the end of the nineteenth century and eventually the spread of Christianity resulted in the decline of practice of age-old cultural traditions and customs. With such transformations over the years, it is noteworthy to look at how through the artistic expressions such as the Hornbill festival the Nagas are trying to retain their traditional culture and customs but at the same time discarding the ritualistic context associated with these performances. This conscious delinking of the rituals from the performed emblematic display of social and cultural norms requires a systematic discourse on how materials, events and even practices have been deritualized to make them figurative representations of a culture for the benefit of the larger community while resisting the actual religious connotations and meanings of these practices that originally attaches the community to. In order to establish a connection between the traditional practices and the delinking process mentioned above, this chapter would constantly be interspersed by the references to traditional patterns that are automatically referred to when performing at the Hornbill festival.

### **Representation through traditional symbols – Specific study of the Hornbill festival 2010:**

In the official Government of Nagaland tourism calendar, the Hornbill festival forms an important event of representation of identity of Nagaland as a State and Naga as a community. The use of symbols has been one of the tools of identity formation. Similarly, in the case of Nagaland, the festival, while bringing all the Nagas tribes under one umbrella, the hornbill and the *mithun*<sup>3</sup> forms the principal symbols of identification of Naga identity. Representation of

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<sup>3</sup> There is a marked decline in mithun population in Nagaland over the past years. The decline is because of the

such symbols can be seen through the publication of information, advertisement, and articles on the festivals which is published weeks before the festival starts. The article entitled *The Great Hornbill and Its Significance* (Purakhu Angami, 2010, p.7) is one such publication which depicts the importance of the hornbill as a symbol of valor, heroism, bravery and fame of a Naga warrior. To further illustrate, the article pointed out that:

It is the general beliefs of the Nagas that if a common man or cowards happen to shoot Hornbill bird, it will fall down tail first and spoil its quill feathers in order not to let the common man use it but if a brave or famous warrior shoot a hornbill bird as preferred, it will fall down head first so that its quill feathers remain intact. That is why hornbill feathers are valued for ceremonial head dresses and adorned in a man's hat and headgear and worn by only Anghs, chieftains, and famous warriors as a sign of valor, heroism, bravery and fame.

The festival is thus a tribute to the Great Indian Hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*) which is a much admired bird for its striking double white with black stripe feathers and grandeur. In the Nagas social and cultural life, the importance of the hornbill is represented and reflected in various folklores, music and dances of the Naga tribals. Thus, the hornbill feather and the term 'hornbill' when adopted as an official symbol and name of the festival added a sense of legitimacy to the whole idea of Nagaland and Naga's identity. The hornbill feather has been recognized as the symbol of Hornbill festival (ibid). Picking up a copy of the schedule of events that were to be performed the entire week one can noticed the symbol of two hornbill feathers enclosing within this was the symbol of a *mithun's* head on top, below this was a traditional pair of crossed Naga spears, and further down a shield with a cross on it (Figure 1).

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destruction of its natural habitat due to jhum cultivation, deforestation, and also because of slaughter of the animal for meat. The scientists at the National Research Centre on Mithun (established by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research in 1988 in the State of Nagaland) have raised concerns that the mithun is presently in a vulnerable position and may face possible extinction if special attention is not paid to conserve this species without further delay.



Figure 1

The *mithun* (*Bos frontalis*) is mainly available in the four North-Eastern States of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur. This animal has played a vital role in terms of social customs among the traditional Nagas rather than a part of livestock production system.<sup>4</sup> Although elaborate religious ceremonies that attached with *mithun* sacrifice have declined over the years, nonetheless this animal is still valued for its socio-cultural significance. It is this socio-cultural significance that the *mithun* has been officially declared as the State animal and its picture used as the official logo of the State Government of Nagaland.

The history of the tribal Naga villages was one where frequent raids among enemy villages were rampant, for this purpose the spear and the shield was an important component of a Naga warrior's possessions, their chief weapons of offence were the *dao*<sup>5</sup> and a spear. The shields are made of either leather from the dried hides of *mithun* or woven bamboo, the shield woven out of bamboo are lighter and stronger and so preferred for battle, while the heavier shields made of

<sup>4</sup> The mithun is used as a ceremonial animal in the traditional Naga culture; as such consumption of its meat was not a regular practice but is had only during traditional festivals. Often when a mithun is to be sacrificed the tribal's followed a series of ceremonies and certain intermediate feasts were given before a man can proceed to the mithun sacrifice which lasts for several days. The possession of mithun is a sign of prosperity and its sacrifice adds to the honor of the giver of the feast in the village. (J. P. Mills, 1973, p. 257) Once done with the sacrifice he wins the coveted right of wearing certain cloths and ornaments and of decorating his house in a particular way, and the skulls of the sacrificed animals hanging outside his house was believed to bring prosperity not only to him but to his heirs who inherit them after him. (ibid, p. 57). In the tribal Ao tradition the significance of mithun sacrifice is also evident when a woman wears on her head one hornbill feather for every mithun her husband has sacrificed and one for every mithun her father has sacrificed in her name before she was married.

<sup>5</sup> The dao is a traditional Naga knife. (cf. J. P. Mills, 1973, p. 59) The dao is an indispensable tool among the tribal Nagas which was used during wars to cut off the heads of his enemies, it is also an everyday use tool by which he cuts trees, clears light jungle, cuts house-posts and carves them, pares down cane for lashings, makes bamboo slips for tying, etc.



leather were typically used for dances such as the war dances which were performed by warriors during festive occasions. In the present day both shield and spear are used only at performances of traditional dances. Besides, traditional items such as these are often presented as gifts for esteemed guests in many Naga functions or use these for display as decorative items at their homes. With the development of selling cultural artifacts for marketing strategies there also exist the reproductions of these cultural motifs which are marketed as souvenirs for tourists.

Christine Ballengee-Morris (2002, p. 233) talks about how visual culture through its multiple formats represents the dynamic and interactive relationship of history, heritage, tradition, cultures, and politics. The illustrated representation (see Figure 1) of traditionally accepted icons which had played an important role in the Naga's history can be observed as imbued with symbolic meanings that represents Naga's cultural traditions. However, it must be noted that the deep influence of Christianity in Naga's society has also brought in change and modification in symbols representation. The addition of the cross (Christian symbol) over the shield (traditional symbol) is such one modification where Naga or Nagaland identity is an infusion of tradition and Christianity.<sup>6</sup> Thus co-exist with none compromising the other. The significance of such symbolic representations can be realized in all its essence if one understands the cultural history of the Nagas and for which the Hornbill festival is an effort to project this through the performances of each tribe and the place, the Heritage village complex, in itself becomes a showcase of each and every aspects of a traditional Naga life.

### **The Hornbill Festival 2010: An ethnographic account**

The Hornbill festival is a seven days event (1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> December) where every aspect of the Naga traditional ethos is showcased within the confines of the performance arena which has been officially declared as the Naga Heritage village complex and has been permanently created for the celebration of Hornbill festival. Each of the Nagas tribes with their experience of its history, tradition, and culture brings forth a varied range of performances throughout the festival. To bring about an authentic character to the festival the organizers each year presents cultural troupes selected from a particular village of each tribe to perform at the Hornbill festival. It is to

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<sup>6</sup> As told by K. T. Thomas Rengma, this symbol of traditional shield with the Christian cross was added by the Commissioner Secretary of Tourism.



be noted here that each Naga tribe belongs to one of the eleven districts in Nagaland, and each of these districts are further categorized into sub divisions consisting of towns or villages. The number of these villages however varies from one district to another. Villages of those who perform at the Hornbill festival keep on changing. For example (to elaborate this further) the dance troupe of Sangtam tribe from Chimonger village had performed in 2009, while Longkhim town performed in 2010, and the coming year would be the turn of another village. Dance troupes from each tribe are thus chosen on a rotation basis<sup>7</sup>.

The seven days event started with the inauguration of the Hornbill festival on the first day as prepared by the Tourism Department; the second day of the festival was slotted as 'North East Day' and was organized by the North East Zone Cultural Center (NEZCC)<sup>8</sup> of Nagaland. On this day folk dances, music and traditional games of the seven North Eastern States were performed<sup>9</sup>. From the third till the seventh day the Art and Cultural Department of the Government of Nagaland took charge for the presentation of all the Naga cultural performances. Table 2 indicates a list of all those who had performed at the Hornbill festival 2010.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Yimmongdong Cultural Club, Chungtia Village. (Ao)       | 9. Akhegwo Cultural Troupe, (Pochury)             |
| 2. Chozuba Village Cultural Troupe. (Chakesang)            | 10. Kasha Village Cultural Troupe, (Rengma)       |
| 3. Mech Kachari Cultural Troupe (Kachari)                  | 11. Yehemi Cultural Society, (Sumi)               |
| 4. Wannong Cultural Club, Keangpang. (Konyak)              | 12. Renga Cultural Club, Ngwalwa (Zeliang)        |
| 5. Kuki Cultural Troupe, Athibung. (Kuki)                  | 13. Alder Club, Khonoma (Angami)                  |
| 6. Lotsu Cultural Club (Lotha)                             | 14. Waoshu Village Dancing Society (Chang)        |
| 7. Mangko Cultural Troupe, Shiponger Village. (Yimchunger) | 15. Kingnyu Village Cultural Troupe (Khamniungan) |
| 8. Sangvi Cultural Women Society, (Sangtam)                | 16. Yongnyah Cultural Club (Phom)                 |

Table 2

Throughout the five days of cultural performances, the folk songs and dances practiced by each

<sup>7</sup> Thomas, K. T., <ktthomasreng@yahoo.co.in> 2010. Hello again. 16 September. Email to: therila thonger <therila\_t@hotmail.com>

<sup>8</sup> The North East Zone Cultural Centre is one of the seven Zonal Cultural Centers of India, its main function to encourage documentation of the various forms of folk and tribal music and dances of the North East Indian states, and set up ways and means to sustain the various art forms that are disappearing.

<sup>9</sup> The participating seven States on this day included Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Sikkim, and Tripura.

of these mentioned tribes were showcased with “Roots and Shoots” as the main theme.

The 60-acres Heritage village ground consists of sixteen *Morungs*<sup>10</sup> (the Naga Dormitory) representing the sixteen tribes serving as the museum space for tourist/ visitors. Further below from here is the main performance arena which is located away from this individual space to the more common open-air theatre. The cultural performances at the Hornbill festival takes place within a large circular area at the center of the open-air theatre which is constructed on the hill slopes. This image of stage is strikingly similar to that of the Ancient Greek theatre at Delphi, Greece. In the Greek theatre, the buildings called as ‘theatron’ consisted of three principal elements – the orchestra in the centre for performances, the skene (tent or hut) behind the orchestra which was used as the backstage area, and rising from the orchestra were tiers of benches build up on the side of a hill for the audience. Like the Ancient Greek theatre, the performance space at the Hornbill festival is such that the audiences could see each other, see the performers, as well as the surrounding countryside. The Heritage village complex at Kisama is placed along the Japfü range<sup>11</sup> and from here one can have a panoramic view of the surrounding Naga Hills and villages. The only difference would be the absence of the skene or the backstage area which instead houses the sitting area for the chief guests and officials (VVIP Rostrum).

The spaces for the showcase of cultural performances can be understood as:

- i) the main/ common performance space at the open-air theatre, and
- ii) the smaller, relatively more contained and culturally specific spaces at the *Morung* for each tribes.

The regular pattern that the performances follow is such that once the performances is over for the day cultural troupes head back to their respective *Morung* where they continue performing for tourists/ visitors within this individual space. Hence the performances itself may be further divided into two categories:

- i) The performance that is staged for a larger audience and accommodating more performers. This is held in the main/ common performance space at the open-air theatre.
- ii) The performance that is staged for smaller audience and performed by a single

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<sup>10</sup> Explained in introduction, p. 1 n.3

<sup>11</sup> The Japfu Peak is the second highest peak in Nagaland and stands 3048 meters above sea level it is about 15 km south of Kohima.

tribe only. This is staged within the confines of the *Morungs*.

The organizers of the Hornbill festival chose Roots and Shoots with the intention to put across the idea of “from old to new, or from past to future”<sup>12</sup>. This idea can be viewed in what Manning Nash (in John Hutchinson & Anthony D. Smith, (eds), 1996, p. 27) described tradition as that which is the past of a culture; a past is thought to have continuity, a presence, and a future. To him while tradition is chiefly concerned with the past and hence backward looking it also has a forward, future dimension (ibid). What can be understood here is that the Naga’s are going back to their roots not as much to dwell in their past, but to remind themselves of their traditional identities and move towards the future.

The changing pattern from tradition to modernity in the Naga society has resulted in the erosion and disappearance of its cultural practices and customs as they could not hold both Christian cultures along with their traditional value system. With the spread of Christianity and modern education, there declined one of the most significant institutions found among the entire Naga tribes *viz* the *Morung* system. As a result qualities of individuals as well as society have loosened, and in the name of modernity the strict rules and disciplines that were once adhered to have disappeared. In K.T. Thomas Rengma’s words<sup>13</sup>

Once you lose your originality and your roots, you are alienated and with alienation comes a lot of problems like drug addiction, drinking problems, and so many ills in the society which is also because we are feeling rootless.

Thus in the context of change in a society where identity of a group is challenge, rediscovering one’s roots is seen as a way of dealing with the challenge of modernity and change. Here the past is an introspection and serve as guidance for directions. According to Joshua Fishman (in John Hutchinson & Anthony D. Smith. (eds), 1996, pp. 65, 66):

Current needs and problems are always a factor in ethnicity. The past always needs to be recaptured, used, interpreted, and exploited to resolve current problems. Thus, ethnicity is more than a means of preserving the past; it also has the potential for giving direction and providing group identity during change.

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<sup>12</sup> Personal interview with K. Kughazhe Yeputhomi on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2010, at the VIP Rostrum of Heritage village complex, Kisama. Yeputhomi is the Addl. Director & HOD of Art and Culture, Nagaland

<sup>13</sup> Personal interview with K.T. Thomas on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2010, at the Tourism Information centre, Heritage village complex, Kisama. Thomas is the Joint Director of Tourism, Nagaland.

The Hornbill festival's inaugural ceremony commenced after a traditional welcome of the Chief Guests and other official dignitaries by means of yelling and yodeling followed by beating of log drums<sup>14</sup> in their respective *Morungs*. Every year a tribal guest of honor is invited from a particular tribe for the customary traditional blessing which was honored by Buwang Konyak the Angh of Hongphoi village from Mon district, given below is a translation:

The Anghs of Konyak have been invited to bless the Hornbill festival for which I am here on behalf of the Konyak and the Konyak Anghs. I extend my happiness and gratitude to all the officers and the people for keeping the desired peace and harmony, there was a time when we did not see each other, we had no knowledge of the existence of the others, however, today we live as brother/friends and as one people just like the mixture of sand and cement for which I am surprised and happy. Unfortunately today both day and night we live life just like biting chilies (signifying bloodshed and disharmony), do not be jealous, do not envy, do not hurt and kill other for no valid reason or without trace of extremity, live a blameless life, a respectful and in peaceful coexistence as in the water the fish lives. These are the dreams of the Konyak community on whose behalf I convey.

It is to be noted that for the first time the Hornbill inauguration ceremony was broadcasted live on a National television.<sup>15</sup> According to the Governor of Nagaland, Shri. Nikhil Kumar, the Hornbill event is viewed as crucial in projecting the State to the rest of the country. Moreover, he also emphasized on the significance of the day which coincided with the 47<sup>th</sup> Statehood day of Nagaland (1<sup>st</sup> December 1963). To him the State of Nagaland and the festival in particular:

The State is a wonderful showcase of the rich culture, heritage and spirit of the people of Nagaland. The week long Hornbill festival is a celebration of the vibrant culture of the people of Nagaland and it is just fitting that we gathered here today on the statehood day to mark the commencement of the festivities. This festival is one of its kind and happily it helps to breaking new grounds and growing in stature with each passing year... Our state maybe considered small but in terms of cultural diversity and richness it is second to none. It is inhabited by many tribes and communities each of who has its own unique and vivid culture and this contributes to the treasure trove of culture that the State of Nagaland is, in fact each and every region and districts of the State draws attention to itself because of its cultural uniqueness. The Hornbill festival is a commendable attempt to capture this very cultural vibrancy and diversity and showcase it in all its splendor to the whole country.

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<sup>14</sup> The log drum is another important heritage which is being maintained by the Nagas again found among most of the Naga tribes. This is a huge log usually ranging between 30 – 40 feet long which is slit along one side and partially hallowed out through the length of the log one end of which is carved out to resemble a head, using wooden strikers the boys in the morung line up along it and beats the drum for reasons such as alarming the villagers when enemies approach, to celebrate the taking of a head, or at times for mere pleasure during some festivals (cf. J. P. Mills. 1973, pp. 76-79). The drum is placed under a roof to protect it from the weather and is usually close to the village morung, while some tribes house this log drum inside the morung. Such representations were also found at the Hornbill festival, the Sangtams had roofed a medium sized log drum next to their morung.

<sup>15</sup> The media officials of Doordarshan Kendra from Guwahati had come over to Kisama for this purpose.

The festival commenced with the cultural exposition of performances by cultural troupes and *Colours and Rhythms of Nagaland* as the theme. In this exposition, simultaneous performances by two different cultural troupes was held, and this was followed by the next two in a continuous pattern which highlighted the various tribals' traditional costumes and their customary traditional practices. In this performance, each of the Naga tribes came with their repertoire of a series of dances and songs that were traditionally attached to festivals, ritual ceremonies, and feasts of merit such as dances and songs that were originally performed to celebrate during their war victories, hunting, or harvesting. Some of these performances are also based on their traditional folk stories, songs about love, joy, sorrow, and also dances imitating the movements of animals.

While the above discussion indicates the prevalent themes on which performances were based, however, the traditional customs, beliefs and ritualistic connotations of such performances varies among the tribes. Some of the presentations at the inaugural ceremony mentioned subsequently will give the idea about how the cultural heritage is being revived, represented and preserved thereby becoming the showcasing of the Naga identity.

**i. The Hornbill dance:**

A characteristic feature of all the tribal Naga dances is that there is less use of the upper body and more movements of the legs such as hops, jumps, skips, and leaps which are used in an erect posture while following a rhythm. In the dances the body is clearly divided in the upper and lower halves. While the footwork's hops, leaps and the jumps are the agility and coordination of the lower part of the body, the upper body initiates only very small and restrictive movements which help the upper body to coordinate with the lower half.

The Zeliang's Herieliem or Hornbill dance movements follow a precise defined stepping maintaining the same tempo throughout the performance. The female performers in a straight line and males in another facing each other begins with hops from the right foot to the left in the same place. While the female continues this movements with their hands swinging backwards and forwards, the men starts stepping forward towards the female performers with their hands raised upwards, taking a full turn to the right with weight on the left foot after every few hops

forward. The males then hop back to their first position and the females follow the same pattern when moving towards the male performers. The performer's upper body and the head movements appeared heavy so as to represent the heavy beak of the hornbill bird<sup>16</sup>. This dance is performed with reference to one of their folklore about a man who transformed himself into a hornbill. Thus a tribute to the transformation.

## ii. Singing in praise of the Hornbill festival:

Like most Naga tribes the Sangtam Naga as well used songs as a means to express their joy, sorrow, times of difficulties, victory over their enemies, etc. Apart from these they also sang praises using the names of brave warriors, chief and important festivals which is a tradition that is practiced even today. Performing at the inaugural ceremony the Sangtams sang in praise of the Hornbill festival. In a semi circle they held each other's hands swinging them back and forth, at the same time in a simple forward and backward stepping motion moved sideways while maintaining the circular pattern. Given below are the translated song sung at the occasion.

*Ohe o helo helo (2 times) ohe o helo o'helo he (2 times)* [this is repeated in each of the following lines]

*Nüru abüm künyangseh khüychore*

We happily welcome you all

*Khingkurü Governor nüro zehcho künyangre*

We are happy for the presence of Governor's lady wife

*Nagaland Governer nüro zehcho künyangre,*

We are happy for the presence of Nagaland Governor

*Nagaland Chief Minister nüro zehcho künyangre,*

We are happy for the presence of Nagaland Chief Minister

*Nüru ro zehcho künyangre*

We honor your presence

*Hiba künyang thsüdila ro zehchehcho künyangre*

We are happy that you could grace this occasion

*Hiba Hornbill muchangkatashi*

Until this Hornbill festival ends

*Tsingrangbanu isa akang müwajung*

May God bless all of us

*Nagaland Hornbill la ro zeh abüm*

Come all and join the Hornbill celebration

*Iru abümmu künyang sehnu khüychore*

We welcome you all

*Nagaland Hornbill hi tsü langnyeh mongyale*

Everyone is enjoying this Hornbill festival

<sup>16</sup> The most distinctive feature of the hornbills is the heavy bill which is supported by powerful neck muscles as well as by the fused vertebrae.

*Nagaru adirü*  
 Naga's leaders  
*Nagaru adirü khyang aningse jung*  
 Give praise to our Naga leaders  
*Aronung kang*  
 In the coming year  
*Isa adümong khyang kutsup yohbüjung*  
 May we all be blessed with good/ long life.

### iii. The tribal war dances and the Feast of Merit:

The Naga's with a long history of war and head hunting finds ways to re/present this aspect through the tribal war dances practiced by the Naga tribes. Showcasing the war dances were the Lotha and Chang cultural troupes. The Lotha performers presented the *Tssok – Cho* warrior dance, this dance was performed to narrate how their ancestors during raids had in order to confuse their enemies diverged their footprints to different directions to ensure that their enemy does not follow them while they retreat to their native village after taking as many heads as possible. The Chang tribal performers each holding a shield and a *dao*, the war dance performed relates to the warriors vigilance for war. On the third day the Chang cultural troupe also presented a drama enacting the warriors raiding a village and taking heads, the drama also shows the war dance performed after returning to their village as their wives brings them wine to celebrate the victory.

The feast of merit is another traditional features which is most common to the early Naga tribes but the purpose and celebration of the feast may varied among the different tribes. This feast was generally offered by rich men and carried out with extravagance, ceremonies, and killing of animals for sacrifice and followed by a feast for the whole village. The Yimchunger tribe performed the *Aneo Jikhi* or the feast of merit to celebrate their name and fame. The feast continues for days with an increasing tempo of ceremonies which finally culminated in the sacrifice of a ritualized *mithun*. However, during their performance at the Hornbill festival, a replica *mithun* as prop to represent the *mithun* sacrifice was brought over.

Performances at the festival illustrates the way of life of their ancestors and hence it becomes a representation that tries to brings out most of the traditional aspects while discarding its ritualistic context which was once strictly adhered to by their ancestors. Apart from folk songs

and dances there were performances on other days where lifestyles that were in practice by the early Nagas- like the demonstrations of fishing, cotton spinning, fire making, traditional customs and practices involved in a marriage proposal, etc, and indigenous games-were also presented to showcase identity of the Nagas.

### **Presented performances on Day 3 of the Hornbill festival 2010:**

The third day of the festival was when the actual performances by the Naga tribes commenced at the open-air theatre which was divided into two sessions. The first half of the cultural performances started at 10:00 am and ended at 1:20 pm. After a short break for refreshments for the performers at the *Morungs*, the second session started immediately at 1:45 pm and continues till 3:15 pm. The performance for each of these cultural items was allotted for fifteen minutes to all participating tribes. Thus from the third day till the last of the Hornbill festival performances and within this allotted time the sixteen tribes showcases every aspect of their folk dance, music, culture and traditions.

Some of the cultural presentations that were presented by the various cultural troupes on the third day are given below. The performances showcased projecting the traditional life, festivals and rituals, customs and values that were prevalent among their ancestors. These representations of the cultural on stage can be viewed as taking an initiative for educating, sharing and performing as well for audiences to re/assert their identity.

In the morning session the Yimchunger (Mango cultural troupe, Shiponger village) presented a drama called *Thüri Thsükhirik* (Ritual of Secret or Stealth head hunting). The drama had all male performers depicting their ancestor's practice of head hunting and the ritual that follows when heads were taken. The performers enacted a village raid and the practice of whoever takes the first hit at the slain enemy takes the head and the second, third, fourth and fifth takes the right arm, left arm, right leg and left leg respectively. After taking their prized possession they head back to their village where they beat the log drum to celebrate their victory in the battle followed by yelling and yodeling. This is followed by the war dance where each performer holding a shield on left and a spear or dao on the other dance with steps that consisted of taping the inner side of the shield by raising the left foot for this purpose (and is also the only time their foot is



raised). Here the performers' feet is always in place with high (high on the ball of the foot) movements and their right hand which holds the spear or dao are raised upwards and down along with the rhythm of their feet.

The Butterfly dance was performed by the Sangtam (Sangvi cultural women society) cultural troupe with twenty six women performers. The performer entered the performance space forming a pattern similar to the English alphabet letter 'W' while holding each other's hands. The hand movement swings forward and back following the rhythm of their foot movements which consisted of walking one step at a time with forward low steps on right and left foot. The step movements were followed throughout their performance despite change in patterns. On reaching the center stage, transition of pattern began when the first performer (refer as P1) in line on the right takes the lead and turns left, the counter clockwise move is followed by the rest to form a spiral pattern all the while facing towards the center. When the P1 reached the center point of the spiral, the last performer (refer as P26) of the line then takes the lead by taking  $\frac{3}{4}$  turn to her left and follows the same pattern of the spiral, and this is the only time that the performers are facing the opposite of each other. Finally P1 takes the lead again to assume their earlier pattern of 'W' and walks away from the performance space. The origin of this dance has been traced back to one of their folk tale about how men had become materialistic with no love and care for each other. Their ancestors set out in search of peace when they observed the love, care and beauty of the butterfly and from which their ancestors learned the lesson of love and care. According to H. Setsala Sangtam (personal interview on 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2010) the pattern formations is to represent the butterfly, and the song sung along with the performance is a mention of their awe and admiration for the butterfly.

The Rengma (Kasha village cultural troupe) tribe presented a popular indigenous game known as *Kenswugi* which is played during festivals by their ancestors. In this game, a spear is positioned upright on the ground and a piece of wood is placed on the tip of the spear for young men to take turns to remove the wood from the spear by jumping and kicking it with both legs at a time. This sport is played for entertainment as well as to assess the strength and vigor of the men.

Another indigenous game for competition is the 'greased pole climbing' held during the refreshment break, and organized by Youth Resources & Sports of Nagaland. Here six finely

shaved bamboos (around 20 -25 ft high) greased with lard had a ribbon tied at the top where competitors have to climb up and retrieve this ribbon. The participants are males only with two person in a team. While the lard oil makes it harder to climb and thus participants resorted to use of ash to remove grease and ease the climb. Though this game is played during festivals by the ancestors, however, the popularity of this sport has enabled it to survive over generations and is still played today on many occasions as a form of general entertainment.

The Chakesang (Chozuba village cultural troupe) tribe being an agrarian society and where much of their activities are related to agriculture represent their community by performing a harvest drama. In this drama, the community was divided in groups of those men who went to cut the grains (rice) straws from the field and the other group consisted of strong men whose job is to thresh the grain. After the straw have been collected and covered with mats weaved out of bamboo, strong men used their bare feet to trample/ jump over the crops to separate the grains from the straw. Finally after the straws are cleared the grains are transferred in baskets which are then passed around from one person to another to the other group of men who separates the grain from the inedible chaffs using a winnowing fan made of bamboo matting (the shape resembles like a transfer scoop without handle). By the end of the day the grains are then bagged and the community disperses back to their home. *woven*

The hornbill dance movements of the Ao (Yimmongdong cultural club, Chungtia village) consisting of hops with steps forward on left first, followed by right and end with weight on both feet forward and followed during transitions of patterns. Forming a circle at first while facing the back of each other, the steps consisted of taking small jumps forward on left foot but right foot steps back and end with both legs together backwards. To signal a change in pattern the performers lift their right foot up and back three times after which they move forward towards the center to form a smaller circle and then back. Breaking the circle the performers then danced in couples facing each other taking steps side right first and side left and end with both feet in the center. The entire dance consisted of increasing as well as decreasing tempo while maintaining successive yet different steps throughout the performance. These active dance movements with constant shift in patterns is a representation to imitate the male hornbill trying to protect the female hornbill when laying eggs, the male hornbill keeps an eye on his family hopping from one tree branch to another in the hope of scaring away intruders or diverting attention.

At the end of the performances for the day the cultural troupes headed back to their respective *Morungs*. Here some performances were also presented for the tourists/ visitors, the Semas demonstration of the traditional pounding of rice, or the Sangtams singing of traditional folk songs is such examples. For visitors the cultural performances is not all, other than the visit to the *Morungs*, there is also the World War II museum which was inaugurated in 2008 within the Heritage village which immortalizes the famous Battle of Kohima.<sup>17</sup> Next to the open-air theatre is the bamboo pavilion<sup>18</sup> and below the Heritage village is the Kids Carnival for children with different games and competitions. In the evening at the Heritage Bamboo Hall of the Heritage village, the ‘Hornbill Ball’ was organized for the first time as a charity towards the Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund for the Leh flood victims.<sup>19</sup>

### **The festival space for re/presenting Naga cultural heritage:**

One of the most prominent structures in most of the Naga villages is the dormitory system or *Morung* where the young men sleep and keep vigil at night against enemies. This dormitory or bachelors house is one of the most significant institutions found among the Naga tribal societies and is considered as a fundamental basis of the Naga cultural heritage. It was the place around which social, religious, educational and cultural activities of the young people revolved. It is an institution where they learn the ancestral folksongs and folktales, myths and legends, war tactics and strategies, morals and family values. In other words, it is the crux of social organization. In the present context, the heritage village presents a stimulation of this institution. To take a tour of the heritage village would give one the feel of a real village scene where exhibits of traditional architecture of traditional homes or male dormitories (*Morung*) of all the sixteen tribes. These structures were constructed with locally available materials that were used down the ages such as bamboo, wood, thatch, palm leaves, slate, etc. and built by the tribal *hoho*’s with the effort to give representation to an aspect of the lifestyle of their forefathers in the closest possible way.

<sup>17</sup> The Battle of Kohima was fought between 4<sup>th</sup> April to 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1944, and is also mentioned in many books. The importance of this battle in the Second World War has been observed to be ‘the turning point in the war with Japan’.

<sup>18</sup> Explanation on bamboo pavilion, see p. 42.

<sup>19</sup> The Leh flood incident on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2010 in Leh, Ladakh (Jammu & Kashmir). The city of Leh located at around 3500 meters above sea level usually receives very little rainfall, however on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2010, the cloudburst and heavy downpour (with 51.3 mm it has been recorded as the highest rainfall over 24 hours) resulted in flash floods and mud slides over the region. The death toll rose to 130 and more than 500 missing as (Anon. 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2010. *The Hindu*)

These traditional huts are built at the festival venue, presenting themselves as museums of sorts. Each of the structures is different from the others and can be distinguished at an instant by the traditional embellishment of hunting trophies and wood carvings on its doorway such as the skulls of *mithun* along with other animal skulls and wood carvings of human heads which symbolizes the ancient head hunting practices of the Nagas. Besides, there are also carvings of *daos*, spears and shields symbolizing how in the ancient times these war implements were kept at the *Morungs* for safe keeping. The emblems displayed thus clearly signify and informed both the local Naga population and the tourists of the characteristics of a particular tribe. For the tourist from outside the State this become a space where the museumized display helps in building the picture of Naga identity and culture, adding to the total attraction and envisioned utility of the festival.

Entering each of the tribal huts one encounters presentations and displays of different sorts. While some had “frozen in time” display of traditional furniture, household equipments, tools and other utilitarian items, few others used this as a kitchen to cater to the needs of tourists who are ready to have a taste of that particular tribe’s cuisine. Few of the *Morungs* was also used to place the traditional log drums – yet another important feature of a tribal Naga life. The cultural troupes in their respective traditional huts tried to keep up a constant show for the visitors by singing and dancing, as well as performing various other traditional activities of their ancestors.<sup>20</sup> The Sangtam women folks gathered outside their *Morungs* and sang songs for visitors passing by. Most of the songs sung when performing outside their *Morungs* were “thank you” songs. These songs are traditionally sung while the performers stand in a closed intertwined circle facing towards the center. Each performer holds the other two, one to her right and the other on her left such that their arms crossing each other forms a crisscross pattern, and making movement with their upper body by moving to the front and back.

The song sung when some official dignitaries had come visiting the Sangtam *Morung* is as follow:

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<sup>20</sup> Performances other than singing and dancing would include enactments of elders passing down words of wisdom to the younger generations in the *Morung*, depictions of a feast in process, women folks grinding rice, etc, the performances of such varieties depends upon what the cultural troupes decide to perform at a particular year by each of the tribe.

*Ihru lümcho abüm nünu lümcho thsang*

May your wishes reflect our wishes

*Nünu sureh lang nüba zehsochong*

May your leadership grow stronger

*Ihru yücho nü yangli lide mutronungba*

May our nation stand united with your leadership

*Chünye iru nüjingde yahre*

Today we stand by your feet (also would mean we trust in your leadership)

Each tribal performer is fully clad in traditional costumes. A brief description of such ceremonial costumes that serves as the surface markers for tribal identification. The Traditional Sangtam ceremonial costume consists of mekhla (sarong or skirt like which is wrapped around the waist) and shawl which was traditionally wrapped around the chest (nowadays many tribes have begun to wear these shawl which is stitched like a blouse) both of which are woven and worn mostly by the women. These have varied types of intricately designed patterns and color which is unique to a particular tribe. Moreover, within a tribe there exist differences in color and design patterns as according to their villages and clans thus distinguishing one clan or village from the other.

The ornaments such as earrings, necklaces and headgears of the women are comparatively lighter than that of the men's which are more complicated and each of which <sup>is</sup> are unique to a particular tribe. As used by their ancestors, a Sangtam woman wears a simple red headband with yellow braided designs woven around this band which have small red flower shaped designs attached to the band which are usually made of dried wild orchids. On the other hand, a typical Sangtam male's headgear is made out of bear's hair neatly bound on to a piece of cane which is bent into a circle to fit the wearer and this frame is adorned with the hornbill feather. This is usually worn only when dancing. The Sangtams like most other tribes have other more elaborate head dresses which were taboos for the ordinary men to wear as these were worn only by their clan chief and also by men of wealth.

Other ceremonial ornaments also included loin cover, sash, and decorative arm and leg bands which are worn by both men and women. For performances of war dances the male also carries the spear, shield and *dao*. The Sangtam male had a *dao* holder tied around the back of his waist, holding a *dao* whose edge of the handle is adorned with goat hair dyed in red. Originally, in the earlier days of the ancestors the handle of the *dao* was adorned by the blood soaked hair from a

females head taken as a trophy during the village raids. (personal interview with A. K. Sangtam on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2010). It is noteworthy to mention that Naga men's costumes were more elaborately adorned than the women. One reason for this could be from the fact that frequent war, raids, hunting were practiced and carried out only by men, and whoever is involved in bringing victory at such events were given the right to wear certain clothing and ornaments which adds to his status in the village. This aspect has also been explained by J. P. Mills (1973, pp. 44, 45) when he observed that:

[...] the true Ao hat is a sort of skull-cap of bear skin [...] often ornamented with pairs of small boar's tushes arranged to form circles. It is worn by elderly men who have taken heads. [...] The old custom was that a man was entitled to wear two hornbill feathers for each occasion on which he got first spear into an enemy, one for each successful raid in which he took part, and one for each time he did the [mithun] sacrifice. Nowadays he can wear three as soon as he has brought the right to wear a warrior's ornaments, and can add one for each [mithun] sacrifice he performs, and one for each Government expedition in which he takes part.

It is also interesting to note that some the ornaments that are worn entails with it a set of strict laws and ceremonies that are to be performed, which were adhered to by all who wore them. According to A. K. Sangtam<sup>21</sup> some other ornaments were considered taboo unless worn after ritual sanctification and certain formal procedures. According to his explanation to a pair of tiger's teeth which was worn by another elderly man on the neck, he said that this piece of necklace is to be worn only by distinguished men, and was not to be touched after eating ginger. He also explained that if one is wearing this then one has to abstain from sexual activity and stay ritually clean for six days. It is therefore clear that the costumes in itself becomes symbolic of their social customs and traditions that was once followed. While performing at the Hornbill festival these can be viewed as a representation of an aspect of their traditions although the ritualistic contexts are discarded.

Though traditions have been followed by their ancestors with regard to the hornbill feathers on headgear (refer to J. P. Mills quote above) however at Hornbill festival or any other cultural events or festivals the use of the feather no longer remains a taboo. The ritual and taboo

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<sup>21</sup> A. K. Sangtam had accompanied the Sangvi cultural group. He is presently a Gaonbura at Longkhim. A gaonbura is usually an elder from a khel or quarter who is elected by members of a village community for a certain period; he is given the right to wear a woolen red shawl as a symbol of his rank and authority. The Gaonbura along with the village council settles quarrels and disputes according to their tribal customary practices, thus the gaonbura is responsible for all matters relating to law and order in the village by acting as a court of justice.

This is important change and needs to be explained more.

associated with certain ornaments to be worn only by warriors, distinguished men, or by those who have taken heads or through inheritance from parents to children are nowadays disregarded and can be worn by anyone who has brought the right<sup>22</sup>. In the modern context, these ornaments are generally for safe keeping or display at their homes with the exception of occasions like tribal festivals.

However, it is also observed that certain taboo still exists regardless of anything ritual, such as the wearing of the shawls which are worn only by older men within the Naga society are taboo for women, if found wearing then penalty has to be paid to the tribal/ village council concerned.<sup>23</sup> Another taboo I had encountered recently during a visit to my native village (Old Mangakhi) in November, 2010 to attend the village council's 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary where my father (Sejungmong Sangtam) was to give an exhortation speech. During this function, my father was gifted a spear and a *dao*. I learned that these gifts (spear and *dao*) were not to be touched by women the first time they are brought back home until the receiver holds it first. Such taboos still hold value within the Naga society in the name of traditions.

what is this, needs explanation

The traditional costumes of Sangtam men and women are mentioned below with each of their symbolic meanings:

#### Male costumes –

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Rahra (Sash):             | It is used as a symbol of bloodshed during head-hunting.   |
| Kiicha (Headgear):        | It represents the hair of human head.  |
| Shunyah-hah (Boar tusks): | Among the wild animals boar is considered as one of the most alert and ferocious animals. The tusk of the boar represents the cutting of human head. |
| Bikhum (Armlet):          | Elephant is considered to be the biggest and the strongest and the use of elephant tusks symbolizes the biggest and the strongest.                   |

<sup>22</sup> The right to wear certain ornaments are brought, for this the person concerned approaches the village council for his wish to acquire certain rights, and the council confers him the right to wear them once he pays a certain amount of money. This also applies to the dress, where certain shawls are meant to be worn only after attaining a certain age, however, even before attaining that age he can buy his right to wear.

<sup>23</sup> Here I specifically mentioned the Naga society for I have observed non Naga females outside the State who wears such shawls which they must have received as gifts from their Naga friends or bought it from the emporium or exhibition of Nagaland.

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Thsipong (Hair casket):           | It symbolizes the hair of the human head.                              |
| Nohtrup (Dao shaft):              | It represents the tradition of Sangtam's to carry it wherever he goes. |
| Kuhanyi (Shell loin):             | It symbolizes the grinding of teeth during the head-hunting.           |
| Lyexe-Khyo<br>(Hornbill feather): | It represents three times feasting by an individual.                   |

#### **Female costumes –**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Kuthsi (Headgear):    | The red color on the headgear and earrings signifies victory in the battle during ancient times. |
| Narobi (Earring):     | These can be worn by a royal woman and wife of a brave warrior.                                  |
| Lah (Necklace):       |  |
| Khehmuyang (Bangles): |  |
| Jignshu (Stockings):  |  |
| Tsi (Spear):          | This is used as personal defense during battle.  |
| Bong (Tobacco pipe):  | This pipe was used as a fire-maker.  |
| Fukhum (Shirt):       | Royal and rich women, warrior's wife can wear these clothes. It cannot be worn by ordinary women |
| Tsingrangshu (Shawl): |  |
| Alongzehshu           |  |
| (Women's lower wear): |  |

#### **Performing the cultural heritage – as presented by the Sangtam tribe:**

During the field study, a close interaction with the cultural troupes from the Sangtam tribe who had come from Longkhim town of Tuensang district was established. According to H. Setsala Sangtam, the club<sup>24</sup> President, it was for last two years that she had repeatedly applied to the organizers so that her cultural troupe could come and perform at the Hornbill festival. She also informed this year she had sent the application well in advance and this has enabled their group to participate. This troupe consisted of twenty six women members of the club and they were

<sup>24</sup> As told by the Sangvi cultural women society President. The town area of Longkhim did not have a proper cultural group earlier, so during any functions they had to call troupes from other villages to perform, and so they decided to bring together a cultural group which was six years ago, however, as a registered club the Sangvi cultural women society has completed its 4<sup>th</sup> year in the month of December 2010.



accompanied by four men from Longkhim. Many of the women are working at government offices, some are housewives married to Government employees while some are daily wage earners or unemployed. According to her, in a year the club performs for the public during important occasions within the Longkhim area on occasion like Republic Day, Mongmong festival,<sup>25</sup> Independence Day and Christmas. A payment of Rs 1500–2000 rupees is paid to the group as a fee for performing and this amount is used to purchase materials for their traditional costumes for members who cannot afford to buy them. Moreover, it is informed that being a member of the club is a voluntary choice and it is not mandatory that they all become performers. The club therefore depends on the willingness of its members to participate in these cultural activities and plays an active role in community activities and concerted efforts to keep the tradition alive.

Throughout the entire festival the Sangtam's Sangvi ('Sang' to say Sangtam, and 'vi' as in *avisa* or light, literally meaning 'bring light to the Sangtams') cultural club presented a varied range of its traditional activities mostly portrayed through singing such as the Peace treaty song (performed on Day 4) which was sung by their ancestors who had decided to stop bloodshed during war and work toward maintenance of peace between two rival villages. Another song is "The Time of Retreat" (performed on Day 7) sung when their ancestors were escaping from the ravage of their enemies, climbing the highest rocky cliffs and jumping through the widest logs chanting the song *I jing dumpi I long dumpi* which is sung to encourage themselves so that their escape could be faster and swifter.

As per the earlier historical and anthropological texts religion in the early Naga society was closely related to the processes and calendar of agriculture<sup>26</sup>. Similarly, like all other Naga tribes the Sangtams also depended on agriculture for their livelihood and thus most of its socio cultural practices, customs and festivals were associated with agriculture. According to Alemla, a senior member of the club, each of the Naga tribes had their own religious and spiritual beliefs which were interlinked to their rites and rituals. However the principal idea behind each of the tribal festivals was chiefly concerned with the offering of prayers to one Supreme Being. As such during these traditional festivals the community believed that by appeasing the Gods with

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<sup>25</sup> Mongmong is the major festival of the Sangtams. Detailed explanation of the festival in Chapter 2 pg (will add later)

<sup>26</sup> For the agricultural calendar followed by the Nagas, see Chapter 2, p. 57

sacrifices they would be blessed with a rich harvest. Such sacrifices were practiced either before sowing the seeds or on the eve of the harvest.

A folk song entitled “The Fruit of hard labor” (performed on Day 6) was presented to depict how their ancestors had believed that while working at their fields, the crops would bear much grains and their tiredness would fade away while chanting songs, *ohle lo o alo* and *ho alo o o helo* when taking a break for their lunch. “The Grinding of grains” (performed on Day 5) which was performed a day earlier depicts how after harvest the grains were gathered for grinding, using mortar to grind the grains they sang the song *holo hele heholo* to forget the tiredness and to regain the lost strength while grinding.

#### **The authority of the oral tradition:**

The festival posits itself as a repository of forgotten or neglected cultural knowledge and traditional norms where originally transmitted from one generation to the next through various means like folklores, folk songs, proverbs and chants. As a non-literate tradition, the oral transmission was the only way to keep their history and traditional culture alive in the absence of a writing system.

Oral tradition has thus been the source of all folktales, some of which refers to popular belief in association with people, particular events or occurrences. An example of such tale narrating the event for the absence of a written script can be found in the folktale of the Sangtams. The folktale narrates how in the early period their illiterate ancestors (clueless about a writing script) were distributed scripts and that among others the forefathers of Sangtams had also got one, however without much knowledge about how to preserve them they wrote them down on the scroll of animal hide and kept it above the fireplace in the house of a couple. One morning however the scroll fell down and the couple forgot to keep it back and went to their field. Upon returning back in the evening they discovered that the animal hide was eaten by their dog. The story thus explains how their forefathers lost their scripts and the reason why the Sangtam’s remained illiterate for many years.

The oral tradition in the form of storytelling was a popular mode of entertainment among the

Nagas. Folk tales like the one mentioned above and also stories on creation of earth, life after death, discovery of fire, tales about relationship between men and animals, etc, are in abundance among each tribe. Much of these tales are mythological in nature dealing with supernatural beings, of heroes which can be seen as providing a basic worldview of its people by explaining the aspects of the natural world and also of their customs and ideas of society. The popularity of storytelling can be seen when young men would gather at their *Morungs* in the evenings after their days work and an elderly man (usually one who has experienced returned victorious from many wars, raids and has brought many enemy heads) relates traditional tales of courage, ancient wisdom, moral values, as well as traditional ancient stories. With the passage of time and the advent of Christianity and modern education, such practices have become a thing of the past. At present the younger generations have little or no idea about their history and care less to spend time even with their parents to listen to such traditional tales. From the recollection of my childhood memories I remember when my mother would tuck me and my brother to bed at night and narrate tales of ancient folk which I remember listening with much awe and fascination.

The passing down of traditional knowledge from generations to generations by word of mouth has thus been bestowed upon with a certain degree of authority amongst the Nagas. The fact that on asking any questions relating to their tradition the common phrases that precedes a Naga's reply would be, as Manning Nash (in John Hutchinson & Anthony D. Smith. (eds), 1996, p. 27) had pointed out, 'time honored', 'the way of the elders', 'in the eyes of the ancestors', 'as our fore fathers before us', and 'the way it was always done' indicate the reverence and authority for the pastness of things. To further quote Manning Nash (ibid):

That things and practices have traditional warrant makes for a linkage over generations, thus bestowing upon even the most humble member of the group a pedigree, allowing him to identify with heroic times, great deeds, and a genealogy to the beginning of things human, cultural, and spiritual.

Through the interviews that were conducted the fact that the authority of such orally transmitted knowledge is well-regarded and acknowledged among the Nagas is further established. According to H. Setsala Sangtam, the practicing of traditional songs and dances among the elder members do not require as much effort as they are already familiar with it and were passed on to them by their mothers when they were young. As such they are the ones who teach their younger members about such performances and if there were any doubts they would seek guidance from

the older men and women in the village. The elders who were regarded by her as “those who know” they have knowledge about the customs and traditions as they were taught by their parents and their elders since childhood during their times. In this regard they mentioned some of the elders to whom they go for guidance, like Rothrong Sangtam- a retired teacher and an Ex-Dobashi<sup>27</sup> Thsidongse who had knowledge relating to their history, culture and tradition. However, she also pointed out that since the coming of Christianity all such traditional customs and practices were done away with which is why the younger generations have very little or no knowledge about their own culture.

### **Preservation of Naga’s indigenous culture and identity:**

The part that plays a significant role in the revivals as well as preservations of traditions is the role of tourism. Some of its prime objectives included among others in the Tourism Policy (2001, p. 3):

- Creation of tourism infrastructure so as to preserve the distinctive handicrafts, folk arts and culture of the state and thereby attract more tourists.
- Promotion of rural, ethnic, cultural, eco and adventure tourism.

There is also the promotion of traditional crafts and handlooms of local/ private entrepreneurs which are showcased at the Hornbill festival at the bamboo pavilion. The year 2010 saw the participation of a total of 83 units consisting of local and national entrepreneurs who participated in the handloom and handicraft exhibition-cum-sale organized by the Department of Industries and Commerce Nagaland. These cultural handicrafts and handlooms consists of a variety of bamboo and wooden works ranging from traditional kitchen utensils such as spoons, mugs, trays, and so on, to traditional decorative pieces, ornaments; handlooms which have traditional designs on mekhla, shawls, waistcoat, etc. All these attempts are found to serve as cultural markers that bring out Naga cultural identity. Such phenomenon can be understood as what is now known as the ‘commodification’ of local cultures.

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<sup>27</sup> The system of Dobashi (DB) is unique to Nagaland which was originally founded by the British to help them in their administration of Naga territories for the purpose of translation or interpretation of language. Later on they also became the interpreters of rules and regulations by delivering justice or give judgments in case of disputes. A Dobashi is usually one who is aware of the local customs and traditions. This system is followed in Nagaland till today.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the performance of the Hornbill festival within the Heritage village complex can be realized as an expression to bring to fore the Nagas inherited traditions and morals from the past for reflection. Such heritage constructions, would be as Ashworth (see Christine Buzinde in Cameron McCarthy, et al., (eds), 2007, p. 240) views it, "...not impromptu creations but rather *conscious* uses of a given *past* for the needs of the *present*." It can also be seen that through such communications Naga identity can be maintained and acknowledged. Through the various presentations on the site of the festival one becomes aware of how the Nagas are identifying themselves as one with unique culture and heritage. The whole idea of deritualizing the traditional practices can thus be understood as a conscious negotiation to go back to their roots and to give the past a new meaning in the present context.

## CHAPTER 2

### Community consciousness / Representation of Identity

#### On Community, Ethnicity, and Identity:

The word “community” is derived from the old French word *communité* which is derived from the Latin *communitas*, *cum* as in ‘with/together’ and *munus* as ‘gift’, which is a broad term for fellowship or organized society. In the dictionary (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/community> Accessed on 19/10/2010) community is explained as “a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage”. George Hillery (1955) after reviewing ninety-four definitions of community states that the common components of a community life includes – area, common tie or ties, and social interaction.

The term ‘ethnicity’ is derived from the English word ‘ethnic’ which in turn is derived from the ancient Greek term *ethnos*. In French this Greek noun survives as *ethnie*, its adjective as *ethnique*, while the English language has no concrete noun for *ethnos* or *ethnie*, the French term *ethnie* can be used as denoting an ‘ethnic community’ or ‘ethnic group’. The meaning of the term however is uncertain, as Chapman, et al (see John Hutchinson & Anthony D. Smith. (eds), 1996, p. 4) points out that it can mean ‘the essence of an ethnic group’, or ‘the quality of belonging to an ethnic community or group’, or ‘what it is you have if you are an “ethnic group”’. Max Weber (ibid, p. 35) looks at ‘ethnic groups’ as:

Those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists.

The earlier understanding of the term identity refers to the idea of self based on the uniqueness and individuality as distinct from others, later this understanding developed further towards a more sociological approach whereby it was used to refer to a person’s conception and expression of their individuality in relation to a group as a member and also in relation to other groups. The

American heritage dictionary explains identity as ‘the set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group’. The concept of social or collective identity thus addresses the “we-ness” of a group, stressing the similarities or shared attributes around which group members coalesce, as noted by Karen A. Cerulo (1997, pp. 386, 387) and to quote further:

Early literature approached these attributes as “natural” or “essential” characteristics—qualities emerging from physiological traits, psychological predispositions, regional features, or the properties of structural locations. A collective’s members were believed to internalize these qualities, suggesting a unified, singular social experience, a single canvas against which social actors constructed a sense of self.

These basic concepts relevant to this chapter will be addressed not so much as different issues but rather how each of these concepts contributes towards the understanding of the representation of the Naga identity as well as its relationship with the community consciousness. In this chapter, firstly I will focus on the features that bring together the Nagas as an ethnic group, and later, look at how the Nagas as a community in relation to their current needs and requirements work towards preservation of their cultural heritage.

### **What brings out the ethnic identity of the Nagas?**

John Hutchinson & Anthony D. Smith (1996, p. 6) arrives at the concept of *ethnie* through Schermerhorn’s definition of ethnic group which tries to capture the ‘ethnic’ content of an ‘ethnic community’ or *ethnie*, as such the term *ethnie* as – “a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more [*elements of common culture*]<sup>1</sup>, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members.”

The Nagas as an ethnic group from this point of view may be looked at through their myths of common ancestry, which includes the idea of a common origin in time and place giving an *ethnie*, in this case the Nagas, a sense of fictive kinship or a ‘super-family’ as termed by Horowitz (in *ibid*), and also look at the Nagas orientation to their past which binds them as a community with regard to their understanding of a shared past.

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<sup>1</sup> The ‘elements of common culture’ was an exchange for Schermerhorn’s list of symbolic elements (see John Hutchinson & Anthony D. Smith, (eds), 1996, p. 6). These symbolic elements are – kinship patterns, physical contiguity (as in localism or sectionalism), religious affiliation, language or dialectic forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypical features, or any combination of these.

The origin of the Nagas has remained uncertain and shrouded in mystery despite several researches, the main reason being attributed to the absence of written records to trace their history. In such circumstances the Nagas had other sources such as their traditional myths with regard to their origin which are separated from the scholarly approaches. Traditional oral history changes over time as it is passed down orally that scholars do not regard this as factual history, but something historical can be derived out of these oral traditions; therefore, to bring out the ethnicity of the Nagas it seems appropriate to give some few examples.

The Ao tribe's traditional myth of their origin (Anungla Aier & Tiatoshi Jamir, 2009, pp. 5, 6) says that the ancestors of their tribe "sprang up or originated" (*pokted*) from six stones at a place called Longterok which is located in Chungliyimti village, at present inhabited by Sangtam tribe in the Tuensang district. This myth refers to these stones as male and female stones<sup>2</sup>. The three major clans of the Ao tribe are believed to have ascended from the stone,

[...] ancestors by the name of Tongpok (Pongen clan), Longpok (Longkumer clan), and Longjakrep (Jamir clan) originated from Longterok. They emerged from the stones along with their sisters whose names were Longkupokla/ Lendina Yongmenala and Elongshe, who belonged to these major clans respectively. It is further claimed that Tongpok married Elongshe, Longpok married Longkupokla/ Lendina and Longjakrup married Yongmenzala, thus establishing the practice of clan exogamy which is followed till today. The descendants of these three couples came to be known as the Aos.

The Semas, Angamis, Lothas and Rengmas relate their origin to Khezakenoma village in the Chakesang area where their traditional story again relates to the fertility stone, this story relates to the two sons of the Khinzonyu clan in Khezakenoma village who quarreled over the correct use of the stone which resulted in the split of the clan into four tribes as mentioned above (Inato Yekhetto Shikhu, 2007, pp. 6, 7).

The migration of the Sangtam, although unclear is related in several myths. Their mythology provides a narrative regarding their ancestors originally living in the Eastern part of the Asian continent, and due to reasons unknown they could not settle in their original country thus they went in search of a better place for their permanent settlement. In the course of migration they split into two groups: one group went towards Thailand, while the other group believed to be the

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<sup>2</sup> The female stone as described by J. H. Hutton (1986, p. 45) in his diary has a natural fissure in its surface with a deep hollow behind, while the male stones were in the shape of a phallus. Of these six stones the biggest (female stone) was knocked down by a Christian evangelist who destroyed a small phallus which stood in front of it.



present Sangtams in Nagaland halted their migration in the valley of Chindwin of Myanmar, from where they further moved upwards to the present eastern part of Nagaland (Tsalongse Chodonge & Kedutso Kapfo, (eds), 2009, p. 3). As far as the origin of the tribe name ‘Sangtam’ is concerned by word of mouth it is believed to have started at Singdang village in Kiphiri district. Here their forefathers while gathered together sitting on a *Singdang* – an elevated platform made out of bamboo which is build adjacent to the house, this is a common feature among Naga houses especially in the hill districts, decided to name their tribe as Sangtam for it sounded similar to *Singdang* the platform on which they had gathered (personal interview with Sejungmong Sangtam, on 29<sup>th</sup> December, 2010).

The origin of the log drum (Tsalongse Chodonge & Kedutso Kapfo, (eds), 2009, pp. 3, 5) of the Sangtam tribe shows one the idea of how events in the past comes to take a commemorative form within the particular community sharing the memory. The Sangtams had in the course of their migration made a temporary settlement in the valley of Chindwin, however there were people who had already settled there and so the Sangtam warriors fought with them for supremacy over the country. However the war continued for long and the Sangtams feeling insecure decided to cross the river Chindwin to look for a new country to settle, which led them to secretly make log drums (the shape of which resembles a canoe). The Sangtams raided their enemy and killed many of them before setting out for the journey, and when the enemy started chasing them for revenge, the children and women of the Sangtam tribe had already crossed the river with the help of the log drums and the men folks sailed behind them in another log drum while defending themselves, being a big river their enemies could not pursue them further. The later generation of Sangtams in remembrance of the log drums saving their ancestors, would make log drum and show great reverence to it by adorning the log drum with enemy head whenever they bought one and beating the drum as a sign of victory.

Another story of the Sangtams talk about how the practice of head hunting was a later tradition. It is believed that one day a group of men saw a group of *thsikhking* or ants carrying the head of a lizard<sup>3</sup>. This incident had a profound imprint on their mindset and hence was tempted to do the

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<sup>3</sup> Similar to this story of the Sangtams is the Ao’s about the origin of head hunting where their ancestors had learned head hunting by watching an ant kill a lizard, while J. H. Hutton (see J. P. Mills, 1973, p. 200 n.1) notes that the Angamis and Sema’s say that while warfare was learnt from the ant, however they do not mention about head hunting as learnt from the ant.

same. So a few years later they killed a man from their neighboring village, cut off his head and took it to their village. Consequently the people of the other village also killed one of their villagers for revenge and since then head hunting had flourished among the Sangtams. (Tsalongse Chodonge & Kedutso Kapfo, (eds), 2009, p. 15)

The practice of head hunting can be looked at as one of the features from the historical past which relates to the common culture of the tribal Nagas. For a Naga, head hunting was not senseless killing of the enemy, but rather a tradition connected with the tribal principles of heroism, justice, honor, pride, and recognition, the victim's head symbolizing status, honor and bravery. Social status of one increased with the number of enemy heads a man hunted. The practice of head hunting was also ritualistic in nature; the ceremonies performed after bringing the enemy heads were associated with the belief of a bumper harvest, bringing general prosperity to the village in the future, blessings for many children, and also prayer for more heads.

Taking into consideration such historical pasts as well as the shared myths and memories it accounts for the Nagas as a community attached to an ethnic history through which its members can identify themselves as part of a group with a shared past. This subjective identification of individuals through shared memories and mythical attachment to the group with respect to the land on which they reside very well brings out the ethnic category of the community.

The ethnic identity however as noted by Kendra Clegg (in Nicholas Tarling and Edmund Terence Gomez, (eds), 2008, p. 173) is not a stable definition, further adding that ethnicity frequently changes its cultural contents although it maintains its boundaries through varying methods. In this respect within the Naga community the characteristics such as shared heritage, ancestry, origins, cultural traditions, and languages brings out the main factors of ethnicity. The shift in the cultural pattern of the Nagas over the years has led to the decline of their traditional ties, as such the need for a collective identity or group solidarity and identification among the Nagas resulted in the revival of their ethnic roots.

#### **The perception about the Naga identity:**

The identity of a Naga can be understood in terms of his/ her tribal identity – with each tribe having their distinct dialect, social and customary values, and specific territorial location forms the tribal identity with reference to their common ancestry. On the other hand each of these tribes together contribute towards a common identity ‘Nagas’, this collective Naga identity can be understood within a national framework as a convenient choice for reasons mostly political to assert their communal solidarity.

I have earlier talked about how a member identifies himself/ herself as belonging to a particular tribe/group through their shared myths and memories as a social group. This identification with ethnic groups would also include what Joshua Fishman (in John Hutchinson & Anthony D. Smith, (eds), 1996, p. 63) talks about as a ‘kinship phenomenon’ which can be seen as a continuity within the self and within those who share an inter-generational link to common ancestors.

Upon closer examination of the subject matter it brings us to the notion of multiple identities underlying within the Naga society. Identity for a Naga is founded within the shifting identities of belonging to a – particular division of clan from the village<sup>4</sup>, tribal group (Ao, Lotha, Sangtam, etc.), then comes the apex point of being a Naga. Further away from here on the national front the Naga is presented in an ‘amorphous identity’ as pointed out by Temsula Ao (2006, p. 7) which is based solely on geographical affinity of residing within the boundaries of the sovereign State of India, which is coincidental. To quote Temsula Ao (ibid):

The definitions of this identity are derived from political and economic dependencies rather than any cultural, traditional or linguistic affinities. The Indian identity therefore becomes a total disclaimer of all that a Naga has conceived of himself to be through generations. His being a Naga, and a citizen of India has to be readjusted in that his existential moorings have to be reinvented in a new context. In the absence of commonalities there can be no assimilation and without assimilation there can be no hybridization. Of necessity it then becomes a question of subsumption of lesser by the stronger force.

The usage and identification of the term ‘Naga’ as already mentioned<sup>5</sup> establishes that the term was given to them by others and not by the Nagas themselves. Panger Imchen (1993, p. 15)

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<sup>4</sup> An example in the case of the Sangtams, they are divided into six clans. The traditional norm suggests that each village should consist of these six clans, namely – Thonger, Anar, Mongzar, Jinger, Rudi Thonger, and Langdi Thonger.

<sup>5</sup> Explained in Introduction, p. 3

mentions about the term 'Naga' coming into common usage during the British rule and later it became more evident during the rise of the Naga Club<sup>6</sup> in 1918. A colonial account of Robinson [see Sanghamitra Misra, 1998, p. 3276] described the inhabitants of the hills as those who were:

Divided into numerous communities and races and knew themselves by the designations of their respective tribes only and not by any name common to all the races ... whatever be the origin of the word 'Naga', it appears that the appellation was entirely unknown to the hill tribes themselves.

Another mention is by R. Woodthorpe (ibid), he notes that the name was considered foreign and unrecognized by the Nagas themselves, for the reason that when a Naga is asked 'who he is' the general reply is that 'he is of such and such a village'. It is thus evident from these notes that the identification of the tribal's as a 'Naga' can be viewed as the colonial construction, to bring together the heterogeneous collection of tribes for reference within a broader context.

The concept of identity as perceived by the Nagas themselves has been categorized, as brought about by Temsula Ao (2006, p. 6), into three features: Existential, Locational, and Artefactual. The existential identity is rooted in myths through which concepts of their origin, location of origin, and why they come to live at different places or inhabit the geographical area called Nagaland and outside the State in some places in the adjoining states, are explained. Examples about such myths and lores of a few tribes I have mentioned earlier, however these being myths have no concrete historical or material support, but among the Nagas such myths have been accepted as, in Temsula Ao's words "inalienable principle of their tribal *history*".

The locational identity can be traced back to what R. Woodthorpe had also mentioned about a Naga confirming to his identity with reference to his village, this means that a person's village of birth and residence forms an important aspect for identity within the tribe. This particular feature of identification can be viewed as the most dynamic of his/her existence as the village identity is marked by characteristics of its own by history, behavior, style of living, language and accents,

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<sup>6</sup> The Naga Club was the first organization formed in Nagaland in 1918 was set up in Kohima and Mokokchung. Its members consisted mainly of Government officials and a few leading headman of the neighboring villages who used to attend meetings where social and administrative problem were discussed. The Naga club which was the only organization then played an important role when the Simon Commission led by John Simon with Clement Attlee and E. Cadogan visited Kohima in January 10, 1929, where the club members submitted a memorandum, stating that they were giving the voice on behalf of the Nagas (Alemchiba, M., 1970, pp. 162, 163).

village administrative system, etc. This idea is clearly brought out by Temsula Ao (ibid), to quote:

The identity affiliated to a village draws attention to clan affinity, possession of ancestral and other properties in the form of land holdings, and underlines one's responsibility to the community in the form of participating in community rituals, celebrations, and in the governance of the village polity.

With regard to self-identity, often one is questioned, for example in the Sangtam society, '*Duo yang?*' or Which village?, '*Suyo tsuthre/atsulatbü?*' or Whose son/daughter?, and '*Duo ahongrü?*' meaning which clan?, and the answer to these makes one's identity more evident. In relation to this during my field work with the Sangtam cultural troupe, I was asked by one of the performers – from which village? Whose daughter? The village identity here becomes important as it brings out an element of belonging to a larger group, thus the village or locational identity can be understood as occupying the most important position in the Naga society.

Finally, artefactual identity refers to forms of art that are assigned as part of the Naga identity. Within the Naga context these art forms were understood not so much as a medium of artistic expression but rather as those that evolved from utility items, to quote Temsula Ao (ibid):

When houses, village gates, textiles, tattoos and other household items became personalized through extra ornamentation or addition of colours or symbols, the ordinary artefacts began to acquire new significance and became a new set of identifiers within a local context. In men's wear the most famous example among the Aos is the "Mangkotepsu" or "Tsongkotepsu" shawl, which traditionally could be worn only by men who had taken heads in warfare or given feasts of merit. Such shawls therefore would automatically be identified with persons of high status in society. Such identity markers abound in all the Naga tribes. Again, the structures and decorations or the lack therein on houses also evince status difference within a given community.

The three main features as discussed above can be understood within the Naga community as an indivisible factor through which it confirms an individual's identity to a particular group/community, this notion of identification applies to all the groups within the Naga society without reference to any particular tribe.

To this three features as already brought about I would like to add a fourth one – that of the 'performed identity' which becomes an important one. The everyday lived life in the present context has made such identifiable features of belonging to a particular group less significant.

Considering the fact that modern scientific worldview has now replaced the age old myths of origin which had once laid the foundation for understanding their identity, culture, and religion. In the process of urbanization Nagas have moved away from their villages migrating to urban centers like Dimapur, Kohima, Mokokchung, etc in search of employment or so that their children can pursue quality education, etc. This resulted in further conglomeration of masses from different villages giving way for a newer identity of belonging to a particular section in the urban centers. Here people do maintain their ties with their village identity, however, in the course of time their present locational identity comes to the fore. With acculturation and assimilation over the past years in the Naga society<sup>7</sup> the material culture becomes a contrast to the traditional. An extract from N. C. Zeliang's notes (2005, p. 1):

Genuine cultural identity of any society is comprised of indigenous religion, native culture, language, glorious history of forefathers, arts and crafts, rite and rituals, traditional village institutions and customary laws. We work to enhance every component of Naga identity. Today it has become a fashion in Naga society to talk about Naga identity while cutting the roots of every component that constitute genuine Naga identity. Wearing costly dresses, singing pop songs, [...] violation of civic rules and disobedience in the name of civil liberty, indecent dress and heinous deeds, etc are not the symbol of Naga identity.

The cultural revitalization through the performance of the Hornbill festival in this sense can be viewed as creating a specific milieu of specially structured events, or cultural festivals. It is through such performances that the notion of identity that had once existed is revisited and reasserted. Hence it may be assumed that the notion of identity is not always what is lived, but sometimes theatrically projected.

### **The Naga Village administration:**

Various studies on the history of Nagas show that the Naga villages were self governed, maintained their own institutional system and settled their own disputes. The village in this sense was described as a form of distinct tiny republic where almost every village was an independent state governed by a council of elders representing each clan, with some exceptions particularly among the Konyaks where the Angh or chief played a pivotal role in the affairs of the community and exercised great authority over his village. During a military expedition Major Butler (see Verrier Elwin, 1961, p. 525) commenting on the Ao village republic, he wrote:

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<sup>7</sup> Explained in Introduction, p. 11

Every man follows the dictates of his own will, a form of the purest democracy which it is very difficult indeed to conceive as existing for even a day; and yet that it does exist here is an undeniable fact.

As noted by M. Alemchiba Ao in his seminar paper (in Directorate of Art & Culture, 1976, p. 7) the village in the past was “their country and its organization was their Government.” The Naga villages can be looked at as one of the most permanent social and political unit for all practical purposes, and as such the social cohesion and stability achieved by the village communities have succeeded in preserving their traditional values till today despite the long period of foreign rule in their land. To this day every Naga village remains a village republic, however, without the previous independent status. The political, economic, and social activities of the Nagas can thus be seen as centered on the village and the sentiment of the people has developed consciously or unconsciously within the village socio-economic structure.

Each tribe consisted of villages having their definite customs, tribal peculiarities and language by which they recognize each other. These villages were further divided into smaller units called khels<sup>8</sup>. The number of such unit ranges between two to eight khels depending from village to village, each khel consisting of their own democratically elected council of elders, or with having a self-appointed village head man or chief. The formation of a khel is given by W. H. Furness (1902, p. 447):

When a man has a sufficient following of friends or relatives who are willing to split off from their native village and either move to an unoccupied hilltop or establish themselves in another village or in a different location in their own village as a separate khel, they follow their leader and as a co-operative body build houses and clear new fields.

Within the village the system of organization was well set up, each village had its own administrative, executive, judicial as well as legislative power managed either by the village chief or council of elders, and the village members were expected to maintain and follow their traditional laws and customs. It can be observed that the customary laws and traditions within the Naga society is a result of their customs, traditions and usages. These laws were unwritten but still were taught and practiced among the Nagas.

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<sup>8</sup> The word ‘khel’ is an Assamese word which is meant to refer to a division of a village found among the Nagas.

The traditional set up of tribal political system was threatened when the British came to the Naga Hills. The British government had earlier pursued a policy of “non-interference” throughout their rule in the Naga Hills. The earliest move for such an act included the Scheduled District Act of 1874 which recognized that the “under-developed tracts”, of which the Naga Hills were also a part of, needed to be treated differently with regard to enforcement of the procedures of usual laws. Few years later again, The Frontier Regulation II of 1880 also “Excluded” the tribal people including the Nagas from coming under such laws as may be unsuitable or complex to. However by 1886, the “non-interference” policy was abandoned and the British entered the Naga hills on the pretext of civilizing the Nagas.

During their rule the British administration introduced two types of personnel or native administrative agents, namely Gaonbora (village elders) and Dobashi<sup>9</sup>. They were appointed to work as agents of the British administration and were assigned certain official powers however their powers were dictated by the British administrators. Also the introduction of new policies such as law and order, justice system, collection of tax and revenue, etc. gradually affected the whole of the Naga territory. The shift brought about by through these changes significantly weakened the traditional village administrative system ,and further more as the villages were now brought under the control of a single government.

The changes brought about through the British rule and conversely Christianity and modern education in the tribal Naga society has been understood and analyzed by various scholars and researchers within a positive and negative framework. The positive aspect has been realized in the light of how their once fragmented village polity has been brought under a unified common political system, giving them a sense of common tribal identity higher than their village identity,

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<sup>9</sup> The word Dobashi is an Assamese word meaning “interpreter”, the dobashi system was first started in 1842 and since then it continued till today as an integral part of village administration. Dobashis’ were appointed by the British officers to use them as a link between the native people and the colonial administrative officers they were paid employees of the British administration. The basis for such appointment were based on their knowledge of an extra language familiar to the Britishers, and through them all the government orders to the tribes were communicated through them. The Dobashis’ court is attached to the Deputy Commissioner or Sub-Divisional Officer and the court is assigned specific powers for deciding cases, including criminal cases according to the Naga customary law which is subject to the modification or approval only by the Deputy Commissioner and his legally empowered subordinates.



while on the other hand such changes have adversely affected the traditional customary laws and customs, as such led to the community's loss of their culture and therefore the loss of identity.

### **The Social life of the Nagas – the traditional view:**

The Naga society remained isolated from the rest of the world until the advent of the British and Christianity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The dynamic activity within the institution of *Morung* and tribal festivals brings out the expression of community spirit in the social life of the Nagas. Here I shall discuss these two significant features that had influenced and characterized the social life of the Nagas.

#### **i. The Morung:**

The *Morung* as mentioned by R. R. Shimray (see Inato Yekhetto Shikhu, 2007: 21) were considered as the Naga schools. The Angamis call the *Morung* as *Kichuki*, Aos – *Ariju*, Lothas – *Champo*, Semas – *Apuki/Illiki*, Sangtams – *Kuhying*, etc, the *Morung* life of a young boy begins at around the age of seven up till thirteen, while in some villages boys do not enter the *Morung* until the age of sixteen, the age for initiation into the *Morung* varies among tribes<sup>10</sup>. Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf (1938b, p. 361) commenting on the initiation into the *Morung* of Konyak tribe in the village Wakching writes:

[...] the ceremony connected with entering the morung at Wakching was originally also a real initiation into the life of a warrior. Yet it must not be overlooked that, far from being a mere survival of more warlike times, it fulfils the very important function of marking the entrance of a boy into the economic life of the morung community. Until then he has always accompanied his parents to the fields and helped them by doing some light work, but now he will join a gang of the morung. Such a gang works on the fields of each of its members in rotation and occasionally on the fields of rich men, who hire the whole gang for a day or two.

In this system the division of work based on gender, age groups and terms of office have been evidenced through the ethnographic records. The boys upon entering the *Morung* takes up the lowest set of works like fetching water, collecting firewood, sharpening *daos*, passing on

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<sup>10</sup> In ancient Ao society there was a process through which one had to go to attain manhood and acceptance to society. The entire life of the Ariju is solely based on the network of age group system, Zungaren. 'Zunga' mean 'age group', and 'ren' means 'in lines'. (cf. Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf (1938b, p. 359); N. Talitemjen Jamir & A. Lanunungang, 2005, p. 83)

messages for elders, etc. The next stage is when the young boys are ready to marry. From this stage onwards he is prepared by the elders in war tactics and other skills. As he grows older he is considered as a senior by virtue of their status and long experience. Apart from the other social activities the *Morung* was also the place where war tactics and strategies were discussed and planned, to guard the village as well as keeping vigil against any attack, and training for warfare was learnt. (cf. N. Talitemjen Jamir and A. Lanunungsang, 2005)

On the other hand the *Morung* systems for the girls were not as elaborate as the boys. While in some tribes this system were non-existent for the girls, the Aos for example had *Tsüki* or girls *Morung* which were guided by *tsükibutsüla* or the eldest member of the sector – generally a widow of a rich man and as such was highly respected. The young girls that are admitted learn all the theories and practices except physical hardships here they were trained in weaving, knitting and other essential activities those of which were to be performed only by women. This institution formed the center of women's socialization.

The system of *Morung* among the Sangtams was comparatively small as compared to tribes such as the Aos, or Konyaks, where the *Kuhying/ Morung* functions mostly as a drum house and as depositories for enemies' skulls (ibid p. 377), they did not have a *Morung* separate for girls. The only activity for women around the *Morung* was that early in the morning around two or three they would gather firewood to light the fireplace, prepare rice beer and store them, and later the male folks gather around at their *Kuhying* and discuss issues and matters relating to their village, making plans, narrate stories, etc, while drinking the brewed rice. The main post of the *Morung* as well as the pillars supporting the roof are usually adorned with the skulls of enemy heads, of *mithun* (this can be put on display only when a feast is given to the village community with the sacrifice of *mithun*), tiger head, and so on (personal interview with A. K. Sangtam, on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2010). The *Morung* does not serve as a sleeping quarter unlike the other tribes, however they did have quarters which were built separately for both boys and girls within the village solely for the purpose of sleeping, it has been the case that when young boys and girls are of the age eighteen and above (this is normally the period when they start courting each other and sleep there until they get married) they start sleeping at these quarters and not with their parents (Phone interview – Sejungmong Sangtam, 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 2011).

The method of training and education within the *Morung* system teaches them hard labor, sacrifices, honesty, fearlessness, faithfulness, punctuality, etc. The institute of *Morung* thus forms the fundamental basis of Naga cultural heritage and is considered as one of the oldest and strongest means of social control. Also the working division of age groups within the social structure in which every member engages himself/ herself towards the common welfare of the village brings out a strong sense of unity and community participation.

## ii. Indigenous festivals:

The other important aspect of the Naga social life revolves around the soil, that is, agriculture and the various tribal festivals that are celebrated are connected to stages of agricultural operations. These festivals were predominantly ritualistic in character where the Nagas offered prayers and sacrifices to the Supreme Being. As rightly observed by M. Horam (1977, p. 39):

The early tribal life centred around the soil, the ancestral fields, sowing and harvesting. Village feasts were directed by the agricultural calendar and seasons. Most religious ceremonies and festivals are directly connected with the fields.

The practice of these religious ceremonies and festivals varies among tribes as well as from one village to another, however the ceremonies related to agriculture are held in general for reasons namely – purification of forests, purification of the soil, dedication of seeds, day of the Supreme Being, dedication of paddy, rededication of paddy, dedication of the transplanted paddy plants, fruit testing, and festival of thanksgiving (A. Wati Longchar, 1995, pp. 74 - 80). The agricultural seasons were determined according to the lunar calendar. For the tribal Nagas a year begins from the month of clearing forests and ends with the harvest. Given below is an approximate explanation of the tribal's way of counting the months as explained by A. Wati Longchar (ibid, pp. 86 - 87):

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| November – December | : the month of clearing of forest for the new field. |
| January – February  | : drying slash for burning.                          |
| March               | : planting seeds.                                    |
| April               | : the month of young crops.                          |
| May – June          | : clearing weed in the field.                        |

July – August : the month of adult crops.

September – October : months for harvest.

The Sangtams celebrate the Mongmong festival<sup>11</sup> during the first week of September each year for a period of six days, the commencement of this festival begins when the crops are ready for harvesting. The traditional procedure that follows will be described as follows (personal interviews with H. Sejungla Sangtam on 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2010; Sejungmong Sangtam, 29<sup>th</sup> December, 2010): at the dead of the night the village priest called *Bebürü* of a particular clan<sup>12</sup> after due prayers and rites makes the announcement, “*Hoi! Isa yangrü zangnyuo mongmong nung eh-heh!*” (Our village will observe Mongmong on the 5<sup>th</sup> day). However the next day, in the morning the same announcement is made by the village head which is considered as the real announcement. The first announcement is made at night for reasons to deceive the dead spirits<sup>13</sup> in the village to avoid any evil doings by the spirits during the festival.

After this announcement is made preparation for the festival begins the same day. This day is called *Jangshikha* which is marked by collecting vegetables, millets, etc, from the old fields for the last time. Also gathering firewood, fetching water and brewing of wine and rice beer by the women, while the men gathers pigs, cows, and mithuns, keeping them tied and ready for killing for the feast. The second day *Singkhithsa* is marked by the killing of the animals that were gathered the day before, setting aside some portions of the meat for the feast the meat is distributed amongst their groups<sup>14</sup>. The rich man also kills meat on this day however this meat is usually distributed amongst their relatives, friends, and neighbors. The third day or *Musuhyangtup* is significant for the worshipping of the three stones<sup>15</sup> that constitutes the fireplace. This rite is performed by the eldest woman/ wife of the household early in the

<sup>11</sup> The Sangtams celebrate several other festivals as well of which the Mongmong festival is the most important of all. Each of these festivals is related to food productions, for blessings and prosperity.

<sup>12</sup> The traditional procedure allows the Anar clan specifically for making this announcement.

<sup>13</sup> It is the belief that spirits of dead people from the village remains in the household / village for a year, during this festival it brings a separation between the living and the death. Thus, the Mongmong festival heralding the end of the year these evil spirits breaks all ties with the living as well as from the village.

<sup>14</sup> These groups consist of ten (10) members of both *Atirü* (men) and *Akhingrü* (women). They are organized in groups primarily for working together in the fields taking turns by each group. The meat that is given to each group is prepared and cooked at the treasurer’s house of each group where all its members feast together.

<sup>15</sup> The Sangtam belief is that these three stones represent the god of the house (Lijaba). It is only after completing the ritual of placing rice shaped into balls on top of the three stones and pouring wine upon them that the feasting commences. Although it is a short ceremony it is taken care that the domestic animals do not eat the food left at the stones as that would bring in misfortune.

morning. At dawn the eldest woman leads the villagers and proceed to fetch water from the village well each of them covers their head with green leaves or *tsumtiva* as they call it. The eldest woman then on reaching the well clears the water source with this leaves to symbolize the cleansing of the water from evil spirits and then draw the first water followed by others. The later part of the day is celebrated by everyone in the village with children playing around, young men and women dressed in their best costumes gather around singing songs of bravery and dancing, while drinking of rice beer, playing games, and other merry making activities.

The fourth day is the *Kikhalangpi* which is dedicated to cleaning the village. On this day the village men gathers around and only after the village headman begins first by clearing the weeds the others follow. Here the paths leading to – the fields, village roads, and water sources are cleared, after which they all gather at the headman's house with rice beer and meat which every adult men contributes for this feast. On the other hand for women, according to their belief the wife's in each family should put chilies, ginger and cotton in green leaves called *Tsidong*, put them in the field or outside the village to ward off calamities and prevent damage of crops. As suggested in the name *Shilang wüba nyumong*, meaning a day for journey, the fifth day is observed by the villagers paying visit, sharing food and drinks with their relatives, and friends living in the neighboring villages. They also present them with gifts which are usually the practice of exchanging meat. After the celebration of all rituals and ceremonies throughout the last five days, on the sixth day the Mongmong festival culminates and from this day onwards harvesting begins. This last day is called *Akasingkithsa*. (cf. National Informatics Centre, Tuensang District Unit, Website. <http://tuensang.nic.in/Sangtam.htm> Accessed on 03/12/2010).

The village space can thus be observed as occupying an important social unit in the life of Nagas within which the elements of political, social and religious life are shared amongst its community members. The community aspect within the area of the village for the early Nagas had through their shared relationship with history and their practice of customs and traditions, enhanced their community spirit and thus brought about their feelings of identity. In course of time however for reasons such as the coming of Christianity and modern education it gave way to a changed outlook towards their feelings of identity – other than their small scale unit of social life at the village level they were now accepting their tribal identity, and more importantly the larger

identification of being a Naga sharing the same political, social and religious life at the national level.

Hence the earlier 'socio-cultural and political isolates', as pointed out by Surajit Sinha (1981), had now emerged to represent a larger scale of tribal unity. Efforts such as the hornbill festival can be looked at as representing this tribal unity amongst the Nagas, further the initiation by the organizers for giving representation to each tribal village on a rotational basis, as already mentioned in the earlier chapter, can be viewed as bringing together each social unit from within the confines of their village to a common platform through which they can represent a larger communal spirit.

### **Representation/ Re-interpretation of Naga identity in the modern context:**

The movement of Christianity brought with it changes in the traditional world which affected the political, social, economic and cultural life of the tribal Nagas, their age-old traditions were considered improper once they became converts. Their traditional practice such as head hunting, the *Morung* system, also the performance of ceremonies and rituals which was an important feature of their tribal village life had all become a thing of the past. As noted by J. H. Hutton (in J. P. Mills, 1973, p. 421 n.3) the wearing of traditional clothes and ornaments as well were considered heathenish so the Nagas refrained from wearing them. The ritualistic performances of their festivals were also put to an end. Nevertheless Nagas have continued to hold on to their tradition of celebrating their tribal festivals till today, although the ritualistic procedure that was once practiced by their ancestors discarded.

As expressed by L. L. Yaden (in Directorate of Art & Culture, 1976, p. 43) talking about Nagaland's state of evolution in the present day, he says that:

The Nagas have been enlightened and united through Christianity; but it also adversely affected the culture of the Nagas and has made deep erosion into it requiring proper study and reform, so that the Nagas retain their good culture without being swallowed in the flood of the highly sophisticated inter-national culture creating social and economic unrest in the society. When a nation or a community loses its cultures, it also loses its identity and existence.

The inter-mingling of different tribes since the British administration created a new sense of identity and the introduction of modern education by the missionaries further led towards giving them a modern worldview among the tribal's which in turn affected their traditional views. It is this new found identity that formed the basis for the present political movements by representing the solidarity of all the Naga tribes. This can be viewed in the terms of what Roy Burman (see Surajit Sinha in T. K. Oommen, (ed), 2010, pp. 209 - 222) talks about as 'infranationalism' – where the identity of the primitive tribal society progresses towards a higher level of integration or 'nationalism'. This sense of Naga nationalism<sup>16</sup> has been clearly pointed by Hokishe Sema (1986, pp. 155, 156):

[...] an aspiration of a certain distinct race or people, characterized by common descent, language or history, living or occupying a definite territory and united in character and manners not by regulation of laws but by uniformity of life and food and common influence of climate... The Naga sub-nationalism emerges out of a strong desire and common sentiments of belonging to a common family of Nagas. It comes out of their feelings for consolidation of all Naga tribes near and far under one compact administration.

The references to the ethnic identity of Nagas as pointed out by Hokishe Sema can be viewed as what Alberto Melucci (in John Hutchinson & Anthony D. Smith, (eds), 1996) refers to revival of ethnic identity as a response to the need for collective identity, and also as defined by De Vos (see Paul R. Brass in John Hutchinson & Anthony D. Smith, (eds), 1996, p. 85) as consisting of the 'subjective, symbolic or emblematic use' by 'a group of people...of an aspect of culture, in order to differentiate themselves from other groups'. This emphasis on their ethnic roots revitalizes the community's consciousness, and as such gives them a feeling of solidarity and acceptance of their common identity as a 'Naga'.

According to a weekly poll conducted by the daily newspaper in Nagaland (*The Morung Express*, 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2010, p. 7) 80% of the readers of the local daily agreed that their identity of being a Naga is important, while 15% readers opted for no. For those readers who voted for no stated their reasons that the Naga identity has lost its past values and qualities, also multiplicity of identity – Indian identity, independent free Naga identity, tribal identity, regional identity, clans identity, religious identity, etc was stated which tends to confuse. The majority of the readers stated that the 'Naga identity today is an accumulation of our history' as such must be

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<sup>16</sup> Explained in Chapter 3, pg. 70

‘safeguarded and allowed to develop’. Another reader suggested that the Nagas should strengthen their common identity through exchanges of cultural activities, stating that the Hornbill festival in this respect provides the right platform for Nagas to learn about each other. The reader hopes that through such events it will draw all Nagas emotionally and socially closer to greater heights ‘where isms will become a thing of the past.’

The issue of identity has become even more critical in view of the changing trends of cultural traditions in the Naga society. This change in cultural patterns can be understood through globalization – where the society is frequently exposed to varied cultural features through the mass-media, literature, contact with other cultures, etc – this resulted in the Nagas adapting to these new cultures which is a contrast to the life of the Nagas.

The Hornbill festival can be looked at as an effort by the Nagas in creating a sense of awareness within the community as well as to those outside the State. The cultural troupes performing at the Hornbill festival dressed in their respective tribe’s cultural attires asserts to their tribal identity. The ‘frequent surface pointers’ as mentioned by Manning Nash (in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, 1996, p. 25), that of dress and language (each performances are in their own tribal dialect) brings about the distinction of identity from one tribe to another. The performances of tribal folk dances, folk music, festivals and also the representation of *Morungs* at the Heritage village were once an important aspect of their social life. These representations at the Hornbill festival becomes a reflection on their past which in the present day context are no longer significant. Thus, the coming together of communities from their respective villages/ towns and performing within the space of the Heritage village for tourists and local visitors alike brings out the sense of identity not simply of the tribe but of the larger performance of Naga identity.



## CHAPTER 3

### The idea of Heritage: Nation/ State/ Community

The website on the Hornbill festival gives one the basic outline about the festival ([http://www.hornbillfestival.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=5&Itemid=30](http://www.hornbillfestival.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5&Itemid=30) Accessed on 15/12/2010) that is - “to encourage inter-tribal interaction and to promote cultural heritage of Nagaland”; “the aim of the festival is to revive and protect the rich culture of Nagaland and display its extravaganza and traditions”. Again as stated by Yitachu, Parliamentary secretary for tourism, the State Government has been conducting Hornbill festival with the view to promote the rich culture and tradition of Nagas by showcasing various traditional dances, lifestyle, music, dramas and indigenous games (Chizokho Vero, 2010b, p. 3). The Naga society has undergone through a lot over the years beginning with the impact of the British administration and western Christianity in the early nineteenth century, then the shift in political power from the British to the Indian administration, the rise of the armed conflict, formation of the State of Nagaland in 1963 in the Indian territory and finally the intervention of mass media have all contributed towards a shift in cultural patterns. This resulted in the Nagas losing the earlier understanding of their identity as well as their traditional culture.

The representation of the performances at the Hornbill festival can be viewed as an outcome of discourses on and in search of answers to such influences. The festival can be looked at as an effort by the Nagas to revive, protect and revisit their traditional culture and identity that once was. The notion of ‘heritage’ in this chapter will be addressed through the performance of the Hornbill festival where I will look at how the idea of ‘heritage’ is being promoted and conceived within the society. While analyzing the topic at hand the question of authenticity with regard to such cultural traditions shall be dealt with. After which I will look at the dynamic relationship between tourism and the cultural performances. On one hand the local cultures is of great importance to tourism, and on the other, for the local culture, tourism becomes an instrument through which they can represent their cultural heritage to a greater extent.

**Towards an understanding of the ‘Heritage’:**

The notion of 'heritage' over the past few years have been acknowledged in the academic field of study. Heritage studies have been recognized as a distinct set of academic practices. The rise to prominence of the term 'heritage' has been observed to have emerged along with the adoption of the 'World Heritage Convention' by the international agency of UNESCO in 1972. This resulted in the notion 'heritage' to be considered as 'an object of common and legitimate enquiry' (Marie Louise Stig Sorensen and John Carman, 2009, p. 18). The idea behind the 'World Heritage Convention' was to encourage the conservation of some of the world's natural and cultural heritage which was considered unique and scientifically important. Thereby to protect them for the present as well as future generations which was a matter of concern not only the individual nations but for the international community. (cf. Ralph O. Slatyer. 1998, p. 138)

The 1972 convention was started to protect the tangible or material heritage, such as human constructions (temples, places, cities and so on) and landscapes. However more recently in 2003, UNESCO adopted the Convention for safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage to safeguard the non-material cultural heritage such as dance, music, knowledge of crafts, of genealogies, and so on (cf. Andre?e Grau in Mohd Anis Md Nor, et al., (eds), 2009, p. 11; Susan Keitumetse, 2006, p. 166). In this aspect László Felföldi (in Mohd Anis Md Nor, et al., (eds), 2009, p. 9) brings out the characteristic by saying that, the later in contrast to the 1972 Convention, pays attention to not just the most outstanding cultural assets but also to "all those social practices which confirm local identity, enhance dialogue and mutual respect in the interest of sustainable development." To quote László Felföldi (ibid):

The 2003 Convention focuses on living traditions (not on archives and documents). It emphasizes the unity of the local, national and international levels of safeguarding, but it lays stress mainly on local initiatives. It prefers cultural diversity of multicultural communities instead of homogeneity.

As viewed by UNESCO (cf. Andre?e Grau in Mohd Anis Md Nor, et al., (eds), 2009, p. 11; Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and John Carman, (eds), 2009, p. 12):

Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations.

With the later adoption of Intangible Cultural Heritage this understanding of heritage came to encompass the domains of performing arts, knowledge and practices concerning nature and

universe (natural heritage), “social practices”, “rituals” and festive events, and traditional craftsmanship (Susan Keitumetse, 2006, p. 166), as such the Intangible Cultural Heritage has been defined in Article 2.1 of the 2003 Convention (ibid):

...practices, representations and expressions, and knowledge and skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage ... is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

The concept of heritage in the field of study can be viewed in relation to issues of identity formation as well as it being a source of income through cultural/ heritage tourism, as expressed by Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and John Carman (2009, p. 3):

It may be approached purely as an object of study, or it may be seen as a means of generating income, or as part of political action or sustainable development to engender community spirit and involvement. The concern may be with its regulation or with deciphering its multifaceted characteristics and many roles. Some may see heritage as their inalienable right, while for others it is a construct; yet others see it as timeless and belonging to all.

Heritage therefore can be understood as both ‘commercial’ and ‘ideological’, and further as pointed out by Andr?e Grau (in Mohd Anis Md Nor, et al., (eds), 2009, p. 11) ‘landscapes, buildings, and cultural knowledge are selected, promoted, and framed’. Keeping this view in mind, what needs to be analyzed is the question of who selects what is to be represented/ reconstructed within a given cultural landscape to establish that particular nation/ state/ community’s idea of their heritage construction.

### **Heritage construction within the Indian context:**

Nick Merriman views (see Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and John Carman. 2009, p. 19) that different communities value different types of past – ‘a monumental, national or global history; or a more personalised, family and genealogical past.’ The ancient history, heritage and culture of India provides an endless diversity present within the nation in terms of topography, climatic conditions, flora and fauna, races, languages, and religion. This no doubt presented India as a country with rich, diverse and unique cultural heritage. Talking on the cultural heritage of India,

Dr. Ausaf Sayeed ([http://www.culturopedia.com/culture\\_intro.html](http://www.culturopedia.com/culture_intro.html) Accessed on 27/12/2010) writes:

India's culture has been enriched by successive waves of migration, which were absorbed into the Indian way of life. The successive waves of migration into India started with the [Indo-Greeks (2<sup>nd</sup> Century B.C.), the Kushans (First century A.D.), also] the incursions from the northwest by Arab, Turkish, Persian and others beginning in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and culminating with the establishment of the Muslim empire by the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and finally the advent of Europeans – [Portuguese, Dutch, English, Danes and French.] These interactions over the years led to introduction of newer elements in India's arts, music, literature and customs and traditions, thus enriching our cultural heritage.

It can be noted that long before the UNESCO Convention, India had passed laws to preserve and protect their national cultural heritage. The framers of the Constitution of India have provided legislation for the State<sup>1</sup> which can be found in the Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy, and Fundamental Duties (cf. P. M. Bakshi, 2009, pp. 66, 90, 92):

- **Article 29:1. Protection of interests of minorities:** Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.
- **Article 48 A. Protection and improvement of environment and safeguarding of forests and wild life:** The State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wild life of the country.
- **Article 49. Protection of monuments and places and objects of national importance:** It shall be the obligation of the State to protect every monument or place or object of artistic or historic interest, declared by or under law made by Parliament to be of national importance, from spoliation, disfigurement, destruction, removal, disposal, or export, as the case may be.
- **Article 51A (f): to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture.**

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<sup>1</sup> Here I use the term "State" to refer to the classical understanding of a State with the four elements of – territory, population, government and sovereignty. In this the community of people plays an important element in the functioning of the State for it is only through the relationship of the people with that of the State power/ government will the laws become relevant.

The material heritage of India has till now 28<sup>2</sup> sites listed in the World Heritage Sites which has been recognized by the UNESCO in accordance with the World Heritage Convention of 1972. Along with this, the diverse tangible and intangible cultural heritages such as the art and architecture, music, dances and festivals, linguistic, customs and rituals, and traditional Indian cuisines are showcased within the tourism industry to represent India's heritage. Cultural tourism in India has been one of the major factors behind the rapid rise of tourism<sup>3</sup> sector over the past few years. The India Heritage Travel Guide website provides visitors with travel information on the cultural heritage of India and related tours (<http://www.heritageinindia.com/cultural-heritage/index.html> Accessed on 30/10/2010), an extract from the website:

Be it music, dance, fine arts, cuisine, customs or festivals, the cultural heritage of India touches you in more than one way. Experience the age-old customs and traditions followed by Indians on your cultural heritage tour to India. Enjoy the sounds, sights and taste of India with Heritage in India.

The Ministry of Tourism and Culture set up by the Government of India has played an important role in the development of this particular sector. The Ministry initiated the advertising campaigns notably the 'Incredible India' which promotes India's culture by attracting tourist in a fresh and memorable way. Along with globalization, India's exchange with the outside world has led to a growing demand both within India and abroad for a comprehensive definition of what India actually is. The advertising campaigns carried forward for tourism gave a new image of India to the world, from 'the land of snake charmers to a hot and happening place and has sparked renewed interest among foreign traveler.'<http://www.iloveindia.com/economy-of-india/tourism-industry.html> Accessed on 11/04/2010)

As pointed out by Christine Buzinde (in Cameron McCarthy, et al., (eds), 2007, p. 241) the national identity is recognized through the "consumption of heritage commodities that symbolize essential elements of nation and home." It has been observed however that the promotion of such national identity through heritage constructions is produced from the viewpoint of the few

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<sup>2</sup> India has 28 listed heritage sites as of 2010, apart from these India has also maintained a list of 30 tentative sites which has been submitted to the UNESCO Committee for evaluation and approval. As for the already approved sites 23 have been classified under cultural heritage, and the remaining 5 comprises of natural heritages.

<sup>3</sup> Tourism sector in India contributes about 6.23% towards the national GDP and generates a total of 8.78% employment. Some of the popular states in India for cultural tourism would include Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, and according to World Travel and Tourism Council, India will become a tourism hotspot from 2009-2018. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism\\_in\\_India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_India) Accessed on 12/12/2010

'dominant minority group' (Homi Bhabha in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffens and Helen Tiffin, (eds), 1995, p. 6). Also as opined by Karl Marx (see Christine Buzinde in Cameron McCarthy, et al., (eds), 2007, p. 241) the actual ability to participate in the re/construction and re/presentation of the nation is available only to a select few. The myriad of cultural groups in the country has been established by the Government of India as coming together of diverse ethnic groups contributing to the national Indian identity. Out of this was constructed the popular idea of 'unity' based on 'cultural diversity'. Thus through this the Government promoted the idea of a collective identity defined by cultural difference. The relationship of politics and its involvement with the 'past' that is the use of the idea of heritage in identity formation within the context of Nagaland is further addressed below.

### **Interpreting the political ideologies within the State of Nagaland:**

#### **i) History:**

The political system of administration of the early Naga society has been characterized as one without unity and in constant hostility with one another. The village administration of the Naga society as discussed in an earlier chapter<sup>4</sup> existed as a republic, having its own popular village government and the transformation of this system as a result of the colonial British administration. The course of history since the first direct Anglo-Naga contact in 1832 up till 1947 has evidences of resistance by the various Naga tribes towards their conquest. These 115 years of British administration has been divided into three periods as explained by Hargovind Joshi (2001, p. 47): the first period from 1832 to 1850 was when the British assumed 'military promenades' in the Naga Hills; in the years 1851 to 1865 the British followed a policy of 'non-intervention' with regard to the Naga tribes, which was however abandoned in the third period; and since 1866 the British steadily extended and established their control and authority over the entire Naga Hills. The Nagas once socially and politically isolated was then exposed to an alien culture which was at first received with much resistance and distrust, as the Assam Census report (see M. Alemchiba, 1970, p. 131) notes:

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<sup>4</sup> Refer Chapter 2, p. 52

the Nagas showed extraordinary persistence in their [resistance] to our arms, and no less than three political officer came to a violent end, two being killed by the hillmen and one being accidentally shot by his own sentry, and it was not till 1881 that the district was finally pacified.

The Indo-Naga relationship as observed was heralded when the Simon Commission (also known as Indian Statutory Commission) then led by John Simon with Clement Attlee and E. Cadogan visited Kohima in January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1929 to understand the wishes of the Nagas with regard, to their political future once the British withdraw from India and Burma. The memorandum that was submitted to the Commission by the Naga Club expressed the feelings of Nagas for asserting their lost independence. An extract from the Memorandum of Naga Hills is as follows (cf. *ibid*, pp. 163, 164; Inato Yekheto Shikhu, 2007, pp. 94 - 96):

[...] Before the British Government conquered our country in 1879 – 1880 we were living in a state of intermittent warfare with the Assamese of the Assam valley to the North and West of our country and Manipuris to the South. They never conquered us, nor were we ever subjected to their rule. On the other hand we were always a terror to these people. Our country within the administered area consists of more than eight tribes, quite different from one another with quite different languages which cannot be understood by each other, and there are more tribes outside the administered area which are not known at present. We have no unity among us and it is only the British Government that is holding us together now.

[...] Though our land at present is within the British territory, Government have always recognized our private rights in it, but if we are forced to enter the Council all these rights may be extinguished by an unsympathetic council, the majority of whose number is sure to belong to other districts. We also much fear the introduction of foreign laws and customs to supersede our own customary laws which we now enjoy.

For the above reasons, we pray that the British Government will continue to safeguard our rights against all encroachments from other people who are more advanced than us by withdrawing our country from the reformed scheme and placing it directly under its own protection. If the British Government, however, want to throw us away, we pray that we should not be thrust to the mercy of the people who could never have conquered us themselves, and to whom we are never subjected; but to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times. We, the members of the Naga Club, claim to represent all those tribes to which we belong.

In May 1935 the recommendation by the Simon Commission on the Government of India Bill was passed. Keeping in view of the Nagas “immemorial rights and customs” as mentioned by Cadogan (see M. Alemchiba, 1970, p. 164) in the House of Commons, the Government of India Act 1935 declared that the Naga Hills District be treated as an ‘Excluded Area’ and that no Act of the Federal Legislature or of Assam Legislature was to apply to the Naga Hills. Thus the affairs of the Nagas were assigned to the Governor of the Province and the area was excluded from different Indian policies.

**ii) The rise of Naga nationalism:**

In April, 1945, C. R. Pawsey, the then Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills established the 'Naga Hills District Tribal Council' with the aim of uniting the Nagas. However this council did not last long, and in February, 1946, through a conference with representatives of the individual tribal councils re-emerged as the 'Naga National Council' (NNC). The aim of the NNC was to foster the welfare and social aspirations of the Nagas in the beginning, but later the council slowly extended its field of interest towards politics which led the NNC to become the first Naga political organization to work for the 'achievement of the solidarity for all the Nagas' including those of the unadministered<sup>5</sup> areas (ibid, Pg 165).

The relation between India and the Nagas since the beginning has been complex in its very nature, indicating attitudes both of friendship and of hostility. One notable incident for the eruption of conflict is the incident during a public protest on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1952 for the reported torture of a Naga minor by the Assam police in Dimapur. The protest turned violent when a police officer ran over a Naga pedestrian by his motor cycle and the demonstrators started assaulting the police officer while some others were protecting him. Consequently the Indian police shot Zasibito, an Angami tribal court judge who was not one of the demonstrators but was merely trying to protect the police officer. After this incident the hostility between the Indian armed forces and the Nagas slowly deteriorated, and by then the insurgency movement had begun to rise.

The demand for Naga Nationalism and separate statehood continued to grow, and by 1956 insurgency in Nagaland grew in strength and formed the Federal Government of Nagaland. With the declaration of the Naga Hills as a 'Disturbed Area' by the Government of India, followed by the Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958 the situation was further aggravated. By 1964 the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) decided to initiate peace talks through the formation of a Peace Mission. The outcome of this effort was the Cease-fire Agreement between the

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<sup>5</sup> The Naga Hills under the colonial rule was politically divided into three parts – first is the Naga Hills Districts which were fully and directly administered, second is the Control area where the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills exerts his political influence in cases of village feuds, and finally the unadministered area which was in part geographically unknown or unmapped. The unadministered territory included those areas in the east and the north-west of the Naga Hill District bordering Burma and Assam. (Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, 1983a, p. 201)



Federal Government of Nagaland and the Government of India, which, however did not last long. And in 1975 with the initiative of the Government of Nagaland and the NBCC the 'Shillong Accord'<sup>6</sup> was signed between the insurgent group and the Government of India.

In the more recent years, with the formation of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN); the NSCN-IM<sup>7</sup> in 1980, NSCN-K<sup>8</sup> in 1988, and NSCN-U<sup>9</sup> in 2007 – the initial ideology behind the Naga sovereignty movement can be seen as gradually disappearing. Instead it gave birth to factionalism and disunity among the different factions arising out of their different ideologies. This led to more violence within the State among the various Naga groups, disrupting the public order and the economic development of the State. The Indo-Naga talks with regard to their political autonomy and their identity is yet to be solved. The issue of tribalism within the Naga society had also set in, which further intensified the crisis within the State. It was at this juncture that the State government recognized the crucial need to bring together communities to strengthen the State's stability and thereby promote the 'unity in diversity' both for the 'insider' and 'outsider'.

### **Constructing the 'heritage' within a nationalistic scheme in the Naga society:**

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<sup>6</sup> The Shillong Accord was based on the agreement that the underground organizations would accept without conditions the Constitution of India, and to immediately surrender their arms with the hope for peace and well being of all. However the Shillong Accord has been criticized as one of the 'biggest blows to the Naga National Movement' (R. B. Thohe Pou, 2006), and also as expressed by Thuingaleng Muivah, NSCN-IM atonlonser, that the Shillong Accord has brought about divisions amongst the Naga national workers as it was an agreement to sell the Naga nation and the rights of the Naga people by accepting the Indian Constitution (Anon. 2010).

<sup>7</sup> The (NSCN-IM) was formed by Isak Chisi Swu, Thuingaleng Muivah and S. S. Khapleng opposing the 'Shillong Accord' signed by the then NNC. Their main objective was to establish a Greater Nagaland ('Nagalim' or People's Republic of Nagaland), their manifesto is based on the principle of Socialism for economic development and a spiritual outlook – 'Nagaland for Christ'.

([http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/nagaland/terrorist\\_outfits/nscn\\_im.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/nagaland/terrorist_outfits/nscn_im.htm) Accessed on 21/11/2010)

<sup>8</sup> The split in the NSCN was primarily due to the clan divisions among the Nagas, between the Konyaks and Tangkhuls, as such the Konyaks formed the (NSCN-K) under the leadership of Khole Konyak and S. S. Khapleng with the primary objective of establishing a 'Greater Nagaland' comprising of the Naga dominated areas of the neighboring States within India, and contiguous areas in Myanmar.

([http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/nagaland/terrorist\\_outfits/nscn\\_k.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/nagaland/terrorist_outfits/nscn_k.htm) Accessed on 21/11/2010)

<sup>9</sup> The Unification was an inter-factional 'true agreement' which was signed between few cadres and leaders of the NSCN-IM (kilo kilonser Azheto Chophy) and the rival NSCN-K (kilonser C. Singson) which was initiated and chaired by Hokiye, President of the Western Sumi [Sema] Hoho. This group claims to aim at unifying the two warring factions of the NSCN.

([http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/nagaland/terrorist\\_outfits/NSCN\\_U.HTM](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/nagaland/terrorist_outfits/NSCN_U.HTM) Accessed on 21/11/2010)

By the dawn of 21<sup>st</sup> century, the people's longing for peace came to a reality. The then Prime Minister of India, Shri. I. K. Gujral through a statement in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha announced, after talks with NSCN-IM, the declaration of cease-fire with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1997 for a period of three months. This was later extended further. With the declaration of cease-fire, a 'Cease-fire monitoring cell' was set up to implement the Ground rules that were laid down by the Government of India (<http://nagaland.nic.in/profile/history/peace.htm> Accessed on 21/11/2010). This 'cease-fire agreement' of 1997 has been, since the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, 2000 renewed and extended every year for a period of one year, much to the relief of the general public.

Taking into consideration the series of events that has ensued in Nagaland it is evident that the first thing that is of interest about Nagaland for 'outsiders' is the insurgency problem that has prevailed over decades. The issues with regard to their self-assertion will continue to be a dominant theme in the Naga politics in the years to come, however, realizing the need of the times and nature of development that has been occurring in other parts of the world the Government started to take initiatives for an 'image makeover' of the State. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century under the aegis of the then Chief Minister Shri S. C. Jamir, the State experienced changes and development to an extent. Jamir has been advocating reconciliation in the Naga society, particularly among the insurgent groups so that Nagas could come together for a permanent settlement of the Naga political issues through peaceful negotiations rather than violence with the Government of India (<http://nagaland.nic.in/minister/scjamir.htm> Accessed on 14/11/2010).

The beginning of the Hornbill festival in the year 2000 was initiated under Jamir's<sup>10</sup> leadership with the hope for a change in situation of the State and reminding the people that progress and prosperity will come to Nagaland only through the establishment of peace in the insurgency-affected State. Speaking on the occasion of the Hornbill festival, S. C. Jamir was quoted to say (cf. Kalyan Chaudhuri, 2003):

The spectre of violence between various factions of our underground brothers, particularly the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isaac-Muivah) and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang), continue to haunt us. Threats, demands, extortion, rape and all kinds of anti-social activities are indulged in

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<sup>10</sup> From 1993 – 2003 – this tenure was S. C. Jamir's fourth rule as the Chief Minister of Nagaland.

the name of a political movement. As much as we condemn terrorism in other parts of the world, we also must put a stop to such trends in our State. The State also has an image of being a disturbed area and does not attract much outside investment as many agencies hesitate to come to Nagaland. The political problem remains unresolved and for which a lasting solution is to be found. The people are fed up of violence. They want peace in their land.

Again with regard to the economic prospects of the Hornbill festival, Jamir further notes (ibid):

It has been successful in projecting the State as a unique tourist destination and in the process it is also celebrating the richness of the Naga cultural heritage. The tourism industry can boost the economy of the State at much lower environmental and financial cost. It can become the biggest job-creator and it can provide wide-ranging opportunities to our unemployed youth.

The use of heritage in the Naga society can be understood as playing an important role in peace-building and the process of reconciliation. The Governor of Nagaland, Shri Nikhil Kumar, addressing the gathering at the Hornbill festival, 2009 expressed the fact that the festival is possible only because of peace and stability that has been prevailing in the State. Looking at the festival space as a means which can strengthen the State's stability and development, and bringing in cultural harmony, he comments ([http://www.hornbillfestival.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=33&Itemid=2](http://www.hornbillfestival.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=33&Itemid=2) Accessed on 05/11/2010):

This festival is an occasion which helps in bringing emotional integration for all of us, and emotional integration is what we are looking for in times to come.

The effort of the Government of Nagaland for the promotion of the Hornbill festival can be viewed as an expression of valorization of the tangible as well as the intangible heritage of the Nagas and through which their identity is asserted. The site of the 'Heritage village' is used as a platform for the performance of all the cultural activities so as to present the Naga culture, traditions and heritage. The practice of head hunting, war and village raids prominent in the early Naga society that are re/presented at the festival delineates from the actual traditional rituals and social performances to a mere re/presentation of events. Such events through its re/production, re/presentation on the proscenium space makes the audience feel safe. The recreation of events from history within the festival space, and formalization of the proscenium thus gives access to spaces where audiences can articulate through such performances the socio-cultural identity. In performing the heritage, that of the traditional ritual war dances and head hunting reinforces the

Naga identity within a symbolic level. Taking into account the disputes and hostility towards each other at one time in history and the social isolation of the tribes, contrasting to this the coming together and performing at the Hornbill festival helps in constructing the imagined “ideal” of unity.

As pointed out by Dr. Tali Imsong<sup>11</sup> heritage is all about preserving ones ancestral culture and traditions, creating “awareness among the younger generation so that our old tradition continues”. Talking on the performance of the Hornbill festival he comments that it serves as a unique platform for creating communal harmony and presenting to the world that the Nagas are one and united despite differences in dialect, cultures and tradition.

Also as expressed by Adile<sup>12</sup>, heritage is that which represents everything about a person from where he comes – culture, language, costumes, food, agricultural means and methods and so on. Thereby promoting these through the Hornbill festival one becomes familiarized with one’s heritage which would otherwise have been lost. Heritage as understood is therefore the elements from the past that are used in the present for the needs and claims of social, political and economic ideals and the representations of the Naga’s past “dignity, glory and solemnity” legitimizes their cultural identity (quoting F. Fanon by Kendra Clegg in Nicholas Tarling and Edmund Terence Gomez, (eds), 2008, p. 175). It is feared among the Nagas that their cultural heritage which was once steeped in folklore, passed down through generations by word of mouth will be lost and forgotten. Hence, the cultural heritage reproductions and performances through this festival are crucial in the present context.

Along with the cultural heritage, for the first time in 2010 the event of the World War II vehicle peace rally was organized to keep the historic Battle of Kohima alive. With the participation of fourteen vintage World War jeeps, driven along a stretch of 70 kms from Dimapur to the World War II museum site at the Heritage village. Speaking on the occasion the Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio called upon the people to join hands to eradicate terrorism and war and propagate prevalence of peace in Nagaland. Rio further added that the World War II rally would be an annual event.

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<sup>11</sup> Personal interview with Dr. Tali Imsong on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2010, at the VIP Rostrum of Heritage village complex, Kisama. Dr. Tali is the Planning officer in the Art and Culture Department, Nagaland.

<sup>12</sup> Personal interview with Adile on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2010 at the VIP Rostrum of Heritage village complex, Kisama. Adile is a guide lecturer at the Art and Culture Department, Nagaland.

The Battle of Kohima in the history of World War II has marked Nagaland in the world map. The commemoration of the historic battle with the peace rally and also the setting up of the museum at the Heritage village becomes a part of the heritage of the Nagas. This adds to the attraction of tourists and the underlying message as expressed by the Chief Minister very well blends within the ideologies of the Government.

### **Tourism and heritage in Nagaland:**

Tourism as understood is the movement of people from one geographical location to another for purposes of adventure, relaxation, escape or business acts. The commercial transactions that accompany this have gained increased significance over the past few decades. Widely viewed as a valuable growth sector, international tourism is prominent on the economic policy agenda of many of the developing countries recognizing the opportunity to earn valuable foreign currency (Scarlett Cornelissen, 2005). With the amount of global tourism government institutions, tourist agencies and cultural centers began to view tourism as a vital element that bridges economic opportunities, educational issues and self-determination. The report of UNESCO, 1976 claims that Tourism is “more than an economic phenomenon with sociological and cultural effects; it has become a phenomenon of civilizations” and as such justifies a detailed ethnographic and historical attention (see Regina Bendix, 1989, p. 143).

Within the North-East India entry of Indian nationals and foreigners were restricted in many States of which Nagaland is one. The basic idea behind such restriction was to let the tribal's manage their own affairs without outside influence as well as protecting the people in these areas from demographic restructuring by larger migration groups. However, with the relaxation of these restrictions – the Inner Line Permit<sup>13</sup> (ILP), Protected Area Permit<sup>14</sup> (PAP) and Restricted

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<sup>13</sup> The ILP is required for Indian citizen which was issued under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873. This is applicable in the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Nagaland.

<sup>14</sup> Under the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958, issued under the Foreigners Act, 1946, the areas under the ‘Inner Line’ and the International border of the State were declared as Protected Area. In this every foreigner excluding citizens of Bhutan were required to obtain a special permit from a designated authority to enter and stay in a Protected and Restricted Area. However keeping the tourism aspect in mind, some of the notified tourist circuits were allowed for foreign tourists either as a couple or as individual, or in groups of four or more after obtaining necessary permit from the designated authority. Areas included along with the number of days allowed after obtaining PAP – Arunachal Pradesh (10 days), Manipur (5 days), Mizoram (10 days), Nagaland (10 days), and Sikkim (partly in Restricted Area and partly in Protected Area for 15 days).

Area Permit<sup>15</sup> (RAP) in 2000, there was an increase in the number of tourists visiting the State. In more recent news the Government of India keeping in view of the tourism prospects in the North-East has decided to lift the PAP to promote tourism in these State's which is to come into force with effect from 1 January, 2011. This will be in force for a period of one year on an 'experimental basis' (<http://www.nagalandpost.com/ShowStory.aspx?npoststoryiden=UzEwMzU2MTA%3D-vXXj8SBqw6M%3D> Accessed on 30/12/2010).

The arrival figures of tourists in Nagaland within a span of three years are shown in Table 3 (The figures are based on the report of the Ministry of Tourism, 2001).

| 1999                                    | 2000                                    | 2001                                   |
|---|---|--|
| 21041 (Domestic)<br>119 (International) | 13272 (Domestic)<br>451 (International) | 9946 (Domestic)<br>920 (International) |

Table 3

*decline in domestic tourism & increase in international.*

The tourism sector in Nagaland has seen a boost since the beginning of the Hornbill festival. Taking this into consideration the festival has over the past years been further uplifted under the leadership of Chief Minister Shri. Neiphiu Rio (2003 – till date). At present the festival events are organized in public-private partnership. However, as stated by the Chief Minister, the Government's policy is to slowly privatize the festival so that the Naga event managers and other entrepreneurs can take it up as a business venture and professionally manage it. The Government has made their plans of withdrawal clear by stating that the Government's role would only be that of a facilitator ([http://www.hornbillfestival.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=33&Itemid=2](http://www.hornbillfestival.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=33&Itemid=2) Accessed on 05/11/2010).

Within the framework of tourism the performance of the Naga heritage plays a vital role in the formation and deployment of the Naga identity. While the engagement with an audience unfamiliar with the community's culture makes the performance of the familiar cultural legacies a challenge as the presentation now has to take into account the factors such as communication to

<sup>15</sup> The Foreigners (Restricted Areas) Order, 1963 states that no foreigner can enter or stay in the 'Restricted Areas' without obtaining permit from the competent authorities. This is applicable to part of Sikkim.

an uninitiated audience, the marketability, the presentability, etc. On the other hand the presentations venture beyond tourism, that by doing so the locals are engaging themselves in their history and heritage on a regular basis so as to disseminate their tradition and culture within the community.

As stated by Khekiye Sema (2006, INTACH), “comunitisation” is the prime focus of the Government of Nagaland as far as tourism is concerned so as to create a common ground to get a glimpse of the variety of Naga ‘culturescape’ in one place. The organizers planning for the Hornbill festival uses tourism as the key factor to advance the project of Naga identity at a national and international level. The re/production, re/construction of the Heritage village is structured such that it is to be consumed at that particular site which is a portrayal of an idealized village with references to the past. Tourism brings out the differentiation of the local performance sites which are essential to the formation of the local identity. The self presentation by the Tourism department in *Nagaland: the State with a difference* (2005) highlights the saying ‘Nagaland is a State where life is one long festival’ and the Hornbill festival as a destination where one can ‘see a mélange of Naga culture on display in one place’. It further states ‘if you are tourist with a keen interest in people, their customs, food habits, sports, dances and songs, you will be more than satisfied’ suggesting to tourists that the event is a ‘must see’. The potentiality of culture to attract tourists to such cultural destinations has allowed for the dependence of tourism on performances at tourist sites.

An example of unique model village is the ToupHEMA village, 41 kms from Kohima the communitisation of assets has been generating income for its villagers. The tourists get to experience the traditional Naga’s daily way of life, says Khekiye Sema, further the ToupHEMA village council has a village development board responsible for the overall planning and development, it also has a tourism committee that coordinates with the Tourism Department and private tour operators and at the same time runs a community kitchen for guests. Here whenever a visitor arrives they are greeted with a welcome drink (traditional rice beer), followed by music and traditional dance, there is also story telling sessions, and the villagers showing the tourists how to cook local dishes. (Samudra Gupta Kashyap, 2008)

The village tour package duration normally is for two days and one night. Similar other village packages include the Khonoma Green village in Kohima – this village has over 30 sq km of Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan<sup>16</sup> Sanctuary, the village is also known for the historic series of battles<sup>17</sup> that were fought with the British which adds to the value and heritage of the village. The other is the Benreu village in Peren, as included on the Tour Guide booklet published by the Directorate of Tourism:

[...] 1950 metres above sea level, houses a unique community where 20 per cent of an animist population dictates the customs and social rules of the majority Christians. A tourist village preserved around the ethnic-tourism concept, Benreu is a living showcase of the endangered culture of these highlanders. With a dense wildlife sanctuary around it, the visitor can literally embark upon his wild safari by staying comfortably in this real animist village. If you are in Benreu, then do not forget to have the Kennie Nku, the local bread made from sticky rice and prepared over a heated stone kiln.

Along with these there are other tour packages (ranging from ` 500 - ` 5200 per pax) from which tourists can choose accordingly. This shows that ‘heritage’ is being “packaged, priced, and sold to the public, including the inheritors themselves”. While at the same time those in power positions are the ones who chooses what aspects of knowledge is to be selected, promoted and framed, as pointed out by Andr?e Grau (in Mohd Anis Md Nor, et al., (eds), 2009, p. 11). Tourism, in this sense, recognizes the visual consumption of place as one of its key aspects; the ‘tourist gaze’ as articulated by John Urry (1990) is the way in which people view places which are constructed through signs directed and managed by tourism, that is, the way in which people travel through a destination is highly structured.

People have been travelling to destinations so as to experience the unique characteristics of other societies, learning their history, heritage and lifestyles. Taking this into consideration the tourism industry strives to present to the tourist a destination image by drawing upon the social and cultural elements through which the identity of that place is enhanced. Another marketing strategy of tourism is to produce souvenirs imbued with symbolic representations of places, cultures, and/ or events for tourists to buy or collect. Christine Ballengee-Morris (2002, p. 232) observes that the process of participating in the world of tourism by maintaining identity,

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<sup>16</sup> Tragopan Blythii (Jerdon) is one of the five species of Tragopan found in the Himalayan region, it is a rare and endangered pheasant found only in Nagaland. Tragopan Blythii or Blyth’s Tragopan is the State Bird of Nagaland.

<sup>17</sup> The British after a series of battle in Khonoma, which was considered one of the strongest village was finally captured in famous battle of Khonoma 1879, this battle is considered as one of the most brutal fighting that had taken place in the Naga Hills.



culturally and economically has led to an interesting phenomenon that is the selling of 'cultural image'.

According to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995, p. 371):

Tourism and heritage are collaborative industries, heritage converting locations into destinations and tourism making them economically viable as exhibits of themselves. Locations become museums of themselves within a tourism economy. Once sites, buildings, objects, technologies, or ways of life can no longer sustain themselves as they once did, they "survive" – they are made economically viable – as representations of themselves. They stage their own rebirth as displays of what they once were, sometimes before the body is cold.

The numerous representations of the Naga's traditional customs, dance and music, as well as the *Morung* system which have ceased to be in practice in the present context and as such are in danger of disappearance are being reconstructed in the 'Heritage village' by the organizers so that these 'heritage' of the Naga's survive, thereby adding value to such cultural assets.

#### **Authenticity of performance and the audience (tourist/ community member) / performer dichotomy:**

The whole idea of tourism brings about the inevitable question of its authenticity. For the purpose of this chapter authenticity will be understood as that which has the quality of being real or being genuine. That whether the performances and reproduction of cultural elements are worthy of acceptance or supported by unquestionable evidence. The basic argument in this context is that the transformation of cultural features into commodities for tourist consumption serves as a great medium in the reconstruction of the local culture. However during such processes the cultural authenticity is compromised when artistic objects are created with tourist's interest in mind. As Dean MacCannell (1973) points out in his concept of 'staged authenticity' that the staging of local cultures is to create an impression of authenticity to satisfy tourists' demands.

impl period

The cultural practices of the ancient Naga comprising of folk dances, music, and community feasts were performed as rituals and in celebration of community activities. Here the notion of performer and audience was not relevant – for each member of the village was a participant

performer. These performances were expressions of their communal feeling which were integrally related with all the aspects of their social life and not merely recreational. As mentioned earlier, changes in culture resulted in abandoning of traditional practices. However, being a part of their ethnic culture, such traditional forms are preserved and performed during the tribal festivals and few other occasions. With the introduction of the Hornbill festival these forms are now being performed for tourists as well.

Heritage as understood is legacy from the past, of traditions passed down from generation to generation. The source of knowledge of such traditions is found in the oral traditions in the Naga society which, as observed from my field work, were conclusively bestowed upon with much authority by the tribal performers from the village. As such, the representations of cultural practices were accepted as 'this is how it used to be' with the ancestors. However, the performers do agree that there have been minor changes in the way the costumes are worn. Christianity was accepted by the Sangtams as their religion in the year 1918, Chare village was the first to convert which was followed by the other villages. With regard to passing down of traditions the authority of the present village elders are regarded. These village elders were said to be aged around 70 years or above. They are regarded as the first generation of the newly converted Christians and the traditional knowledge that was passed on to them by their parents and elders is thus considered to be authentic. Such oral histories, taking into considering its importance, efforts have/ are being made to record the traditional cultural legacies for preservation and reference in the future.

When asked about the authenticity of the cultural performances at the Hornbill Festival, K. T. Thomas Rengma replied (personal interview on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2010):

There is not much change, some combination of change and originality is there. People are becoming modern [being] a government put up show, at home they may be putting new modern hairstyle but for hornbill festival they may just cut their hair and perform. Originally they are not supposed to wear anything except traditional Naga kilt, but here they may be wearing half pants or underwear and perform. We cannot call it very authentic or original, but we have to change with the times.

From the viewpoint of the spectator, as observed by Neha Dixit<sup>18</sup> (personal interview on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2010) she notes:

The performances are not very artificial or manicured, there is no stage and the cultural groups come from villages mostly, they are not like practice groups from the cities or town they are actually villagers who come and they perform with passion. [A] lot of people cannot travel to interiors for [different] reasons so they can just come to the hornbill festival and see all the 16 tribes, try out different food, buy things, watch the performances, it's really nice for people who do not have much time ... a lot of foreign travelers, but I don't think there is enough people from other parts of India ... not too many from North or South unless they are journalists, perhaps there should be more awareness across India.

The cultural presentations for tourists at the Hornbill festival are staged performances. Here, delineating from Dean MacCannell's view on 'staged authenticity', it has been observed that the performed authenticity moves beyond the satisfaction of the tourist's demands. The different tribes, by performing together in one platform showcasing different aspects of culture and tradition, the performers as well spectators get to learn about each other's tribe. As pointed out by K. T. Thomas Rengma (personal interview on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2010) the Hornbill festival tries to achieve 'cultural assimilation or a kind of acculturation' and also as an important platform for dissemination of culture.

Through the course of interviews and dialogues that was held with the Sangtam cultural troupes, it became clear that the motive for coming to participate at the Hornbill festival was the desire to learn about other tribes, about others' cultures and traditions while presenting to others their ancestors/ forefathers' traditional customs and way of life – such as practice of agricultural activities, performances of dance and folk songs in relevance to a particular activity, etc. As learned from the interviews and discussions, the role of the Art and Culture Department of the Government of Nagaland extends only till the selection of which cultural troupes or village/ town are to perform at the festival for a particular year. Therefore the selection of repertoire that is to be represented/ showcased for tourists/ audiences depends on the cultural troupes – the performers.

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<sup>18</sup> Neha Dixit is a show anchor on NDTV Good Times, she has been traveling around in Nagaland for 3 years at the time of the interview, presenting shows on national television from her tours in the districts of Mon, Mokokchung, Zunheboto, Wokha, Peren, Kohima, Dimapur and several villages within this districts.

As expressed by H. Setsala Sangtam (Personal interview on 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2010), President of the Sangvi cultural club, the fear of losing their cultural heritage and identity is also what has motivated them to form the Sangvi club. She further went on to say that she hopes for the younger generation to realize the importance and learn about the cultures and traditions of their ancestors. She adds, “We are becoming old now and so the club is thinking of teaching our girls, daughters how to dance during their vacation break from school. Society will not remain the same as generations will come and go, so we wish to pass on our knowledge to the young ones.”

## CONCLUSION

The high point of the Hornbill festival 2010 as observed and also acknowledged by Yitachu, Parliamentary Secretary for tourism Nagaland, had been the performance of the 'Hornbill Unity Dance' at the closing of the festival. As expressed by Yitachu (in *Nagaland Post*, December 8, 2010, p. 1) the motto of the State Government on the message of 'peace and unity' was displayed when the 480 performers from all the sixteen cultural troupes joined hands in unison for the unity dance, adding that it was "the spirit of unity we could display in action". This framing of the Naga identity and the projection of one-ness can be seen as structured within the domain of the political administrators. The mode of cultural re-productions, re-presentations that are structured by the community of Nagas to that of those in power positions can be associated in terms of what Marshall Sahlins (1985, p. 138) writes:

In their different ways, the commoners and chiefs responded to the divine strangers according to their own customary self-conceptions and interests.

Either way the reference to their culture has acquired new functional values. The presentation of performances by the tribal communities can be understood as a pragmatic approach to showcase/exchange their respective customs and traditions to the outsiders – the tourists and also to those outside their tribal community. On the other hand, those in the power positions assume the role of a mediator – to project a larger social relation and at the same time bringing in economic growth and development in the State.

It would be, however, unjustified to talk about the Hornbill festival as an entirely traditional show. The progress and change in the Naga society is also innovated in the celebration of the festival. To quote K. T. Thomas Rengma (see Kartyk Venkatraman, 2005):

Many western tourist come here expecting to see the so-called 'original' Nagaland, with semi-naked tribals and their costumes. What they find is a modernised society. So, at the Hornbill Festival, we give them a flavour of old and new Nagaland.

Events like the 'Hornbill Fashion Nite' (held on 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2010) at the Heritage Bamboo Hall were organized by the Departments of Tourism, Art & Culture in association with Hope Centre for Excellence. This provided a platform for the prominent designers from Nagaland to

showcase their works not only for the locals, but also national and international crowd. Outside the Heritage village space but part of the Hornbill festival were events like the 'Fashions of North East India' (held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2010) which was organized for the competition of the best designers from the North Eastern States<sup>1</sup>. The annual events like Hornbill International Motor Rally and the Great Hornbill Rock Contest have become a part and parcel of the Hornbill festival. The rock contest attracts rock bands from all over the country as well as Naga bands to compete for cash prize (₹ 5 lakh in 2010, prize money keeps increasing almost every year).

The shifts in cultural patterns in the Naga society as analyzed by Alban von Stockhausen (in M. Oppitz, 2008, p. 74):

This generation speaks English, wears western clothes, founds bands that play western music, organises beauty pageants, or a 'Naga Idol' show, and steadily loses itself through a lack of alternatives in the standard fare churned out by global mainstream culture.

With the trend of modernization that has set in the Hornbill festival it also targets the younger generations to bringing them back to their roots. Mediums such as the events mentioned become the only way to bring them together and while doing so it gives them the opportunity to understand the socio-cultural fabric of Naga cultural traditions. The Hornbill festival in this sense can be understood as an effort to portray the Naga identity as a unique culture centered on inter-cultural plurality and globalization.

It was interesting to note that unlike the previous years the Hornbill Rock Contest in 2010 shifted its venue from the Heritage village complex to Kohima at the Indira Gandhi Stadium. The reason being that youngsters coming to attend the rock show often start drinking which has been viewed as a menace to the general atmosphere of the Heritage village. The organizers of the festival suggested that this move was taken to prevent drunk driving which has been the cause of many road accidents in the hills during the past festive seasons. In the same year, organizers of the festival also issued a notice that no Indian manufactured foreign liquor was to be sold in any of the food stalls (prior to which it was available) except for the traditionally brewed rice beer. With this change in venue of the rock concert, evenings at the Heritage village became less active and quite. Other than tourists and Naga families coming to dine in authentic Naga food, there has

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<sup>1</sup> Participating States included Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim.

*What  
is this  
drinking  
to?*

been a marked decline of visiting Naga youths compared to other years which was suggested by one of the proprietor of a food stall at the site.

The power play within this can be realized in the need to do away with profanity within the site of the festival. Moreover the fact that Nagaland being a 'dry State' might have raised issues among the various social groups and organizations which were however not mentioned. The point I want to stress here is that the planners of the festival through such interventions assumes the role of a mediator thereby choosing 'what and what not' are to be projected. This leads us to the fact that the whole construction and framing of the Naga identity can be viewed as a structured representation of the ideal. // imp

The series of performances at the Hornbill festival presented by each of the sixteen tribes consisting of tribal war dances, dance of imitations (of the movements of animals, birds or insects), indigenous games and sports, tribal folk songs, enactments of traditional customs and practices, etc, has been explained in Chapter 1. The dominant themes were related to their agricultural practices, expressions of their association with the natural environment and other daily tasks. Each tribe's performance/ presentation is considered unique and varied which arises from their ancestor's tribal world-view that had been passed down from generations to generations through the practice of oral tradition. These repertoires of cultural performances are regarded as invaluable expressions of their ancestor's socio-cultural life and thus a part of their identity. Also the *Morungs*, a central feature in the social life of the early Nagas is also re/constructed at the Heritage village.

The conscious effort of bringing together the various tribes and their cultural presentations at the Hornbill festival opens up new ways of re/asserting the Naga identity. For tourists (outsiders) such performances and representation of Nagas' past guides them to an idea of Naga culture and identity. While for the locals (insiders) it gives them the opportunity to go back to their roots and at the same time learn more about each other's culture and identity. The State Government through this festival is trying to bring to the front the unified Naga identity with the popular notion of unity in diversity and that too against the reality of the fractured identity of the sub-groups. The unifying factor of identity of the Naga-ness is thus sought in the eyes of the outside world, as well as within the members of all the Naga tribes. Policy decisions of this kind can be

viewed as means to sustain the wellbeing and overall peace in the region and not to forget in the context of Nagaland's relationship with India where this agenda is being hard-pressed by the Central Government.

I have talked about ethnic identity and how this is perceived within the Naga community in Chapter 2. Their village administration, social and cultural organization of the *Morung* system and the rituals involved in the tribal festival with particular reference to the Mongmong festival of the Sangtams has been dealt with. In doing so I have brought about how the identity of the earlier tribal community revolved around myths, customs and traditions, and phases of their institutional life at the *Morung* within their village republic. Since the beginning of British rule, acceptance of Christianity and modern education, the above mentioned traditional features declined and became less significant. In the present context, as mentioned in Chapter 2, Temsula Ao (2006, p. 7) talks about the shifting identities of a Naga. The loss of the earlier understanding of the Naga identity has been analyzed by Naga writers and scholars alike as resulting from acculturation and enculturation process in the Naga society over the years. Observing the Hornbill festival, as a performance playing their identity thereby serves useful to re-discover, re-visit their cultural values and traditions.

The construction of heritage has been analyzed in terms of the revival of the tangible and intangible heritage within the social, political and economical ideologies of the State Government of Nagaland. Whereby in doing so the 'past', in the present context is used to recapture and reassert their heritage, and identity. Within this structured formation the planners of the festival bring focus on the heritage of the Nagas, while the act of bringing together the sixteen tribes puts across the message of cultural heritage as belonging to each of these tribes which contributes to their sense of identity. The study of heritage in this research has thus been analyzed in relationship to identity formation (the ideological) and also as a means of generating income through cultural tourism (the commercial).

Scholars have talked about how in the early years Nagas were living as socio-cultural and political isolates. However, the introduction of modern education directed the Nagas towards a spirit of nationalism. The need for a common identity was and is emphasized through the politicization of Naga ethnicity and their claims to tribal solidarity or nationalism is based on



ethnic bonds such as – common history of origin, culture, self-governing institutions, birth right and heritage of territory. The performance of the heritage at the Heritage village site has proved useful in presenting the region via Hornbill festival as one of the cultural destination for visiting tourists. As already described in Chapter 3 the initiation of the Hornbill festival has helped in the flow of tourists to the State. This has in turn brought/ bringing in development and progress within the State. Demand for hotels to accommodate tourists has given rise to opening of more hotels, prior to which the only two decent accommodations were the Tourist lodge and Hotel Japfü at Kohima, both of which were initially promoted by the Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC). The need for development of more places to stay and for recreation along with the urgent need for better and improved road connectivity throughout the State has been stressed by the State's Governor Nikhil Kumar in his inaugural address at the Hornbill festival 2010. Also as pointed out by K. T. Thomas Rengma (personal interview on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2010) the Hornbill festival has been successful in creating employment opportunities for atleast around thirty to forty youths as tour guides, operators, etc. who were earlier unemployed.

In this research my attempt has been to present an overview of how the Nagas look at themselves with regard to their identity within a changing socio-cultural context. The culture of any given society is subject to change according to the times and the socio cultural milieu of the period. Likewise, in Naga society the cultural shifts brought about by Christianity, western education and more recently through globalization led to changes in the Naga cultural patterns of thoughts, behaviors, customs and values and so on. The past few years have seen the State Government taking initiatives in constructing the Naga identity by encouraging its people to preserve and protect such cultural values and traditions. The Hornbill festival and also the Road Shows<sup>2</sup> are some of the major initiations taken up by the State Government which aims at development of identity consciousness.

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<sup>2</sup> The State Road Shows was launched in 2009 by the State government, held in all the eleven districts of the State which coincides with the major festival of each tribe in the concerned district. Incorporating the Road Shows with the festival encourages the people to display their unique features like their songs and dances, traditional sports, feasting rituals, handicraft skills and culinary talents, farming methods and local agricultural products, and so on. Thus, through this it provides a platform for each tribe to exclusively showcase their unique cultural practices and rituals giving an opportunity for other tribes and visitors to learn more about the host tribe. [Anon., 2010. Road Shows: A boon for tourism. In *Nagaland Post* January 24, 2010.

<http://www.nagalandpost.com/ShowStory.aspx?npoststoryiden=UzEwMjE2ODk%3D-MKkcOLjk6k4%3D>  
Accessed on 21/11/2010]

To conclude, the process of cultural manifestations as observed, analyzed and represented through the Hornbill festival including the performances of repertoires, projects their distinct traditional practices. The performances based on their age old traditions, customs and practices are re/presented and re/enacted for themselves as well as for the others. Past traditions are thus revived and retained as well as staged. This staging of performance at the festival, therefore, has been viewed through my study as the principal tool to explore Naga traditions and their roots, ultimately leading to the presentation of the Naga heritage and identity.

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ILLUSTRATIONS



Image 1



Image 2





Image 3



Image 4



Image 5



Image 6



Image 7



Image 8





Image 9



Image 10



Image 11





Image 12



Image 13



Image 14





Լուսանկար 11



Լուսանկար 10



Լուսանկար 12