

**FOLK LITERATURE OF THE YIMCHUNGER NAGAS:
EXPLORING THE FOLK CULTURE OF THE LOST LANGA**

(Dissertation submitted to Nagaland University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for
the Award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy in English)

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SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled Folk **Literature of the Yimchunger Nagas: Exploring the Folk Culture of the Lost Langa** is a bona fide record of research work done by Ms. Akiula, Regn. No. NU/M.PHIL/Eng/43/2019 Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima campus Mereima, during 2018-2019. Submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy in English, this Dissertation has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or other title and the dissertation represents an independent and authentic work on the part of the candidate under my supervision. This is again certified that the research has been undertaken as per UGC Regulations May 2016 (amended) and the candidate has fulfilled the criteria mentioned in the University Ordinances for the submission of the dissertation.

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DECLARATION

I, Akiula, do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Folk Literature of the Yimchunger Nagas: Exploring the Folk Culture of the Lost Langa**, is a bona fide record of research work done by me, under the supervision of **Professor Rosemary Dzüvichü**, Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima campus Meriema, during the period of my research 2018-2019, and the dissertation has not been submitted for the award of my degree, fellowship, diploma to any other Universities or institution. This is being submitted to the Nagaland University for the degree of Master of Philosophy in English.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Folk literature also known as Folklore is the study of cultures and traditions transmitted and maintained usually through word of mouth. Through this process of transmitting orally, some aspects or items of folk literature sometimes shows relative stability and also undergoes drastic transformations, depending on the interpreter and their listeners. Folk Literature, Folklore or Oral Tradition is the study of the tradition, culture, beliefs and practices of a group of people usually not having any written records. Folk Literature includes not only the traditional and cultural beliefs but it also includes Tales, Riddles, Stories, Myths, Legends, Proverbs, Songs and even Dance forms. Every community has their own Folk Literatures in numerous forms with or without a written record. The origins of such Folk Literatures are inadequate and may vary from people to people and from place to place. It is transmitted orally or through Oral Tradition, the art of handing down culture and tradition from mouth to mouth through spoken words from generation to generations. Folk Literature generally incorporates and involves the folksongs, folkdances, folktales, superstitions, myths etc. It includes both the verbal and the non-verbal cultures of the people with their arts, crafts, customs and even beliefs as well. It in fact, depicts the total way of life. The term Folk Literature has become recognized worldwide as a cultural good among people who have no written language, and who still possesses forms of literary works and there is no existing nation or country without its own variation of culture and tradition of the past.

Folk Culture generally refers to a Culture traditionally practiced by any group of people often living in isolation from other groups, handing down their histories through Oral Tradition, which demonstrates the old ways conveying a sense of their community. It refers to the unifying expressive components of everyday life as enacted by localized, tradition-bound groups. Folk Culture usually features the place of origins, ways of everyday life, the mode of living, practices and the land, its features and people as an element. The most common way of defining Folk Culture is learning and studying folklores and its mode of transmission, that is, oral tradition. Yet, it is important to note that everything that is being transmitted orally cannot be the Folk Culture as Bascom says, "All folklore is orally transmitted, but not all that transmitted is folklore" (Concept of Folk and Folk Culture 4). For instance, people also learn the folk culture by observing which constitutes the non-verbal aspects of folk culture like gestures, dance and games. Oral Tradition is an essential aspect or elements in the study of any Folk Literature and Folk culture. Story telling through oral narration is not only a means of entertainment but is also a means by which, elderly person hands down instructions, principles, histories, moral values and even knowledge to the younger generations. Joseph Ki-Zerbo in, *Oral Tradition and its Methodology* says, "Oral Tradition may be defined as being a testimony verbally from one generation to another. Its special characteristics are that it is verbal and the manner in which it is transmitted" (Nonglait 1). According to Flora Devatine, Oral Tradition, "characterizes a human society that does not write and that has no resource for transmitting cultural traditions, or inscribing the reflections, thoughts and emotions of its members. Further each members of such a society is responsible for perpetuating Orality and its memory." It is also "the transmission of accounts about beliefs and traditions...Orality is also the foundation,

the support, the construction and the boat that guides the navigation of one's thoughts" (Nonglait 1). In the absence of writings, the culture and tradition depends on the communication, conveying and handing down all the past aspects to the next generation.

Orality is natural and genuine in human society and it reflects the people's way of living, food habits, mannerism, ethics, attitudes, practices and many more. It is an expression of various multi-faceted feelings and emotions about any simple or complex issue and brings meaning to life. It is a colorful expression with multiple versions and is not static. It is the messages that an individual, the household and the community as a whole receives which are usually based on memories, visions, dreams and even facts being narrated in different forms in order to bring the community together and to maintain and preserve the traditions and cultures that have long sustained in the absence of written form.

Nagaland, one of the states of India is a land of diversity, a mixture of number of Tribes, each having their own distinct tradition and culture which forms the Folk Literature of the Nagas. The Naga people are known as the Hill people inhabiting the northern Hill ranges between the Brahmaputra and Chindwin rivers on both sides of the present India-Myanmar (Burma) International border. Presently the different areas of Nagaland are dominated by the presence of one of the major tribes, while in towns live a mixture of the Naga tribes. The Nagas like any other race possesses outstanding cultural and traditional features of the very popular headhunting, feasts of merit, folktales, beliefs, practices, unique and colorful attire, songs and dances which contributes immensely to Naga Folk Literature. The Naga people are tribal in nature, but besides all these Folk aspects the Naga Folk aspects are gradually losing its importance as the early people never had the opportunity to write it down for their succeeding generations. As such the contemporary

society can only learn about the Naga Folk Literature from the stories and tales that are preserved in the minds and memories of the elderly persons. However, the Naga society has never lost their identity, social norms, customs, values, culture and tradition and has been successful in sustaining them despite of all the inconveniences. The early Nagas and their world were very much limited without exposure and the knowledge of the outside world. Their life was confined to their own people and community and had the attitude of war and superiority to the outsiders. As such, British authors like A. Mackenzie, Hutton Robinson termed the Nagas as ‘savage’, ‘uncultured’ and ‘semi-civilized’ owing to the fact of the very popular Head-Hunting practice, (Singh 23). In exploring the Naga Folk Culture, it has been observed that the language plays an important role. The Nagas in general speaks Nagamese as their common language. It is a recent one and an influence of Assamese language. The folk aspects are acceptably transmitted to others or the younger generations in tribal dialects and not in Nagamese. Being a tribal society, each Naga tribes speaks their own distinct dialect and these dialects contribute meaningfully and immensely to their identity formation. A person can be easily identified through his dialect, as to which tribe he belongs. A study of the tribes of Nagaland reveals that the Nagas differ in their languages, village polity, social institutions, physical features, temperament, myths, migration and origin etc. The Naga tribes differ from one another in their social and customary behaviors as well. But nevertheless each Naga tribe has some common characteristics like the will to maintain and preserve their own unique identity, courage, reserved, strong and a desire to have a free life.

The Yimchunger Naga Tribe is one of the major tribe of the state of Nagaland in India, inhabiting the eastern part of the state. The Yimchunger Naga inhabits east to

khiamnuingan Nagas, west to Sangtam Nagas, Sumi Nagas and Pochury Nagas, north to Chang Nagas and is bordered by Myanmar (Burma) in the south and south east, stretching its length to Hakumeti village of Kiphire district adjacent to Indo-Myanmar (Burma) boundary. Hakumeti village is considered to be the last village of the Yimchunger Nagas. The tribe inhabits parts of Tuensang district and Kiphire district with Shamator town which is 56 kilometers away from Tuensang district and Pungro town which is 43 kilometers away from Kiphire district as the Tribe's main and the central town. The Yimchunger Naga tribe is also one of the major tribes of the Eastern Nagalans, which consists of six Naga tribes namely- Chang, Konyak, Sangtam, Phom, Khiamnuingan and Yimchunger.

The Yimchunger people are a peace loving people full of hospitality and love for the native land and people, with immense respect for the other tribes. The Yimchunger people speak various sub-dialects they are- *Chirr Yu, Mukury Yu, Tikhir Yu, Longphur Yu, Phenunger/phenungru Yu* and *Langa Yu*. 'Yu' (Langa Term) means dialect or language. Of all the sub-dialects *Langa Yu* is considered as the common dialect of the Yimchunger Nagas, which is very much similar to Ao-Mongsen and Sangtam dialect. The Langa language of the Yimchunger Nagas belongs to the Ao branch of Sino-Tibetan group of the Tibeto-Burman language family. It is clear through the number of Langa speakers that despite the existence of many sub-dialects of the Yimchunger Nagas, Langa dialect is the most commonly spoken dialect of the tribe and is widely spoken as a common language even among the vast sub-dialect speaking people. *Langa yu* is a rich dialect, a single word can mean several things with several meanings and a single phrase can be used to indicate a variety of things and meanings. For instance the *Langa* word *thiyukhean* means history but it may also mean story, *amutsan/amütsan* which means reason can also be taken as a trace

or a sign. Some things have more than one word like bamboo basket which is either called as *mülok* or *hah* or *khi*. The *Langa* language is full of homophones, words which are pronounced alike but has different meanings like *lak*-necklace, *lyak*-bridge, *hün*-pull, *hüm*-leave etc. The speakers of the *Langa* language uses phrases which when translated in English becomes an irony like *thümi mülakhi mihtsürü* which is a reference to a man without common sense or to a crazy foolish man. The term in English would mean ‘a man without salt’.

The Yimchungers are divided into two groups the lower Yimchungers which constitutes the Yimchunger villages of the Kiphire Pungro area and the upper Yimchungers which constitutes the villages of Tuensang-Shamator area. Their land stretches from Mount Saramati in the east to Helüpong in the west, surrounded by Longleng district in the North, Phek district in the South, Myanmar in the East, and Mokokchung and Zunheboto district in the West. The villages of the Yimchunger Tribe are grouped under six ranges namely- Pungro, Thsorungto, Shamator, Mangko, Kewung and Showuba (Dimapur District). The tribe has a clan system and its folks are divided into Six Clans which has different names according to the sub-dialects respectively though the meanings are the same.

Table 1

The following table shows the different cult names of the Yimchunger Nagas (in sub-dialects)-

	Clan/Tittle/Cult of the Yimchunger Nagas		
	<i>Langa</i>	<i>Tikhir</i>	<i>Pehunger/Phenungru</i>
1	<i>Jangru</i>	<i>Lamliu</i>	<i>Shongru/Jingre</i>
2	<i>Jankhiungru</i>	<i>Yiuliu</i>	<i>Jankhiungri</i>
3	<i>Khiungru</i>	<i>Thongliu</i>	<i>Khiungri</i>
4	<i>Kusunkhiungru</i>	<i>Kusunthongliu</i>	<i>Kusunkhiungri</i>
5	<i>Khiphuru</i>	<i>Sangnguliu/Muphuliu</i>	<i>Lamongri</i>
6	<i>Limkhiungkhiungru</i>	<i>Tutsuliu</i>	<i>Limkhiungkhiungri</i>

The landscapes of the Yimchunger Nagas are immensely blessed with rugged, hilly and emeralds with a legendary range remarkably, the Mt. Saramati, (*Fürim/Furim Shuwung*) the highest peak in Nagaland with a maximum height of 3840m above the sea level, bordered by Myanmar (Burma). The land of the Yimchunger is marked by its beautiful landscapes, flora and fauna and its clear and amazing water sources and rivers like the Likimro river in Pungro territory, where Likimro hydro-electric project is set up producing 24MW electricity, the Langa river in Kuthur area and Yai river in Rurur area. The land of the Yimchunger people has amazing sacred natural sites attracting people and

tourists especially around Mimi village of Pungro area which includes rock caves, Rocky Mountains, limestone hills etc. The land of the Yimchungers is a fertile one which blesses the community with different crops. The Yimchungers are the highest producer of *Kholar* or *kholomae* (kidney bean) in the state. Besides this, the community also grows potato, cabbage, maize, millet, rice, soya bean, etc.

The Yimchunger Nagas have a very rich and distinct history, practices, cultural heritage, customs and traditions, social and religious systems which are still preserved today. The customs, colorful dresses and ornaments, attractive dances and songs displayed during the festivals are an example of the tribe's rich heritage. The tribe also possesses rich history of freedom fight and wars for Naga independence, contributing immensely towards the building of New Nagaland. The Yimchunger Nagas like many other Naga tribes of Nagaland do not possess a written script of their own. It is a known fact and perhaps the most accepted way that the history, past traditions, cultural norms and values, practices and beliefs lies deep in the minds and memories of some remaining older generation persons. These available memories of the overall cultural and traditional systems are not accurate and stiff. Everywhere there is a shift or slight changes, be it in names, places and timings. All the folk aspects that we hear now from our elders has variation and differences according to place and people because of the fact that no one has actually encountered the events physically. They have managed to sustain through oral tradition from generations to generations. As such, one cannot wholly accept and stick to one view as an appropriate one, because the ones that lived did not left any definite written records of the whole chronological and exact events. The contemporary society recreates the past lives, history and every happening only on the basis of the memories of older generation, which includes

forms of tales and stories being told and heard from grandmothers and grandfathers in bits and pieces. These stories in bits and pieces becomes difficult to reconnect and recreate a complete life and events chronologically.

It is widely believed that the Yimchungers were wanderers before being termed as Yimchunger tribe. The Yimchunger people are Nature lovers, warriors and peace loving people. All these distinct qualities are now stored in the folk tales, myths, legends and songs reflecting the overall life, nature and characters of the tribe handed down from people to people. Before the advent of Christianity, the Yimchunger people were Animistic in nature. They believed in the realm of supernaturalism. Their religion was such that they believed every Natural element as having life and celebrated life relating it to Nature and spirits. The people believed that there was someone greater and higher than human beings known as *Arimpuh* (Spirits) who was believed to be the creator, sustainer and controller of the whole universe: an omnipresent Being who was always involved in the everyday affairs of the people, knowing the actions and hearts of the people. In those days the people believed that they can even speak to animals and natural elements and can even turn into one of such natural elements. The belief in lycanthropy was very much popular among the tribe which is still believed by some people in the villages. For instance, the Yimchunger people believe that some person possesses the spirit in the form of a tiger, which always guides the person dear to him in the real physical world. It is incredibly believed that if a person possessing a tiger spirit gets hurt or is wounded spiritually, the physical body of such person shows marks of injury and wounds and sometimes even leads to death as a sign of getting injured spiritually. It is also said that if the tiger/tigres's spirit haunts and eats flesh of their prey at night while their physical body is at sleep, the following morning

the tiger man or the woman finds pieces of flesh or hairs stuck between their teeth. It is indeed something unbelievable that even in today's world this belief, of a man possessing the spirit in the form of a tiger still prevails. Very old persons in some villages are believed to possess such spirits.

Some significant rituals of the Yimchunger people-

For the Yimchunger people every natural object lived and grew along with them and they played a vital role in every sphere of life. The tribe offered sacrifices, offerings and prayers to Nature as they saw a living spirit manifested in every object which guided, protected and provided them. They believed that the Supreme Being, Arimpuh (spirits) dwells in Nature. As such the Yimchunger People worshipped trees, large rocks, stones and other objects as sacred objects in which the Supreme Being manifested according to their belief. These offerings and sacrifices were carried out both individually as well as by the community. The most common and important practice was that of an animal sacrifice. Pigs, cows, hens and dogs were offered as a sacrifice to appease such spirits. Agriculturist as they are, for the Yimchunger people the land is their major support for livelihood. The land is dear to the Yimchunger community and most of the sacrifices, offerings and prayers revolve around land and agricultural activities. The community usually practices jhum/shifting cultivation, as such after their harvest they usually move on to another spot for farming. Whenever a spot is being chosen for farming, the owner takes animals such as pigs, cows, hens, etc. to the chosen field and offers the animals as a sacrifice to appease the

spirits that occupies and dwells in it. The community believed that by doing so, the spirits protects the fields from harm and blesses the cultivation in abundance.

The basic interest of every Naga is his family, the clan, the khel (*khiang* in Yimchunger *Langa* Dialect), and the village. This is very much relevant to the Yimchunger Nagas, who is passionately attached to his land, village, community, family, cultivation and tribal affairs. Great agriculturalists and Food gatherers as they were, the Yimchunger people mainly depended on farming and hunting. Most of the belief system of the tribe revolves around agriculture. The tribes were careful in selecting an area for farming or cultivation. They never selected any area randomly for cultivation. They followed certain rituals initiated by the village elders, *Khiungpuh* or the owner of the field. As the people selects a plot of land for cultivation, the village elders (*Khiungpuh*) or the priest in order to choose the right and fertile area of land follows a ritual which includes, digging small area of land, later parting into two directions somewhat like the shape of 'Y'. They then pour water on the area that has been dug and carefully observes into which direction the water flows most. The direction towards which the water flow maximum, was taken for the next cultivation with the belief that the water flows in the direction of a fertile and healthy land. Once the area or the plot is selected, the community chooses their own shares and portions and starts preparing by clearing the jungle. After clearing the area indented for farming the people again follows a ritual. Some people before sowing the seed takes the animals to the fields making them flee in the fields or jungle as an offering to the living spirits of the fields. While some takes the animals slaughter it and spills its fresh blood on the area as a mark of sacrifice, and on that day everyone is forbidden from visiting the fields. The following day the owner sows a seed proclaiming the field as his, only after which the

family members and the communities lends their hands in farming. Another significant sacrifice was being practiced by the Yimchunger community when a warrior, a rich man or a renowned person in a village dies, a dog is being sacrificed in the belief that the dog would escort and guide the dead man on his way to the world or village of death, *Asherü-Kiulung* by barking and chasing away the persons or animals whom the deceased man had hunted during his life time. This shows that the Yimchunger Nagas believes in life after death. It is widely believed that a man dies only to leave his physical body but his soul starts a new journey as soon as he dies.

Some important customary laws of the Yimchunger Nagas-

Since the olden days, the Yimchunger people had strict laws and customary practices for the peaceful living of its folks, which if violated one had to face the harsh consequences. The penalties or the punishment was according to the crime committed. The customary laws and regulations play a vital role in keeping law and order in all fields of live. Any person who brings disgrace, shame and humiliation to his family and his community are dealt strictly. They are made to pay finds in terms of paying and surrendering their possessions like their property, land, houses, and domestic animals of high value. If the crime is severe, the culprit is even dismissed or oust from the village.

Rih Yam- Anyone who violates peace and order and brings shame to the village and the community like fightings, stealing, disturbing the natives, etc. are kept as captives in the customary lock-ups known as *Rih Yam* for days, torturing them. The customary lock-up/*Rih Yam* is mostly built in the center of the village or in the boy's dormitory. *Rih Yam* is usually very small in size, made up of strong woods that causes or leads to extreme

itchiness on being contacted or touched, known as *Meihmushü Sang*, which are often hard to bear. The customary laws and regulations play a vital role in keeping law and order in all fields of life maintaining peace and harmony among the people.



Rih Yam (customary lock-up)

Marriage- Marriage is both an individual and social activity. Like many other tribes of Nagaland, the Yimchunger tribe forbids marriage within the same family cult/title. One must marry someone outside the family cult, as individuals belonging to the same family cult are considered as siblings even if they belong to different families. For instance, a Yimchunger man belonging to the *Khiphur* cult cannot marry a *Khiphuru* woman. Anyone who violates this rule is liable to be disowned by his family, society and village even to the extent of ousting and driving them out of the village. It is also believed that a child from such couple bears deformity as a curse, and this curse sustains for generations.

Inheritance of property- The Yimchunger customary law permits only men to inherit the property of his father. Women were exempted from this right. From dao *nok*, spear *Thsüh* in Langa dialect to land and household properties, everything is inherited by men. Women are allowed to own some household materials like utensils, clothes etc. In this present scenario, we find women inheriting some portions of acquired property if the family members and the father permits but ancestral properties are not inherited by women.

Mahtsahrü- *Mahtsahrü* means messenger or mediator in Langa Yimchunger dialect and only men were assigned with the responsibilities of *Mahtsahrü*. *Mahtsahrü* acts as a mediator for both personal and societal purpose. In olden days, the Yimchunger people in order to fix marriages, the family members chooses a trust worthy and an honest man to be the *Mahtsahrü*/Mediator for the marriage. *Mahtsahrü* would assist all the talks, approaches and events regarding the marriage and he would link one family to the other. He would act as a messenger, delivering messages and taking care of all the activities related to marriage within the two families. *Mahtsahrü* is also used for village and social affairs in order to maintain peace and order within the community, clans and villages. *Mahtsahrü*/Messenger/Mediator acts as the spokes person for the whole community in maintaining friendship and relationship within clans and villages. The villagers in order to maintain a friendly relation with the other village and to sort out differences or to carry out any case, intrusts *Mahtsahrü-* a trust worthy and honest person to take up all the necessary responsibilities. *Mahtsahrü* can be changed anytime. There can be several *Mahtsahrü* according to individuals, families and the community. Any person who is trusted by the natives can be rendered with the responsibilities of *Mahtsahrü*. He can be temporary, chosen only for an event, activity or a case. He may not be appointed as *Mahtsahrü* for the

next event. All the cases that are to be carried out within the village and even outside the village are done in the presence of *Mahtsahrü*/Mediator. *Mahtsahrü* witnesses and observes all the occurrences, behaviours, crimes, mistakes, accusations and the people involved in a case and acts as a spokes person, thus clarifying everything from all sides without being one sided or prejudiced. No case is solved without *Mahtsahrü*. Thus, *Mahtsahrü* plays a vital role in all personal as well as societal affairs maintaining peace and order as such *Mahtsahrü* is sometimes also referred to as a peace maker. *Mahtsahrü* still exists in Yimchunger community.

The early life of the Yimchunger Nagas was that of a community life rather than that of individualism. The people celebrated every sphere of life from birth to death embracing every stage and events of life. Some life related events as celebrated by the Yimchunger people are as follows-

1. BIRTH

Giving birth to a child is always an event of celebration for the Yimchunger Nagas, the people follows a unique ritual for this event since time immemorial. Whenever a child is born into a family, the family shares cut meat *Shihcham* to neighbors and relatives. Meats are shared to six families if a boy child is born and to five families for a girl child. This particular practice is carried out till date with the belief that the male possesses six souls and the female five souls, which the cut meat indicates respectively. It is also believed that those shared cut meat becomes the food for a person to partake when he dies and leaves his physical body, starting a new journey to the world of deaths or the spiritual world *Asheru kiulong*. This very practice are often witnessed during the tribe's main

festival *Metemnio* indicating the new born within a year in the belief that the family members are preparing and storing food for the person as they partake their spiritual journey. This very practice of the Yimchunger Nagas makes us aware that the tribe believes in the uncertainty of life and that it is a natural process that everyone born must eventually die and one must be prepared to face death. It also shows that the Yimchunger people believe in life after death and that the decay of the physical body is not the end but is the beginning of a new life. Every ritual concerning birth revolves around this belief as such we see that the Yimchunger people still follow the pattern of naming a child with regard to this belief. A boy child is named on the sixth day after being born and a girl child on the fifth day, where the neighbors, relatives, village elders and priests gather to bless the new born. The eldest in the family usually brings two names from among which the most suitable one chosen following a ritual known as *Azan*- an earlier form of some sort of superstitious and magic-like practice through which one learns about the future and the outcome of anything with the help of short sticks, meditating and asking the ever present Supreme Being for the right path and choice. A child is thus named after this *Azan* ritual. This shows that the Yimchungers were worshippers of supernaturalism which is still prevalent even today to some extent. Naming ceremony which is known as *Mungji Munchi* is celebrated lavishly feasting by slaughtering Mithuns (bison), Cows, hens and Pigs.

2. MARRIAGE

Marriage is a union not only between body and souls but also between two families. Marriages among the Yimchunger Nagas are an important occasion and it follows a certain process and ritual since the early days. Dowry system as a whole doesn't find any trace among the tribes but we see some sort of paying and giving on the occasion of marriage

among the tribes which had been practicing since the time of the forefathers. Polygamy was never practiced among the tribe and is still not in use. Inter-marriage within the same family clan is also strictly prohibited. A man in order to marry a woman impresses the families and relatives of the desired woman by offering them gifts in the form of lands, fields and animals of high value as a sign of respect, which the relatives and the family members of the woman shares among themselves. A man also proves his bravery as a warrior and as the most suitable man for the woman by bringing an enemy's head though this system has now vanished. However giving and taking occurs not only from the groom's side but equally from the bride's side as well. They offer clothes, seeds, utensils and domestic animals which might be helpful to the couple in starting their new life, blessing them. Once people are united through marriage, for the Yimchunger people the maternal relations becomes an important relation. Maternal uncles become a very important family member. During marriages and also in the proceeding life, the maternal uncles are paid due respect and honor, they are offered a hand weaved shawl *Rongkhim* man's shawl on marriage by the bride as a mark of respect and love. In return the uncle of the bride also blesses them by giving his niece by gifts like household materials. Marriages among the Yimchunger tribe are a great occasion of exchanging gifts among the two families as a mark of their union and kinship. The gifts shared among the relatives and family members is believed to build stronger relations among the relatives and the ones receiving the gifts owes the couple and remain close to them to such an extent that whenever any occasion, events and feasts takes place, they are never neglected. As a mark of love and respect, whenever the relatives that have received the marriage gifts slaughter animals like cow, pig

and mithun (bison), a part of fine flesh from the neck's portion is offered to the sisters of the respective partners.

3. DEATH

A man born into this world is bound to die. The Yimchunger Naga tribe firmly believed in the life after death, and as such when one dies and leaves his physical being, he is given due respect by family members, relatives, friends, community and village. Funerals are carried out feasting as the last feast of the deceased man in this physical world. Even during funerals like the feasts of birth, marriage and any other festivals and occasions slaughtering of animals is a must. Animals have always played an important role in the early life of the Yimchunger Nagas which is still prevalent. A stable and socially well to do family member of the deceased man also contributes in offering animals for the funeral feast as a respect. The funeral feasts lasts for three days as it is believed that the soul of the deceased visits his near and dear ones and that his house and family members should not be left alone. During funerals, if the deceased man has any kind of debts to be paid as well to be received, it is being discussed and cleared by family members and relatives on his behalf. If the deceased man has sons, properties of the deceased man are shared among them in the presence of all the relatives right after the funeral. And if the deceased man has no male child then, his properties goes to other male family members or the nearest male child of the family. A patriarchal community since the olden days women were not allowed to inherit properties except some small casual things. It is seen till now that when a father dies his traditional Dao, *NOK* and spear *THSÜH* in *Langa* dialect is handed to his youngest son. The ones who die an unnatural death like by drowning, by the attack of wild animals, by the hit of a tree etc are still believed as a sign that brings misfortunes and bad luck to the

family and the community as a whole. The Yimchunger people were highly superstitious and they avoided attending such funerals as it is believed that by attending such funerals, one calls misfortunes to himself and his family. Infact, in olden days such deceased men were not even allowed to bring inside the villages, as their entrance would bring a series of misfortunes to the community. As such only the family members along with some of the village elders perform funeral rituals on the spot where the incident took place or somewhere out of the village and disposed the dead body far from the village.

One of the most popular and significant practices of the Yimchunger Nagas which is highly relevant in this contemporary society is the festivals. Festivals not only act as an event where the whole community gathers as one, celebrating and feasting every aspects from sowing to harvesting and stages of life, but it also acts as a platform where the tribe highlights their age old practices like folksongs, folkdances, main dishes, traditional attires, ornaments, games and sports. This present world infact learns so much of the tradition and culture during festivals. The Yimchunger People has two important festivals namely *Tsüngkamnio*, (a festival of thanksgiving for the bountiful harvest) celebrated on January and *Metemnio*, (a soul wrapping festival) on the first week of August after harvesting millets. *Tsüngkamnio* signifies the year long life and harvest achieved during the year. During this festival the young men and women gathers together and go around dancing in merriment to every house. The house offers them meat, wine and rice. It is a festival of thanksgiving for the bountiful harvest and successful activities throughout the year. During this festival, the warrior announces their success in warfare and honors the warriors especially the ones that brought an enemies' head. *Tsüngkamnio* is believed to be a time to renew friendship and relations between individuals, clans and villages.

The most important festival of the tribe is *Metemnio* (a soul wrapping festival). During this festival we see competitions among the youngsters of some important traditional practices like making fire through traditional ways by rubbing dried wood pieces with a dried bamboo split and chipping two stones rubbing them to make a fire, top spinning and playing dice (for women). The village streets, public wells, graveyards and the village surroundings are cleaned during this festival, where every member of the village gives a hand. The festival lasts for five days, each day being assigned a particular activity or work. On the first day the village is being cleaned. The paths to the fields are cleared on the second day.

On the third day the village roads are being made and rebuilt. Water sources and public wells are cleaned on the fourth day. On the fifth day the whole community celebrates the festival. During this festival young boys and girls get engaged and exchange gifts. Agricultural implements such as Doa, spade and hoe are also sharpened and worshipped during this festival. Many of the age old folk songs and dances are displayed during this festival which also portrays the belief system and the ways of life, each folk songs and dances portraying distinct practices and beliefs. *Metemnio* is celebrated in order to give thanks and praise to the Almighty for the blessings. During this festival the tribe undertakes a mass social work, where all the members of the village have to take part. The villagers are restricted to do any manual work during this festival. *Metemnio* is also celebrated significantly for the new born and the deceased individuals. It is a deeply religious festival which reunites the spirits of the deceased with the living ones. The tribe believes that it is during this festival that the new born are welcomed by sharing cut meat *Shihcham* to the neighbors and relatives and also celebrates the departure of the deceased

individuals as it is believed that the deceased man leaves the actual physical world during this festival. The name *Metemnio* is also suggestive of this belief. *Metem* can be applicable to deceased souls and *neo/nio* means celebration or feasting. The festival therefore, paves the way for the deceased man a new spiritual journey. Thus the deceased individuals are remembered in prayers and the family members leave food, meat and other eatable things for the departed souls with the belief that the souls would visit them and the house for the last time before leaving the world.

Not only the festivals and the all the practices of the Yimchunger Nagas revolve around agricultural patterns but also the name of the months in their dialect is based on to a large extend on agricultural pattern. Every season and every month brings a distinct assigned work for the people.

Basing relatively on their agriculture works, the Yimchunger Nagas has well defined and suitable names for the months of the year. They are-

1. *Yungphu* (January) - it a month of leisure and rest when all field works being done. A time too early to start new fields so the people enjoy eating and feasting the collected stocks and harvest that has been reaped. This is what *Yungphu* means.
2. *Khirhim* (February) - the second month of the year is called *khirhim* which implies that during this time all the insects and small animals hides itself underneath the soil.
3. *Khishang* (March) - the third month is called *khishang* which means that the insects and small animals that has hidden themselves underneath the soil undergoes a process of transformations and comes out on the surface during this time.

4. *Aniu* (April) - *Aniu* means new. April is a time of newness when all the trees and plants grow. A time when new growth of leaves and seeds takes place. It is a season of growth and regain, as such the Yimchunger people calls this month *Aniu*.

5. *Khito* (May) - the fifth month of the year is called *Khito* which means thickness. It is a time when the landscapes and forests are thick and dark. It is a time when all the wild animals roam around enjoying the thick forest and when the trees and leaves grow in abundance.

6. *Khiheam* (June) - *khiheam* means lazy or idle days. During this period, one is too lazy to work and is always in a hurry even to eat. It is a time when the days seem to be long and idle.

7. *Langzü* (July) - after a time of lazy days, during this time of the year all the pending works like plantation, clearing new plots for farming, clearing paddy fields etc clashes all together. *Langzü* means a time where one has no time for rest and is always busy engaging in all the works.

8. *Müzhie* (August) - August is called *Müzhie* which means a heart filled and a beautiful sight. During this time of the year all the fields bear its fruit and are at its highest bloom. The fields look beautiful and clear during this time which captivates one in its beauty.

9. *Muphu* (September) - *Muphu* is a time when the people gather seeds from *sangpun* (flowers), dried them in the sun and make thread out of them to make beautiful shawls.

10. *Khiphung* (October) - it is a time of collection, harvesting or reaping. *khi* refers to a traditional bamboo basket made out of bamboo splits. The woman folks during this time carry 'khi' with them as they go to the fields to collect the fruits and harvests on the *khi*.

11. *Hanto* (November) - *hanto* means carry. It is a time when all the fields have been harvested, the *khi* and all the granaries filled. A time when the harvest are carried home.

12. *Muliu* (December) – *Muliu* implies completion. During this time all the works have been done, with the field cleared one need not work on the fields. It indicates the completion of all the works especially that of farming.

The people in olden days had no names for the days of a week as of now. But they do had their own countings of today, tomorrow and day after tomorrow till the tenth day (a continues counting after the tenth day), which are still used they are- *Khihni, Shito, Zihto, Zümto, Kihresok, Shiresok, Zümresok, Mütsahresok, Hahkhiungarün and Thuhphinim shak*.

The Yimchunger Nagas were labeled as animism before Christianity, they believed in the realm of spirits and supernaturalism so much so that there was also the practice of lycanthropy. Lycanthropy is in fact believed to be existing even at this time. Some people still believe in the existence of human souls in the form of a tiger. It is believed that a man possessing the spirit of a tiger protects and guides the life of his dear and loved ones in their walks of life by even attacking the enemies that heads towards them. The tiger spirit haunts at night when their physical body takes rests and such incidents are known the next morning as the person possessing the tiger spirit, on waking up finds residues from the haunt like hairs, bloods, wounds etc as per the tribe's belief. It is also believed that when

such a person is wounded spiritually, the wounds or the scars are seen on the physical body of the person. The Yimchunger people even believed that they can communicate with the animals and the elements of nature. The Yimchunger people were worshippers of Nature, for them spirits manifested in every element of nature. The tribe saw a living spirit dwelling on huge rocks, stones *Long-Toh* and large trees *Sang-Toh* or *Sangtong-Ato* in and around the village and as such offered prayers, offerings and sacrifices to such elements with a view of appeasing the spirits which hold great and supernatural powers according to them. Such spirits had the power to destroy, protect, guide and bless humanity. The Yimchunger Nagas not only worshipped trees and rocks but they believed that the Supreme Being manifests in various forms and in various elements as such they also worshipped elements like sun as *Ani Thrunpuh* which means 'God of the Day or the Light' and the moon as *Azing Thrunpuh* meaning 'God of Darkness' with the belief that the sun protects the natives during the day and the moon guides them all through the dark night. The tribe had a common name for the spirits or the Gods of the land as *Alo Limpuh Thrünpuh* and for the Gods of the sky as *Achangpuh Thrünpuh*.

The Yimchunger Nagas like all other Naga tribes practiced the very popular and well known Head-Hunting practice- A practice which brings a man good name, fame, pride, respect and status. Any man who brings the head of an enemy was considered as a hero *Athrong Rü* and was exalted high within the community, it was a sign of bravery. He was given the most respect and every attention. Before a man proceeds for a hunt, follows a ritual *Azan* as a prayer for their safety and success. When they returns back with enemy's head, with the head tied with a rope they pull their enemy's head around the village singing

and proclaiming their victory. After which the cut off head was hung on a tree often big and tall usually known as *Kuzingpong Sangtong* which means a head hanging tree.

The collected heads are then left hung on the tree where the crows *Khüyak* gather and feeds on the flesh of the head. The crows, *Khüyak* because they consume the flesh of humans, since the past days and even today the Yimchunger people do not eat crows. A man who slays an enemy and brings his head was called *Athrong Rü*, (warrior) with respect and they were liable to put on) *Rongkhim*, (*Athrong Rü khim* a warriors shawl) and *Rehu Nok Trüp* a heroic Dao case with hand woven belt and a wooden box to carry a Dao. A man who carries or puts on such heroic shawls and belts were easily noticed and acknowledged as a great warrior. A man who fails to prove his bravery was considered as a coward. The more head a man brings the higher his social status rises, as such every man was expected to build up a stable status which was largely based on this Head-Hunting practice. A man who through this practice rises his status becomes the most eligible bachelor for the women folks in and around the village and he also becomes an important person in all village making processes. Some Yimchunger Nagas hung the collected enemies' head on a tree which is usually found at the centre of the village and celebrates their victory. Some natives also threw the heads in the log drums that was placed in the boy's dormitory and celebrated their victory by feasting.

A person who kills a tiger was also considered as *Athrong Rü* (warrior) because of its might and the many beliefs and symbols it carries. The teeth and nails of a tiger were of great significance and of high value which could not be acquired by any ordinary man. The teeth and nails of a tiger were used in apparels and ornaments and symbolize bravery. A man who kills a tiger takes the teeth and nails for himself. Unlike other domestic animals,

the killed tiger was not brought in the village. The flesh of the tiger was not distributed or even shared. Some elders with the one who killed the tiger and his group consumes the flesh of the tiger in the jungle itself within three days without returning back to the village. After which they will take a bath in the river cleaning themselves and returns back home singing and dancing. On reaching home, the one who killed the tiger hosts a feast of merit celebrating his victory and bravery feasting, singing, dancing and drinking *Yukhu* (rice beer).

The tiger is believed to possess a strong negative aura which would affect the children and women folk, if it is brought to the village. It was believed that such aura of a tiger is able to make one sick and disable even leading to deformity. That was the reason behind not taking a tiger's flesh in the village. Even as the men feasts on the flesh of the tiger in the jungle, its left over bones were thrown carefully under stones and on some deep caves which is away from the reach of the masses. The skin of a tiger was hung on a tree known as *Khüzü zing pung sangtong*, (tiger hanging tree).

The Yimchunger people since time immemorial were very much creative in arts and crafts. They used hand-made earthen pots for cooking, bamboo baskets, and mugs and weaved their own attires. Even today the crafts are seen on the entrance gate of each village like the carvings of animals and human figures on the pillars. The age old attires are still used and are of high value.

Table 2.1

The following tables shows some of the shawls, attires, apparels and ornaments of the Yimchunger Nagas-

Men's attire (*Athürü Khim*)

<i>Mokhok khim</i> (shawl)	White in color, worn by every man of the tribe, it is common shawl.
<i>Shipang Khim</i> (shawl)	Worn by wealthy man, who often has the ability of hosting feast of merit and who can slaughter animals and distribute to the natives or relatives as the name <i>shi</i> implies meat.
<i>Rongkhim</i> (shawl)	The most valuable shawl with precious cowries. Worn only by the warriors, it is also known as <i>Athrong Rü Khim</i> (a warrior's shawl)
<i>Rehükih Khim</i> (shawl)	A shawl worn only by rich, wealthy man and a great warrior who brings an enemies' head usually on the occasions of festivals. It is red in color with the design of a person's head.
<i>Rongrhih</i> (apron)	A traditional apron worn by every man. Some has cowries stitched on it with black and blue lining.
Müktoh Rhih and Rehütam (apron)	A warriors or wealthy man's apron with cowries <i>Larüb</i> (a round silver metal)

Table 2.2

Women's attire (*Aliberü khim*-shawl and *Rungtsun*-wrap around)

<i>Yeaktoberü</i> or <i>Alungzah rungthsun</i> (wrap around)	A common wrap around attire worn by every woman.
<i>Kejingberü rungthsun</i> (wrap around)	A common wrap around attire worn by every woman especially during festivals. White in color with 'X' shaped designs of red and black.
<i>Peye rungthsun</i> (wrap around)	A wrap around attire worn only on occasions and events. Red in color with blue and black linings
<i>Khiungkeberü rungthsun</i> (wrap around)	Purple or off white in color, usually worn by women who marries men from other village or community.
<i>Sangkonglim Khim</i> (shawl)	A common shawl worn by every woman.
<i>Tsüngrim Khim</i> (shawl)	A prestigious shawl worn by the wives of the warriors (<i>Athrong Rü</i>).

Apart from the traditional attires the Yimchunger people also wears and carries various ornaments and apparels usually termed as *Zülu*, which are made of gold, bronze and other valuable metals. Some of which are-

- a. *Rongnokshang*, a traditional dao often tall with a goat's hair attached to its wooden handle.
- b. *Thsüh Rung*, a traditional spear with long wooden handle.
- c. *Aramkuthran* a traditional head plate with designs decorated with hairs of animals and boar tusk or other animal's teeth.
- d. *Rehu Nok Trüp*, a traditional Dao case.
- e. *Kuyü Tsupong*, a casket or a sash which has a woman's long hair attached to it. It is often used during festivals and folk dances. The hairs are usually kept long with its end horizontally sized to let it swing in the air making the dances charming and colorful. It is said that whenever a man brings an enemy's head (woman) who has beautiful and long hairs. The hairs are taken to design *Kuyü Tsupong*.
- f. *Jingtum*, an ornament worn on the angles of a leg.
- g. *Lak*, the Yimchunger people wears a series of *Lak*- necklace made of precious stones, pearls, metals, bells (made of brass) and cowries.
- h. *Nuku Mükhip Pü*, a traditional earring worn by both man and woman.
- i. *Sanglüh*, *Hühzo* and *Yinchitong*, a bamboo made arrow and a bow made of metals and iron.

The Yimchunger people use hornbill feathers on their headgears. They not only use valuable metals for their ornaments but also animal skin, bones, teeth, hairs and furs. Teeth

of wild boars, elephants and rhino were used. The people use the tusk of wild boars for necklace which are very expensive and precious.

The Yimchunger Nagas are very much traditional even in this contemporary world and maintains their ethnic culture and identity. This generation has been witnessing all those traditional and cultural practices but a few knows where it all originated and the reason and significance of these practices. The younger generation is aware of the past but in bits and pieces because of the lack of written and preserved records. It is only through the mouth of the older generation that we know about the past. It is not that the Yimchunger people sprung out suddenly, they have a long and vast history. This younger generation blindly carries out their identity without the true knowledge of who they actually are. There is an urgent need to dig the roots and be known of the past ways. The distinct identity of the Yimchunger Nagas should be preserved so as to pass it down to the succeeding generations. No matter how educated, developed and advanced a man becomes, he would be lacking if he is unaware of his roots and the essence of his tradition and culture. Because of the absence of proper recorded culture and tradition of the Yimchunger, the existing ones varies in so many ways and one cannot stick to one view as the most accurate one. The tribe carries a prolonged history which speaks of their history, migration, war fares, folk tales and folk songs, recreated often through Oral narratives. With the advancement, the Yimchunger people have started recording these aspects but still a large part yet remains to be explored and recorded. We can say that a large part of the history of the Yimchunger Nagas might have lost in the passage of time because of the inadequate Literature which also makes it difficult to identify the vast Yimchunger society with their culture and tradition.

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CHAPTER II

ORIGIN OF THE YIMCHUNGER NAGAS

The Nagas are an Indo-Mongoloid folk, living in the North-Eastern hills of India. The Nagas are of various tribes which are further divided into several sub-tribes under the umbrella of one major tribe from which the sub-tribes usually originated. The Naga tribes speak different distinct dialects belonging to Tibeto-Burmese family, 'Sino-Tibetan and Tibeto-Chinese speech family', which is divided into Tibeto-Burman and Siamese-Chinese languages, (Naga Institute of Culture 2). The Nagas have numerous and vast myths of origin and migration, which differs from tribe to tribe and even among a tribe exist numerous versions among the sub-tribes and among the cult and clans. In general, the Naga tribes are believed to have migrated from far eastern countries like China, Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, Mongolian etc., who came to the present land in small groups, but is inadequate as the Naga tribes do not have recorded history of their migration and origin. And the only reliable source is the folk stories that are stocked in the minds and memories of the older generations.

There are numbers of views and opinions regarding the Naga tribes coming to the Naga Hills. Some believed that the Naga tribes came in groups as Kuki-Chin from Kachins moving southwards from China migrating downwards towards the Chindwin River and moved slowly towards northwards spreading all over the Naga Hills. The people migrated in groups and from various places. Some groups came from central Asia crossing the Irawaddi, who were divided into numbers of tribes and sub-tribes and clans but belonged to the same Mongoloid race, with distinct in languages, physical appearance, character,

culture, tradition and beliefs and practices yet bearing so much of similarities. Smith, in the book, *The Naga Society*, is of the view that the Naga tribes belong to the same blood as that of people from Burma, Sikkim, Bhutan and other Hilly areas of North East India. The people after occupying the Naga Hills marked their respective territories with stone, rivers and mountains as boundary line, establishing their sovereign village and maintaining separate identity. (Singh 27)

Despite various researches and efforts about the Naga origin and migration and their settlement in Naga hills, there is no reliable information or truth thus far. The Naga origin and history is somewhat blurred with no accurate view point. Thus the Naga tribes have distinctive cultural and traditional practices hinting to some extent to their origins.

In the article, *The mixed Culture of the Naga Tribes*, Dr. Hutton traces the Nagas with the Formosa people. The Nagas inhabits many of the qualities of the Formosa such as, *wearing cane belts and leg bands, tying the back hair (in the case of the man) in a chignon; using a communal hut for unmarried; exposing their dead on platforms with, but ultimately disposing of the skull, and perhaps all the bones separately in stones cists, on rock shelves, or in pots; and subsisting in the main millets and or taro.* Dr. Hutton says that there are close parallels in the cultures of the Naga Hills and the Formosa hill men. (Naga Institute of Culture 5) Dr. W.C. Smith, a Christian missionary and an American Sociologist in *Ao Naga Tribes of Assam*, relates the Naga Hill men to that of the Tibeto-Burman tribes of Assam and the Indonesians of Malaya highlighting similar characteristics between them, such as,

1. *Head-hunting*
2. *Common Sleeping-Houses for unmarried men, which were taboo to women*
3. *Dwelling Houses built on posts and piles*
4. *Disposal of the Dead on raised Platforms*
5. *a sort of trial marriage or great freedom of intercourse between the sexes before marriage*
6. *Betel-chewing*
7. *Aversion of milk as an article of diet*
8. *Tattooing by pricking*
9. *Absence of any powerful political organization*
10. *The Double-cylinder vertical forge*
11. *The simple loom for weaving cloth*
12. *A large quadrangular or hexagonal shield*
13. *Residence in Hilly Regions with a crude form of agriculture (Naga Institute of Culture*
4)

We have the knowledge that though not used today all these practices were followed and widely spread among all Naga tribes at one point of time. Naga tribes can be said to have migrated from Tibeto-Burma and the hills of Formosa. Not only the origin of the Naga people but also the origin of the term 'Naga' is controversial. Many scholars have

and are trying to trace the source from where the term Naga came into being but no definite conclusions have been made thus far. The Naga myths and tales of migration tells us that the Naga Tribes migrated from China, and from Burma to a large extent, and the name 'Naga' is a term given to the tribes by outsiders, like the view that the word 'Naga' derived from the Sanskrit word 'nagnah' which means naked and the word 'naka' which means snake, referring to the animistic practices and worshipping of Nature. Some believed 'Naga' derived from a Bengali word *Nangta* and a Hindu word *Nanga*, both meaning 'naked'. While some believes it to a Kachari word *Naga* which means 'a young man or a warrior'. A. T. Philip, an anthropologist, believes that the word Naga derived from an Ao word 'Nok-kha' which means 'one Dao' (Longchar 28). This view can be relatable as every Naga men keep their Daos close to them. No family or no men is not without a Dao since time immemorial.

Every Naga Tribes have their own unique, 'the biggest mystery is the origin of various tribes of the Nagas because different tribes have their own version of their origin', says P.D. Stracey in *My Native Country: The Land of the Nagas* (Nuh 49). The Naga tribes migrated in several waves at different period of time. Along with the Ao, Changs, Tangkhuls, Sangtams and Khamniungan, the Yimchunger Nagas migrated among the second wave as one group. They followed the same route from Thangdut area in Burma (Myanmar) near the Chidwin River and reached a place called Moru and then came to Jure village. The people settled there for quite some time along with the other groups and then, the Yimchunger and the Khamniungan Nagas formed another wave moving towards westward through Burma and entered the present land Naga hills (Naga Institute of Culture 20-21)

Along with the rest of the Naga tribes, the origin of the Yimchunger Naga traces back to Mongolia, a Sino-Mongoloid group. It is accepted that the Yimchunger Nagas have come from Thailand, China and Mongolian race. According to some village elders a group of people came wandering in search of a proper place to settle down. Since there were no proper road in those days this groups of people came wandering through the hills by following the rivers and reached a place of their satisfaction and choice and settled there, forming a village carrying life activities. The original name of the Yimchunger is *Yimkhiungrü*, *Yim* means search and *khiungrü*, means reached. As such Yimchunger means *the ones who have reached their place of choice* (Yim 4). The features and way of life of the Yimchunger Nagas is different from other Naga tribes, yet they bear similarities in many ways. The origin and migration of the Yimchunger Nagas is based more on speculation and transmitted tales than on facts.

The stories and the view points of the tribe's migration vary from person to person and from village to village. The claims on the origin of the Yimchunger Nagas are a broad and a vast one, with no clarity and proven view. As such many believe what they hear. No one can be accurate enough and stick to one view alone as the most accepted one. The origin of the Yimchunger Nagas is inadequate and that of a mixture which relies to the different views of the older generations. Every village offers their own story and myths of their origin with different versions. It is like a mystery which is almost impossible to solve. And the only thing people can do is accept every view and create the most relevant one by taking into account all the views.

The Yimchunger Nagas migrated along with the rest of the Nagas from South-East Asia through the mountains and basins of China and Thailand through Burma (Myanmar)

along the rivers Chindwin and Irrawady. The people came towards Saramati area along the Patkai range on the banks of Tizu and the Zungki river and settled in a place called *Mih-bokpong* on Zungki banks also known as the *Thurak ke* or the *Yayi-Langa ke*, *ke* means 'river'. From *Mih-bokpong* village, the people moved and established the ancestral village *Kemiphu/kemüphu* with 999 households. Because of the cold weather in *Kemiphu*, the people moved to several other places establishing new settlements across the *Zungki* river like *Yingphu* and *Tongkhun*. According to this view it was only then that the people expanded and established *Yimkhiung-Awünrü*, where all the descendants and settlers that dispersed from *Kemiphu* to various other places gathered and started the *Yimkhiung-Awünrü*. From there some migrated further and established a well known *Langa* village, across the *Hiruppong* mountain range and continued to spread in all near and far directions expanding beyond *Dikhu* river.

Most people believe that the Yimchangers existed before all the civilizations of present day which was referred particularly to the earliest civilization or the village of the Yimchangers *Yimchung-Awünrü*. *Yimchung* refers to the Yimchunger people and *Awünrü* means old. The village still exists as one of the earliest village popularly known as *Y. Awünrü* in Shamator area of Tuensang district. Before the people reached and settled in *Y. Awünrü* it is believed that the people who migrated from china wondering in the broad landscapes, crossing a series of mountains and rivers settled in various places and came migrating from one place to the other. Some groups of people (whom we now term as Nagas) finally inhabited and settled along the lower Chindwin plains near to Shans and the Burmese.

The Yimchunger Nagas also shares a legend with the Chang Nagas along with the Phom Nagas Konyak Nagas on their origin known as the *Changsang* legend. According to this legend, the Chang Nagas emerged from earth at *Changsang Mongko* village, between Tuensang and Hakchang villages. Then the chang people came up to Lanyyong River near Noklak and settled in *Changsang*. From there, the population increased and the people migrated to various directions, hence it is believed that once the Chang Nagas and the Yimchunger Nagas lived together. Among them some migrated to Langa village and became the Yimchunger Nagas. Langa soon suffered and was destroyed and the people again migrated to other places establishing new Yimchunger villages. It is believed that the people that left Langa became other tribes as well.

Mr. Kewongkhum a native of Kutor village (shamator area) believes that the Yimchunger people migrated from China during the Sikiang province, mainly because of the forced labour during the building of the Great Wall of China, settled in Mt. Mezosira in Yunan (Chinese Boarder) in the northern part of Kachin and from there, migrated towards the Chindwin plains in Sagain and Mandalay in Myanmar (Burma) and reached the of present day Naga Hills in various groups. During that time the people were not divided to any tribes or they did have a common name as that of now. They were simply wonderers wondering from place to place in search of a suitable place to settle. The groups of people came to Naga Hills around 400 B.C he says. Isolated from the rest of the world, the groups' first encounter with other people were the Burmese known as Shans from Myanmar (Burma).

The Nagas as we term now or the so called Mongolian people were handsome and beautiful. They wore beautiful attires to cover themselves and ornaments which added

more beauty and color to their physical features. Because of their attractiveness, the children of the Mongolian groups were abducted by the Shans. The Shans used to stole the beautiful ornaments that the people wore. And even if the children were recovered, brought back or managed to escaped and returned back home, identifying them to the right parents was a problem. Because of this problem, the Nagas or the Mongolian people started tattooing their children on their chin to identify them. The tattoos differed in designs from clan to clan or from groups to groups, so that it would be easier for them to identify their own people. The practice of tattooing thus started while the people were living in lower Chindwin, under the Sagan division of Myanmar (Burma). It is believed that the present day Yimchungers were also among those groups as the forefathers of the Yimchunger Naga followed this tattooing system.

During their stay in lower Chindwin the Nagas had constant conflicts and wars with the Shans which caused enormous problems. The Shans used to attack the Nagas on elephants which was impossible for the Nagas to defeat. The Nagas in order to defeat their rivals would dig deep ditches, covered with leaves and entrapped the elephants. When the elephants are entrapped, they would collect the elephant's tusk which was used as armlets. Thus armlets made by elephant's tusk began which is still in use among the Yimchungers. Due to constant fights and losses, the people in Chindwin areas were compelled to retreat to other parts.

It is believed that the people parted in three groups from the lower Chindwin and the Yimchunger Nagas belong to the second group. The second group went up the further along the Chindwin River and entered the western side of the Patkai range through Tizü River and Ararü (Sutsü) River and reached a place of satisfaction to settle. This new

settlement was called *Yimkhiung-Awürü/Yimchung-Awürü* (Yimchung-Old). The name *Yimchung-Awürü* (*Y.Awürü*) itself suggests that it is the oldest village of the Yimchunger community. Similarly another group came from a lower place known as *Chi-Kiulong* through *Kemiphu/Kemüphu*. The groups gathered and build *Yimchung-Awürü* and called themselves as *Yimkhiungrü* meaning ‘the ones who have reached their place of choice’, the literal meaning of the present day term Yimchunger or the *Yimkhiungrü*. From *Y.Awürü* new settlements flourished which became a permanent settlement of the present day Yimchunger Nagas.

How Yimchung-Awürü (Y.Awürü) came into existence.

According to Mr. Zungkum a native of Sangphur village, a group of people came wondering in search of an appropriate place for settlement from *Kemüphu* known as *Kemüphume*. The people that came through this route were Lakiumong, Kosang, Zoyingkiu, Rongkiumong, Khumong, Hemong, Sangkongthong, Makhung, Sangpen and Kiso. From *Tükeyakab* village in *Kemüphu* area these group of people as they went for fishing with their *Kheak* (a kind of basket used where the collected fishes were stored and carried) in *Yayi* river, they saw a *Kheak* that flowed down from upper side of the river with charcoal. On seeing that, they thought that they are not the only people around. Thus they began their journey towards the upper part of the river in search of people. Their days of journey following the *Yayi* River came to an end with the exploration of a settlement called as *Yimchung-Awürü* (*Y. Awürü*) and they settled there. Another group of people came down from the upper part of the river known as *Tsüngkong ke* (river) following the water route and they too reached *Yimchung-Awürü* and settled there. *Yimchung-Awürü* was thus filled by people gathered from various parts. The people started a settlement but the

question of who the *Kiulong Tsührü* (village makers/builders/owners) was, soon disturbed the people and the people started fighting each group claiming themselves to be owner of the village and that they were the first to find and start the village there. The groups that gathered became distinct clans. Each group had their own valid reasons to claim themselves as the owner of the village but each group cannot be titled as the village maker so the people as worshippers of *Arimpuh* (spirits) decided to let *Arimpuh* (spirits) decide as to which group came first. Both the groups, people that came down and the people that came up in order to own the land as the owner came up with excellent ideas which would prove them as the first to arrive at *Yimchung-Awünrü*.

The people decided to ask *Achangpuh Thrünpuh* the God of Heavens and *Alo Limpuh Thrünpuh* the God of lands as to who came first. So the people that came from the upper side made one of their native climbed one of the tallest and thickest tree and made him hide himself so to answer the people disguised as *Arimpuh* (spirit) on being asked about their coming. Similarly the people that came up from the lower part also dig a deep ditch, camouflaged with leaves and made one of their native to hide underneath and answer in their favor as *Arimpuh* (spirit). When the people gathered together and asked the God of Heavens, *Achangpuh Thrünpuh* to tell them who were the first to come and settle there. The man on the tree being disguised as *Arimpuh* (spirit) replied, it is the people that came down from the upper part. The people that came from the lower part then said that they should also ask the God of the lands. So the people again ask as to who came first to *Alo Limpuh Thrünpuh* (God of the land). And the man hidden on the ditch replied it is the people who came up from the lower part. Now both the groups again were labeled as the first one to come and settle in *Yimchung-Awünrü*. But both the groups wanted to stand out

as the first group to settle in *Yimchung-Awünrü* so they again decided to search the roots. This time the people agreed to look at the excreta of the people and the cut trees because the trees that has been cut first and the first human waste would be dry and black or brown in color, which would show clearly which group came first. It is believed that when both the groups went back to take the ones who had been hiding on the tree and under the land disappeared and were never found. The people believe they became spirits.

Clever enough, both the groups again came up with brilliant ideas. The people that came from the lower side went in a hurry and cut down *Thümüh Sang* (Jakhiya Tree) but did nothing about their excreta. So when the people came looking for their excreta and the tree that has been cut by them, they found no trace which proves their first arrival. The second group, people that came down from upper side namely Shitomong and Sangpen (according to Mr. Ramji, Langa Village) ate black sesame known as *Bendang* which produced their excreta in black color. They went and cut down *Muktong Sang* which turns black or dark brown immediately after being cut down. Seeing their excreta black and the tree they have cut dark and dry, the natives then declared the people who came from the upper side as the first settlers and the owner of the land.

Mr. Zungkum the people that came from up from *Kemephu* left *Yimchung-Awünrü* and again moved to another place. After wandering for two to three weeks the lower people namely Zoyingkiu, Kusang, Renkiumong and Makhong settled in a place which they named Langa. The formation of Langa became one of the most remarkable establishments in the history of the Yimchunger Nagas, as it is believed that though Langa is not the earliest village of the tribe, it is through this village that the Yimchunger people dispersed into many of the present day Yimchunger villages.

Another legend on the origin of the Yimchunger Nagas says that the Yimchunger people came about searching a good place to settle in two groups, one through the river and the other by the land. On reaching a particular place *Kemüphu*, misunderstandings and conflicts broke out concerning land. From there some people went and settled in a place known as *Mukong* (Thünim Kiulong), meaning gather in Langa dialect, bordering Myanmar (Burma). So some people are of the view that *Mukong* is one among the earliest known Yimchunger villages, to be established by those people who migrated from Burma/Myanmar. From there villages like *Thsün Kiuso*, *Y. Awünrü*, *Langa* were being established one after the other.

Yet another *Kemüphu* legend holds that the yimchunger people came out from a stone cave at *Kemüphu* each speaking different tongues. The people according to their different speaking tongues dispersed in groups to different parts, of which most of the people gathered in Langa. According to the Yimchunger Nagas, the Yimchungers are the original settlers of the Langa village from where all other Naga Tribes emerged. For instance, the yimchunger Nagas believes that the Ao Nagas migrated further passing them across the river looking for a suitable place. Thus, they are called as *Ahorü* by the Yimchungers which means ‘one who passed by or one who has gone across’.

It is also believed that some people from *kemüphu* migrated and established *Tukheakiupong* (Tukhiakhup) from where persons like Renkiumong, Koshang, Sangjen, Lakiumong, Zongyimkiu and Hemong went up along the Yayi River establishing *Yimchung-awünrü* village. From there, a group of people under the leadership of Koshang, Zongyimkiu and Hemong shifted to other place, establishing Langa. The people then again

dispersed establishing *Sangphur* and *Thsenkiuso* village (Socio-Historical Background of the Yimchunger Nagas 17-18)

There are diverging views on the origin and migration of the Yimchunger Nagas, each bearing some similarities with differences. On the whole each view highlights *Yimchung Awürü* as the first Yimchunger village from the Yimchunger natives flourished. According to Mr. Sunymongba, from Kutor village some groups of people came through *Tsungkong* River and they departed ways. Some came down to *Y. Awürü* and some went towards the upper site and settled in *Hukerü* village towards *Shimrü* (Sema Nagas). As such till date some Yimchunger villages are also located in Zuneboto areas.

Yet again another view holds that the Yimchunger people came from Thailand through Burma (Myanmar). And from Burma came to a place called *Moru*. The people lived in *Moru* for a short time and again migrated to a place called *Chiru*. From *Chiru* the people migrated to *Thunyim Kiulong* (Village), *thunyim* means fifty and *kiulong* means village in Langa dialect, the village was called *thunyim kiulong* because of the fact that people from different places gathered there. From *Thunyim Kiulong* the people again scattered to *Tophung* village and *Thsunkiuso* village. After this long process of migration, the people gathered again in *Kemüphu* on the banks of *Thurak ke*, also known as the present Zungki River.

The people settled in *Kemüphu* for quite some time and moved to a place known as *Tukhiakhup* also known as *Tukheakiupong*. The people migrated in groups every now and then leaving the others behind in search of a better place. One day, as the people from *Tukheakhup* were fishing on *Zungki* River, they found a burnt charcoal floating down from

Yayi River. This discovery compelled the people curious about some unknown human settlement and a large group of people went up following the river till they found a place where other humans lived. Finally on reaching a place where there were other humans, they settled there and named it *Yimkhiungto* which means 'found it', and the people that lived in this village were therefore known as the Yimchungers. With the passage of time this place came to be known as *Yimchung-Awünrū* till date. The people started living under one name as Yimchunger in Yimchung-Awünrū. After which some groups of people left the village and moved further towards north and established a new settlement known as Langa below the present Kutor village.

Some people are of the view that only two clans lived in Langa *Jankhiunger* and *Janger*, while some says that three clans lived in Langa. Lakiumong, Zongyimkiu and Khusang were leaders of *Jankhiunger* clan, Pathong and Hemong from the *Janger* clan and, Sangpun from the *Khiphur* clan. It is said that all the leaders were equally brave, strong and daring people and they soon began to fight against each other for supremacy torturing all the villagers. Finally all the people parted ways lead by their respective leaders as they could no longer live together in peace. Langa was thus desolated and left barren forever. The people ventured and spread all over the Naga hills establishing new settlements which stands till date as Yimchunger villages. The destroyed Langa and its remains are still found today as a testimony declaring the land as to once inhabited by hardworking and fearless people of Yimchunger Nagas.

Most people are of the view that the groups of people that gathered in *Y. Awünrū* fought within themselves over the land and people gradually dispersed to other lands. One of them was the Langa village. *Y. Awünrū* is the first and original village of the tribe but

Langa is being marked as the most important village in the history of the Yimchunger because of the series of fights, events, incidents, migration of large number of people and its destruction. A large number of people abandoned Langa at once making the world know Langa and in turn making the Yimchunger people known to other tribes. It is because of the conflicts that lead to the destruction of a great settlement Langa and because of its destruction the Yimchunger people spread all over the Naga hills.

It is said that the People of Langa migrated to other parts of Nagaland as well, like towards the land of Chang Nagas, Ao Nagas, Sangtam Nagas, Konyak Nagas, Phom Nagas and Khaimniugan Nagas. However this claim may not be accurate and may not be applicable to other Naga tribes as every Naga tribe has their own distinct myths, legends and views about their origin and migration. It is wholly based on the views of the Yimchunger people and their narration on their origin. Though some groups went further leaving Langa forever, it is believed that the larger groups moved in nearby places of Langa and continued to live as Yimchungers increasing their population. And now the Yimchunger villages are located in most of the districts of Nagaland.

Taking into account all the views on the origin and migration of the Yimchunger Nagas, one cannot come into a clear cut conclusion. Yet the view that groups of people came wandering from various places and reached *Yimchung-Awünrü*, from where the tribe Yimchunger came into existence is accepted by most people. It is from this village that the groups of people came to call themselves as one of the tribe known as *Yimkhiungrü/Yimchunger*.

It is to be noted that the ancestors of the Yimchunger tribe had a long way of migration. They moved from place to place in groups. Until they gathered in *Yimchung-Awünrü*, they had no name. The people were only termed as groups. Finding and reaching *Yimchung-Awünrü* gave the groups a name. Therefore most of the people that dispersed from *Yimchung-Awünrü* established one of the greatest settlements of the Yimchunger Nagas and from there came the many present day Yimchunger villages.

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CHAPTER III

FOLK SONGS AND TALES OF THE YIMCHUNGER NAGAS: TRANSLATION

The folk songs and folk tales of the Naga tribes contribute largely in the formation of the Naga Folk Literature. The Nagas being deeply rooted in the belief of spirits, supernaturalism, fantasy, magic and animism, their Folk tales and Folk songs at large, feature these elements. Large number of Folk tales and Folk songs are not of recent origin, they have existed since the time of our forefathers and the early Naga society which has successfully been transmitted time and again in the absence of written forms, as Chandrika Singh in *The Naga Society*, writes, 'in the case of Naga Society and its cultural as well as social norms and values, it never happened that the Naga people lost their identity' (Singh 1). The Nagas have maintained their distinctive identity largely through folktales, folksongs, myths, legends etc. Folk tales and Folk songs despite depicting the belief system of the Nagas, they also depict their tradition, culture, moral values and the ways of life.

Folk songs always accompanied the Nagas in everyday life. Folksongs are very much a part of Naga society even today. We hear Folk songs in various festivals and on tribal occasions. Folksongs usually depict the beliefs of the Nagas, praise the prosperity of the land, blessings, thanksgiving etc. The Naga tribes have a number of Folksongs for different occasions. Folk tales reflect the mind of the people, behavior, character, religion, taboos, superstitions, tradition and culture. Some Folk tales also depict a strong passionate as well as tragic love tales, where as some exclaim the story and life of great warriors.

Folk tales of the Nagas usually has a moral value to be conveyed to and to be acquired by the community. Folk tales of the Nagas are full of knowledge and wisdom.

Folk songs and Folk tales of the Yimchunger Naga reflects the process of ethnicity, reflecting the social reality of the tribe. Every account, event, experiences, knowledge and wisdom are now basically found in the preserved Folk songs and Folk tales of the tribe. They are usually transmitted by the grand parents or the older folks to the younger generations as a bed time story or in family gatherings or during free time. There is no other source to explore Folk songs and Folk tales other than being transmitted orally. Folk song is very much common among the Yimchunger people. Though the tribe no longer dwells in their past beliefs, Folksongs still pierces deeply among the people proclaiming the tribe's past ways and beliefs. Folksongs are still popular heard as the community marches on their fields and during community's mass works. The older generations are still heard singing Folksongs with so much of longing and with great delight and pride. Folk songs in this contemporary period are popularly sung during the tribe's festivals. The Yimchunger Naga tribe has distinct folksongs for distinct occasions.

M. Horam says, '...the tribal people of the world are by and large very musical...,' (Horam 44) this is infact very much relevant to the Yimchunger Tribe of Nagaland, they have their own peculiar songs which has been preserved since time immemorial. Dr. M. Sharma says, 'A Folksong is a lyrical, short, simple, less artistic but rhythmic song of a folk-community... It is transmitted, circulated and perpetuated spontaneously through oral tradition from person to person or from generation to generation' (Nonglait 3)

The Yimchunger Naga Folk songs are usually short and the lyrics a free verse. All tribal events and occasions feature song and dance. It is the earliest expression of joy, victory, sorrow and celebration as such the Yimchunger sings of agriculture, seasons, land, humans, age, sorrow, merry making etc. Some of the Folk songs also consist of well prescribed rhyming words. Many of the folksongs of the Yimchunger Nagas convey a message or highlight the past traditions and beliefs. It also features the beautiful landscapes of the Yimchunger land and depicts the characters of men. Many of the folksongs of the tribe are still sung popularly on occasions and festivals.

1. *Yimchungrü Atankhi Khün*

(A Beginning song of the Yimchungers)

Langa, Langa, Lo, O, He

Langa Yimchung Perü.

Langa, Langa, Lo, O, He

O, Langa.

Translation - Langa, Langa, Land. O, He

Langa, Yimchunger Women

Langa, Langa, Land, O, He

O, Langa.

The song owes to the very accepted fact that the Yimchunger community dispersed and increased its population from Langa village to various present day locations. This folk song praises the Langa land which is believed to be one from among the earliest Yimchunger civilizations. The song sings of the generation that the Yimchunger women has produced from this very land i.e., Langa. It claims that the birth of the Yimchunger community from the Yimchunger women of this land. This song is significantly sung even today especially among older generations on the community strongly upholds the view that the tribe migrated from Langa village due to internal conflicts within the village elder builders, *kiulong tsührü*. But the tribe had never forgotten Langa as one of their ancestral villages.

The Yimchunger people through songs often depict the nature of human beings, be it positive or negative. They sing of human behavior, wealth, happiness and everything related to life. Singing has always been the most common and widely used form of expression.

2. *Kheangrü Kiurü Lung Marihakokhi Khün*

(A song of Disunity among the Community)

Apü külim Yütöle?

Moshi Khuk Yüto.

Aji Külim Yütöle?

Shing Ayuh yüto.

Yingürü, Kheangrü Larü,

Yamtong Kheangrui Larui,

Khihpe larui, Tangkho Larui.

Trum, Trum, Trum.

Translation- Where's Grandfather gone?

To steal cows.

Where's Grandmother gone?

To steal Ginger.

A community, a neighborhood we have,

A family, a home we have,

Crap we have, grasshopper we have.

Trum, Trum, Trum.

The last words in each lines of this Folksong are systematically woven having rhyming words. This song is in interrogating form. This song presents a dialogue between two speakers, where one asks and the other answers. This song draws light on human mind as wicked and selfish. The human heart is never satisfied and his demands, wants and desires never ending, which tends to follow wealth and gain. The song clearly depicts a grandfather and a grandmother who is missing from a mass community's work. On being asked, it is made known that the two escaped the general mass work and proceeds for their personal gain, taking the advantage of the situation. The song says that the people have

food, shelter and animals. They have community, family and neighbors and they need not steal. But as human nature, the two elderly persons had been too selfish and unsatisfied with what they have. This kind of behavior leads to disunity and misunderstanding among the natives. This act of the two elderly persons reveals a denial of helping hand to the community and to the welfare of the whole society. This kind of behaviors is very much seen even today. The song clearly depicts how human beings put personal benefits as their first priority before the mass's benefits.

3. *Wuhnuh Yan Khün*

(A Bird Chasing Song)

O, Kungpü he, Kungpü he

O, Thürowüh, Thürowuh

Isa Lu Ching, Jünü nüpok muthsü

Thsülo Are Lu ching Jünü

Pok thsüang, Nüpok thsüang.

O,O,O, he, he.

Translation- O, bird he, O, bird

O, bird, bird

My field won't fill your stomach

You can fill your stomach from other fields

Fill your stomach, be filled

O,O,O, he, he.

This Folk song is popularly sung by the farmers when their crops begin to grow. As the crops grow, it attracts the birds to prey on their fruits. The Yimchunger Nagas being agriculturalist sings this song as they work on their fields, believing that their song would chase the birds away from eating their crops. The song asks and requests the birds to go eat in other fields or somewhere else as the crops in their field won't suffice their stomach.

4. *Kushim Khün*

(A get together song)

Hi Su, U.

Suneha, Hi, Isa Hi So, O

Atsa Hi, I So, O, He

Ahi, I, Hi So, O, He

Hi, Isa Hi Neha

Ahi ang So, O, Ra

This song is popularly sung in any of the gatherings usually when a small group gathers be it friends, community, family or as tribe. It is a pride taking song. The frequent use of the word 'I' pronounced as 'e' refers to the 'me' and 'Isa' means 'us'. The song is all about praising the self or the self group as distinct intellectual or intellectuals. Every

clan has some great deeds to be praised and proclaims their own abilities which are often expressed through songs.

The Yimchunger Nagas are proud of their ancestors and their ways of life. The present generation owes life to past generations. The people have immense respect for elderly people for leading this younger generation in every way.

5. *So Shimpe Nü, So Shimpuh Nü*

(who old woman, who old man, an ancestral praising song)

So Shimpe Nü, So Shimpuh Nü Jishulo, Jira Ale?

O,O, Hu, U,

Hu, Li I Ra

Translation- who old woman, who old man have called us and feed us?

O,O, Hu, U,

Hu, Li I Ra

The song praises the ancestors who have called us and feed us. We are the offspring of such old man and woman through whom the community has been sustaining thus far.

6. *Mongtsü Tüsho Arih Akho Khün*

(A song of peace and harmony)

Chang, Chang Müyaang Ko Kong

Müyaang, Müyang Perü Laji So

Khiungke Thsürü Mü Ü-yang Se

Translation- Chang, chang a true friend

Friend, friend a woman friend we have

Far off people are our friends

Friendship is a beautiful bond, the Yimchunger people celebrates this beautiful bond and maintains friendship with trust and loyalty. The song praises the bond of friendship; a good friend is always remembered. The name of a good friend both man and woman lives forever in the hearts of the people. Friendship is not limited to one's own community and territory. A good friendship may extend to far off areas and other community as well, the song declares friendship of such kind that does not limit to one's own community, area and tribe.

7. So Müyangpe, So Müyangpuh

(A song of friendship- who's friend?)

So Müyangpe Müyangpe Tsa Tsa

So Müyangpuh Müyangpuh Tsa Tsa

So Shimpe A, Nü Tsa Le Shi

So Shimpuh Nü Tsa Le Shi

Ho Ye A, Alosa Ho Ye A, Alosa Ye A

Translation- Whose friend is he tsa tsa

Whose friend is she tsa tsa

Who good old woman has brought you

Who good old man has brought you

Ho Ye A, born out of dust Ho Ye A, born out of dust Ye A

This song also praises a friend and his parents who have given birth to them and brought them into this world. Though humans are born out of dust, it is through persons that a man comes into this world. The song praises this very process of human birth through humans by which one has a companion and a friend.

8. *Atsün Khün*

(A dance song)

Thongpo, Thongpo Hi Iza Himeha, Thongpo

Sora Sora Hi Iza Himeha, Sora

Translation- Thongpo, Thongpo hear our voices,

See our movements and our dance

The Yimchunger Nagas are very much fond of singing and dancing. Much of their folksongs are accompanied by some movements- folk dances. This song is a dance song which highlights and praises the voices and the dance of the folks.

9. *O Tsüng Tsüng*

(A dance song)

Tsüng , Tsüng, Tsüng, Tsüng Te Nung A

O Tsüng, Tsüng, Tsüng, Tsüng Te Nung A

O,A,O Tsüng Tsüng Te Nung A

O,A,O A Nung Khura Le

This song is also sung accompanied by a dance. The Yimchunger Naga Folk dances are carried out in full traditional attires which include a series of necklace, armlets, wristlets, head gear, earring and anklets as well as spears, doas and shields. With their full attire as the people makes a movement, the ornaments on coming into contact with each other makes a tingling sound adding a sort of music to their song. The song makes a declaration of such sounds of apparels and ornaments that the people wear and carry. The song says hear the sounds of our armors and ornaments.

10. *Aherale*

(A dance song)

Ha O Herale

Aherale.

Thik, Thik, Thik, Thik

This is song is a woman's song of dance. The song states that the woman dances with hand in hand, held together in unity. It is a song of celebration sung only by the woman folk. Folk songs of the Yimchunger Nagas are often accompanied by dance or some sort of movements which can be seen even today especially on the occasions of festivals, as M. Horam says, 'Dance, i.e., movement of body, in its most elementary forms- preceded actual singing. (Horam 45)

11. *Phungso O Mükhiutapün*

(Bloom O Rhododendron)

Phungso O Phungso,

O Mükhiutapün Phungso

O Aza Shu Tsa Shua A

Translation- Bloom O Bloom

O Rhododendron Bloom

O how Beautiful

The song praises the beautiful state flower Rhododendron which blooms in abundance in Yimchunger land especially in Pungro Area and Saramati area. The song states that the blooming of the Rhododendron is a beautiful and awful sight which adds beauty to the land.

12. *Wochak Khün Tung*

(A song of farming)

O he, ha hu

O he, ha hu

Oh he le he, hu O, O ha he

Oh he le he, Hu O, O ha he

O le he, O le he, ha he

O, O Lu I, huto O A Ohi

O, huto I huto O A Ohi O, he

O, O,O,O, A,A,A,A, ho, he

O, he

The early Yimchunger People depended wholly on agriculture for their basic necessities. Every individual or every family owned lands for agricultural. They believed in unity of work as such in earlier days a group of people works together taking turns in the fields. As they work hard against all odds and difficulties they believed that their song would make their work easy going and energetic. It also encourages them to work without being lazy. The song also praises the field from where they get most of the food.

13. *Acham Khün*

(A song of departure)

Chamko Lo, O, Lu U, Chamko

Mücham Nene she A, Lu U

Chamk Chamko Lo

Translation- we have to part our ways

Departure we don't want, but yet

We have to part our ways

The yimchunger Nagas after every occasion, event, feasts or any other gatherings sings this departure song. This song can be also sung addressing the deceased ones. Humans are bound to be departed by death as no one can avoid death. It is impossible for humans to always live together.

Folk tales of the Yimchunger Nagas is an important element in sustaining the age old ways of the tribe. The tribe's folktales were always intended to teach a moral lesson and a value to convey to the natives. Many of the present day practices and beliefs are derived from the many preserved folk tales. Through folktales the older generation shares their experiences, it not only features animals and spirits but humans as well. People still refers back to the folktales or phrases from the folktales which are popularly used depending on the situation. Animal's character plays a vital role in Yimchunger Naga folktales.

1. *Phihnu Le Tanila Yukhean*

Nimong Khülang Phinubo alala Küdang lato. Jü nimong Phihnu bonü hate atsang achih a lu, Tanila nü Isa nimong apante tsühkhamapacho jumonü Isa tsokhitpuü thsongkheak nü ahongching lak phungyok jih anü. Jute tsüsho lang api arükhi Isa nü asopah. Tüsho Isa ju api kheaknü atso khitpah te thapah alalanü asühte yakzan jü tsü-a luto. Jutüchoki arüpololng khülang nü hate tha- jü yakzan khete tsülah thahle Tanila hungching lak jü Isa shepünü aphung yokji pah? Jutüchoki shenü Inü aphungyok jih pah te malokhi te arü yakzan thsükhi ju akeangkang kama pah toh. Jumonü khhine khung te Tanila nü Phihnu poh tsühte arü choh.

Translation- A tale of rats (*Phinu*) and the cat (*Tanila*)

One day the rats (*phihnu*) gathered for a meeting (*Phihnuh Kudang*). The meeting was to get away from the cat (*Tanila*) once and forever as the cat was destroying the rats by eating away them. The rats had to deal with the cat as early as possible to save their species. Every day and night the cats comes gentle with no sound and hunts them mercilessly. The rat's species were declining day by day. All the rats gathered in one place and decided to tie a bell on the cat's neck so that the rats would know the cat's approach as the bell would make a sound as the cat moves. Every rat agreed but one among them remarked;

The question Is, who would dare to go near the cat and tie the bell?

No rats had the gut to face the mighty cat. They discussed for a very long time but couldn't find any alternate way to tie a bell on the cat's neck. None of them stood up to sacrifice. The meeting thus came to an end with no outcome and the rats dispersed unsatisfied. Therefore, since the rats failed to tie a bell on the cat, cats still hunt and prey on rats.

The yimchunger people use the phrase *Phihnuh Kudang* whenever a group, union, or any organization holds a meeting without any outcome. A simple discussion which yields no result or is meaningless is popularly referred to as rat's meeting (*Phihnuh Kudang*).

2. *Wuyih Le Khüzü Yukhean*

(A tale of wild cat and the tiger)

Atüso kim khülang ching-a Wuyih le Khüzü ju müyamrü khong tüsho rukkhik lang alakheah. Nimong khülang ane nü leango khete münah ngü tüsho ju tsühpü Khüzü junü leango tong kheakju mükün khok. Jumonü Khüzü nü Wuyih kit tha, 'nü wükih-ang tüsho Ishe rhoah aki shang'.

Jute thapahle Wuyih jü leango tong kheak künshih she, Wuyih nü leango atsü atsü ju alala api lang tsüh, tüsho aküp julang Khüzü kilem aki shih. Jumonü Khüzü apok khite akhiuk. Ju ngüpah Wuyih nü thah 'Müyampuh' Inü hakheaknü akepeh aniungpe ngükheta nü kilem akip pü ngüa zochihlah jumonü nüpok takhiukte arang I tonglem. Jüshü Wuyih nü Khüzü ju tangpong khülang pepah wü.

Jutüchoki limro ching, sang khulang ching Mükhu ato khite ngü pah Wuyih nü thah 'Müyampuh' Inü athakhitsü haju-ah. Ha khite niunglah jumonü haju-ah nü lang tsüh-ang te. Khüzü nü yüpah Mükhu ju atsühpü khiu, tüsho apilang Mükhu nü ngüthünak-a pah.

Jumonü Khüzü nü apok khite akhiuk te tha, nünü I rük khite akito jumonü kheaküa Inü nü nguhsah-a atsühpah te tha. Jutüchoki Wüyih nü taleh nü kihniah khite tuktsü lah jumonü shito lang nünü I yanphuh sho tsüh-ang te thapah le tsoapah. Ashito Wüyih ju tangpong khülang alo kiu-a zo. Wuyih nü akiukhi aloju atankikh lem ato nü kiutüyü pah anini khüh api azüh müshe kiukhit-a zo. Khüzü nü Wuyih ju yante yü. Tüsho Wuyih nü alo khünpit lim ju alihte yü, tüsho alo khün ching ju yüzah. Alo khün ju anikhüh lang kam te tso, jüching Khüzü ju müyüzah khok te kam. Khüzü ju alo khünpit ching mabhabkhok te kam-a pah, tüsho Wuyih ju mütsüh khok te pah to. Wuyih lümlong rükri ju lang Khüzü sühmüh kheaknü ato peh kam, junüh Wuyih akok ngü.

Translation- A tale of wild cat (*Wuyih*) and tiger (*Khüzü*)

In earlier days the wild cat and the tiger were best friends. They played and hunted together and were always together. One day as they were wondering around the jungle, they saw a bunch of banana fully ripen. They both wanted to eat those bananas but the tiger couldn't climb the banana tree. The tiger asked the wild cat, *Müyampuh (friend) why don't you climb the tree, pluck the bananas and pass it to me so that we can both have it.*

The wild cat climbed the banana tree and instead of sharing it with the tiger, the wild cat ate the bananas all by itself and threw only the covers. On this behavior of the wild cat the tiger got angry and started screaming asking the wildcat to get down. The frightened and clever wild cat to save itself from the tiger's anger said to the tiger,

My dear friend, (Müyampuh) these bananas are not good, I know a place where you will get sweeter stuffs to eat. These ones are not sweet and I am having these bananas so that I

can let you eat other the sweet stuff which I have found. *Müyampuh* (friend) don't be mad at me and follow me, I will take you there don't worry.

The wildcat then came down from the tree and asked the tiger to follow. On their way the wild cat saw a huge bee hive (*Mükhu*) on a tree, and pointing towards the hive the wild cat told the tiger, *Müyampuh* (friend) *there it is, the sweetest fruit I was talking about.*

The wild cat cleverly asked the tiger to go and get the bee hive as it is the sweetest thing saying, *Meyampuh* (my dear friend) *I have especially kept this sweetest fruit a secret so that I can let you have it all.*

The tiger then went happily to eat the bee hive all at once unknown of the consequences and instead got heavily bitten up by the bees. The tiger became angry and told the wild cat *Müyampuh* (friend) you have crossed all limits and now you will have to pay for your deeds. It is now your turn to face the consequences '*I am mighty*' screamed the tiger and now I will kill you and make you my food. The wild cat then again told the tiger cleverly, *Müyampuh* (friend) *you are sick and heavily bitten up by the bees, you cannot consume me now. You won't be able to move your chaw, so kill me and consume me tomorrow.*

With these words the wild cat ran off. The following day the wild cat started digging a ditch hole in one place and entered the hole and continued to dig deeper and deeper knowing that the tiger is after it. The hole had a broader and a wide beginning where in the tiger could easily pass, but as the tiger followed the wild cat the hole became smaller reducing to the wild cats size. The wild cat made its way digging the hole further until the

other surface and escaped from the tiger. The tiger was left stuck inside the ditch without being able to dig and move and failed to eat the wild cat.

This folktale is widely used even today by the Yimchunger people. It teaches the natives that a clever mind can surpass a physical might. The Yimchunger people address a clever man *Wuyih ruk rokh* which means as cunning as the wild cat. A strong and mighty man can be defeated easily if he lacks intelligence, cleverness and presence of mind.

3. *Khihnu Le Khiakhnu Yukhean*

A tale of dog (*Khihnu*) and a pig (*kheakhnu*)

In olden days, all the wild animals like cows, pigs, hens, dogs and goats lived together with humans. The people never built houses for rearing animals and were left free to move around. People threw all their waste in open space. The pigs ate human's excreta in the jungle as in olden days the Yimchunger people never had proper place to throw their waste. And the dogs ate the left over foods of the humans. Once a man had both a dog and a pig, who sleeps the day away doing nothing. The man decided to make them help him and took them to the field to let them work. He let both the animals work in the field promising a reward to one who works the best and he himself took a nap under the shade of a tree. The clever dog who always stay close to humans slept near his master the whole day without working. The pig alone worked in the sun the whole day. The dog on noticing that the work has been all done ran to the field, playing running up and down, on the worked field to leave its foot prints. Meanwhile the tired foolish pig wondered what the dog was doing.

On waking up the man toured the field to see how the work has been done. To his shock he saw only the dog's foot prints and thought that it was the dog who was working the whole day and not the pig. The man decided to reward the dog by letting it stay at home with humans eating the left over foods of humans and let the pig had to live away from humans and eat leaves and plants thereafter as a punishment. The dog's cunning mind won it the man's affection leading it to live with the humans forever.

The Yimchunger people according to this tale till date keep dogs at home and pigs out of home. They are also served different foods by the people following this tale.

4. *Khüzü Le Chi Yukhean*

A tale of Tiger (*Khüzü*) and Mithun/Gayal (*Chi*)

A tiger is considered as one of the mightiest animals. A tiger hunts other animals and consumes them and no other animal can attack or kill a tiger. All the animals fear the tiger. One day, a tiger thought of making Mithun/Gayal (*Chi*) its prey. The pride Tiger with full confidence went on to attack a Mithun. As the approached the, Mithun knocked down the Tiger instead with its strong horn and entrapped the tiger under a big heave trunk. The Mithun said,

You think yourself to be the strongest animal on earth, if it is so escape from thus trap. If not, I will come only after tomorrow's sunrise to free you. But I have a condition. You will henceforth never attack us nor will you eat us.

The Tiger was confident enough to get itself out of the trap and agreed to the condition. The tiger thought that it would be able to free itself and would kill and eat the

Mithun when it comes back. The Tiger however failed to free itself from the heavy trunk. As the Mithun returned back the following morning, the Tiger was still there. The Mithun helped the Tiger in freeing itself with a promise that the tiger will never attack Mithun again.

So it is widely known among the Yimchunger Nagas that a Tiger wins over all animals except Mithun. It is believed that a Tiger is afraid of Mithun and thus they don't eat Mithun. The folktales of the Yimchunger Nagas feature spirits and elements of supernaturalism as believed earlier. It is through the spirits that the people learned ways and norms of life. Spirits have always taught humanity one thing or the other.

5. *Tongto Le Müshuh*

(A Pillar and a Hearth)

Atüso kim khülang ching tsührü mahne lakheah, ane lüm müzo yite ape le apuh anechito she-a pah. Tüsho tsührü mahne ju khite küpkhok te alakhiah. Ju kim ching ane kimtsah pahle along choki mo thusüa zojih tüsho yimkham nü-a zojih te aleang te alakheah. Jumönü ane keoneone nü ha shenü Ike hatükhüh müzho chonü kihinia mükim tsahte jik a mongpah tüsah akheah pah te thsüpah jika aleangte mong. Jütü choki arelim apuh ju Tongto ching nü akhiuk tüsho ape ju Müshuh chingnü akhiuk tüsah rhimojih. Ju ngü pah tsührü mahne ane jik pong ching nü akhiuk pah ape le apuh apante ramrih pah khite trepte tha apa, apuh Ike she nuke lapung pepah yüang tetha. Jütü choki ape le apuh püne nü tha, 'tsüh, tsüh ne', Isa puh longki chama pah to jumönü Ike lapung a pepah müyü khok. Jumönü nuke tülöngri te laang te tha pah tükheak a pah.

Jumonü khhne khiung te asherü arhang larü rokküh mülahok. Tüsho puhü ju Tongto ah, tüsah perü ju Müshuh ah te amüsan tsüa lu.

Translation- A tale of a pillar and a hearth

Once there lived two brothers whose parents died when they were still very young. The two brothers had to struggle and grew up on their own with no one to look after them. They had to work in the fields, cook for themselves and do all the household chores as there was none to rely. Every day, as they returned home weak and tired to their surprise all the chores was being done and someone unknown had already cooked for them. This continued for some time but none of the brothers knew who was helping them behind them. The two brothers eagerly wanted to know that person who was bestowing so much love to them as they had no clue.

One day they decided to hide themselves in the house and wait to see who was doing all their works when they are away. The elder brother called out his brother loudly to go to the field and walked out. But they instead hide themselves in the house. As they kept hiding towards the evening, the spirit of their father came out from the pillar *Tongto* of the kitchen and their mother's spirit from the hearth, *Müshu* of their fireplace and started doing all the necessary chores and cooked for them. The two brothers were overwhelmed with tears; they came out crying from their hiding place and embraced their parents. They asked their parents to take them to where they live saying that they miss them and are lonely on this earth. Life is hard to live without parents and we want to be where you are said the two brothers. The parents then with tears replied,

tsüh, tsüh I Tsühne (my dearest sons) we have departed our ways and we are helpless, we cannot take you two to where we are now. You have to live on this earth without thinking of us. Do not be depressed for we will be together once again, saying these words the spirits disappeared.

The Yimchunger people according to this tale believe that a father is the pillar of the house and the mother is the hearth. This tale makes a clear distinction between the role of a mother and father- a father as the post or pillar and the mother as the hearth of the house or kitchen. The father engages in all the works to keep his family growing and the mother helps the father in managing all the affairs of a family. It also believed that a father provides the family with all the necessities of life and a mother cares of all the chores at home and keeps her family satisfied. Following this tale, the people also strongly believes that the world of deaths and the livings are different and they can never live together. To this date the deceased souls and the livings cannot live together in one place.

6. *Müngühmühe Ahiuang*

(Share your Blessings)

Once there lived a man called Hozaba. He had a son named Sangkongthung who had a cotton field. He often visits his field. On one of his visits he saw some footprints and noticed that some of his bloomed cottons are missing. He decided to overnight in the field to see who was stealing away his cotton. As he watched, at midnight he saw six damsels coming down from Heaven to pluck his bloomed cottons. The six damsels played in his field singing and dancing joyfully. Sangkongthung was captivated by their beauty, which made him catch one of the damsels and made her his wife. Sangkongthung named the

damsel, now his wife Tsüngrümkhumla. They bore a son and named him Mekim. Sangkongthung's family prospered in every field and so the villagers soon became jealous and suspicious of Tsüngrümkhumla which created misunderstanding between the husband and the wife. As a result, Tsüngrümkhumla felt frustrated and returned back to Heaven leaving her husband and her son.

After some time Sangkongthung was killed by the enemies and Mekim was left alone. The villagers again, taking advantage of his situation and loneliness drove Mekim out of the village. Years later, Mekim returned back to the village with his wife and son Tenükiu, but the villagers still refused to accept them. History repeated again in Tenükiu's fate. He like his father lost both of his parents. His parents died and he was left all alone and had to leave the village and live in the forest.

After some years, a young lady named Mönungchi, daughter of a poor farmer was working all alone in the field, when a young man from the forest approached to her and helped her working in the field. After the work, Mönungchi was confused to see Tenükiu returning back to the forest instead of following her. Tenükiu and Mönungchi met in the field constantly and worked together. After some months they finally approached Mönungchi's parents and got married with a great feat, offering a reindeer's meat to the parents and the villagers. They bore a son after a year and Mönungchi returned back to her parents and feasted in the name of her new born son and left them forever.

It is believed that the Yimchunger people took the example of Tenükiu and Mönungchi's marriage and till date the people shares blessings feasting during marriages. Following this tale the Yimchunger people feasts in the name of the new born and in their

festival *metemneo/metemnio*. *Metemneo* festival also celebrates the reunion of the spirits and the humans.

A very similar folk tale of the Yimchunger people is also recorded in the book, *Fables from the Misty Mountain (Folklore of the Nagas)*, published by the Government of Nagaland, Discovery of Shawl. According to this tale a man named Hosa caught some fairies plucking flowers from his garden and *tucking them into their resplendent shawls*. He caught one of them and took her beautiful shawl. The fairy pleaded, *Please return my shawl and help me hide my nakedness*. (172)

To which Hosa replied, *Not until you tell me your name and teach us how to make shawls as gorgeous as yours*.(172). So the fairy taught the people how to make beautiful shawls. That is how the Yimchunger people learned the art of making shawls and named the shawl *Tsungremkhim* after her.

Both the tales features spirits and supernatural elements. The name of the shawl and the name of the damsel from the former tale is also the same.

7. *Lümakheahbah lang thiyü thang*

(Think Before you talk)

Nimong khülang ching mihtsürü mahne ruhrü kiupü yüto. Ane ju ruhrü ngü pah nimong lolo kiu te mong. Ruhrü ju khite sük te ayüzah pah lakheah, jumonü ane ju kheti keaksah tekiu te mong. Jütü choki ane lung khülang nü tha, Müyampuh ruhrü ha kiukhit sho I lu anü, tüsah mükiu khitsho nü luang te.

Jutü choki lüm a mükheah te khülang puh ju nü he te te tha pahpah alo khito. Jumonü kiukhit pah ane mücham te khülang puh nü lang lua pah to. Jumonü Isa kütükhüh neokheam kheam she tüsho kütükhüh thsümüh lala she thiyü ju tsüte lümakheahbah le lang atha pe tüsho alo peah te mükheah peah.

Translation- Think before you talk

One day two friends went on to dig moles (*ruhrü*). They found a place where a vole had made dig holes like small tunnels all over the surface of the land. They both started digging the land following the tunnel where in depths lies the vole. They dig and dig the whole day but the vole was too deep beneath the land. Soon they became tired and exhausted. One among them said, *Müyampuh (my friend) if we catch the vole, I will take it and if we didn't you can take it.*

The other friend without thinking and without paying attention to the other talking blindly agreed to what his friend said. So when they finally got the vole after all the hardships and exhausting efforts only one among them took the vole without sharing it between them. One of them had to return with nothing even after so much of hardships and digging. All his energy, strength and time got wasted only because of his reply.

This folk tale may look very simple but it teaches the Yimchunger people a great lesson. Humans often tend to talk and make decisions in haste without thinking. This act of humans may lead to unwanted outcomes. This tale teaches us that no matter how busy, weak or strong we are, we must always think before speaking. We must know and understand what we are and others are talking in order to avoid misunderstandings.

8. *Keoneone Tükheak Amüzho Mülah khi Yukhean*

(No Love between Siblings)

Kim khülang ching akhiung le aniurü ala kheah. Tüshe aniurü nü akhiung kheak amüzho mülate ala kheah. Tüsho rhimo ching thsüala-lashe, tsühpü yungpü thsüala-lashe, yünü mührü nangrü keoneo tüsho amüyamrü kheak lang müzho chih te alakheah. Tüsho akhiung kheak a amüzho mullah te lang lahkeah. Jütü ala choki mihtsürü ahih to nü, aniurü ki hate thsangyu, Keoneone amüzho kheakh müho te ha alomi ching. Keoneone ah mülong khülang tsüpah le alapeah

Jumonü aniürü nü lümakheah pah nimong khüha Ikhiung ju atopeahshi I müyamrü poju atope anü rük aki a kheah pah. Tüsah jute atsü pü tsongkheak nü api khim chingtsüh rhuk yok pah thih müjü kham pah apang kheak Mungshuhshuh müju pahle limpeak khaeak ashe khi rok yapa huh to. Tüshe jütü choki amüyamrü poh nü arü pahle arü mün hüm pahle api ju paahyok te tsokham.

Jütü choki akhiung nüläng arüpah 'Neo Neo Are nü atsü choki a nü müyamrü ahih khüh la kheah, tüshe kihin a nü müyamrü khülang lang she mülate'.

Jute tha pah akhiung nüläng aniurü ju yihmüsualu. Ju nimong nü rün te mihtsürü alala nü keoneone amüzho ha lang alala khiaknü atopeah te mükheaha luto.

Translation- No love between brothers/siblings

Once there lived two brothers, the younger one being more into friends and relatives. The younger brother had no love, affection and respect for his elder brother. The younger brother always preferred sharing his love, things be it eatable things, a helping

hand or his attention and time to his friends, relatives and other villagers. His own brother was never his choice and his priority. He always chose others over his own brother. He never listened to his brother. Many people on noticing that there is no love between the two brothers started advising the younger brother that no matter what you should always live in unity and with love to your siblings. Many people advised him, *There is no love like the love of brothers in this world. Blood relations are the greatest of all.*

The younger brother thought these words and one day he decided to see if his brother's love is greater than his friend's love. He wanted to know if his friends who have been dear to him all his life would stand for him or not and whether their love is greater than his own brother's love. Then the younger brother in order to find out disguised himself as though he is badly wounded. He put on a shawl that was filled with blood and applied *Mungshuhshuh* also known as *Axone* by the Nagas, (fermented soya beans) which stinks hard and bad and he lay on the road as though he was death.

All of his friends and other people on seeing his condition avoided him. Some of his friends came near him with a sigh, put their hands on their mouth and left. No one turned up to carry him or to see what actually happened to him. As he lay on the road, it was finally his own brother who came to see him. His brother said (with much pain),

Dear, Dear, you had many friends but only when you were good. Today you do not have a single friend. Sorry. After uttering these words to his brother, he carried him home. Ever since the day people came to know the bond and love that brother's share. The people still believes that blood relations are the greatest relation of all. A love that can never be

measured or compared. No matter what blood relations will support and stand by us in all circumstances.

The folksongs and folktales of the Yimchunger Nagas reveal so much of the people and how they were. There is no other source better than folktales and songs that transmit the age old practices and beliefs. It always acts as means of transmitting the old ways and the roots of the tribe in an interesting and attractive ways.

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CHAPTER IV

LANGA THEN, LANGA NOW

Every Naga tribe has one or more villages which exist till date as the earliest village and from where the tribes migrated and expanded their size. The early Naga tribes after wondering for long from one place to the other, finally as they settled, they lived in self-sufficient villages. Almost all the villages of the Naga tribes were built on hill tops with strong protection arrangements. In olden times one's identity was largely linked to or used in terms of his village.

Yimchunger Villages in the absence of well established form of government in olden days, were ruled by the village founders *Kiulong Tsührü* and representatives from each clan. 'The ranking of the leadership is determined on the ground of what each leader has offered during the formation of the village..., but it has been in accordance with the decision being carried out by the clan members on the ground of their status and merit' (Yim 4-5). It is very much accurate that one of the oldest villages of the Yimchunger Nagas, Langa was ruled and dominated by the village founders and its destruction was also initiated by them.

Like any other Naga tribe, the Yimchunger Nagas, as most people believe came from Mongolian, Thailand, china and Myanmar (Burma) in different small groups and settled in Yimchung-Awünrü. From there the tribes migrated to other place because of differences and clashes among the groups regarding the ownership of the land. Eventually the group who emerged as the first settler and the owner of the village continued to live and

the group which failed to claim their ownership had to move to other place. The new place that the group migrated was known as Langa village.

There are number of view points, stories and myths about the establishment of Langa and the reason behind its destruction. Horam writes, to the Nagas, 'to obey was piety; to destroy was impious, and the rule of obedience was enforced upon each individual by the will of the community to which he belonged' (Singh 35). This is very much applicable to the Yimchungers of Langa who were bounded and held together under different clan and *Khiang* (Khel) leaders. The Yimchunger society had always been a casteless society. Yet the natives were made to obey or were made to stay under the rule of the elders *Kiulong Tsührü*. No persons were discriminated on the basis of clan but there were often fights for supremacy and bravery. A sort of competing nature harbored the elders and the village makers of Langa which gave rise to many of the unwanted events and outcomes, making Langa an important aspect of the history of the Yimchunger Nagas and their migration.

On establishing Langa, people lived in harmony and in peace for some time before the clash between the brothers took place. The first fight that took place in Langa, says Mr. Neokichung, second G.B. Kutor village is known as the tale of 'Shusola who burned the forest'.

Shusola Who Burned the Forest

Shusola, a lady originally belonging to Y.Awünrú village came down to Langa to settle there. One day she went to the jungle of Langa and burned the landscapes. The fire extended to an alien place known as 'Phutoru', burning other areas where people with

healthy thighs lived. After some time Shusola again went to the jungle, this time to cut and collect fire woods. As she was cutting the woods, the people from the unknown area found Shusola to be the culprit who has burned their forests and landscapes. They abducted her and killed her.

The Langa people on learning that Shusola is been missing for days, went in search of her and reached the unknown place 'Phutoru' and learned that the people with big thighs killed her. The Langa people realized that there were many people in 'Phutoru' and so they send a messenger back to Langa to send some more persons to attack and kill the people in 'Phutoru'. After killing the people, the Langa natives brought with them their enemies' head, legs and hands celebrating their victory and enjoying, 'phuto'. After this incident the Langa people decided to live peacefully without any fights.

Formation of Langa- According to Mr. Zungkum from Sangphur village, the clash in Yimchung-Awünrū compelled some groups of people leave the village, Langa and search for other place to live in. A group of people namely- Lakiumong, Zoyingkiu, Kusang, Renkiumong and Makhong reached a place called Kiuro, near Y.Awünrū stayed there for two to three weeks and they finally built Langa as their new home and village. The people lived peacefully in this new found home Langa which was a land of abundance. Langa was a fertile land. People started rearing animals and began to grow vegetables and fruits such as *Kholar/Kholomei* (kidney beans) and Banana. Life was all good with people and houses increasing day by day. Soon Langa turned into a big sophisticated village. Because of its fertility and good atmosphere, Langa attracted many people.



The Beautiful Langa Landscapes (a view from the Langa Village)

Destruction of Langa- As generations passed by, the succeeding generations of the village makers/owners *kiulong tsührü* were divided into seven sub-clans and they were overtaken by pride, jealousy and selfishness among themselves. They started competing and fighting against each other. The wicked nature of *Kiulong tsührü* (village makers/builders) soon disturbed the Langa natives making their life hard by torturing them. The *Kiulong Tsührü* (village makers) were the ones that came down from Yimchung-Aünrü and established Langa. People belonging to one clan or the same group were brothers and fought with the other group. The consequences of the fight between the

brothers were faced by the innocent natives. Langa now became a violent and disastrous place to live in.

The natives of Langa were farmers and all depended on the crops they grow and on hunting and fishing for their survival. It is said that the village makers *Kiulong Tsührü* snatched away all the healthy animals and crops which the natives of the Langa brought to their homes. The village owners were arrogant and were of the view that Langa is their land and so everything that is found and grown in their land belongs to them. Fishes and animals hunted were all snatched away. Domestic animals were also taken by them making one or the other excuse.

There are many stories which highlight the hardships faced by the natives in the great fight between the brothers which paved way to the destruction of the Langa village. In those days all the domestic animals were left free roam around in the village. The brothers of *Kiulong Tsührü* (village makers) namely Kushang, Zongyimkiu, Tochikhiung, Lakiuong and Ramjikhiung (according to Mr. Ramji a present day Langa native) would knowingly stretch their legs near the animals (hens and pigs) and made the owner of the animal pay a fine of those animals saying that the animals have crossed their paths and has made a scratch on their legs. When a man returns home from fishing and hunting the *Kiulong Tsührü* awaits on the entrance of the village, snatches their stuffs saying that all things belongs to them and it is only because of them that the people are being blessed. Grains were destroyed by them out of jealousy or because the natives refused to offer them. Animals like Mithuns (Gayal) and Cows were captured or entrapped by the brothers and feasts upon slaughtering them. The poor natives had to pay and appease the *Kiulong tsührü* in every way.

Apart from *Kiulong Tsührü*, no other person was allowed to feast or celebrate. If anyone feasts with their friends or relatives, they were punished. The friends and relatives that gathered for the feast were killed mercilessly by *Kiulong Tsührü*. No outsiders were entertained inside the village.

Therefore it is to be noted that the destruction of Langa after this fight was not an external one but an internal one. No outsider or intruder came in to Langa and fought. It was the brothers of *Kiulong Tsührü*, who started the fight among themselves out of insecurities, pride, jealousy and fame.

Khels/Khiangs-The Langa people had seven clans divided into two khels *Khiang* the upper and the lower *khiang*. The upper *khiang* belonged to *Janger/Jangkhiunger* clan led by Bakhung and the lower *khiang* belonged to *Khiunger* clan led by Shotsangba. Bakhung and Shotsangba were friendly and maintained brotherhood and lived together.

They both had sons, who unlike their fathers were rivals. Bakhung's son was Kushang and Shotsangba's son was named Zongyimkiu. Kushang and Zoyingkiu were supposed to be brothers and friends but they wanted to stand out as the strongest against each other. Kushang was a healthy man, with full confidence that he can easily defeat his brother Zongyimkiu who was not as healthy as him. Zongyimkiu was weak and always fears the might of his brother Kushang. The brothers decided to fight against each other and the one who wins would be titled with a heroic name and would be the master of the people and the land. This tale of Kushang and Zongyimkiu is recorded in the book, *Fables From The Misty Mountain: Folklore Of The Nagas*, published by the Department of Art and Culture, Government of Nagaland with the title, *Heroic Name*,

The two brothers, Kushang and Zongyimkiu were both strong warriors. Kushang was tall, handsome and rude whereas, Zongyimkiu was short and ugly but respectful. Kushang always insults and mocked Zongyimkiu like,

Zongyimkiu, your ears are like a fox and your face is like a pig too (173). Their conflicts eventually led to a big fight with a condition that *whoever loses will cease to associate his name with heroism (174).* The short and ugly Zongyimkiu easily won and defeated the tall and handsome Kushang. From that day onwards for the Yimchunger natives *Zongyimkiu has since been a name worthy of heroes. (174)*

Zongyimkiu after defeating Kushang became the owner of Langa. His family spread strongly all over Langa. He had six sons, with Lakiumong being the eldest. Unlike his father, who lived all his life trying to maintain peace and order in his village, his sons grew up to be cruel and wicked. His sons lead by the eldest son Lakiumong started imposing fines to the poor farmers in the village every now and then over the animals and crops the villagers owned. The villagers were being tortured so much that they finally decided to leave the village. Zongyimkiu tried to stop the villagers from leaving but was out of help. Finally Zongyimkiu along with all other villagers left Langa saying,

Langa is no longer fit for us to live. Let's all go and settle somewhere else (177). Langa was thus lost forever.

There are many other incidents that contributed to the destruction of a well established Langa village. Myths about the lost Langa exist in abundance. Every village has its own myth and they vary from person to person. The people believed that the fight was

not only between the village elders *Kiulong Tsührü* but it involved the *Khiang* as a whole. The people were constantly involved in fighting and one could not tolerate the other.

The upper clan *Khiunger* led by Lakiumong, Zongyimkiu's (Village maker) son often boiled water and spilled it down on the people from the lower *khiang* making them suffer. On the other hand, the lower *khiang* *Jangkhiunger* led by Bakhung's son Tochikhiung as a reply to their attack, threw stones and *Khüyikh*- a wild seed with rough and hard cover, to hit them especially on their heads.

Lakiumong and his brothers tortured the person who fails to pay them fines by using *Khüyikh*. The brothers used to scratch the poor peasant's bodies with the *Khüyik* cover until blood drains out from their bodies leaving a severe wound. The arrogant brothers would stay out the whole day, sharpening their tools like Dao, and to check whether their tools are sharp or not, they used to cut the thighs of any person that crosses by. Such tormenting life the natives of Langa lived.

According to Mr. Neokichung, Second G.B., Sunnymongba, Kutor Village and Ramji, Langa village, among the grandsons of Shotsangba (*Khiunger*), Lakiumong was the eldest and the most notorious one. And among Bakhung's (*Jangkhiunger*) grandsons Tochikhiung was the most sincere and an honest. Pride Lakiumong always sits on a big stone at the entrance of the village (Seen in the picture below), stretching his legs mocking every villager that passes by as ugly and weak. He takes everything from them. Lakiumong grew jealous of Tochikhiung's popularity, as most of the villagers loved him because of his good nature and also because of his wealth. Tochikhiung had many animals and his fields were full and healthy. Lakiumong always mocked Tochikhiung and was always in the

pursuit to stand out against him. He could not tolerate seeing him happy and famous among the natives. While the other leaders were cruel and arrogant, Tochikhiung was a good hearted man unlike other leaders of Langa so the people favored him than the rest, which made Lakiumong insecure and angry.



A Sitting place of Lakiumong and his brothers (Langa Village)

Lakiumong was always told by his relatives and brothers that he is wealthy and had sufficient animals but not more than Tochikhiung. His relatives entrapped all the animals owned by Tochikhiung and count them to show him who is richer. This act added flame to their differences to the extent that Tochikhiung decided to leave the village. Tochikhiung

with Fifty families decided to leave the village. His fear of being killed by his compelled him one particular night, to climb the top of the village and announce his leave. He yelled,

Langa Tsührü Tochikhiung Zhihto tsocho

Langa's child Tochikhiung is leaving day after tomorrow.

Tochikhiung, after yelling he returned back and left Langa the very night accompanied by fifty more families towards Mütsong (Tuensang, according to Mr. Ramji). On waking up the villagers noticed that Tochikhiung had already left and abandoned Langa. Now that the most honest man has left the village, the villagers gradually started to leave Langa one after the other.

Zongyimkiu, Lakiumong's father noticed that another fifty household left the village on the second night after Tochikhiung left. So Zongyimkiu, in order to please the villager and to make up for his son's acts, slaughtered a big Mithun, (*Chi*) and hosted a feast. When all the villagers were in their fields, Zongyimkiu left Mithun's meat on the doors of each house in the village. The villagers on returning from their field saw those meats hanging on their doors but no one accepted the meat. And on the third night all the villagers about 999 houses left Langa without even taking the meats that were dried above their hearths. It is believed that the people as they wandered hungry in search of a new place longed those dried meats they left. That is how Langa was thus lost forever.

It is believed that the people who left Langa migrated to various present day villages of the Yimchungers like Kutor, Phutoyung (Tuensang), Wungtoh, Sangphurü, Yakor, Shipongrü, Tsohtokurü and many more. Some even became other Naga Tribes.

Kutor the nearest Village to Langa is believed to be built by the people that dispersed from Langa, after six years from Langa being destroyed.

It is said that some people went back to Y.Awünrū. Lakiumong and his sons were also among them. Among his sons Ramjikhiung was the most notorious one who was always in conflict with others. He was soon killed by his own relative and the people then decided to rebuild Langa again. People started having secret meetings in *Mükiak* landscapes and forests near Langa as to how they re-establish Langa. Groups of people namely Jimshutan, Shophukhiung, Thrumhokiu, Sojiba, Kamchimong, Kichingba and Kamjila went down to Langa with cows in order to build it again, but they failed and returned back one after the other.

According to Mr. Ramji, the present Langa G.B. and the founder of the new Langa village, he is in the fifth generation after the destruction of Langa. He says four individuals from the fourth generation tried rebuilding Langa by taking pigs along with them but like all other, they too failed. It is only on the fifth generation that he settled in Langa. He says he lived alone in the forest of Langa and says,

Langa Lo Ju Isa Lo ah, Isa chirü Lo. Langa Inu Müzho lah, I Chirü Lahte Arükhi Lo,

Langa is our land, our forefather's land. I am much attached to and in love with Langa, a place where my ancestors lived.

Mr. Ramji lists the names of his ancestors chronologically, they are

Longrenkiu → Limtanba → Langakiu → Yangtankhiung → Hükhiangba → Azihmong → Khiungsen → Royim → Richamong → Ramji (present Langa founder). Mr. Ramji,

originally a native of Kutor village, on learning that he belongs to that group of people that came up from Langa and settled in Kutor, on **7th March 2004** he started to build Langa again all alone. He stayed alone for a year and married Aphula Khiphur from Chasshir village. Gradually some people came and settled along with them.



A View of Present Langa Village

The Government of Nagaland gave recognition to Langa as one of the villages of the Yimchunger Nagas in the **2014**. Langa as of now is a small village with only **28** houses and about **141** in population says Mr. Ramji. Though small in number, the people in Langa are living a self sufficient life. They say,

Langa lo ching Tümüuh yangpa nü atsü lang tsücho, thüngüh ram pü ayung phünge lah, sang lüpuh mükeak lah, tüsah shiyüh akambong lah. Ha hote Akhiang pü mullah.

Everything that is sown in this Langa land bears good fruits, we have rivers nearby to catch fish, plenty of forests to collect fire woods and enough space to rear animals. What more do we need from a land?



A View of Langa River (which further forms the Yayi River) from Langa village

Langa is located near Kutor village. Langa is a beautiful and fertile land of about 1000 sq ft. in breath and 500 sq ft in length. It is bounded by a crystal clear Chet Ke river in the east and the Langa or the Yayi River, also known as Huke River by the people of Langa in the west. The home dialect of the Langa people is the Langa *Yu* (dialect). The Langa people are peasants and they grow crops like Kholar/Kholomei (kidney beans), banana,

orange, cabbage, potatoes, rice, millets, corn etc. and rears animals like pigs, cows, hens, dogs etc. Langa like any other village had its own beliefs, tales and myths which are now stored in the minds of some elderly persons in the form of tales. Some of the folktales of Langa are as follows,

1. why Langa?

After leaving Y.Awünrū, a group of people wandered here and there in search of a suitable place. They walked against water and fire, without being distracted. On the journey, some were lost but still a few reached the desired place. The group weary and tired had no strength to climb up the hills and all they saw around them were ranges of unending hills adjacent to one another, and rivers on the other endings. Though it was a long way, the people took the longer path, instead of climbing the hills, they took the way round to reach the top. They made small rough routes in the bushes, through the thick jungle moving straight from one end to the other end. Thus, when the people finally reached the top, they named the place *Langa* which means ‘straight’ in Langa Yimchung dialect. The people because they walked straight through the jungles had big and healthy thighs.

2. *He He, Ha Ha, Ho Ho*

The Langa people did not know how to express happiness except through feasting and merry making. Expressing through laughing was alien to the people in Langa. They thought laughing was something which can be bought and acquired. So the people went on to buy Laugh carrying a pig on their *Hah* (a bamboo made carrier/ basket). As they were walking, one man’s *Hah* broke down and the pig fell down and went rolling. On seeing this all the people unintentionally started expressing *He He Ha Ha Ho Ho* and they realized that

laughing/laugh cannot be bought. The people then discovered 'laugh' and returned back laughing *He He Ha Ha Ho Ho*.

3. **Momola**

Once there lived a mother named Momola with her son and a daughter. She takes her children wherever she goes. One day she took her children to the fields and they were working, the day saw its dawn early. The skies turned dark and heavy wind blew. Momola hurriedly took her children and ran, but she caught her son and the wind blew her son away to some unknown place beyond her reach. Momola was disturbed and lonely. She searched for her son everyday but she found no trace of him. Momola then, started catching fishes every day, collected them and stored for her son to feed him as she believed that her son would return back home some day.

One day the people witnessed an incredible thing, the Heavens fell closer to earth as though it would smash the earth and destroy everything. People scattered to various places and tried to hold back the Heavens with their sticks used during sowing hays and they started hitting the sky with dried cow dung and stopped the Heavens from falling upon the earth. There was then, a heavy rain making the whole earth full of water. People thought that the Heavens wanted Momola as she has taken many fishes for years for her son. So the people pushed Momola into the waters, which flowed in various directions and the rain stopped. It is believed that Momola flows in the rivers surrounding Langa as Langa is surrounded by rivers.

4. *La hoi, hori hora, yohoi, hori hora*

The natives of Langa were all food growers. Langa was ruled by its village makers, *Kiulong Tsührü*. The village makers left no stones unturned in mocking their poor natives. The poor were always made fun reminding them always of their condition. While on the other hand, praises the wealthy families. The people whenever they pass the house of the rich remarks, *La hoi, hori hora* as a sign of respect and *Yohoi, hori hora* whenever they come across a poor family as a sign of dejection. The society had a clear distinction between the two groups, the rich and the poor.

6. *kühüh Mülakhi Müyampe*

(Bald head's lady)

Once there lived a man and a woman who were deeply in love. The man often expresses his love for the lady but the lady was an introvert cold hearted person who never expresses her feelings and love for him. The man became suspicious of her feelings towards him and decided to test her feelings for him. As the lady was on way to the field, the man hide himself under the bushes, disguised and voice and started mocking the lady taking the name of the man she loves. He addressed her as, *Kühüh Mülakhi Müyampe*,

Bald Head's Lady, making fun of her loved one to embarrass her with the intention to know her true feelings. The lady then replied to the unknown voice, *Kühüh Mülalah she I Müyampuh ah, api Jaktsü yung te A Mülung Müzho tshoh. What if he has a bald head, not his appearance but his heart, I love.* The lady responded without knowing that it was her beloved testing her. The man then happily accepted her and married her without any doubts.

5. Langa *Arimpuh*

(Langa Spirits)

It is said that when people first came and settled in Langa, they saw miles of uncultivated lands. Right from the rivers on both the sides the landscapes of Langa was covered with thick and rich forest. The people went and occupied the vast stretching barren land for cultivation, marking territories. They cleared the forests, burned it and started to sow their crops. As the people started to work in their respective fields, many unwanted incidents kept on occurring each day. It is said that *Arimpuh* (spirits) of Langa land disturbed the workers working in the field. *Arimpuh* chased them, tortured them, and even took the lives of the poor farmers. Some people as they slept on their farm huts, on waking up found themselves out in an open space. People fell sick and some even died immediately after returning from their fields. So the people realized that some very strong unseen spirits dwells in the lands of Langa and abandoned the field for some time. But as their main source of livelihood was farming, the people could not abandon farming (Yimchungrü 9).

The people then started offering animals and its fresh bloods to the spirits as a sacrifice so that *Arimpuh* (spirits) would not disturb them and their fields, as the people believed that *Arimpuh* eats flesh and blood and ate what humans ate. And that they hunt people because they found humans in the fields. As a result, people started sacrificing animals like bull, cow, pig, dog and cock so that *Arimpuh* would spare them and would rather bless them in return. When the people started offering animals to such land spirits, it is then when they began to work peacefully and harvested in bountiful. This practice

became a taboo which every native followed as he cultivates a new plot of land. This is how offering animals to the spirits came about.

6. **Jak Mütsüpe Huhkanglaglagbeh**

(Ugly Huhkanglaglagbeh)

Huhkanglaglagbeh, an ugly lady who was always dirty, dusty and messy but a hard worker and a kind hearted lady was always avoided by other ladies in the village. She had no friends and always worked in the field alone.

Müneahmong, a wealthy man in the village had only one son named Jimniangnakcha. Müneahmong was in search of a suitable woman for his son. Proposals for marriage from beautiful ladies and from well do to families approached him, but he declined everyone's proposals. So the father decided to take his son to the way where she will find all the young ladies going to and coming from the fields to let him choose a suitable lady for himself. He waited long and rejected all the pretty ladies. Lastly he saw a lady approaching full of mud carrying *pinüh* (Taro) in her bamboo basket who happens to be the ugly Huhkanglaglagbeh. His father found her disgusting but Jimniagnakcha chose her of all the ladies in the village. Müneahmong took her directly to his home.

The villagers started searching for Huhkanglaglagbeh thinking that she has lost her way. While some people came with the news that the rich man's son Müneahmong will marry her and that she is with him. They got married with a great feast and lived happily ever after.

Relating to the above two tales, the Yimchunger people are of the view that since the time of Langa marriages were never carried out by considering physical beauty and wealth. The people always looked for dignity and qualities of a person before they approach for marriage proposals. Personal traits were always greater than their appearances. The elders till date advices the youngsters that they should not be deceived by the outer beauty in choosing a life partner.

The people in Langa like any other tribes of Nagaland were agriculturalists. Many of their practices emerged as an agricultural based practices. Their folktales reveal that the people in Langa believed in supernaturalism. People regarded lands, stones, trees, caves and other objects as an embodiment of spirits, *Arimpuh* and offered offerings and sacrifices to such spirits for blessings and healthy harvest. A well established and beautiful Langa still stands just below Kutor village telling many of the stories and incidents of the past and the Yimchunger ancestors. Langa though not the first and the earliest settlement of the tribe is an important village in the history of the origin of the Yimchunger Nagas, as it is believed that the Yimchunger community expanded in population and spread all over the Naga hills from Langa.

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A highly diverse in traditional and cultural aspect, the Nagas for decades have maintained their customs, culture and identity even without learning the art of writing or documenting through oral narration. The Naga culture and tradition is rich, many of which are yet to be explored. It is very difficult to learn the Naga culture, tradition, belief system and history because many of the Naga tribes do not have a written record of their own. The early Naga society was confined or limited to their own groups; they lacked interaction and intermingling with the outer groups of people living out of their confined territory. The only relation they had with the other was that of warfare. Every outsider belonging to other groups was viewed as an enemy and thus the early people were after killing each other and taking the other's head. Every Naga tribes popularly practiced Head-Hunting which brought an individual fame, respect, honor and status. With this Head-Hunting practice came many of the practices like feast of merit, 'the Nagas... to obtain his certificate of manhood, must present their Raja with a human head...belonging to a tribe, not related' (Singh 30), a man by bringing a head ensures a good social status and a man incapable of bringing enemies' head were considered a coward among his clansmen and village. One who brings an enemy's head becomes the most eligible bachelor for the young women in and around the village.

The early Nagas were believers of spirits and supernaturalism and were highly animistic in nature. Every object and every element in nature was viewed as having spirits and souls which played roles in human life. The worship and decotion of Nature was very

much popular among the early Nagas. The first chapter introduces the 'Folk Literature of the Yimchunger Nagas: Exploring the Folk Culture of the Lost Langa' giving a brief introductory note on the Folk aspects of the Nagas in general and the Yimchunger Nagas in particular. It gives an account on the geographical features of the Yimchunger land, highlighting some of the remarkable places, the crops they grow and the river that flows in their lands. It also mentions the sub-dialects of the Yimchunger Nagas, they are *Chirr Yu*, *Mukury Yu*, *Tikhir Yu*, *Longphur Yu*, *Phenunger Yu* and *Langa Yu*. *Langa Yu* is the common dialect of the tribe. The Yimchunger tribe is internally divided into different clans and groups speaking distinct dialects. It also highlights some of the aspects of the rich Langa dialect and its meanings. It mentions the cult or the clan names of the Yimchunger Nagas as found today. The chapter focuses on some significant age old practices and rituals of the Yimchunger Nagas like the worshipping, sacrificing and offerings made to Supreme Being *Arimpuh* usually initiated by a Village elder known as *Khiungpuh*. The first Chapter also discusses some important customary laws of the Yimchunger Nagas which if violated were dealt strictly, for instance, anyone who brings shame, disgrace and humiliation to the family, community, clan and village were made to pay fines and were even kept as captives in traditional customary lock-ups known as the *Rih Yam*. It also highlights some aspects of life's events celebrated by the Yimchunger people like Birth, Marriage and Death and details the ritual that follows. The Yimchunger Naga practice of naming ceremony, *Munji Munchi* follows the age old practice based on superstitious belief is still found in this contemporary society among the tribe.

As the Yimchunger Nagas were very fond of festivals, the chapter also touches some aspects of their two main festivals *Metemnio/Metemneo* and *Tsüingkamnio*. It also

mentions the names of months in Langa dialect and the reasons and meanings of the names. The Yimchunger people were animistic and their whole belief system was based on animism. The people worshipped big trees, stones and even mountains and landscapes as Supreme Being *Arimpuh*. The people also worshipped the Sun as *Ani Thrünpuh* meaning ‘the God of light and the Moon’ as *Azing Thrünpuh* which means ‘the God of darkness’. The first chapter mentions some of the rich traditional attires and ornaments of the tribe.

The second chapter ‘The Origin of the Yimchunger Nagas’ before jumping on the origin of the Yimchunger Nagas, gives a brief account on the origin of the Nagas. The chapter then presents the various diverging views on the origin of the Yimchunger Nagas. The most accepted or the most popular view is that the Yimchunger people came in groups from China, Thailand and Mongolian through Burma (Myanmar) following the river routes, gathered in a place called *Yimchung-Awünrü* also known as *Y. Awünrü* which means ‘Yimchung Old’. Till date Y.Awünrü stands as the oldest village of the tribe. Through the number of myths and legends, one can conclude that the groups of people till they came and settled in Y.Awünrü did not belonged to any tribe. It is from this village that the groups of people came to be known as the Yimchunger Nagas. Before the people came into present day villages, the ancestors came migrating from far ranging areas in search of a suitable land. Most people believes that on reaching Yimchung-Awünrü, there arouse conflicts between the groups of people with regard to owning the land. The groups then decided to dig the roots to find out which group came first so that the first group will be declared as the owner of the village. The losing group had to leave the village; they came down and established Langa near present Kutor village. And from Langa again the Yimchunger people scattered all over the Naga hills. The chapter also discusses views on

how Yimchung-Awünrū came into existence. It is believed that some groups of people living in Kemüphu, on seeing a burnt charcoal floating down from Yayi River went up following the river and reached Yimchung-Awünrū. Taking into account of the various diverging views, no one can come to an accurate conclusion about the origin of the Yimchunger Nagas, as the myths and legends regarding the origin of the tribe is based more on speculation and assumptions than facts. Yet no one can say that these myths and legends are inaccurate and the only way is to accept and rely on the different views on the origin of the tribe.

The third chapter 'Folk songs and Folk tales of the Yimchunger Nagas' explains some of the folk songs and folk tales of the tribe and translates them in English. Folksongs and folktales of the Yimchunger Nagas are transmitted orally and have been preserved in the minds and memory of the older generation for decades depicting values, tradition, culture and ways of life. It also reflects the mind of the people, behaviors, character, and religion, taboos, superstitions, and culture and belief system. It reflects the process of ethnicity reflecting the social reality of the tribe. Folksongs are still very popularly sung among the Yimchunger tribe during tribes' occasions and on festivals. The folksong of the tribe portrays the nature of humans like the song *Kheangrū Kiurū Lung Marihakokhi Khün* (A Song of Disunity among the Community) sings of the wicked and selfish nature of man. *Kushim Khün* (A Get Together song) is a self praising and pride taking song. For the Yimchunger Nagas friendship is a very precious bond, the people celebrates friendship for instance like the songs *Mongtsü Tüsho Arih Akho Khün* (A song of peace and harmony) and *So Müyangpe, So Müyangpuh* (who's friend?) praises friendship that goes beyond the limits of tribes and clans. Some folksongs like *So Shimpe Nü, So Shimpuh Nü* (who old

woman, who old man) and *Yimchungrü Atankhi khün* (A beginning song of the Yimchungers) sings of the ancestors of the tribe and praises the ancestral village of the tribe Langa. The tribe also has a series of songs that are sung during occasions accompanied by dance forms like *Atsün Khün* (A dance song), *O Tsüng Tsüng* (A dance song) and *Aherale* (A dance song). The tribe also sings as they work in the fields known as *Wochak Khün Tung*. The Yimchunger Nagas sing a departure song as they disperse from any kind of gatherings known as *Acham Khün* (A song of departure)

The Yimchunger Nagas do not possess a written history, they inherit a rich oral tradition through which knowledge of the past is transmitted to the present which are preserved in their folklore, tales, myths and songs that constitute their social history. The tales of the Yimchunger Nagas feature animals to portray and depict some kind of lessons and moral values. The tale of *Phihnu Le Tanila* (A tale of Rats and a Cat) teaches us not to waste time in worthless discussions, whereas, the tale of *Wuyih Le Khüzü Yukhean* (A tale of wild cat and a tiger) makes us learn that no matter how strong a person might be, he cannot defeat an intelligent person. Mental ability always stands out against physical strength. Many of the folk tales depict supernatural elements reflecting the beliefs of the early Yimchunger people. *Tongto Le Müshuh* (The Pillar and the Hearth) and *Müngühmühe Aheaung* (Share your blessings) depicts the supernatural elements working and living in human life, making us aware that though the spirits are invisible their presence are always with us. Some folktales teach us high moral values like the tale *Lumakheahbah lang thiyü thang* (Think Before you Talk) makes us learn that no matter how busy one is, one should always think talking. Words we utter can put us in unwanted situations as such one must be aware of how and what he talking. The Yimchunger Nagas folktales also depict the bond

of siblings like the tale of *Keoneone Tükheak Amüzho Mülah khi Yukean (No Love Between Siblings)*, which is a tale of two brothers who lacked affection and love for each other. The folksongs and folktales of the Yimchunger Nagas play an important role in transmitting the past ways of life.

Chapter four, 'Langa then, Langa Now', explores Langa, one of the earliest settlements of the Yimchunger Nagas. Though Langa is not the first and the earliest village, it is through this Langa that the Yimchunger Tribe is believed to have come into contact with the rest of the Naga tribes. Langa plays a vital role even in the origin of the Yimchunger Nagas. Langa as it was in olden days is not the same now. Once a well established settlement, Langa have been destroyed not by any disaster or natural calamities but by its own settlers. The chapter highlights the many views of life in Langa and the people that ruled Langa *Kiulong Tsührü*. The people in Langa lived in harmony and peace only for a short span of time and soon violence overtook Langa. Hatred, jealousy and competition among the leaders tortured the poor and innocent people. The chapter mentions the clans that lived in Langa and highlights some of the evil practices that were rendered upon the natives by the village elders. The chapter mentions some of the tales that depicts the furious fight between the famous village elders Lakiumong and Zongyimkiu (brothers). Most people are of the view that their treatment towards the natives and their frequent fights compelled the natives to leave Langa in search of other place. The chapter highlights how and who destroyed Langa in detail.

The chapter also covers the Present Langa as found today and mentions in detail how, when and who established Langa again after much attempts and failures. According to the present Langa village maker Ramji, Langa was established again on **7th of March**

2004 and got Nagaland Government's recognition as a village in the year 2014 with 28 houses and about 141 populations. The chapter also portrays the present Langa village in pictures and highlights the fertility of land with a brief geographical feature. The chapter mentions some of the tales of Langa that depicts the beliefs of the people and their ways of life as highly supernatural one. The Yimchunger people lived in disturbance, fear and bloodshed until they dispersed from Langa and started new calm and peaceful settlements. Though according to the myths and legends of the origin of the Yimchunger Nagas depicts Yimchung-Awünrū as the earliest settlement of the Tribe, Langa comes to play an important and remarkable role in the formation of the Yimchunger community. Even folk songs like *Yimchungrū Atankhi Khün*, mentioned in the second chapter 'Folk Songs and Folk Tales of the Yimchunger Nagas' highlights that the Yimchunger community sprung out of Langa women. The tribe holds the tradition in connection with Langa that they migrated to the present day villages along with the other Naga tribes from Langa.

At present many of the traditional practices of the Yimchunger Nagas are not applicable in everyday life with modernity and the arrival of Christianity, but the tribe has immense affection to those past practices and in some way or the other those practices are seen even till date. The belief in spirits are still found in some villages, like some villages believes in the existence of land spirits, *Alo Remri* and House spirits, *Thüyam Me*. The people celebrate birth, death and marriages since time immemorial. Infact, the rituals and the feasts that follow on these occasions are largely based on earlier practices, though with the passage of time there are some alterations. The people feasts during naming ceremony, *Munji Münchi* which takes place on the sixth day for a male child and on the fifth day for a female child, with the belief that a male child possesses six souls and a girl possesses five

souls. The people hosts a feast for funerals as well which lasts for three days, a practice that has been passed down from the past generation. The age old prohibition of marriages within the same family cult is still strictly prohibited. The present villages still consists of *Khels* or *Khiangs* like in olden days. The Yimchunger Nagas' use of traditional attires and ornaments including shells, animal's skin, teeth, hairs etc. shows their love and inclination to bygone culture and traditions. The early festivals still stands strong among the tribe which is celebrated every year with much pride and joy. Characteristics of cultivation, villages built on hill tops, unique tools, carvings, rituals, eating habits, songs, dances etc found today are all of past origins which have been sustaining thus far. Most of the Yimchunger people are still agriculturalists especially the ones living in villages.

The Yimchunger Nagas do not possess a written history; they have been preserving their past knowledge through oral narration usually the older generation transmitting to the younger generation. All the past aspects and history of the tribe is now found with so much of variations and differences. The names, places, spellings, interpretations, time everything varies from person to person. To reconnect and recreate them becomes a very difficult task as every view and opinion seems accurate and one cannot conclude and incline to one view alone. Even the name *Yimchunger* itself is ambiguous. The original name is *Yimkhiungrü*, *Yim* meaning 'search' and *khiung* meaning 'reached'. The people lived in scattered places and on finding the existence of other humans went on searching and reached a place of their choice. *Yimkhiungrü* means 'the ones who have reached their place of choice'. The incorrect spelling *Yimchunger* which do not posses any meaning, entered into written documents and records because of the pronunciation, accent and misinterpretation of the

tribe. Henceforth *Yimkhiungrü* is still used as ‘Yimchunger’ (YIMCHUNGRÜ AKHERÜ ARIHAKO Golden Jubilee Souvenir 17)

People have started exploring and recording the folk culture of the Yimchunger Nagas yet a vast still remains unexplored. The Yimchunger Naga Folk culture and tradition would soon lose its track and value in this modern society if the people do not pay attention and make time to learn and record those, as there remain a handful of elderly persons with knowledge of the past who are at a crucial and sensitive age with loss of memory and incapable to recollect and forgetful as well. The Yimchunger generation at present barely knows about their history and their people. We know so much of the tribe’s practices but we barely know from where and how they came into use. The tribe should make an effort to learn the significance and the many untold stories and incidents behind every practice, record it for the present and succeeding generations as well. Documenting it will further promote and expose the unique ways, ethnicity and practices of the Yimchunger Nagas contributing to the Yimchunger Folk Literature. A step towards exploring the past culture and tradition will enhance us with the knowledge of many of the present practices which are at large related to old ways and practices.

Very few written documents do we find about the Yimchunger Folk aspects that has been recored. The traditions and culture of the Yimchunger Nagas has no doubt reduced and has changed to some extend with modernization but there are some which continue to stand and influence the community even today. If we explore the Folk culture from the older generations, we find that the tribe though there in variation from people to people and from village to village, has an amazingly unending and incredible Culture, traditions, belief system, tales, legends and myths which will help one in understanding the tribe and their

unique ways, with their manners, ethics, attitudes, and practices and would contribute efficiently in promoting the Folk Literature of the tribe. The Folk aspects of the Yimchunger Nagas are still acquired or are transmitted through oral narratives with no written Literature of their own. The past ways and lives are time and again recreated only through the transmitted knowledge, which becomes the folk Literature as Vanisa says, 'Whether memory changes or not, Culture is reproduced by remembrance put into words and deeds. The mind through memory carries Culture from generation to generation...'

(Sanyu 4) The Folk aspects of the tribe are large based on the memories and stories of the elderly persons who with much anticipation and gratefully passes on the tales and past life stories to the younger generation. The origin, practices, beliefs, traditions, cultures, dispersal and the growth of the Yimchunger tribe are embedded in their folk tales, stories, myths and legends that constitutes their social history.

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