

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the unresolved question of Naga origins, analyzing oral traditions, colonial records, and archaeological findings. The research challenges the monolithic narratives imposed by outsiders, instead revealing a complex interplay of migrations, inter-tribal exchanges, and localized adaptations that shaped Naga identity. These findings underscore the need for Indigenous-centered historiography in understanding Nagaland's past. The origin of the Naga people in Nagaland remains a contested and under-researched topic in anthropology, history, and Indigenous studies. While various theories—ranging from migration narratives to autochthonous (indigenous) claims—have been proposed, there is no definitive consensus due to:

1. Lack of Written Records – Naga history has been primarily oral, leading to fragmented and sometimes conflicting accounts.
2. Colonial & Outsider Interpretations – Early British administrators and ethnographers often categorized the Naga based on superficial observations, leading to biased or oversimplified classifications.
3. Diversity Among Naga Tribes – With over 16 major tribes and numerous sub-tribes, each with distinct languages and origin myths, constructing a unified Naga ethnogenesis is challenging.
4. Political Implications – Debates over Naga origins influence modern identity politics, particularly in the context of Naga nationalism and resistance to assimilation.

This study aims to provide a comprehensive ethnographic overview of the various Naga tribes residing in the Indian state of Nagaland. By delving into oral histories and cultural practices, it seeks to document and analyze their traditional clothing, rituals, adornments, inheritance systems, and economic structures. The research endeavors to explore how these elements have evolved and how they contribute to the collective identity of the Naga people.

Specific Aims:

To explore the historical evolution and origin of the Naga tribes in Nagaland.

- This will involve a detailed investigation into the oral traditions and legends surrounding the genesis and migration patterns of the Naga people.
- The study will examine how the tribes' cultural identities and appearances have transformed over time, in response to internal developments and external influences.
- Special attention will be given to major historical transitions and the differing narratives that emerge from oral histories, highlighting diverse interpretations and hypotheses.

2. To document and interpret the oral sources relating to the origin of the Naga tribes.
 - Oral history is the cornerstone of the Naga people's cultural transmission. This aim focuses on preserving and analyzing narratives that have been passed down through generations.
 - The study will identify common themes, symbolic meanings, and tribal variations within these oral accounts, aiming to reconstruct a multifaceted picture of tribal origin and migration.
3. To conduct a comparative analysis of different Naga tribes.
 - Given the rich multi-tribal composition of the Naga people, this aim emphasizes a comparative approach to understand the similarities and differences among various tribes.
 - Key aspects of comparison will include clothing styles, ritual practices, systems of inheritance, decorative arts, and economic activities.
 - This analysis will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of tribal identities and inter-tribal dynamics within the broader socio-cultural fabric of Nagaland.

There is a lot of speculation on where the term "Naga" came from. Before the year 13 A.D., there was neither a written nor an oral history of the Naga people. It wasn't until the arrival of the British that the term "Naga" started to be used in a widespread manner to refer to the tribes that lived on the Naga hills. When the "CHAO SUKAPHA" and "TAKAI" kings of Thailand were on their way to invade Assam in the year 1228 A.D., they also assaulted the Naga people. As a result, people began to hear the word "Nagas" more often. Before that time, the people who lived in these hills referred to themselves by the names of their tribes, which were also used by the majority of people in Assam and across East India. The term "Naga" refers to headhunters who lived in the hills and were naked.

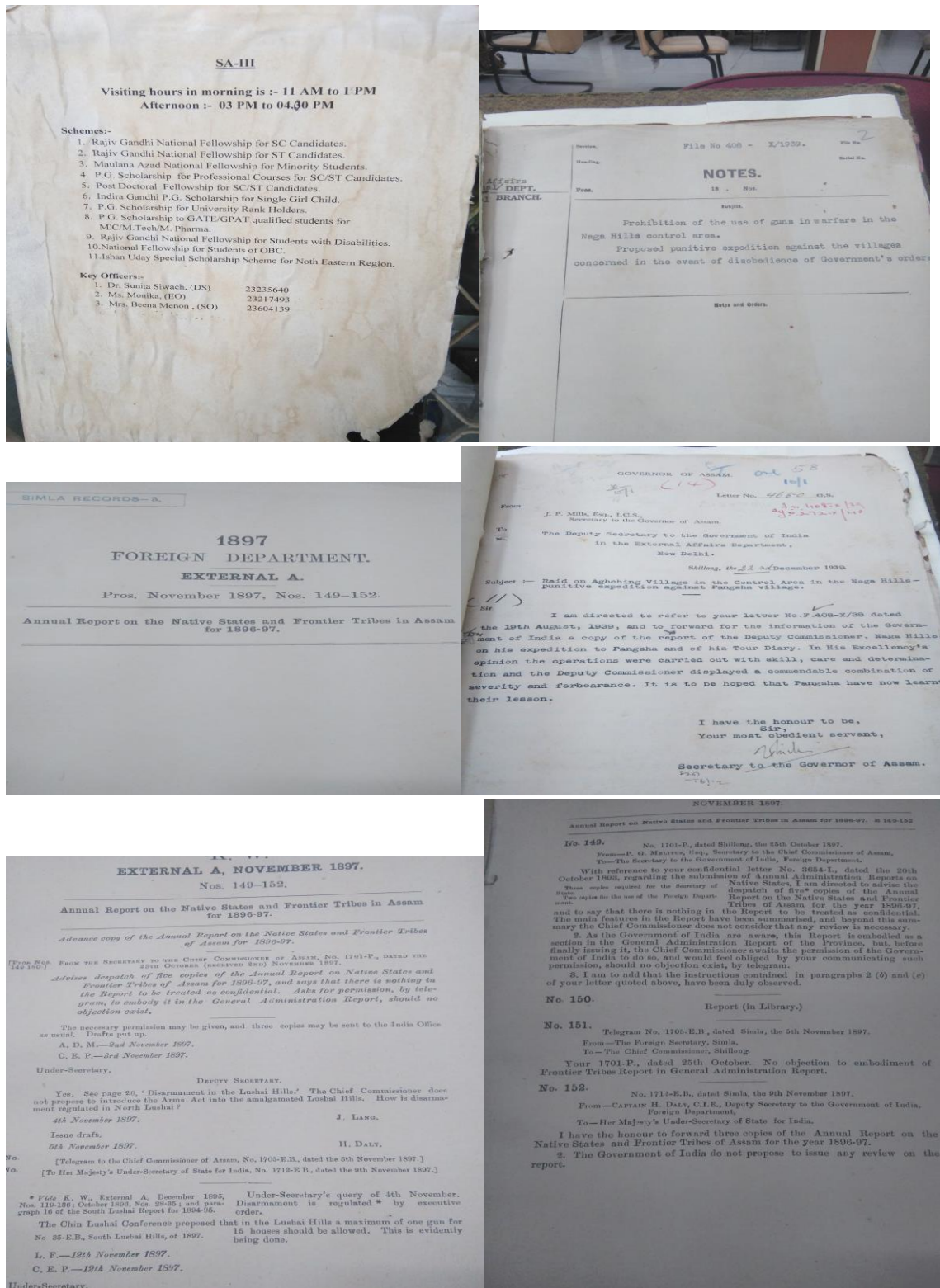


Figure No.16 Image of reports from the National Archive of Delhi (Sources: PhD scholar)

The initial interaction between the Naga people and the Ahom people took place during the reign of SUKAPHA, the first monarch of the Ahom kingdom, which began around the year 1228 A.D. As the Ahom kingdom quickly expanded, there were many confrontations between the Ahoms and the Nagas, but on the whole, the Ahoms kept surrounding tribes under control and collected tributes from them. This was even though there were regular clashes between the Ahom and the Nagas. As a kind of compensation, the Naga people were given tax-free land and fishing waterways, with the understanding that they would abstain from conducting any more predation expeditions into the plains.¹

THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD NAGA IS UNKNOWN; However, there is scant evidence to back up this etymological derivation, as the Bengalees were far more familiar with the Khassias and Garos than they were with the Nagas, and the Garos in particular are traditionally accustomed to a greater degree of nudity than the Nagas. It would indicate that none of the hill tribes themselves are familiar with the appellation "Naga," regardless of where the name "Naga" came from in the first place. The people who live in these villages belong to a diverse range of groups or races, and the only names by which they refer to themselves are those given to them by the tribes to which they belong; there is no overarching term that is used for all of the races. There does seem to be, however, some distinguishing feature that differentiates these tribes from others that surround them, as well as some common links that bind them all together as a single people, even if they may be now separated into tribes due to the variety of dialects they speak. All of today's tribes may have this connection with their ancestors, the big indigenous population who settled in the highlands thousands of years ago. People of different ethnicities may have sought refuge in the billows from time to time, bringing with them their languages. However, it's also likely that they've assimilated into the old stock in terms of habits, manners, and, most importantly, religious superstitions. They are more likely to marry within the Naga society and make alliances with other Naga groups rather than with members of other tribes. This is even though they are always at war with one another and speak such drastically different dialects that members of even close-by tribes can't understand one another unless a third dialect is used as a bridge. It seems that the Nagas are distinct from their neighbors in terms of their physical appearance as well. This is because all Nagas, despite their wide variety, have characteristics such as extreme crudeness and barbarism in appearance and extreme shyness, heaviness, and boredom in character. Some of the rituals practiced by these various groups of people have commonalities. Furthermore, they are easily distinguished from one another because javelins and spears are their exclusive means of protection. Due to the lack of data, it is impossible to make any inferences regarding the Naga people's genetic background from their linguistic makeup. The apparent diversity in the languages spoken by the various tribes makes it plausible and likely to conclude that they did not all descend from a single progenitor. Therefore, although some of the tribes may have languages that are descended from the same root, others have languages that are unique from one another. It is anticipated that a more

¹ Kumar, B.B. 1973: *Origin of the word 'Naga', Highlander: The bulletin of the Culture Research and State Museum*, 1(1), March, Pp. 6-31.

widespread familiarity with the people and a more rigorous attention to the languages of the people will soon be able to shed light on these fascinating races. Already, two or three members of the American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions have established themselves in the Naga hills, and they have become so familiar with the language of the tribe amongst whom they have located themselves (the Namsangiyas), that they have been able to get up a few elementary books in that dialect, and to open a school for the education of the children. This has allowed them to open a school for the education of the Namsangiyas.² We shall soon owe a debt of gratitude to these extraordinary people for the wealth of information they have provided us with on the Naga tribes and the goods of the hills where they have made their home. The Nagas, who have been the scourge and prey of their more civilized neighbors since the beginning of time, may soon begin to emerge from the deep barbarism that has made the tribe of Cach hill an enemy to that of the next, and which has prevented an Alpine tract of great natural resources and high fertility, from supporting more than a very small population. This is to be hoped, with the blessing of Divine Providence, through the efforts of these excellent men. It stretches for around 36 miles in length and 18 miles in breadth at its widest point. Manipur's verdant and rich valley may be found at an altitude of around 2,500 meters. The Manipuris of this valley are frequently thought to be unrelated to the many Nagas found elsewhere in the nation. Nonetheless, there is no evidence suggesting that the Manipuri language is unconnected to the languages spoken by any of the Naga tribes. Additional research has a significant likelihood of revealing similarities between the two tongues. According to the Reverend Mr. Brown of Jaipur, there are clues suggesting a connection between the Manipuri and Singpho languages. The Manipuris are significantly more developed as a civilisation and have a written language than any of the Naga tribes. This might be attributed in great part to the favorable conditions of their location, which promote consistent farming and provide enough resources to keep the locals living in reasonable comfort. Regardless, the Manipuris have reached a far higher level of civilisation than any of the Naga peoples. We know very little about the Naga, save for a select few of their primary subgroups. To the south and west of Manipur are the Koongjuices, who inhabit the hills; to the north and west, the Marams; to the east and northeast, the Laohoopas and Ungkools; and to the north and west, the Angamis, who inhabit the same valley. It is unclear to us, however, whether any of these designations really represent any of these federated tribes, or if the people even recognize these words.³ Assamese Nagas live on the northern slopes of the mountains draining into the Brahmaputra; these are the mountains being mentioned here. Nagas are the general term for these people, but the Nagas that make their homes on the mountaintops are known as Arbors or Abor Nagas. They fight constantly because they don't want the Arbors to engage in direct barter with the people of Assam, and because they don't want the Nagas living in the interior to have access to the marketplaces that they do. The Nagas of the lower ranges are very protective of the wealth that comes from their ties to the province. The jealousy is so pervasive that the Arbors are banned from Assamese markets and the Nagas of the northern

² Kumar, B.B. 1973: *Origin of the word 'Naga', Highlander: The bulletin of the culture Research and state Museum*, 1(1), March, Pp. 6-31

³ Barma, Padmanath, 1892: *Naga (in Assamese). The Bijuli* (Calcutta), S. 1814. Pp 12-70.

hills are prohibited from trading with Ava or Manipur. The Naga people live in a number of small settlements between the Namsang River and the Assam border to the east. The more powerful Singphos seem to be oppressing the Naga to the point that the latter are effectively treated as slaves. However, the recent development of our utmost authority has helped them out, which is great news. The Khunung people, who dwell in the mountains where the Irrawaddy River begins, may also be Naga, despite the fact that they are seldom referred to as such. In practice, however, this overarching grouping is seldom utilized to characterize them. Assam is home to many Naga tribes, including the Namsangiya, the Borduriay (sometimes spelled Borduwarias), and the Panidawarias, all of which need more attention than they now get. These tribes have traditionally been required to pledge their fealty to the Rajas of Assam in exchange for access to very important saline springs. Both the Nagas and the government of Assam have historically relied on the export of salt from the hills, and the Nagas have relied on the markets of Assam to exchange salt for grain and other goods. This has led to a climate of mutual respect and understanding between the two peoples. As a result, the Naga highlands have always been accessible to the plains people, and the Nagas have never been denied access to the border towns' markets. Recent tariffs on Naga salt have been particularly onerous, and the method in which they have been enforced has resulted in a considerable degree of extortion on the part of individuals who are responsible for collecting taxes. The individuals who were tasked with collecting the taxes levied tolls at the springs on the hills and the markets below. Both the salt and the goods the Nagas received in exchange for it were taxed in this way. Tax collectors were present in both places where they were expected to be. The old method was quite onerous for the people of Sibpur, Lieutenant Brodie discovered upon taking command of the region. Therefore, he got rid of all the fees the villagers had to pay for the salt they got. Taxes in the form of commodities are now in effect, with the revenues amounting to 3,264, 13.4 rupees from the sale of 652 maunds, 38 seers, and 11 chittacks of salt at the current rate of 5 rupees a maund.

With the monthly costs subtracted out (a total of 120 rupees, or 1,440 rupees a year), the net ROI is 1,824:13:4. The Nagas own the vast majority of the salt wells in the highlands. The former Assamese government was able to negotiate shared ownership of some of the wells, with the Nagas granted the right to draw brine for a certain time each day.⁴ Raja Purunder Sing allocated a certain number of pykes to the works because he anticipated a high return on investment from this privilege. The British government has yet to exercise its prerogative in these wells because the Pyke technique has been abandoned, and it is highly unlikely that it would be as profitable under a system of hired labor, at least not without some method of boiling the brine that is more profitable than the one that is currently being used. The government has an exclusive right to use several springs at the base of the hills, but the Nagas, out of jealousy during the weak period of the previous Assam administration, blocked access to these springs with violence. This happened at a time when the government in Assam was in control. Salt produced by the Nagas is inferior to that supplied

⁴ Barpujari, S.K. 1974: *Formation of Naga Hills District: A Landmark in the History of British-Naga Relation. Highlanders*, 3(2), Sept.: 1-8.

from Bengal because it is made using an extremely inefficient and labor-intensive method. However, it is expected that European speculators will soon be able to offer a much more profitable way of generating the salt, which is more likely to succeed due to the closeness of many coal beds, which will provide the means of evaporating the brine with greater ease. It is also envisaged that this new approach may be put into action over the next months. It is now hard to imagine any acts that might be taken that would not upset the Naga people, even if such actions would be to their advantage. The previous government had a hard time dealing with the ongoing hostilities between the various Naga tribes. The Naga people had already been mentioned, so this made sense. A particularly nasty feud has persisted for a long time between the Namsangiyas and the Bordurias. Instead of working to settle the situation, the Asam Raja authorities have made money out of it by fining both parties. This practice just recently began to lose its lucrative status. Recently, Mr. Sub-Assistant C. R. Strong was sent to their hills to find out the root of their feuds and, if at all possible, mediate and bring the warring parties back together. Hopefully, he was able to achieve this goal by convincing both parties to commit to stop further hostility and to send future complaints to the British authorities for resolution. The western Naga tribes are unknown to us, and we have no access to any reputable sources of knowledge about them.

Most of these native populations openly declare their support for the British government, and as a result, they have unfettered access to the hauts, or border market regions. During the reign of the Assam dynasty, the Nagas paid a little fee in exchange for the privilege to cultivate all of the land south of the Dhudur-Alli. Today, the Nagas have built a number of prosperous towns and farms along this frontier.⁵ The majority of the people living in these villages are Assamese Pykes and slaves who were forced to flee their homes because of the systemic persecution they were forced to endure there. As a result, they were able to find safety and sanctuary in these communities. It is believed that an attempt by Raja Purunder Singh to increase the taxes already obtained from these tribes, or a wish to bring under taxation the Nagas who had long been exempt from it, led to the open hostility of the Naga tribes between the Dikho and Disang rivers toward the government of Raja Purunder Singh during the latter part of his reign. These Naga tribes were responsible for such terrifying destruction in the adjoining areas that they cut off all road access. However, now that these disturbances have ended, everyone may breathe a sigh of relief since normalcy has been restored. For the Assamese, the hills to the west of the Dessai River and between the Dessai and Dhansiri rivers are home to the numerous and docile Latoo Naga tribes. Latoo Nagas is the common name for these groups of Nagas. Shopping excursions take them to the Dhansiri River banks, such as Jorhat and Kachari-hat. The huge Angami Naga population lives to the west, on the hills that separate the Dhansiri's many tributaries. As a consequence of the Nagas of the sizable Angami community's persistent violence against the Kachari settlements in the hills of northern Kachar, the British administration has lately come into confrontation with the tribe. These attacks prompted the relocation of the hills to Assam, where the authorities are more equipped to deal with

⁵ Barpujari, S.K. 1974: *Formation of Naga Hills District: A Landmark in the History of British-Naga Relation. Highlanders*, 3(2), Sept.: 1-8.

them than their counterparts in Kachar. The British administration was finally forced to take swift and decisive action in response to the persistent acts of brutality committed by these tribes. Two operations conducted by Mr. SubAssistant Grange against them achieved their desired goal. In response to these missions, the most powerful chieftains have sent in letters promising to change their ways and show more tolerance. Lieutenant Bigge, the Principal Assistant in charge of the Now gong, will soon go on a third and, perhaps, last mission. Gong will soon visit the hill tribes to have talks with the leaders there about forming an alliance and establishing open lines of communication. It seems that the Angamis, although being a powerful confederation, had never traded with Assam. This is because the Latoo Nagas, with whom the Angamis have been at war for a long time, are very likely to have intercepted any communications transmitted from those marketplaces. If this is the case, then the Angamis have no ties to the Kachar region along the Jamuna and may ignore it as a possible destination. Even though the Angamis were the rulers of the Kacharis and some of the Nagas of the lowest hills, the Kacharis and the Nagas were nevertheless employed to keep up a little trade with these people.⁶

Because of what seems to have been a very repressive kind of leadership on the part of the Angami chiefs, many of the Naga people have been forced to flee their villages and seek refuge in the Mikir hills, which are located to the west of the Dhansiri. Before Mr. Grange's voyage, the land of the Angami Nagas was travelled through by Captains Jenkins, Pemberton, and Gordon. Their mission was to find a way to establish contact between Manipur and Assam. The expeditions that these officers led, however, were not successful in achieving any long-term goals. This was partly due to the Angamis' vehement opposition to any route being opened through their country, and partly due to the officers of the British and Manipuri governments holding divergent views on the policy of the proposed measure and failing to follow through consistently on what their predecessors had started. The meagre knowledge that we currently have on the Naga tribes is hardly adequate to let us linger at any length on their civic and social status. This is because the Naga tribes have a long history. In all unpolished countries, the duties in the household economy that fall naturally to the share of women are so many that they are subjected to hard labour, and they are required to shoulder their full amount of the common burden. This puts women in a position where they are forced to do harsh labour and must bear their entire portion of the common load. This is especially true among the Naga people, and it may be due, at least in part, to the anarchical state of the country; however, it may also be due to the large number of independent chiefs who, in the past, were ready to go to war with each other over even the smallest transgression, which is the worst kind of war because it is conducted in secret and without being discovered. As a result, it became customary for the women to be in charge of cultivating the fields, while the men were responsible for training for combat and engaging in actual combat. This was because the males were required to be constantly prepared for an attack. The Nagas have a sense of decorum that is unheard of among their more civilized neighbors when it comes to the relationship between the sexes. The

⁶ Angami, A. 1975: *Changing Naga Society* (Letters to the Editor). North eastern affairs, 3 (4), January-March, Pp. 4.

males limit themselves to one woman, to whom they feel a deep attachment and whose virginity they seem to be quite possessive of. On the other hand, some say that women are notable for the fact that they appropriately conduct themselves. They are permitted to take part with the men in all of their celebrations and social activities, and the men, in general, show them a great deal of compassion in how they interact with them. The Naga people do not traditionally marry young, unlike the Hindus, and they do not enter into marriage during infancy. Men also do not typically get married at a young age. This is most likely the result of the difficulties in acquiring the resources to pay the parents of the bride the anticipated dowry upon giving the suitor their daughter to be married to the wife. Therefore, a young man who expresses an interest in marrying a girl must, if his proposal is approved, commit to serving the girl's father for a certain number of years. This commitment is often restricted to the amount of time necessary until the girl may be regarded as marriageable. When his time as a slave is done, the young couple's parents build them a home and provide them with an initial supply of pigs, chickens, and rice. Additionally, the young couple is freed from their obligations.⁷

Nothing is quicker than a Naga's revenge for an offense against his hardworking companion; his spear provides an instant response to any slur against her dignity. The young bride has been preparing for her new role as a wife for quite some time. Her skills are highly valued, and no one will get swifter retribution than a Naga if they are insulted. The agriculture used by the Nagas is neither very arduous nor very vast. Rice is the only crop that is grown in these regions, which are inhabited by some of the tribes. In these areas, every bit of arable ground is terraced up the hills in such a way that rivulets can be used to irrigate the beds, and in these communities, rice is the only crop that is cultivated. They also have some giant capsicums, excellent ginger, and a few cardamom plants in their communities. Arums and yams are found in great quantities among the Naga people; however, most of the time, they are found growing wild around their settlements. Cotton is often cultivated on the slopes of the hills, and it is not uncommon to come across a type of grass known as *Lachryma jobi* beside it. The Naga people make an intoxicating beverage from the grain of this grass using a process that is quite similar to the process of brewing beer. It appears to have been one of the earliest uses of human intelligence to find some concoction of an intoxicating nature, and there is no tribe so backward or so devoid of creativity that they did not succeed in this study that led to fatalities. The Nagas seem to have the same level of dependency on the consumption of alcoholic beverages as any of the other neighbouring tribes. All of the villages have a plentiful supply of pigs, fowls, and ducks, and some of the wealthier villagers even retain herds of cattle that they have acquired from the plains. They have no qualms about consuming meat and are not picky about the foods they eat in any way; dogs and cats, along with reptiles and insects, are all consumed in equal measure as sources of nutrition. The Nagas, in general, do not consume a large amount of vegetable food. As a direct result of this, the majority of the Nagas who have reached old age exhibit severe and repulsive signs of skin eruptions, scurvy,

⁷Angami, A. 1975: *Changing Naga Society* (Letters to the Editor). North eastern affairs, 3 (4), January-March, Pp. 4.

and leprosy. There is no question that in a mountainous region of such vast proportions as that which is inhabited by the Nagas, the number of beneficial plant and mineral compounds that are generated there must be quite high; nevertheless, due to our limited familiarity with their territory, we will only be able to highlight a select handful of these substances. Among the former, there are numerous kinds of laurels; that producing cassia is known to occur plentifully on the eastern highlands, and the plant that we know as the bay leaf, or the text of commerce, is abundant everywhere. Bay leaves are used in a variety of medicinal and culinary applications. During Mr. Grange's journey to the Angami Nagas, he discovered the wild tea plant growing in significant numbers on their hills. The Shyans, who accompanied him on his journey, attested to the plant's high level of quality. The product of these hills, known as agarwood, was at one point in very high demand as a commodity in the marketplace. In addition, there is an abundance of a highly resinous fir in all of the upper elevations, and in addition to other important timbers, oaks are abundant in all sorts.⁸

As we have already mentioned, salt is the only mineral product we are aware of that is used by the Naga people. However, we have been able to trace coal along the lower ranges bordering the valley, and we know that salt springs exist westward on the banks of the Dhansiri at Sunkar, in the Kachar hills, as far east as the banks of the Dehing and Namsang rivers. The Nagas trace their ancestry back to the Mongoloids. The Naga languages have been classified by linguists as belonging to the Tibeto-Burman group. Unlike the Naga, who have many different towns and each town speaks its dialect, all members of the Cach tribe speak the same language. For example, there are three Poumai Naga settlements, and the language spoken there is incomprehensible to the other residents. The Tangkhul Nagas are distinguished by the fact that each village speaks a unique dialect that is incomprehensible to speakers of neighbouring villages. The Naga people are known for their bravery, hard work, politeness, colourfulness, friendliness, and sincerity. They have a good sense of humour, are not afraid to speak their minds, and are welcoming to others they do not know. Several authorities on Nagas provided their thoughts on the creature. To paraphrase what Dr. Verrier Elwin had to say about them, "They are a fine people, of whom their country is proud, strong, and self-reliant. They possess the free and independent outlook that is typical of highlanders everywhere." Pleasant to the eye, with an unfailing sensibility for colour and design, affable and upbeat, with a sharp sense of humour, endowed with wonderful dances, and in love with music"⁹

The Myth of Naga Origin: Since ancient times, a significant number of ethnologists have been studying the Naga tribe. The British were the first Westerners to come into contact with the Naga people and begin collecting data about them. There is no history of the Naga people that has been recorded in written form. However, the folk songs, folk tales, and legends of many Naga tribes are

⁸ Angami, Rulithou, 1975: *Short account of the British Military Expeditions against the Angami Nagas*. Highlanders, 3 (2), September, Pp. 10-12.

⁹ Angami, Rulithou, 1975: *Short account of the British Military Expeditions against the Angami Nagas*. Highlanders, 3 (2), September, Pp. 10-12.

the types of Naga history that we may use to trace the origin of the Naga people. The many specialists on Nagas offered their hypotheses or contributions from their perspectives on the origin of Nagas. Some sources believe that the headhunters of Malay and the races who originally inhabited the Southern Seas were the ancestors of the Naga people. While the findings of other researchers suggested that the Nagas originated in China. The British, who had established contact with the Naga people as early as 1832, researched the many Naga tribes that existed at the time. The Naga people are distinct from the other tribes that are found in Northeast India in many ways. Because of this tribe's distinctive characteristics, British ethnologists felt compelled to investigate them and publish their findings. Dalton, Sir James Johnstone, J.P. Hutton, J.P. Mills, Woodthorpe, H.H. Godwin Austin, Mackenzie, Damant, and some other pioneering anthropologists were among those who researched and wrote about the Naga people. The majority of the first ethnographers to study the Nagas were military personnel. The leaders of Nagas were amateur anthropologists in their field of study. This may be one of the reasons why no one has researched the history of the Nagas and the derivation of the term NAGA to provide a suitable answer backed by facts. During the uprisings of 1879, some of the significant records and papers of the Nagas were lost or destroyed.¹⁰ Damant possessed a Manipur I Dictionary and a study on Angani Nagas, but both were lost in the Kohima stockade along with the Nagas themselves. The early ethnologists did their best to collect data on the Naga people, but they only had a limited amount of knowledge and information on the Naga people. This may be because there was a communication barrier between them (interpretation), and there was no recorded history. The work of the authority on Nagas should be respected and valued despite their imperfect understanding (notion) of Nagas, even if there may be a wide variety of viewpoints on Nagas by outsider Writers and insider Writers. However, there may also be different perspectives on Nagas by outsider Writers and insider Writers. There are many points of view held by the ditto rent writers on Naga on the history of the Naga people. One of the pioneer experts on Nagas, Sir James Johnstone, who came into touch with the Naga people in 1874, wrote on the origin of the Nagas: Where the Angami originated from must remain unclear until the language of our Eastern boundary is thoroughly investigated. Johnstone was one of the first individuals to come into contact with the Naga people. The late Mr. Damant, a man of great brilliance and a pioneer of inquiry, had excellent literature in his hand; however, it was destroyed in the uprising of 1879. The possibility is that they originated from the South, specifically a stem corner of Tibet.¹⁰ There is no evidence that folklore and traditions surrounding Nagas can be traced back to Tibet. But the tales of their beginnings converged in the southeastern region. The folklore and folk song neither supported nor refuted the aforementioned belief that Nagas originated in Tibet. James Johnstone first made contact with the Naga people in the year 1874 in Samagudting. In that time, an elderly Naga, who was a centenarian at the time, told him that the Nagas had originally arrived from the North East and that they were the seventh generation to live in that region. Another pioneering scholar on the Naga people, JH Hutton, said the following: "Where the country near Manipur is located is a much more difficult problem, and one that is quite beyond the scope of this book." On the one hand, many origins have been linked

¹⁰ Interviewed Doyel swu on 15/07/2022.

with the IHead-hunters of Malay and the races of the Southern Seas, while on the other hand, China is the cradle of many of these beginnings.¹¹

MIGRATION OF THE NAGAS: Oral folklore, folk songs, and folk stories have been handed down from generation to generation via oral traditions. Despite this, the ancient past of the Nagas is shrouded in mystery since there is no historical evidence that has been formally recorded. Many historians, anthropologists, and geographers have speculated on the reasons for the migration of Naga tribes to Nagaland, giving rise to a plethora of different migration hypotheses. Some of the hypotheses on the migration of the Naga people to Nagaland are presented in the following: According to Hutton, all Naga tribes traditionally refer to migration from the south. This observation implies that the Nagas are a Mongolian stock that moved from China before the Christian period. 1) The first hypothesis proposed that the migration of the Naga took place northward from Southeast Asia. 2) The second theory proposed that the migration of the Naga took place westward from central Asia. 2) The second idea proposed that the Naga people settled in the Naga Hills after migrating from China to South East Asia through the Himalayan portion. This migration took place at some point in history. This path travels southward via the Patkai Mountains, the Arakan Yoma, and the Banda Arch in the direction of Java and Sumatra.¹²

The oral tradition states that the forefathers of the people of this tribe originated in the Chinese province of Yunnan. During the building of the Great Wall of China, several individuals said that they were coerced into leaving their homes. When a Chinese pilgrim arrived in Assam in 645 AD, during the reign of Bhaskas in the hills, east of Assam, he saw that the locals had many characteristics in common with a barbarian group from south-west China. According to the chronicle kept by the Ahom Buranjis, the Nagas had already established a community in the Naga Hills by the time the Ahoms arrived in Assam in the 13th century.

Based on Physical, Skin, Hair, eyes, face and looks traits and culture characteristics, some scholars said that the Nagas are racially as the Indonesian Naga are racially as the Indonesian type, the type of people belonging to Malay and Indonesian tribes of Nagas also seen to have similarities with people outside of the Asiatic mainland such as the Dayaks and Kanyan's of Borneo. This assertion was made by some scholars. Although there are no written sources on the Naga that offer the specific date of the arrival of the Naga tribes into the hill region or the particular areas of origin, or when and why they migrated, it is thought that the Naga tribes invaded the Naga hills before the Christian period. This is because there are no written sources on the Naga that provide the exact date of the arrival of the Naga tribes into the hill area.¹³

FIRST NAGALAND SETTLERS

¹¹ Ibid.,

¹² Interview with Tohevi Assumi on 15/05/2018.

¹³ Ibid.,

When the Naga people came to rule Manipur and Nagaland, three brothers, Meite, Hondung, and Thanga, led many people and came. Meite is the eldest brother, Hondung middle, and Thanga the youngest brother, but these three brothers split into two places, that is, Manipur and Nagaland. Meite and Hondung stay in Manipur, and Thanga came to Nagaland. Therefore, when Thanga first arrived in Nagaland, he stayed in the "MEKHROMA" village together with two locals from the "KHUZABOMI" village.

The migration of members of the Sumi tribe of the Naga people is said to have begun at a location known as Khuzabomi (Khezhakenoma), according to one of the numerous legends that describe how the Sumi tribe came to be.



Figure No.17 Litsapa stone in Khezhakheno village(source: Research scholar)

According to the legend, there was a piece of flat rock known as the Litsapa stone. This rock was different from other types of stone. When they set the rice on the stone and waited until dusk, the amount of paddy either doubled or tripled, depending on how you look at it. This stone had magical properties. According to another legend, Chakhesang was the oldest son of the first man to establish in Khezhakenoma, also known as Koza the father, and Kola, the mother. Angami was the second son, and Sumi was the youngest son.

Before the father passed away, the father told their son, "Since I have already made a career for all of you except for the youngest son, give that Litsapa stone to the youngest son." However, after the father passed away, the two older brothers took turns spreading their rice on the magic stone or Litsapa stone without giving the youngest brother a chance to do so. One day, the youngest son became enraged and, on top of the Litsapa stone, he lit a fire with some dried leaves, which resulted in the stone shattering into pieces. In the middle of the flames, he saw a cock emerging from the

blaze, and it proceeded to fly towards the Yeti (Doyang) river. Therefore, the youngest son followed the cock because he believed that doing so would bring him a blessing. Elders from the Khezhakenoma village said that the Sumi Naga first established in the region that is now known as the Sumi Naga area after migrating from the Khezhakenoma area to other locations. After this, the Sumi Naga developed fast and spread out in many different ways.¹⁴

ENTRY OF SUMI LAND/ THE SUMI TRIBE

In contrast to the other Naga tribes, the Sumi village is ruled by Akukau, the Village Chief, and his Chochomi, the Helper of the Village Chief. The Chief of the Sumi Village is chosen via a hereditary process, and the villagers place a high value on the importance of family ties. People who are born into the Akukau family or the family of the Village Chief can only ever become a ruler or a superior ruler. While the majority of Naga tribes use democratic forms of government, there are a few exceptions to this rule. The Sumi tribes were characterized by their autocratic government. The civilization of the Sumi tribes of Naga has been centered on Akukau from the time it was founded to the present day, and Akukau is recognized as the leader in his jurisdiction.

The Naga people of the Sumi tribe are continually relocating to newly constructed villages. When a new town was being established, the son of the town's Chief either gained the land via victorious combat, reserved it for himself entirely, or selected ground that had never been farmed before. It was customary for the Chief's son to release a portion of the land to one of his traveling companions who had a more important position. He could also leave land for the people, even those who are reliant on him, to acquire. The chief of the next village gave his dependent some land on the condition that the dependent would assist the chief in battle and labor in the chief's fields for a certain number of days or months each year.

There is no written history of how the first Sumi village was established, but according to some oral tradition, there were IGHA, HEBO, CHISHI and their sisters SHESE while they were on their way to establish the village, their father bound one stone with them and gave them one cock and said, if the stone fall and the cock started crowing, establish the first village there; however, when they reached CHISHOZU, their father told them to establish the first village there. The stone didn't fall, and the rooster didn't crow, but as soon as they reached IGHANUMI, the stone fell and the rooster began crowing. They recalled their father's words and created the first village there. To this day, people continue to live in that village, and the name of the community has remained the same.

They even constructed the villages of HEBO, CHISHO, CHISHI, and SHESU after they had established IGHANUMI village.

THE GOOD CULTURE OF NAGA'S

¹⁴Interviewed by N. Toshi on 2/07/19.

The Naga tribes undoubtedly have intriguing tales, and the legacies have been passed down from one generation to the next (going back centuries) up to the present day. The Naga people have always shown their village elders respect, affection, and obedience, and this behaviour has been passed down through the generations and continues to this day. The traditional garb worn by Naga people reveals a lot about their origin and the spiritual significance of their culture. In addition to being powerful and brave warriors, they have a rich history that may be shared. Their music and dance also feature the praising, triumphs, and recounting of battles that their ancestors fought a very long time ago.¹⁵

How Christianity Began in Nagaland: Tribes of Nagas are known for their bravery, the size of their hearts, and the fact that the vast majority of their people live in hilly terrain. In earlier times, the Naga people would assault each other's villages. As a result, to prevent their enemies from readily attacking their village, they would build it in a mountainous place. However, after Christianity was introduced to the area, they stopped engaging in harmful practices such as headhunting and other forms of violence.

Beginning of the American Baptist mission in Nagaland, the American Baptist mission was responsible for bringing Christianity to the tribes of the Naga people. Rev. Miles Bronson, an American missionary, operated among the Naga people from 1842 to 1858. The first Naga person to be baptized as a Baptist was Nathan Brown at Sibsagar. The second Naga person to be baptized was Hubi he was, Longja lepszuk, in 1851 in the hamlet of Merangkong. It was not until December 1872 that the first church on Nagaland territory was built with the first group of believers in Molungkimong village (which is located in the present-day Mokokchung district). It is believed that the American Baptist mission was the first to make contact with the Nagas as early as 1839. Dr. Clark is credited with establishing the first church in Nagaland in the year 1872. The following year was said to have seen a tremendous expansion of the church in Mokokchung and across Nagaland. The missionaries were successful in generating a self-perception among the Naga people that was "Impur" and "uncivilized," and needed to be modified so that they might be brought into the Christian faith and become civilized.¹⁶

Mission of the American Baptist Church to the AO Naga: One of the most important groups of Nagas to come from Nagaland is the AO Naga. Clark arrived in Sibsagar on March 30, 1869, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Clark and his wife, Mary. Dr. Clark was given the responsibility of seeing to the health of the church as well as its public relations. Dabbled by the Assamese as headhunters or Clark, eyes were put on the Naga Hills ever since the first encounter with the stranger Naga from the hills. It was at the time that Supong Meren of Mokokchung had gone down to Sibsagar to hunt for his son that he became acquainted with Godhula and began living with him. Supong Meren was on a mission to find his son. Godhula was the conduit via which Supong Meren was introduced to Dr. Clark, and within a short length of time after their first encounter, the three

¹⁵Interview with Dr. Hotokhu on 14/05/2018.

¹⁶ Ibid.,

of them developed a robust period relationship with mutual interests. During his time in Sibigar Supong Meren, he learned the AO language, together with its customs, culture, traditions, folklore, and religious beliefs, from Godhula and Clark. Therefore, the basic preparation for the AO had begun by the late 1870s, and during this time period, considerable literary work was carried out. Clark performed Supong Meren's baptism in Sibsagar in early 1871. After his baptism, Supong Meren joined the American Baptist church, which would subsequently become Mulungkimong village. Clark was the one who performed the ceremony. In October of 1871, Godlhula traveled to the Molungkimong hamlet to meet with Mupongmeren. He took Mupongmeren with him. At that time, there was a problem in the community caused by the entrance of a foreigner or any individuals, and some of the inhabitants asked that he be leased out of the town as soon as possible. People from outside the community were not allowed to be entertained at this time since it was head-hunting season. Godhula was not kicked out of the community when Supongmeren persuaded the other villagers to change their minds, but the people locked him up in the hut and forbade anyone from communicating with him. Godhula was trusted and given the freedom to talk and tell about his faith to the people or villages. After a few days, he returned to the mission location at Sibsagar, after keeping him in the Hut for three days and seeing that he was a calm guy during that time.

In April of 1872, Godhula and his wife Lucy travelled to the Molungkiiong hamlet to see them. While they were there, a bamboo chapel was built in the community to hold religious services. Even though they were receiving all of these threats, nine young men opted to accept baptism, and they were baptized by Dr. Clark on November 11th, 1872, in the Dikhu River. This decision contributed to the struggle that was taking place in the village, which was further fuelled by threats from neighbouring AO communities if they did not expel the new faith.¹⁷

Some of Dr. Clark and his wife's literary works are presented here for your perusal:

- Mezung Ashiba (Ao Naga primer Vol 1) in 1891.
- Tanabuba Ashiba (Ao Naga Primer Vol 2) in 1893.
- Ao grammar and illustrated phrases in 1893.
- Yoseph Otzu (The story of Joseph)
- Tazungtsu Kaket (Ao Arithmetic) 1902.
- Ao Folklore.
- Translated the gospel of Mathew, John, Acts I, Psalms, and Corinthians.
- Translated the magnificent, the beatitudes, the Nunc Dimittis, and the Lord's prayer.
- The Ao Naga dictionary was published in 1911.
- Ao Hymnal of 125 hymns.

To commemorate the founding of the first Baptist church in the world, which took place on December 22, 1872, in Mulongkimong Village, the Ao Baptist Church Association and the

¹⁷ Interviewed by Khulupu on 2/07/2019.

Nagaland Baptist Church Council are holding foundation day celebrations today. It is the biggest Baptist Church Association that is linked with the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC), and there are over 160 churches that are a part of it. Today, it is a significant financial backer of mission work in the neighbouring states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh as well as the neighbouring nations of Nepal, Myanmar, and China.¹⁸

MISSION WORK TOWARDS LOTHAN TRIBE OF NAGA

The next morning, April 9, 1885, saw Rev. Dr. W.E. Witter and his wife make their way to Wokha. The evangelism of the Lotha Naga tribe didn't get off to a very good start until after Dr. Witter and his wife were on the scene. In addition to the Mission efforts conducted by Dr. Clark at Molung in the regions inhabited by the Ao Naga tribes and by C.D. King in the regions inhabited by the Kohima people. On the other hand, Dr. Witter started his work among the Lothas in Wokha in the year 1885.

Witter started the process of creating a script for the languages spoken by the various tribes of Lotha with a lot of energy and commitment. Another very necessary thing was getting the Bible translated into their language or the languages of the nearby tribes.

The first school in the Lotha region was established in 1885 by Dr. Witter and his wife. H. Daniel Baruah served as Dr. Witter's assistant when they were in Wokha. On August 25, 1886, the first three Lotha boys enrolled in the day school, but the number of students quickly rose.

Dr. Witter is credited with being the first person to put the Lotha language down on paper. The Lotha primer and a sentence from the Book were both created by Dr. Witter in the year 1888. The outline grammar of the tribe of Lotha Naga language, together with vocabulary and illustrative sentences, was printed in Calcutta the same year, and it was produced at the cost of the government. In the same year, 1888, Dr. Witter also translated the hymnal and the first Catechism. After Dr. Witter and his wife went to the United States to get medical care, they did not return to the mission field in Wokha. After receiving his medical degree in 1922, Dr. Witter went to Gauhati, where he practiced medicine till 1923. After returning to the United States, he became the pastor of the Lake Avenue Church until his death in November 1931.

Following Dr. Witter's departure in 1888, the activities associated with their mission were put on hold for more than a decade. They often sent missionaries from Impur and Kohima to take care of the Wokha Mission in their stead.

It wasn't until the arrival of Dr. James Railey Bailey, an American Medical Missionary, that the first Baptist Mission Centre was founded in Vankhosung under Wokha District. Bailey arrived in 1927 and was responsible for establishing the centre. In honour of his legacy, the Wokha Town

¹⁸ Ibid.,

Baptist Church constructed a college in Wokha in 2006 under the sponsorship of the college, and it was given the name he had given it.

A translation of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John was completed for the Lothas in the year 1940. Reverend Anderson and Reverend Tanquist worked tirelessly throughout 1946 to finish the first version of the New Testament.

During the years 1948-1953, the final missionaries to reside with the Lothas were a married couple named Howard and Harriet Houston.¹⁹

MISSION WORK TOWARDS THE ANGAMI TRIBES OF NAGA.

Reverend C.D. King was the first American Baptist Missionary to the Angami. He came to Chumoukedima in the year 1878. However, as a result of the wars between the Angami and the British, they were compelled to return to Sibragau. In 1879, when the British finally established their administrative headquarters in Kohima, on February 25, 1881, Reverend C.D. King returned to Kohima to spread the Gospel, which is also known as the Good News. The foundation stone for the Kohima Baptist Church was laid on March 29th, 1883. Four Angami were converted to Christianity and baptized in the year 1885 in the city of Kohima. Because of Mr. King's health problems, he had to go to the United States, and unfortunately, this caused many of their early members to lose their faith. To get the work back on track, Mrs. Hattie and Dr. Sidney W. Rivenburg moved to Kohima in 1887 from Molung, Assam, and Nagaland. After toiling or working in Kohima for five years, they saw their first convert, and after that, slowly but surely, people from Angami started to convert to Christianity. Mrs. Hattie E. Rivenburg passed away in Kohima and was laid to rest in the ABCC complex at the other end of the city. Until 1923, Rivenburg was actively engaged in service to the Angami people.

Impur, Kohima, Vankhosung, and Aizuto were the first areas in Nagaland to receive missionary work from the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society.²⁰

HOW THE TRIBES OF NAGAS BEGAN THEIR HOHO

1. Chakasang Hoho was established in 1949; now, they are composed of 83 Churches, and Pfutsero serves as their primary mission area.
2. The Nagaland Kuki Baptist Hoho was established in the year 1986; it now consists of 18 Churches, and its Mission is located in Karbung.
3. The Rengma Baptist Hoho was first established in the year 1940. They consist of 31 different Churches. Zumpha serves as the organization's Mission Centre.
4. The Zeliangrong Hoho organization was established in 1953, and its main location for mission work is in Peren.

¹⁹ Interviewed by Rev. P. Dozo on 1/07/2010.

²⁰ Anderson, B.I. 1978: *we lived in Nagaland*. Aizuto (Kohima, Nagaland), Sema Baptist Church.

5. The Sangtam Baptist Hoho was established in 1949. There are 64 Churches, and Yangli serves as their Mission Centre.
6. The Chang Baptist Hoho congregation was established in 1949. They have 47 Churches, and the Mission center for them is located in Furang.
7. The first Konyak Hoho was built in 1951. They have 105 Churches, and Mon serves as the center of their Mission.
8. 8. Phom Hoho was established in 1953; now, they have 33 Churches, and their Mission field is located in Longlen.
9. Yimchunger Hoho was founded in 1950; now, they number 66 churches, and their mission headquarters are located in Samator.
10. Khiamniungan Hoho was established in 1950; now, they number 28 churches, and their Mission center is located in Noklak.
11. The Sumi Baptist Akukuho Kuqhakulu (SBAK) was founded in 1929; now, they have 185 congregations, and Aizuto serves as the location of their mission center.
12. The Sumi Apheyu Baptist Akukuhou Kuqhakulu (SABAK) was founded in 1981, and the Pughoboto area serves as its mission field.
13. The Western Sumi Baptist Church Akukuhou Kuqhakulu (WSBAK) was established in 1983; now, it has 113 congregations, and Akuvuto serves as the organization's mission center.²¹

HOW CHRISTIANITY ARRIVED IN SUMI TRIBES OF NAGALAND

There was no American Baptist missionary there when the message of salvation was first brought to the Naga people of the Sumi tribe at that time. The majority of the Sumi Naga tribes may be found in the central regions of Nagaland. They (the Sumi) were affected by the Angami Naga on one side, and the Ao Naga on the other side. There were several members of the Evangelical Church of the Angami Naga. It has come to our attention that these evangelists brought the message of salvation to the neighboring Sumi Naga village, such as Ighanumi.

On the other side, in 1906, an American Baptist Missionary named Rev. Bailey and Rev. K. B. Longwell lived in Impur. They were having a difficult time converting the Sumi Village.

The Sumi people see their Village Chiefs as their teachers, and if their Village Chief does not permit or prohibit them to convert to Christianity, the consequence is the removal of the crimson blanket. On the other hand, they came to the conclusion that the Sumi Naga could not be readily persuaded or converted, in contrast to the Ao Naga, whose political system is democratic. It was difficult to convert the villagers if the village Chiefs were not already believers in the new religion. In order to communicate with the other people, the missionary had to go through the Chiefs of the community first.

²¹ Interviewed to Tohevi Assumi on 15/05/2018.

At its beginning, Christianity was met with vehement opposition or opposition. Preachers of the Christian faith were driven out of the hamlet, and those who remained there were prevented from using many of the community's resources to eradicate Christianity. In the meantime, there existed a Dobhasi person with the name Inaho Kinimi. He was opposed to Christianity, and his opposition was so strong that he sought and received approval from the SDO of Mokokchung to establish regulations that prohibited conversion. People continued to convert and embrace Christianity despite the stringent regulations that were established, and eventually, even Dobhasi himself converted to Christianity. Despite the rules, people continued to convert. He was even given the job of Head Dobashi to prevent him from converting, but he declined the offer and ended up being baptized instead. After that, he pursued a career as an evangelist. On October 1 of the same year (1927), he formally tendered his resignation as Dobhasi. Following his conversion to Christianity, individuals from the Sumi hamlet in the vicinity of Mokokchung began to convert as well.²²

Sumi lived in the Mokokchung area up until 1928, when they joined forces with Ao tribes from the Mokokchung region. 1929 was the year when they severed their ties with Ao Hoho and established the beginnings of their own Hoho in the village of Naghutomi (Tsuvekha Phutomi). And the following is a list of several Hoho leaders chosen on that day that may be found below:

- 1) Chairperson – Rev Inaho Kinimi
- 2) Assembly Speaker - Litrakatsuba, Pastor Sapotimi
- 3) Recorder – Sureptsuba, Pastor Apitomi (Sutemi)
- 4) Speaker – Nihevi, Master Lumtsami

It wasn't until 1937 that Bengt Anderson created the first Mission center for the huge Sumi tribe of Nagas in Aizuto Zunheboto. Before then, outreach to the other tribes of Nagas had begun in general, but outreach to the other tribes of Nagas had not. Aizuto housed the American Baptist Mission field's youngest missionary at the time. According to what Bengt Anderson has written, the Sumis' gathering in 1937 was the most successful one ever documented in the whole history of the mission. In 1943, the Aizuto Lower Primary School opened its doors, and in 1947, it also transitioned into a Middle English School, being the only institution of its kind in the region of Sumi at the time.

Outcomes

- A comprehensive comparative record of oral traditions and cultural practices among key Naga tribes.
- Preservation of indigenous narratives for future generations.

²² Interviewed to Tohevi Assumi on 15/05/2018

- Insights into the dynamics of cultural change and continuity.
- Contribution to broader discussions on indigenous identity, heritage preservation, and tribal studies in India.

Future Research Directions

1. Comparative Studies: Link Naga migrations to broader Tibeto-Burman ethnolinguistic movements (e.g., Konyak ties to communities in Myanmar).
2. Genetic Anthropology: Use DNA analysis to trace lineage patterns across tribes (e.g., recent studies on Northeast Indian haplogroups).