

A CRITICAL STUDY ON THE FOLK NARRATIVES OF THE SUMI NAGAS

*(Dissertation submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Award of the Degree of Masters of Philosophy in English)*

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This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **A Critical Study on the Folk Narratives of the Sumi Nagas** is a bona fide record of research work done by Lito Zhimomi, Regd. No. 50/2020, Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus, Meriema during 2019-2021, submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in English. This dissertation has not previously formed the basis of award of any degree, diploma or other title and the dissertation represents independent and original work on the part of the candidate under my supervision.

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A CRITICAL STUDY ON THE FOLK NARRATIVES OF THE SUMI NAGAS

Abstract

Folk Narratives refer to the traditional stories of a particular society or group of people handed down by word of mouth from one generation to other, which reflect the history, belief system, judgement, economy, polity, religion and all spheres of that particular society in focus. It is inclusive of the verbal accounts of folk tales, folk dances, folksong, proverbs, jokes and also the customary laws that govern that group of people.

Folk narratives are integral part of any culture and a valuable source of tracing one's identity and roots. They reflect moral values and beliefs and identities of groups and individuals. In Naga culture, in general, and Sumi Naga culture in particular, the folk narratives are mostly in the form of proverbs, riddles, legends, folktales, tongue-twisters, folk songs.

Oral narration is an important part of the Sumis and most of the folk culture and history of not only the Sumis but also the Nagas, in general are contained in and transmitted through folk narratives in the form of myths, legends, fables, tales, anecdotes and the like.

The narratives collected from the Sumi Nagas form an important part of their culture. Though limited in number, they reflect the socio-cultural aspect of the community. The different kinds of rituals practiced by the Sumi community are expressions that reinforce their shared values and beliefs. Throughout their lifetime, the cycle of the activities that they perform is related to the structure of their society which is guided by certain attached rituals, and this in turn regulates their social roles and behaviours. The belief system of the Sumi Nagas are manifested in their rituals and practices and very closely linked with their environment.

This dissertation entitled, “Folk Narratives of the Sumi Nagas”, studies various forms and narratives about folk stories, proverbs, taboos, folksongs and other such aspects with the intent to understand, document and preserve it in print form, which was realized as a much needed step in the midst of the onslaught of globalization and changing pattern of life. The Sumis sustain their history and culture through narratives which are oral in nature. Christianity and globalization are major factors that can affect the personal and community identity of the Sumis. Thus the ardent need to document, preserve and educate ourselves as well as the present generations is needed to save the culture and history from oblivion and the risk of losing it.

Chapter I : Introduction

The Sumi Naga tribe is one of the major ethnic tribe of Nagaland inhabiting Zunheboto district, parts of Dimapur, Phek and some other districts. There are also seven Sumi villages in Tinsukia district of Assam. The Sumi Nagas are bordered by the Angami tribe on the South, Rengma and Lotha tribes on the West, Ao and Sangtam tribes on the North, Yimchunger and Tukomi Sangtam tribes on the East, and in the Northwest, they are touched by the people of Chang and in the Southwest by the Rengma tribe. The first chapter throws light on the typical features and practices of the Sumi Nagas like that of Head hunting, feast of merit, costumes, food habits and festivals. The sumi society has a centralized system of administration which is centered on the authority of the Chief. The Sumi Naga celebrates many festivals which have been carried down from generation. Most of these festivals usually mark the beginning of new seasons. The major festivals of the Sumi's are Tuluni and Ahuna. The Sumis have named the days and months in their own dialect and each day or month is named with regard to certain concepts. While the days of the week are generally in line with the seven days of Tuluni festival, the months of the year are mostly to do with seasons or crops relating to agriculture. The days of the

week initially existed only as days during feast of merit or ritual days for sanctification for agriculture and personal well being. The month, days and night were kept count of by keeping in account the moon or 'dead moon days'.

Chapter II : Origin, Migration And Settlement Narratives Of The Sumi Nagas

There are various narratives about the origin of the Sumis specially regarding the first Sumi village. It is generally believed that the Sumis came from the South relating to the story of the blessing stone at Khezhakenoma as accepted by many other Nagas, however because of limitation of proof, and because of the fact that all information and resources has solely been oral narratives, there are variations in the stories. Claims are made by different villagers about the formation of first sumi village. The first chapter deals with the narratives of some of the first villages, namely, Lazami village, Ighanumi village and a village named Sumi. It, further delves into the system of founding of villages among the Sumis, the naming of clans and youth dormitory, also known as morung.

Chapter III : Folk Songs, Folkpoems And Narratives About Folk Dances Of The Sumi Nagas

Songs and dance forms are important part of any community. While they serve as a source of entertainment on the surface, they have more functions to them. They serve as the vital element of any living culture. They act as unrecorded tradition of the society and reflect man's relationship with nature, animals and human behavior at various stages of life. Folk songs are an important part of the Sumi lifestyle. Another form of art that existed among the Sumis were Leshe/ Leshele which are chant-like recitations. These are neither songs nor can be clubbed under normal poetry. It is a mixture of both, whereby poetry like compositions are recited with certain musicality to it. Songs accompanies any kind of event, further it was a part of their day-to-day life. Songs were used for different purposes, as an outpour of their different emotions, as a way of conversation or

as a way of socializing. Folk dance is an important part of the Sumi tradition. It accompanies every celebration and gathering. It is practiced and performed by the Sumis in different events and occasions. There are different kind of folk dances performed by the Sumis which hold different meanings. However one thing that holds true for all dances is that it is always performed in an open space, created as a stage for an event or in an open area in front of the host of the feast.

This chapter documents and analyses the narratives surrounding the folk songs, poems, and folk dances.

Chapter IV : Folktales, Fables, Idioms And Proverbs Of Sumi Nagas

Folktales are an important component of a society. The folktales of a community reflect both its natural and cultural settings. It can help determine the world view and thought process of the community, it helps in creating a better understanding of why a community is as it is and vice versa which is no less true for Sumi community.

Proverbs are one of the most important form of folk narrative that throws a good light upon the belief system of a particular community. They act as the carriers of traditional wisdom and their significance can be measured or understood when used in a particular context or situation. Like any other folk narrative, they regulate the behavior among members of a society. The traditional wisdom and knowledge of the Sumi Nagas are manifested in the form of Ahole or Proverbs.

The undertones, themes and concerns that are present in the folktales, fables, idioms and proverbs documented in this chapter mirrors the structure and cultural values of the Sumis. The various kinds of narratives contains motifs such as exogamy or endogamy, headhunting, patriarchy, marriage and agricultural practices which adds up to form a

unique cultural identity of their own. It further portrays how gender roles are determined by custom and how relationships between villagers, clansmen and even between family members are customary in nature and bounded by tradition. The different tales and narratives throw light on the relationship that exists between man, nature and different kinds of spirit.

Chapter V : Beliefs, Taboos And Rituals Of The Sumi Nagas

The Sumi believe that plants, objects and natural things have living soul and so one may call their religion as 'Animism'. But unlike an Animist who tends to become a polytheist by recognizing several deities, the Sumi believe that there is one God known as 'Alhou' or Creator (sometimes referred to as Kunguu' or 'the one above') Alhou is the supreme God who has authority over birth, death and things around them. The Sumi acknowledge their power yet give more importance to the Soul and the Spirit in their daily affairs. Thus elaborate practice of rituals are practiced in which an offer is made to the benevolent and malevolent spirits, especially an offering to appease the malevolent spirits. Alhou, the Creator to a Sumi is all good and all right, he does no harm nor shows his power to command respect and obedience, on the other hand there is "Tughami or the devil who is all out to harm, for which Sumi perform ceremonies to propitiate so that they will not harm them or their properties. This chapter looks into the different belief systems, taboos and rituals of the Sumi Naga society. The Sumis believed in the existence of a supreme being, a benevolent god, but they also believe in the existence of a number of various other spirits and they believe that the different phenomenon are controlled by the spirits and thus different kind of rituals are performed to appease the spirits. They believe that the spirits can bless them so also curse them if they fail to appease the spirits thus we can see that any activity or even that is considered important,

an equally weighted ritual is linked to it. Thus the socio-cultural lives of the Sumis are inextricably linked with their religious beliefs, and form a greater part of their identity.

Chapter VI : Conclusion

The present generation in the quest to fit into the needs of modern world, disregards and neglects their age-old tradition and culture, and far worse, fails to learn their history and how their ancestors came about or lived. The very less of culture which remains among the people of this generation, is compromised following new trends and narratives, threatening their history and identity. Sumis cannot deny or live past the fact that every society goes through changes and cannot remain static. It has to adapt to the changes brought about by modernization, however this also poses a threat to the old culture and tradition. This dissertation has been taken up keeping in view the need to document the narratives. The final chapter is a conclusion, summing up the observations and findings discussed or highlighted in the preceding chapters.

Keywords: Sumi, Nagas, Folk Narratives, Culture, Morung, Beliefs, Songs, Rituals, Ceremonies, Society, Village.



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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I, **Lito Zhimomi**, hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **A Critical Study on the Folk Narratives of the Sumi Nagas** is a bona fide record of research done by me under the guidance and supervision of **Prof. Jano S. Liegise**, Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus, Meriema during the period of my research (2019-2021), and the dissertation has not been submitted either in part or full, to any university for the award of any other degree, diploma or title at any university or institution. This dissertation is being submitted to the Nagaland University for the degree of **Master of Philosophy in English**.

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(Lito Zhimomi)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Folk Narratives refer to the traditional stories of a particular society or group of people handed down by word of mouth from one generation to other, which reflect the history, belief system, judgement, economy, polity, religion and all spheres of that particular society in focus. It is inclusive of the verbal accounts of folk tales, folk dances, folksong, proverbs, jokes and also the customary laws that govern that group of people.

The folk narratives or the folklore is oral in nature and thus are not uniform. There are multiple versions and variations in the narratives, the validity of which version is correct and holds authority, however cannot be ruled out as these narratives are no longer in first person but have been passed on through many generations and might have been altered or re-created with each narration.

Folk narratives are integral part of any culture and a valuable source of tracing one's identity and roots. They reflect moral values and beliefs and identities of groups and individuals.

In Naga culture, in general, and Sumi Naga culture in particular, the folk narratives are mostly in the form of proverbs, riddles, legends, folktales, tongue-twisters, folk songs.

The body of information about Naga origin keeps on adding up by archaeological works. In the meantime, it supports that there are certain facts to oral narratives and myths. The mystery of Naga origin are said to be discovered in stones and trees that the tribes pointed out as their birthing places, as also the place they migrated from. Narratives on settlements of the Nagas, tales or myths or origin, other folk tales and folk songs have been used to guide archaeological descriptions on locations and socio cultural developments.

The Sumi Naga tribe is one of the major ethnic tribe of Nagaland inhabiting Zunheboto district, parts of Dimapur, Phek and some other districts. There are also seven Sumi villages in Tinsukia district of Assam. The Sumi Nagas are bordered by the Angami tribe on the South, Rengma and Lotha tribes on the West, Ao and Sangtam tribes on the North, Yimchunger and Tukomi Sangtam tribes on the East, and in the Northwest, they are touched by the people of Chang and in the Southwest by the Rengma tribe.

The indigenous people under study, call themselves Sumi but they are known to some as Sema as per the British official records, a term popularized by J.H. Hutton, a British colonial administrator in the Naga Hills who wrote the monograph “The Sema Nagas” in 1921, amongst a number of other monographs on many Naga tribes. Some narratives hold and believe that the word “Sumi” has been derived from two terms “Tuku-mi” and “Swu-mi”, the great ancestry of the Sumi tribe. Some theories further hold that Sumi means the people who live under the tree or wood, “Su” means wood and “mi” means people. Yet again some oral tradition say that ‘Sumi’ is derived from Chokri “Semi”, “se” means “three” and “mi” meaning “of that people” therefore, summing up to “the people of the three”. The Chokri people recounts that Sumi are the third son of one father of Khezhakeno. The Home Department Government of Nagaland, with the initiative of the Sumi Hoho, the apex tribal body of the Sumis has issued an administrative order that the word “Sumi” would officially replace the term, “Sema”, through the government of Nagaland Home Department notification No. HOME/SCTA-16/94.

The origin and the migration of the Sumis remained shrouded in obscurity for long and even today there are variations owing to the divergent oral narrations. However most of the sources state that the migration of the Sumis can be traced via Maikhel and thence to Khezhakeno or Khuzabomi. It is said that the Sumis moved towards Lazami and

Ighanumi and spread out towards the Northern side- Zunheboto Area and gradually to the other parts of the state.

The genesis of the Sumi Nagas prior to this can be traced along the tale of migration of the Nagas as ethnic mongoloid group hailing from South East Asia.

According to the 2011 census, the population of Zunheboto was recorded as 140,757 with a density of 112 per sq km and a literacy rate of 85.26%.

Like other Naga tribes, Sumi Nagas too have some dialectic variations in different areas like Lazami, Chizami, Chisholimi and Zunheboto but unlike some Naga tribe, the variation is not too great and is understandable by all. However the spoken words of the central area around Zunheboto are accepted as the standard and official for all purposes. All the same, the Sumis speak one language called 'Sutsah'. Sutsah has two diploma academies, one at Zunheboto and another at Sutsah Academy Dimapur.

The Sumi language was said to be originally spoken by the Sumi village which is in Chakesang area and parts of Manipur. It was probably spoken by the people of Mao, Puomai, Khezhas and the Sumi people many generations back. Oral narratives hold that the Sumis carried with them their written script on dried skin which was later eaten by a dog. Been too long gone, they could not relearn their script.

The storehouse for Sumi literature is contained in the oral form wherein their religion, supernatural beliefs, social practices, political and economic life are reflected in their expressions of poetry, songs, tales and other narratives of folklores.

Oral narration is an important part of the Sumis and most of the folk culture and history of not only the Sumis but also the Nagas, in general are contained in and transmitted

through folk narratives in the form of myths, legends, fables, tales, anecdotes and the like.

The varied forms of narratives served as an outpour of expression for Sumis within the confines of their agrarian society and, in fact, it extends even beyond the realm of agrarian set up, it was earlier housebound to. It also serves to express the accepted or non accepted behavior within members of the community. They act as guiding factors of socially sanctioned behavior.

It is said that most Sumis set up their villages beside the hills and not far from the river or streams where water holes were also available. Most of these villages have their own land in abundance which can be cultivated after every fifteen to twenty years for Asuye/ shifting cultivation. Excepting the chiefs and Kivimi- noblemen, the common Sumi people lived a simple life and thus their requirements were less. As a result, they were self sufficient and did not require economic help or support. In times of feud and wars with enemies or neighboring villages, small villages however required help from the bigger villages or from a more powerful chief who had a command of braver or experienced and reputed warriors. The Nagas in general, inclusive of Sumis, were known to cross their territories of the villages only to trade iron and salt or to invade or take the heads of enemies as they were mostly self sufficient, with villages living in isolation from each other. This is also the reason that there are slight variations in accent, dialect and culture though of same origin. The desire to become independent and to rule over one's own village among the nobles gave rise to founding of numerous small independent villages. Villages were not only founded by nobles but also by brave and worthy subjects by joining forces.

Anyone was entitled to be a 'Kivimi' or nobleman after providing at least four times, feast of merit to the whole village. They were also free to become 'Aghutomi' or warrior if he succeeds in taking heads of the enemies or in protecting the village and its folks at least two times. Heroism thus could be obtained not only by noblemen but also by ordinary people who sacrifice to protect the village or the well being of the people. There was no discrimination among the people, each had to work their way up through hard work, sincerity, bravery and wisdom.

Head- hunting

Head hunting was a practice which bestowed favor and honor upon a person as was in any other Naga community. The number of enemy heads taken by a warrior determined his place in the eye and hearts of people, the more enemy heads a man brought to the village, the higher was his status in the village. Likewise, a village with warriors who have history of taking many heads commands honor and terror in the sight of other villages. Men who had the credit of taking heads are honored ceremoniously and respected as a warrior and hero. Thus, for the Sumi men the greater part and interest of their life was to be a brave head hunter, as for the people who were well off, it was to offer the 'Feast of merit' known as "Aphisa". Aphisa means to throw a party and feed all the villagers lavishly. A person who has done so is known and respected by all, placing him in a distinguished place. Rituals were observed when a head was taken. The head was considered a trophy and carried by the killer. When the victorious hunter or his party is about to reach the village, they sing and chant signifying the victory and all the villagers join in the happiness to congratulate and honor the person. The warriors are then fed with the choicest drinks and food outside the village fence and then on, taken to the skull tree (a tree where skull of heads are hanged) or to the morung, where they recite a particular chant meant for that event. As the rituals are time consuming, they are able to

hang the head only on the following day. As for the warrior and his raiding party, they are not supposed to return to their respective house that day as they are considered unclean. They take shelter in the morung that particular day, with the head hung up on a carved post in the centre of the morung. Further their weapons and hands are considered as defiled, thus they recede from using their hands to consume food, and instead a particular leaf is used as a spoon known as 'war spoon leaf' to avoid contaminating their food through their hands. The following day, pigs and dogs are sacrificed and the meat is shared among the members of the raiding party. After this is done, the head is taken to the skull tree while reciting certain chants which is witnessed by the entire village. In order to hang the head, a firm stick is pierced through the head from behind the temple. This is done by a warrior, who has already taken two or more heads, then a strong cord usually made of cane is attached to each end of the stick and the two ends are tied to a long rope hanging from a bamboo pole which is kept in such a manner that it leans against one branch of the tree. Flowers are then stuck behind each ear of the head.

There were certain privileges for head hunters and people who have offered Aphisa. Some clothes and ornaments were limited to be worn by them alone and could not be worn by ordinary men. The head hunters who have given Aphisa were tattooed and given social status. Their houses were designed in such a way that displays their courage and bravery. The beams and pillars of their house were carved with figures of human heads. By such acts, people recognize and revered them, they also won the favor of women folks. Another privilege of head hunters was that they were able to marry a woman of their choice, of beauty and value, as all the women praised and wished to marry men of such capability.

Feast of Merit

There are certain distinctions and levels in 'Feast of Merit' or 'Aphisa'. When Feast of merit is given to the whole village, the individual attains social distinction. However, each individual receives due respect according to his class of feast of merit that he has hosted. In some cases, some nobles get passed over in their succession to chieftainship for not being able to perform or sponsor the feast of merit and for not performing the warrior's feat or valor feat or to be chief. All the rites for the feast of merit are performed by Lapuu or priest and his assistants. Lapuu is the one who performs all rites for food, drinks, feasts and deaths.

- The first feast of the Shikusho

Before Shikusho feast, husband and wife fast for one day, and the next day before sunrise they clean their house and surroundings and mark them with branches of brushes. By sunrise, the Lapuu/ priest announces the Shikusho to the maidens separately. The menfolk gather firewood while the women prepare the liquor on the first day. The following day is called 'Akughani' or 'Preparation ritual'. The Lapuu/priest performs the ritual cutting of the meat and the 'Ashipu'/ butcher cut the meat. The Akughani is attended by all the households and when the sun sets, womenfolk cook meat and food. The preparation and fasting rites are to be done by an old women called 'Yipuu', whereby they throw pieces of meat and liquor into the air for the spirits before she tastes it. The Yipuu receives leg of a pig for performing this ritual. During Shikusho feast, the host kills a pig every day, feeding the whole village with its meat and liquor for consecutive mornings. The third day is known as 'Aghulhuni' or 'Feast day' where all the villagers gather at the yard of the host. Rituals are conducted by the Lapuu/ priest before they start the meal. She puts 60 pieces of meat on 60 plantain leaf and sprays liquor on it. It is then thrown into the air to appease the spirits. On this feast day, all the

villagers put on their best clothes and sing and dance throughout the day till late in the evening.

After the completion of first Shikusho feast , the Awowu/chief priest announces the ‘Aphikimithe’ or body cleansing ritual. During the cleansing ritual, the men isolate themselves from women. The villagers clean their houses and surrounding, utensils, weapons and finally take bath to cleanse their body.

- The second Shikusho

The second Shikusho can be hosted only by a person who has successfully hosted the first Shikusho feast. All the rites in the second Shikusho are almost the same, except the fact that the Lapuu/priest kill an ‘Ijiwo’, which is a piglet of around six months after starving it for three days. If the pig survives after the third day, it is a good omen. However if the pig dies, it signifies a bad omen and the host is obliged to perform atonement ritual. The meat of ‘Ijiwo’/piglet which is killed is to be eaten only by the Awowu/ chief priest and the Host.

- Sanctifying Ritual (Pinne)

After a person has hosted and completed the two Shikushos, the feasts of merit, they perform ‘Sanctfying rite’ called Pinne. Here too, the Lapuu/priest and the host kill and eat the ‘Ijiwo’/piglet, thirty pieces of meat separated into two halves, each covered by a plantain leaf and hidden away. After the ‘Preparation ritual’ by the Lapuu/ priest, the husband fasts for thirty days while the wife fasts for nine days where both are required to remain chaste. In the case of some villages, the husband can sometimes cross the village boundary to eat and drink. After their fast is completed, a well fed Ox is pulled by the young men of the village into an open space and tied to the post of a ‘Moasu’, a neem-

like tree. The Lapuu/ priest then cuts open the Ox for the villagers to take off its flesh. In this way, the Ox is sacrificed and the Lapuu announces “Akughani’ and “Aghulhuni” where rituals are performed in the same manner as was done in the first feasts of merit. Following this, they perform the ‘Aphikimithe’, body cleansing ritual. The ‘Shikusho feast’ and ‘Pinne/ sanctifying ritual’ together is called ‘Tiye-Tiye’.

- After “Tiye-Tiye”, “Tilshu feast” is observed. No rites are performed in this stage. The Lapuu/priest goes through the usual ritual of performing and killing and the whole village attends the feast.
- “Tilshu” is followed by “Aphikusa” or “Aphisa feast”. The host first kills a big pig and cut it into very large pieces called ‘Atukale’ distributing it to every household in the village. During Aphikusa, the host provides meat and rice beer to the whole village for six consecutive mornings. The Lapuu/ priest and Ashipuwu/ butcher perform all the rites in the similar way as the preceding feasts. During Akughani or preparation ritual, a bull or mithun is tied to a big bamboo pole called ‘Aphoqhedu’, then the animal whichever it is, is slaughtered. It is considered a taboo for the host to eat the meat of this animal. The man who has observed ‘Aphisa” is entitled to wear ‘Aqhumi’, a black shawl striped with red, designed with yellow and red patches. A man who has not performed Aphisa is only entitled to wear a shawl without designs or undyed white woven cloth called “Lusuphi”.
- After the first “Aphikusa” feast of merit, one can observe the second Aphikusa. All rituals remains the same except that in the second Aphikusa there is a “Michiqhedu”, a wooden ritual post.
- After all the above feasts of merit are performed, a man can kill a mithun, termed as “Yikuchu”. A man who has reached this stage is not required to perform all the rituals of the early stages except the ritual practices before killing and feasting. In this stage, a

mithun after being pulled to an open space is bound on the horn by a strong rope, the ends of which is held by men. Another rope is tied at the rear of the leg to control the animal, then it is made to jump about as the men display their skills in tackling the mithun. The men then pull the mithun on all sides, rendering it helpless in a flat position, where it is pierced to death. A person who has performed “Yikuchu” feast of merit can put up a Y shaped ritual post called “Ahutshu” and a V shaped decorated bamboo pole atop the right and left side of the roof struck off a gable of his house. He is also entitled to wear “Avikiyiphi”, a black shawl with white stripes and a design on the white stripes. The Aphikusa ritual is concluded by performing the Aphikimithe / body cleansing ritual.

- After a man successfully carries out the above feasts of merit, he can perform “Aghuza Kiphe”. This is usually performed by wealthy and powerful chiefs and is beyond the reach of ordinary men or even chiefs who are less powerful or healthy. Before ‘Aghuza Kiphe’, the Lapuu/ priest and his assistants perform the usual rituals carried out before every feast, a pig is slaughtered and men goes in search of Aghuza- cane leaves. The Lapuu/priest and the Awowu/ the chief priest dig a hole in the ground where the rite is to be performed and put in stripped pieces of iron and ‘aghu lothi’(seeds of chenopodium murale). The Aghu, murale plant is then tied to a straight bamboo pole which is decorated with bamboo ornaments. This decorated bamboo planted on the ground and raised is called Aghuzabo. The Aghuzabo occasion consists of as many number of mithuns or cows killed.

During Aghuza Kiphe, ten to hundred mithuns are killed. All the villagers, relatives and even neighboring villages are also invited. The host serves the finest of food and drinks and also, the invitees come in their best attires. The feast runs for about two days while the villagers enjoy the abundance of food and drinks till a week. A man who have performed all the feast of merit and reached ‘Aghuza Kiphe’ decorates his house with V

shaped wood or bamboo a top the roof of both ends decorated paddy basket, a woven thatch grass placed between the V shaped horns on which is hung a decorative small basket with threads which swings and clatter in the wind. A carved bird made of wood is also placed on top of the house. They also built a huge pictorial post called 'Amla' which is carved with figures of Sun, Moon, Stars, head of a Mithun, Breast of Woman, Dao and Spear, pieces of Meat and scalps of heads taken are kept where visitors can see and understand his merit. He is also entitled to wear "Asukuda phi", a shawl decorated with cowries. His wife and daughters too can use cowries, designed and coloured cloths, Tsukoli/ earrings made of tuft of red hair, and decorated head bands called Akutsu Kukha. In this manner, a man of high status was recognized at home or outside and given due respect. The above clothes and design of house are only limited to people who have completed the stages of feast of merit. Ordinary men, following such a lifestyle was considered a taboo with a believe that they would be overcome with tragedy.

The Sumis were known for their hospitality, sharing their food and place with strangers. They were even known to dine with servants, sharing the same food. The staple diet of Sumis consisted of diet of rice and in some cases Job's tears in places where rice could not be grown well. Millet is also another substitute for those who cannot afford the first two. Along with rice, meat, fish and vegetables were consumed. Chilli was a very important part of Sumi diet and they were also great meat eaters consuming it at every meal. Meat was generally smoked by keeping the meat above the fire place. Axone (fermented soybeans) is an important traditional delicacy of the Sumis, which is cooked with pork. They take three meals a day.

As of the staple drink, rice beer was a routine drink. There was generally three kinds of rice beer, akuputsu (the infused beer), akeza (the mildly fermented beer) and azhichoh (more like akeza but brewed in a slightly different manner). The akuputsu is considered

the most important of the three. Before drinking beer, a Sumi always pours a few drops on the ground or touches a drop to his forehead to appease aghau (spirit) or tughami (devil).

Traditional Costume

The dressing of the Sumi women principally consists of a short petticoat above the knees, wrapped round the waist and kept in place by a bead girdle. There are a number of 'Hekimini', (wraparound) commonly known as Mekhala to the Nagas, differing in color and patterns. The Sumi woman also wears a number of ornaments. Following are lists of most common women's cloths and ornaments.

Women's cloth

- Chekutha qhumi (Shawl)
- Lotosu mini (Wrap around)
- Tsughu mini (Wrap around)
- Aye mini (Wrap around)
- Miyi mini (Wrap around)
- Chophilimi mini (Wrap around)
- Lazalimi mini (Wrap around)
- Kiyepu mini (Wrap around)
- Ghile mini (Wrap around)
- Abo mini (Wrap around)
- Pulosu mini (Wrap around)
- Ghile mini (Wrap around)
- Abo mini (Wrap around)
- Pulosu mini (Wrap around)
- Litashi mini (Wrap around)
- Tixi mini (Wrap around)
- Ahuna mini (Wrap around)
- Anishe mini (Wrap around)

Womens's items and ornaments

- Akutsu Kukha : Crown kind of circlet made of cane covered with orchid stalk and short red hair patterned like a flower.
- Tsukoli: An earring with a tuft of red hair
- Achighathi/ Achixathi: Small size bead necklace of three or four strings
- Achipu: Stringed medium size bead necklace.
- Achiku: One stringed big size cornelian bead.
- Akusa: Metal armlet.
- Asapu: Bangles and bracelets on the arms and wrists.
- Awukukha: Armlet
- Akusa: Walking stick.
- Tolupa: Pipe
- Achipa/ Achigho: Necklace of several strings made of beads.

- Akichelochi: Birdle of beads wrapped around the waist which consists of many colours like Ayeghachi(white), Achikutsu(blue), Achikulu(red), Ani la(both small and big, yellow in color), Anila (cream), Khakhuchi(dark yellow), Achizu(ashgrey).
- Achikha: A little of all varieties of beads bound together and so it is called Achikha.

Men's Shawls:

- Aphikuh
- Lusuphih
- Tubophi
- Aqhumu/ Kichimiqhumu
- Miyiphi
- Abophi
- Avikiyiphih
- Asukudaphi

Men's ornaments and tools:

- Avabo- coronet: A circlet head gear made of bear's fur and tail feather of the Hornbill.
- Akini supha/ Nixa: Cotton ear-wad.
- Milusaxxe (Drongo tail): The drongo was considered an important bird and its long tail was used as an ear ornament.
- Ashoghila/ Ashoghikutsu: Three or four stringed white conch shell, each straightened flat with a bone spreader through holes.
- Amla kuxa/ Akuxa : A beautifully designed and woven sash on which hangs scarlet hair stripped with white hair all bound at the root with yellow and glossy orchid stalk, it is worn across the breast cutting through the left shoulder in a triangular.
- Akuhaghi: Ivory armlet.
- Ausukukha: Gauntlet made of cowry.
- Amnikuda: A loin cloth worn hanging on the waist covering the front loin, the upper portion is decorated with short red hair each bound by orchid stalk set in semi-circle with cowries laid within it; the middle and lower portion covered with cowries except the two bare cloth lines that runs through it vertically.
- Asapuh /Casket: An Asapuh signifies a tail. When a warrior takes the head of an enemy woman with long hair, her hair is cut and used as an Asapuh in the warrior's casket.
- Aminihi/ boar tusk: Aminihi is worn around the neck during traditional dances.
- Azuta /machete or dao: This was not meant only for war but was also used for many other works such as clearing of forests.

- Angu /Spear: The spear was both an implement of war and also used as a walking stick.

The Sumis of both gender enjoyed wearing ornaments. Piercing of ears was not done by women alone but also loved and practiced by menfolk. There were certain rituals and a particular day set aside for piercing ears, thus they looked forward to this day to get their ears pierced. The men folk wore wads of cottons known as ‘Akinsupa’ while women wore earrings called ‘Tsukoli’.

FOOD HABITS

The staple diet of the Sumis consisted of rice, meat, axone(fermented soyabean), and vegetables. Job tears, millet and many different kinds of cereals are also harvested and consumed by the Sumis. It is said that in the olden days, while the rich people consumed rice, the poor people took millet as a substitute for rice. As the Sumi society was agrarian by nature, they generally took three meals a day, one before heading for their field, one while resting from their field work in the middle of the day, and another one in the evening after returning from field. The Sumis were lovers of meat and fish, which formed an important part of their diet. As among the other Nagas, the staple drink of the Sumis is the ricebeer. There are generally three kinds of ricebeer- akuputsu, akeza azhichoh. While all other food items consumed by the Sumis are common to all the other folk communities of Nagaland, Axone is particularly considered as being the special cuisine of the Sumi Nagas owing to its origin being from the Sumi community, though no doubt, to this day, it is made and consumed by many other people.

Origin story of Axone:

Axone is a fermented soybeans product commonly used in Naga cuisine which owes its origin to the Sumis. The word Axone is from Sumi dialect and is a combination of two words axo and ne, Axo means aroma and ne or nhe means deep or strong. So it literally refers to the strong smell of axone. Axone is best known to be enjoyed when cooked with pork. Axone is prepared by picking and cleaning the soyabeans in clean water after which it is cooked until it is soft, provided that it is still whole and not overcooked to deform its shape. The excess water is then drained and put into an aqhupu- basket and placed above the fireplace to warm and ferment. This takes around three to four days or even a week's time during the summer and winter accordingly. The readiness of the soyabeans to be ready for the next step is decided by smelling it which determines if it smells right. It is then placed into a wooden pounding structure called Apikhi and smashed. After this, the smashed soyabeans paste is scooped up and placed in banana leaves and the edges of the banana leaves are closed to make it parcel like. The packed soyabeans are then placed above the fire again and can be consumed after a few days.

There are number of stories around the origin of axone but the most accepted one is the story linked with a lady named Kujunakali.

Kujunakali was the daughter of an old woman Mutale. Her parents had expired when she was of a very young age for which she had to be raised by her uncle and his wicked wife. She was not taken care of properly or loved, instead she was made to cook and perform all kind of chores in that household. Every day she had to wake up, clean, cook and feed her uncle's family and go to work in the field alone while the other members of the family kept on entrusting all their personal works upon her, even after returning from the field she had to attend to household works till late at night.

It was made sure that everyone was fed well to their content while she was offered only the cold leftovers. In spite of her sincerity, obedience and respect she was ill treated and denied of parental love and in fact even the basic necessities of life. While she left home for the field in misshaped clothes the only mid-day meal that was packed for her by her aunt was half cooked soyabeans mixed with meager amount of shredded bamboo sticks, rotten vegetables wrapped in a banana leaf. After the whole day's toiling in heat and rain, Khujunakali would retire to a resting shed made of haystack known as Axapiki for her meal. Unable to consume the kind of meal packed for her, she would keep them in the Aghiyi kutsu- between the layer of the haystack on the roof of the shed by the fire and return home hungry and tired without food.

One day she went to the field without food and was very hungry. She recalled that moment that she had kept food in Aghiyi kutsa and went on to look for it as she was famished. As she opened the packed food she had left long back, she found that the soyabeans was already smelly and faulty but it looked appealing and also gave an alluring aroma. She tasted it and found it to be rich and relishing. That day she dried it in the sun, she cooked it with water and savored it to her heart's content, with a full stomach like never before in her life and returned home. After some days she invited her friends to taste it and all of her friends praised her special exotic dish for the finger licking experience and the appealing aroma. From that day onwards she named this delicacy as Axone and thus axone came into being. News about the taste of Axone soon started to spread among her friends that they started ordering Axone from her in exchange for shawls and other garments. She soon started saving money by selling Axone and soon became known for her wealth. Khujunakali's marriage was talked about in the whole village as she declared a huge amount of money and a pair of mithun and

other livestock as her “Asana” meaning her savings which was a product of her earnings from selling Axone. Sumi women are considered to be rich and hardworking by the “Asana/ Asanah ” they offer during their marriage, and this is how she earns honor from her in laws even after marriage.

Festivals

The Sumis practiced kiti-do/ kick fighting, and were headhunters like every other Naga Tribe before the arrival of Christian missionaries and their conversion to Christianity thereafter. The ancestral religion of the Sumis was a kind of animism however with the arrival of Christian Baptist missionaries around the twentieth century most Sumis are now Christians. The sumi society has a centralized system of administration which is centered on the authority of the Chief. The Sumi Naga celebrates many festivals which have been carried down from generation. Most of these festivals usually mark the beginning of new seasons. The major festivals of the Sumi’s are Tuluni and Ahuna.

Tuluni

Tuluni festival commemorates the harvest of the first fruits. During the Tuluni festival, the betrothed exchange basketful of gifts with meals. Tuluni is generally accepted as the grandest and most important festival of the Sumis, a midyear (July) festival of communal harmony and merry making. It is a special time for them because they get to rest and celebrate the completion of a farming season of hard work in their paddy fields. It is announced by the priest, “Awowu” during the last quarter of the moon in Anniqhi, the month of July. The Sumis now officially celebrate the Tuluni festival on 8th of July. In olden days, it was observed for seven days namely,- Asuzani, Aghizani, Ashigheni, Anighini, Mucholani, Tupulani and Tughakhani.

1. Asuzani

On Asuzani, the first day, people are not supposed to go to their field as on regular days, instead they are expected to stay home, clean their homes and surroundings in preparation of the feast. They are also prohibited from undertaking any kind of journeys. After a year of working in their fields they take rest from their agricultural works and all the males with long hairs cut their hairs with machete or sharpened bamboo edges. They even clean the animals that they rear, making sure that nothing is left out. Then, they go to the pond and cleanse themselves also washing off their clothes.

They also collect millet and prepare to make wine to be used throughout the festivity.

2. Aghizani

On Aghizani, the second day, they make further preparations by collecting the necessary materials needed for the festivity. They bring in the bamboo for pole climbing, an indigenous game where the participants climb the bamboo poles to get hold of meat hanged up at the top of the bamboo. They collect and prepare the vegetables, make wine out of rice to be used on Anighini, the fourth day. They also built 'akhache', a kind of platform, and prepare the ground on which the celebration is to take place.

Further people who have thrown parties and feasts for the entire village sits back and enjoy wine.

3. Ashighini

On Ashighini, the third day they clean the outskirts and the roads which lead to the ponds and forests. Ashighini is an important part of Tulini. Ashighini basically means the rituals

surrounding the slaughtering of livestock and distributing it among the people. With the sum of their earnings throughout the year, they chip in their shares and buy pigs and cows. Then they distribute the meat among themselves as a sign of merry making.

The Sumi's usually amass wealth and livestock ahead of time to be able to celebrate Tuluni with great pomp and show.

The practice of working in groups known as 'Aloji'/ peer group is common for the Sumi agriculture farmers. Every aloji slaughter animals and share equally among themselves. They gift the head of the cow or pig to the group leader known as alojitou.

In the Sumi society, the role of alojitou/ group leader is crucial and revered by the people. With the respect he gets, he also has many responsibilities as the head. He understands the plight of the needy and helps them in his capacity. He negotiates on the terms of payments and other such issues of his aloji/ group, he also leads the song as singing is an integral part while working in aloji. During the harvest season, they celebrate by dining from his house and makes sure that no family of the aloji members go hungry, ever ready to support and help the families of his aloji. All gatherings and meetings are conducted in the residence of alojitou/ group leader.

Preparations for the following day are carried out by the aloji/ group. Elders and strong men of the village are entrusted to slaughter the animals while some others are entrusted to cook. All the various aloji/ groups make sure that they give the choicest parts of meat to the village chief.

Meat is not only shared among groups but also among relatives, neighbours and even to people from other villages as they visit each other. Special food packages are prepared and

gifted to elders and relatives who in turns bless them saying, “Opukhu mutsu ou mutsu kighishe ishelu peniu! Otikughukono thalaxu tikughuko toi, acuwa kughoko toi peniu!”, meaning ‘may many lives spring from you, may your offspring multiply like that of spiders and crabs’.

Apart from alojis/ groups contributing various resources for the celebration, the wealthy people also slaughter animals and throw parties, distributing meat among his offsprings. Able and generous hosts also share it with orphans, who takes shelter under them, the unfortunate and the needy, widows and widowers alike.

*Alojimi dolo: Distribution among the group/ shares of group members

The oldest one in the aloji plans everything. Since he is the oldest and the one who leads the group in all affairs, the alojitou’s(group leader) share is first taken out. People who run errands in the group are also given a share and the rest of the other members receive equal share of meat.

*Alolijimi : womenfolk of the Alojimi

The whole group works hard , however people entrusted with cooking has most of the work so they are given extra shares of meat. The womenfolk prepares wine and food from their homes, bring and feed the cooks and take care of them, as well as take charge of cleaning up, and confirming that everyone is fed. These womenfolk are also presented with packed food as a sign of respect for the work they have rendered to the society.

*Ashigheni no chinyi che: Rituals performed on third day

On Ashighini they pluck a certain wild plant called ‘Ayilobo’ from its branch and pierce it on the walls of their homes and on the roofs. They do so because of their believe that the smell of Ayilobo keep the evil spirits away from their homes. Since other medicines were not known to them, they used Ayilobo as medicine too.

*Kichikhuna (Feast for deceased) – In the evening they prepare a feast for the deceased in plantain leaf, placing rice and sliced liver of pig. After performing certain rituals they cook the packed food and keep it aside in one place for the deceased members of the family. It is said that the next morning they find the food half consumed by the dead.

*Ashighini tsala ye itimi lokivi tsala: Day of celebration for children.

On this day, children are also gifted rooster or hen to boys and girls accordingly. This is done as a sign of love and respect by parents to their children.

Piercing of ears are also done on this day, therefore people who are yet to pierce their ears wait for this day with great enthusiasm. Piercing of ears was not only limited to the womenfolk but was common among men as well. Both men and women could not get married until they pierced their ears. As such piercing was important for the youths, and they gifted packed meat to the ‘akini kuvu-u’, the person who pierce ears.

4. Anighini

Anighini means the aghiu or important day, this is the main day of celebration. On this day, the alojimi (group members) gather in the house of alojitou/ group leader early in the morning and do the cooking. Before the actual Tuluni feast begins, the menfolk engages in traditional games like apukhu kiti/ kick fight, asu ilheche/ high jump, ayilu tikuxu/ top-

spinning, and angu chekuxu/ spear throwing. The womenfolk also plays puxa kuxu/ jumping , recites lejole/ songs, leshele/ poems and competes on many other agricultural song, reveling the spirit of festivity. Children who have reached the stage of consuming adult food are also taken to alojitomi/ group leaders, requesting them to feed their child as their first feed.

In order to ensure good harvest of rice, all the married couples or families ties their offerings on a cloth and hang it on walls outside their homes. This prayer and wish was made to Litsapa. People believed that Litsapa was the one who bestowed blessing upon them. Thus this day was in a sense considered a day of prayer.

Another important event of this day was for people who were in the midst of Tusutixe, meaning people who were courting for marriage. The two families intending to unite in marriage exchange feasts. The first step is taken by the parents of the groom-to-be who slaughter a wholesome pig and give more than half the meat and head of the pig to the parents of the bride-to-be. On the same day, the bride's parents also invite the groom's family and feed them and they decide on the date of marriage together. The bride's parents then enlightens the groom's parents to get ready with the bride-price as per their wish. While the groom's family depart in the evening, the bride's family also prepares more than half a pig with its head and gifts it to them. Then it is made known to the villagers from then on that the two are engaged to be married. After these activities are done, it is considered that the two parties are engaged and cannot separate. If separation takes place after these events, a thorough enquiry was done and the one found guilty was punished accordingly.

5. Mucholani

On mucholani, the day following the main celebration, the villagers clean the roads that lead to fields. Everyone cooks meat, fill up their wine, carry eggs and goes to the field, leaving their pack foods on the way. Then they go to their respective fields, each talking to their plants to grow up well. They split up a wood called 'thumsu' into four and place the egg between the four sides of thumsu and leave it in the field. After this is done they meet on the way and eat their food. The practice differs from village to village. However in most cases while paving the way they also make rest houses along the way and dig ponds mid way.

6. Tupulani

The third day of celebration is called Tupulani. On this day the young women and men of the village go to the field through the newly paved and cleansed road and bring vegetables from the field. Since they will not be able to get out the next day, they bring in the necessities for the next day as well. If there were any disputes among the youths in the past, they feed each other, forgive and make peace. Then the villages gather around, and have recreation time. This day gives special importance to youths, whereby they gather and hold different kind of competitions of songs and games.

In the evening the menfolk visit the homes of women and sing songs to their families. When they sing 'Lejole' - folksong, they are served with choicest foods.

7. Tughakhani

Tughakhani is the last day of Tuluni. Narratives by elders says that the Tughakhani day stands for ending all rites for different kind of evil spirits that they held during the previous days of the festival. On this day they are not only prohibited to travel but also forbidden to

even go to the fields for they fear that the evil spirits may kill them if they do so. They feared that ill luck may befall them on their journey that day or that the spirits may detain their soul.

Ahuna

Ahuna is a traditional post harvest festival of the Sumis. Ahuna is the first rice that is consumed from the new produce of the year. Ahuna signifies the celebration of the season's harvest in thanksgiving, while invoking the spirit of good fortune in the New Year. The Ahuna was practiced in similar ways by all the Sumis in the olden days, however gradually with the increase in population and the spreading out, it is now celebrated in different ways.

Originally, it was commemorated only by the menfolk. For the celebration, the menfolk would generally make a gallery-like structure and not use the normal kitchen for any purpose that relates to the Ahuna celebration, the womenfolk similarly were forbidden to enter the area of celebration. Separate rooms were also constructed for men to sleep while the celebration was ongoing so that they would distance themselves from their normal homes. Early in the morning, with the first rooster's cry, men are supposed to go to the 'azukhe' or the pond to wash themselves. The significance of this practice is that, such wee hours of the morning is considered the time when 'Kungulimi' or the heavenly beings take bath and washing up with that water, is considered to be good that they would be blessed with a good and long life.

On this occasion, the entire community prepares and feasts on the first meal of rice drawn from the season's harvest which is cooked in bamboo segments. Ahuna also serves as the starting point for a new beginning whereby they plan and prepare for a new beginning, mapping an area for agriculture for the following year known as the "Asuyekithe". This

occasion and practice served as a major event for the Sumi ancestors to seek divination from the creator “Alhou” and the spirits of nature to shower the villagers with good harvest in the next season and for prosperity.

After the Ahuna feast was consumed, rituals were said to be performed to appease the spirits. The bamboo tubes which are used to cook rice for the feast are emptied after the feast, split into two equal halves and thrown into the air with conjuration. This ritual is performed by the priest known as Achine-u. If both the halves of bamboo land face down or face up, it is considered a bad omen, however, if one faces up and one face down, it is regarded to bring good fortune. Further, if the bamboo is not split in equal half there will be ups and downs in fortunes the next year.

The dormitory was an institution where they shared their experience and views, learned folklore, manners, discipline and art. They learned how to join each other in happiness and in mourning, to lend hands in times of troubles. They had common grounds belonging to the village in general to preserve forests and also for landless new comers. They even bestowed favors upon ‘Aqhu- Axemi’, the people who were taken in as captives or servants by rewarding them with their own lands if their work deserve appreciation. They were even allowed to get married and live their own independent life thereon. Integrity was prevalent and they also were tolerant in terms of religion. The chiefs and elders were said to serve the interest of the people and not dominate. Though the chief was the head of the village, he was not the Supreme ruler. He acted as the final judge in times of conflict between parties, however with the advice of the elders of the village. The Sumis expressed their relation in terms of ‘numi’ or ‘limi’. Numi means ‘of father’s son’, while limi means ‘of his clansmen’. Chieftianship, no doubt, was hereditary and property could be inherited or purchased, but all

other social status could only be achieved through one's own achievement or effort. Therefore, in this way some chiefs and nobles received more respect and power than the chiefs and nobles whose achievement in warfare and benevolence were lesser. The Sumis thus carried on an active and colorful life, replete with rich ancestral traditions.

Sumi Calendar

The Sumis have named the days and months in their own dialect and each day or month is named with regard to certain concepts. While the days of the week are generally in line with the seven days of Tuluni festival, the months of the year are mostly to do with seasons or crops relating to agriculture. The days of the week initially existed only as days during feast of merit or ritual days for sanctification for agriculture and personal well being. The month, days and night were kept count of by keeping in account the moon or 'dead moon days'. No feast or festivals are supposed to be conducted on 'no moon days' except of birth and death.

Days and Months

The seven days which were observed only during festivals by Sumis became the regular 7 days of a week.

Months of the year

Agriculture was the main occupation of the Sumis, hence the Sumi months are named and divided according to the stages of cultivation, particularly of shifting cultivation.

1. Lu-u Qhi

On this month the lu-u/iva (preparation) starts for the New Year's harvest and agricultural related works, hence it is named as Lu-u qhi (month of Lu-u).

2. Suphu Qhi

On this month, Asu (millet) is planted in the field. The process of planting different crops had different terms. While the process of planting paddy is known as xu, the process of planting millet is known as phu. Hence the name Suphu is a mixture of two words Su from asu and phu.

3. Lusah Qhi

After burning down the field/ forest, the process of ‘Sakimthe’ or clearing takes place on this month. Thus it is known as Lusah qhi.

4. Ghixu Qhi

On this month, the process of Xu(planting) the paddy begins, thus it is named after the process of planting paddy.

5. Moza Qhi

On this month, the paddy plant begins to grow and thus the cleaning of the field takes places whereby they remove the weeds and unnecessary plants that would hamper the growth of the paddy plant. This process is known as ‘atsuni qgo kuza’ (cutting down weeds) or mxa(plucking out weeds), hence Moza derives its name from that practice.

6. Am-ha Qhi

On this month, the people generally run out of agricultural produces from the previous year and run out of supply which is known as ‘a-m have/ kuhavekeu’. Hence, it is known as Am-ha qhi.

7. Aniqhi Qhi

‘Ani’ means festival in Sumi. On this month the celebration of Tuluni festival takes place, hence it is known as the month of festival or celebration.

8. Saghi Qhi

Saghi means 'bring' or 'to bring'. On this month, people bring home different kinds of vegetables from their fields happily and this the month is named as Saghi Qhi.

9. Am-tha Qhi

On this month people prepare to harvest paddy, hence, they say home and pray in preparation for good harvest which is known as Am-tha.

10. Ghile Qhi

On this month, the people bring home their new (aghi) paddy home; hence from the process of bringing home paddy, Ghile derives its name.

11. Ahuna Qhi

On this month, after the harvesting, paddy is stored in the granary and they gather the first rice (ahu) that remains at the top and cook it in the bamboo to commemorate the consumption of the first rice.

12. Liphi Qhi

On this month, the clearing of old fields takes place. It is believed that clearing weeds known as phi, during this cold season and leaving the land to cool gives it better chance to retain its fertility.

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CHAPTER II

ORIGIN, MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT NARRATIVES OF THE SUMI NAGAS

2.1 Narratives about the first Sumi village.

There are various narratives about the origin of the Sumis specially regarding the first Sumi village. It is generally believed that the Sumis came from the South relating to the story of the blessing stone at Khezhakenoma as accepted by many other Nagas, however because of limitation of proof, and because of the fact that all information and resources has solely been oral narratives, there are variations in the stories. Claims are made by different villagers about the formation of first sumi village. The Lazami, Ighanumi and Hebolimi alike, claim on being the first village in Sumi area.

1) Historical account of Lazami village:

The Lazami, in “Laza Xushe”, 2008 by the Lazami Village Council records that towards the end of BC, a group of people arrived at Mekhel which is now known as Makhro. One among them who was known as Khepheu settled in Khezhakeno in AD 12. After he settled there, his lineage is traced as:

- Khepheu
- Khepheu’s son Koza
- Koza’s son Swupu
- Swupu’s son Rheo
- Rheo- Rheo had three sons:
 - Khrieo
 - Leo

- Tseo

Among Tseo's sons were, Kheza and Lozu, Kheza was the elder son and Lozu was the younger son. Lozu left his brother Kheza around AD 30 following the blessing stone (Atuyeni). It is said that most of the population followed Lozu. The blessing stone which was known as Atuyeni was said to have been passed down from their ancestors, that when a handful of grain is kept over the stone, it multiplies and they were able to collect basketful of grains. However the older brothers always took the chance to dry their grains above Atuyeni and never gave Lozu the chance to dry his grains.

Lozu for this reason was always unsatisfied with his brothers and had a grudge in his mind. He would always go to the field with his younger sister and bring back Perilla and stored it. One morning as he woke up he saw that the weather was very favorable and hence he placed the Perilla plants over the Atuyeni and burnt it after which the Atuyeni got splitted into two halves. With the split in the stone smoke appeared and along with the smoke a white dove rose and flew away, thus Lozu followed the bird towards Yeti river however the bird like thing was later found to be or turned into a stone. Lozu plucked a plant and kept hitting the stone which kept on moving to a certain direction. On his way however, Lozu came across three people and while in a conversation with them, forgot to hit the stone with the plant, for which the stone submerged deep into the ground. He tried hitting the little remain of the stone above the ground, however it failed to move this time. This place is now said to be in Ghatusami (Chachezou) village. Further it is said that the Chakesangs of that area calls this stone as the migration stone of the Lazami because Lozu first settled near that stone.

Lozu passed through the Kidimi village and arrived at Khughaboqa situated below the present Tubami village. At that point of time it is said that Lozu's brother Kheza came to

learn of his settlement in that place and came down to invite him back home, however Lozu told his brother that as he had already looking for a place of settlement, he would not go back with him. Hence the two brothers said their greetings to each other and went their separate ways after deciding that though they are unable to settle together, they would see each other to their death.

Lozu and his men settled in Khughaboqa for some time, however, with the increase in population, the place became too small for them hence they migrated and settled at Fuiqa. One morning as Lozu was preparing to go to the field, a bee started to hover around him continuously hence he got an air that something was strange. He asked his wife to help him prepare for a journey and set off. As he was going along the Yeti river he came across Kheza's clansmen who were on their way to inform him about Kheza's death. They went on together to fulfill the last death rites. It is said that during that time, there were no villages in between their settlements.

After the rites, Kheza's men told him to inherit his brother's land as he was his only family, however he replied saying that land as immoveable, as it is, cannot be taken away by him or anyone. Hence he instructed them to take care of his brother's land. He further slaughtered livestock and distributed it among the people who had helped in laying his brother to rest, further instructing them to finish the meat in three days time or to bury away the remains if they are unable to consume it by then. He then took a young hen to himself and left for his journey back home.

Hence even to this day Lazami slaughters hen in different occasions, which is to be consumed only till the third day, above which it is considered chinne or a taboo.

Lozu's off springs after he settled in Fuiqa is recorded in "Lazami eno Tishe-Tiyemi Bothu Xulhe" as below:

Lozu (Loze)

Ikato (Ikuto)

Hepho

Kukato

Swupu had two sons:

1. Kigho 2. Kache:

- Swupu
- Hepho
- Laza
- Kiviye
- Laza

Around ten generations under Laza is supposed to have settled at Fuiqa. The Lazamis hold that among the many people that previously lived and then then migrated to different directions for settlement are people like Ashu(grandfather) Igha, Hepho, Chisho and Chishi.

2) A Narrative about Sumi Village

Sumi village is located in Pfutsero division of Phek district. It is an old Sumi village near Chizami town, surrounded by Zhessami towards the east, Pfutsero towards the West and Pholami towards the North. According to oral tradition, and as their Souvenir suggests, their forefather Supu and wife Khaulil along with the other first settlers migrated from Khezhakeno, journeyed through Leshemi, Kami, Nakrami and settled at Ranguzumi. (A

Brief History of Sumi Village. A Souvenir, 1995) After settling there for sometime, they moved to Pfutsero and then on to the present location, the Sumi village.

3) Historical account of Ighanumi village:

According to the narratives about the Ighanumi village, there were six brothers- Ghathu, Vethu, Igha, Hebo, Chisho and Chishi. When Igha heard the news that Ghatu and Vetu were about to migrate to other places, Igha sought the permission of his father Holo to establish his own village. His father blessed his plan and gave him heirloom consisting of a stone, white rooster and three pieces of thong, a Rhus wood and the wool of bamboos. He was then sent forth after proper guidance and instruction of traditional rite for establishment of a new village. Igha carried the stone with Ayephani, a wild leaf as a strap. He was instructed to continue his journey till the stone falls and the cock crows. Holo taught his son Igha to sing, “ISHE, HOLO, HOIYE, HIYELO, HILI.. LINO, ZULO, ISHE ZULO HO...”. (Jimomi, Inavi. Sumi Naga)

The lyrics of this song is entirely a collection of his grandparents name so that they would be remembered by the future generations no matter where they settle or spread out.

As Igha set out for his journey, he came across Cheswezu and Thenezu villages established by Ghathu and Vethu. He however proceeded as instructed. Finally when they reached a place, the fetish stone fell of and the cock crowed signifying that they had reached their abode. On seeing that the signs have been given, Igha led his group and observed the rites, after which the village was formed naming it “Ighanumi” which is considered by many to be the first Sumi village.

The main heirloom-the fetish stone was placed at the main gate towards the west, which was said to illuminate at night. This phenomenon drew the attention of Major Johnson who

expeditioned the Ighanumi village. He wanted to have a piece of this stone and eventually the legendary stone was dismembered and part of it was carried away with him. The remaining stone still lays buried in the village.

The people of Ighanumi attached importance to this stone. It was significant in the following ways:

The fetish stone- Used for seeking omen on defeat or victory in war, showing signs of prosperity or adversity in the village and to know success or failure in hunting.

The white cock- It signified honesty and chastity of the people, courage and benevolent spirit.

It is said that the other brothers Hebo, Chisho and Chishi also moved across Vethukusami now Thenezumi and Ghathukusami now Cheswezu. According to a narrative, these brothers came to a rugged cliff when the stone fell off and they settled there taking that as a sign. The cliff is known as ‘Aghungu Tuxu’ presently located at Ighanumi village. The Ighanumi calls this place as ‘Ashu Hebo Kakuthala” meaning the way grandfather Hebo went. Hebo group later migrated upwards because that place was too steep and not convenient for settlement, they however found Igha living there and asked him for a joint settlement. Igha advised the Hebo that it is best to settle at different places to avoid any hatred or enmity that may befall them in the future, and thus they should go downwards. Hebo group then went along Tsuyi stream and found a vacant land where they established their village.

Oral narrations holds that Igha and his group migrated straight from Khezhakenoma to the present village. It is estimated that the village was established around 914 A.D.

2.2 Aphuwo Ghili/ Founding of villages.

The founding of villages, as given here, is the system that was practiced roughly in between sixteen to nineteenth century. When the Ighanumi village was founded, Igha the founder was given an heirloom, a stone and a cock by his parents before he set out to found a new village being advised to establish a village where ‘the stone falls and the cock crows’.

Hebolimi took up this ritual but found it undesirable in practice, thus the founding of village evolved into a practice following certain principles:

(A) Qualities of the chief or leader to be.

A man who wishes to start a village should possess qualities befitting a leader and a chief.

1)He should be physically fit enough to withstand any challenge from the enemy, be it men, animal or harsh nature.

2)He should be intelligent and brave.

3)He should be wealthy enough or be in a position to provide for the poor in times of trouble especially during the first three years of establishment of the village.

4)He must possess protective and benevolent nature.

5)He must be influential yet just.

(B) Survey of land.

A man with befitting qualities of a chief assesses the strength of people who are ready to join him in founding the village and after he gains reasonable strength of members he secretly surveys the area on pretext of going for fishing or hunting. During the survey he keeps the following pre requisites as priorities- the land must first be fertile:

- 1) He digs out a hole in the earth and refills the hole with the soil dug out, if the soil overflows it is taken as a sign of prosperity but if it fails to fill up the hole it is taken as a sign of poverty and thus looks for another land.
- 2) It should be a place where all kinds of bushes and trees grow healthy. If he comes across a new plant he feeds it to the domestic animals to test if it is palatable.
- 3) The air and water should be fresh and available.
- 4) The area should be sufficient for habitation and cultivation. There should be enough land for the whole village to cultivate fresh plot of land annually for at least 15-20 years during its shifting cultivation called 'Asuye'.
- 5) The surrounding area must provide good defence from invaders/enemies.

(C) Choosing of men. (Done by leader or chief)

"The chief appointed the following people to assist in the process of migration:

Ghungu(the chief's shadow), Awou(the chief priest), Lapumi,.." (Hibo & Ngullie, 77)

- 1) He first approaches the man to be his lieutenant/deputy chief sometimes known as Ghungu, whom he trusts and who can be with him in good and bad times, help him both in wealth and men.
- 2) Together they choose 'Awowu' (the chief priest) who conducts all important festivals and social ceremonies.
- 3) Then they choose 'Lapuwu' for slaughter of domesticated animals and for burying of dead.

4) Next they chose 'Amuthau' who performs rituals for clearing of the jungle for cultivation purpose, for seedling and for harvest.

5) 'Azukheu', the one who performs rituals for construction of ponds and the use of water is chosen from amongst the poor so that the water might be less yet continues like the spring well and all those who draw water may remember the 'Azukheu' and ways of the poor and use the water carefully.

The leader and his deputy's first step is to organize a group of like minded people. They take special care in choosing the warriors and accordingly woo and convince them with praises and offers.

(D)Permission to start a new village.

While all these are being done secretly, the leader sees to it that he is in favour of the chief of the parent village where he still resides. After all is set, the leader then indirectly cites to the chief of the parent village that he desires to have a share of labour/tax of the villagers. If the chief refuses he cannot go but in most cases it is allowed for the plan to set up a village is first done in confidence with the chief of the parent village.

The 'Awowu'(Chief priest) is then invited to the leaders house, along with the elders of the migrating group. A big feast is prepared for them in which it is a ritual to kill a healthy piglet which has white stripe in the tail and leg. The Awowu/ chief priest is well fed with best pieces of cooked meat and gifted liquor, paddy, meat and new spear head. It is said that the elders have to coin a new word before they migrate.

(E)Clearing of the proposed village area:

When the permission sought to establish a new village is granted, they set out to clear the jungle of the proposed village area. The leader donates food, drinks, and a big pig. Amuthau performs the ritual of jungle clearing, Awowu/ chief priest cuts down the first jungle growth, then the rest follows. After the jungle is cleared, they first build the house of the leader and his deputy which is followed by building the house of Awowu/ chief priest followed by the others. This takes weeks so if they migrate to a faraway land, they first build a makeshift shelter near the proposed area of the new village and move in only after the construction is completed.

(F) Clearing of the village pond:

Two or more village ponds are dug out. The chief or his deputy donates a pig. The Azukheu (Person in charge of water rites) performs a ritual by cutting 120 pieces of meat and keeping 60 pieces within the village area, he keeps another 60 pieces besides the pond. The bladder and tail of the pig is bound to a V-shaped post and placed near the well. The ceremony and starting of the work is done by the Azukheu but the other works like digging and construction is helped and done by the other villagers. Ponds can also be constructed after the formation of village depending on the availability and requirements of the villagers.

After clearing of the jungle, building the houses, constructing the village well the leader and his deputy provides food and drinks. The villagers then build the village wall, dig the trenches, construct watch spots. The Awowu/ chief priest then performs the meat cleansing-wine cleansing ritual in which pieces of meat and liquor are put into plantain leaf and thrown into the air.

(G)Asukuchu ceremony

The leader donates a pig without blemish or defects and the menfolk go outside the parent village and perform this ceremony. They cook the pork with beans and eat it without rice, the leftover of which is burned and never carried home. The men then bathe, clean their weapons till they shine and come back. The womenfolks are forbidden to neither eat nor see of it.

(H)Sacrificial dog rite:

The migrating men then perform sacrificial dog ceremony called ‘Atsukupu’. Some leaders donate a big male dog without defect. They kill the dog and burn it near their new village saying

“Nikutokumo, akumghakumo eno nixine kumtsu pewovetsu peni eno axine qhikutsu ithulu peniu”, [May you carry away all our sins, may all our misfortunes be carried away by you, and may we be redeemed by this]. (Jimomi,142)

The dog is thus sacrificed before they enter the village.

The night before they start to migrate to their new village, each householder places the bed directed towards the front door and calls the spirit of the house by saying, “wherever you are, return home”. As the dawn breaks the head of the house makes a hole in the roof and knocks at the wall while declaring that they are going to a new village for a better life, and all the members of the family follow their father. No one is allowed to look back even if they have forgotten something important lest, it is said, they die a bloodless death. The migrating group is led by the leader who is followed by his deputy, then the priest and the other members follow.

As the group moves out of the village gate, both sides throw rotten eggs at each other as a sign that the parent village may take back all the dirt and ill luck while the parent village also does the same so that the migrating group may take away all of it. The next day the parent village perform a cleansing ceremony by dusting and sweeping their houses, the village ground, the jungle around their village and taking bath thereafter.

When the migrating group reach the gate of their new village the Awowu gives a victory cry, throws his spear inside the boundary of the village and cuts open the closing to the village gate.

All the men then gather and pray for prosperity, protection, good health and long life. After all the members have entered the Awowu lets free a cock without blemish into the village saying,

“May you be our good luck charm”.(Jimomi,144)

It is said that if the cock is killed by wild cats or dies soon, it is a bad omen. The house at which the cock settles is considered a good omen for that house shall become prosperous.

The people then gather around the house of the chief while the Awowu/ chief priest opens the chief’s house. He makes fire by using finely stripped, dried bamboo and bounding it to a dried wood or bamboo and pulls it until the fire is lit. After the hearth is properly lit up, the Awowu/ chief priest gives fire to each household. After that, the chief’s wife goes straight to the pond and draws water without talking and brings it home where the Awowu/ chief priest performs the water cleansing ceremony.

In the first year of settlement, the villagers do not eat anything of the jungle, be it animal or plant. This is done to test the ways of the animals and keep the animals in the jungle friendly and see if it may cause any harm to the settlers.

“The names of the village in between the 10th and 17th century were named after the leader and his forebears or son, example: Ighanumi, Iphonumi, Hebolimi, Chisholimi, Chishilimi. Limi here means ‘of his clan/brethren’ and ‘numi’ suggests ‘of his sons or sons dependent on him’. The Zhimomi and Yepthomi clans of 17th century started the tradition of naming their villages by their own name directly and not as ‘numi’ or ‘limi’. Example: Satakha, Kiyeshe, Hoishe, Kiyekhu, Yemishe etc.” (Jimomi, 146)

The above account of the rituals however, of founding a village slightly varies from village to village.

2.3 Clans.

The Sumi society like any other Naga tribes is divided into several clans. There are mainly twenty-two clans although there are some minor clans as well. The twenty-two Sumi clans are Assumi, Chishilimi, Achumi, Awomi, Ayemi, Chekemi, Yepthomi, Nunomi, Shohemi, Kinnimi, Katelimi, Khuzhomi, Tsukomi, Wokhami, Wotsami, Chunimi, Chophimi, Muromi and Zhimomi. The origin of these clans have different stories and background and each clan vary from each other.

- Yepthomi was named so because they were considered “yepu-tho” or very deep heart.

- Jimomi was named so because he was an orphan and could not inherit his parents name, and was abandoned by people, therefore initially they were named jumo-mi meaning people who are not looked or taken care of by people, it was only later on that it got renamed to Jimomi or Zhimomi.
- Ayemi were generally “Yeye” or very noisy while talking hence they were called “yeye-mi”, later on it changed to Ayemi.
- Awomi while conserving never talked well with people in the right manner but in awou-u hence they were named as Awou-mi, spelling changes took place later on.
- Assumi was the eldest son among the Sumis and hence was known for his pride, further he claimed that ancestral property or apuh-Assu mheghi should only be inherited by him, thus by nature of ancestral inheritance he was named Assu-mi.
- Chophi- A man of a particular clan was seen surfacing(known as chophe in Sumi) his neck from the water continuously while in water thus his clansman was named as Chophe-mi and gradually spelling changes took place.
- Kibami was timid and afraid of going out at night and would do his needs inside the house in fear, thus he was named ki-ba mi, ki meaning house, ba means discharging faces and mi meaning people.
- Chishilimi was named so when he stole wine from another person’s house and denied his crime, hence the owner of the wine punched him, known as chishi in sumi dialect.
- Tsukumi while fighting with people grapped (kmown as tsuqu) the neck of the other person hence he was renamed to Tsuqumi.

- Wokhami- While the other clansman were living in an era of warfare, this person was seen busy feeding his pig(awo) and calling it “khuwo”, hence he was named wokhami, wo from awo(pig) and khami meaning one who catches.
- Wotsami returned after beheading his enemies to catch a pig for the celebration but got bitten by the pig hence he was named Wotsami, from the words wo(awo) and tsa (eat/bite).
- Shohemi- While the other clansmen went for headhunting, brought heads and hung it on the tree of heads, he was seen peeping (shophe-shohe in sumi) hence he was named as Shohemi.
- Achumi were known for “Achu qhu tike”, meaning had lots of food, hence they were named Achu-mi.
- Kinimi were known so because they were wealthy, hence from the two words “kini” meaning wealth and “mi” meaning people.

2.4 The concept of Mighimi, the Leaders and the Elders (chochomi, Kivimi and the elders), Anulikishimi (The dependents)

i) Mighimi

Other than the chief and his nobles all the villagers including the priests, relatives and distant cousins of the chiefs are known as ‘Ni mighimi’ or ‘We mighimi’ literally meaning ‘We the orphans’ but in reality ‘We the subjects’.

ii) The Leaders and the Elders (chochomi, Kivimi and the elders)

The word Chochomi (plural) is derived from ‘chocho+ haha’ (alert in times of emergency or in times of need). It is also used in the negative – ‘hasty action’ is said to be ‘cho-cho-shi’ or

an exaggeration. The chief appoints chochomi for different kinds of works, some works as messenger, some as announcers- and other errands. The most active of the chochowu who assists the chiefs in all the confidential works and important affairs is allotted one 'Aghunaju' or 'one time free labour of every household of the village'. The chief consults his chochomi and elders of the village in all the all-important decisions that is taken. With the coming of Christianity, Chochowu has taken over all the works of the Awowu/ chief priest except works that relates to religious activity which again is no longer practised.

iii) Elders

The Elders of the village are the most respected folks of the Sumi village. They are given first privilege in all the family or social gathering. In matters of disputes and decision making the elders put their heads together and come up with the best possible solution. They give their stand and views in all disputes and settlement. The village elders are the history bearers from whom the past events are told. The younger ones, even the Chief does not supersede his elder while narrating about the past. He is given priority in speech or in distribution of gifts or shares. The old are regarded as the experienced and the wise, and in gatherings they are found advising like, "My thoughts could not catch up with my limbs when I was young, now that I am old, my limbs could no longer catch up with my thoughts, so listen to me that you may be strong, both in body and mind". Sumis have a tradition to seek for advice and wisdom from the old, thus, the elders generally are composed of at least one representative from every clan.

iv) Kivimi

Apart from the chief and the elders of the village, 'Kivimi' are the most respected members of the village. One can become 'Kivimi' by performing good deeds like protecting the village from the enemies, taking heads of the enemies and killing wild animals in a skillful and brave manner. Such person is regarded not only as a warrior but also as Kivimi. A person is also regarded as Kivimi when he, by nature, is hospitable, kind and has hosted a series of feast of merit. Thus a brave and a noble man usually gain the status of Kivimi. A person, no matter how rich or nobly born cannot become a Kivimi unless he performs a daring feat or host a feast of merit. Kivimi forms a part of Elders council which is headed by the chief of the village.

v) Anulikishimi (The dependents)

'Anulikishimi' literally means 'becoming sons' or 'being sons'. The chief/noble calls them 'inulikishimi' or 'my becoming sons' and they call him 'Ipu' or 'father' and not 'master' or 'sir'. The runaways, the lost, the orphans, the landless or very poor subjects who come seeking the shelter of the chief/noble become his son, in reality 'dependents or son' through certain situations or circumstances and so they are classed into different categories which are given below:

Anulikishimi is given in different forms. Normally, chiefs have 10 to 20 households of Anulikishimi, some chiefs were said to have 30 households. The chief give shelter, protection and provides the needs of his dependants/ sons and in return the Anulikishimi gives free labour to his father or master. They also see to that the chief's property, his authority, he and his family's own being are well protected. In times of troubles, some even sacrifice their lives for their father's safety.

1. Aqu-u: A person who does not have clothing, food or land and comes seeking for it from another (usually the chief) becomes his Aqu-u meaning ‘the one who has nothing’.
2. Axeu: A person who cannot afford to give dowry to his in-laws for his marriage is provided dowry by the chief/ noble and he is called the chief’s/ the rich’s axeu.
3. Akiwo: The runaways who do not have family or other property and comes seeking for adoption use to be adopted by the chief. They were called Akiwo or ‘came within the fold of the house’. Akiwos are mostly temporary eg. Hoshepu s/o Khumutsa Amighiu of Nunumi Village became the Akiwo of Iloka of Sukomi village- who was the friend of Hoshepu’s father Khumutsa Amighiu of Nunumi village. Hoshepu later became the chief of Sukomi village.
4. Aqu-Axeu: A person who do not have clothing, shelter, food nor a dowry to give to his in-laws is provided by the chief/ noble and such men becomes his Aqu-Axeu. These are the poorest and helpless persons among the Sumis.
5. Anukishimi: People who do not have land were given land by the chief and they are called Anukishimi or ‘being sons’.

2.5 Morung/ Dormitory:

Dormitory, widely known among the Nagas by the term Morung probably derived from Assamese word meaning ‘a big tree drum’. It was customary for Nagas to keep a drum carved out of a tree besides the bachelor’s dormitory. Many oral narratives holds that morung is one of the first structure that is built while establishing a village. It is a kind of place for youths, who not only guards the village and enables youths to socialize through interaction

but also provides informal education. The morung was an important institution of the Nagas. The village was the entire world for Sumi youth and they were satisfied with whatever the village provided. They could master the requirements of village life through the dormitory. The dormitory for male youths was known as 'Apuki' and for ladies it was called 'Iliki'. Upon reaching puberty, they were sent to their respective dormitory. There were different kinds of ranks under the dormitory which they had to experience and go through till they attained adulthood and were admitted to full membership. In some cases of small villages, the morungs were attached to the residence of the chief, while in most of the other cases it was built separately. The womenfolk were not allowed inside Apuki, they were also forbidden to roam around the surroundings of Apuki. Likewise, men were also not allowed in Ilikis. Elders of the respective gender were invited to teach the members of Apuki or Iliki the art of warfare, of handicraft, folk dances and songs, spinning, weaving, and all other basic activities that could be of help in their agrarian lifestyle. Oral traditions were kept alive in the morung and passed on from one generation to the next.

Apuki:

The Apuki is usually constructed at a site which has good defense with a raised ground as a kind of watchtower where the entire village and its boundaries can be kept under view. Inside the Apuki was the cubicle and a fireplace where the young men pass the night singing songs, listening to stories of the past or of their personal experiences and adventures. The front of the Apuki is usually decorated with carved wood work in the main post and trophies of the skulls of both men and animals they have hunted down. There was an open space or ground where the young men would wrestle, kick fight or jostle. It also had a wooden platform

where the men relax after their work or sports. Apuki further served as a kind of armory where the village braves keep their spears, daos, shields, crafts, etc.

*Youths were taught the art of handicrafts from wood, cane, bamboo and also metal works on how to make daos, spears, spades and other tools from the experienced elders. The art of wood and stone carving, basket-making and snare-making were also taught to the young men to prepare them to live as skillful men after their training.

*Apuki served as a meeting hall at times when the matters concern festivals, celebration, war or even as a court when there were disputes concerning a member of the Apuki. It also served as a Guest house to strangers and visitors who had no acquaintances in the village. It is said that at times it has also acted as a sanctuary to culprits who took refuge in it. This is owing to the believe and practice of the Sumis that they are to protect, shelter and serve the guests whosoever, as long as they remain under their roof.

*As there were no written records, telling of folk tales, oral tradition of narrating about their past was the only way of holding on to their history and roots. Therefore oral narration was a very important part of the Apuki which not only entertained and taught the members but also preserved the culture, custom and history of the Sumi Nagas.

* The Apuki also served as the Guard house of the village. Because of its strategic location, men in the Apuki were able to hear the commotions and noises in and around the village. Thus they were always alert and on guard to rescue and protect the village from any harm that could befall on the village. During wartime, conflicts or dry season when the thatch houses were prone to catch fire, or when raids of enemies are expected, the men in Apuki take turns in sentry duty.

*The members of the Apuki as a group assisted any person or family in times of tragedy or natural calamity that may have befallen the said person or family. The men in the Apuki take turn in acting as carriers of messages to other villages, they also help the orphans, weak, widows, poor or the disabled village folks.

*During leisure time, games and sports of various kinds are performed in the open space or ground in front of the Apuki. Competitions, challenges and trophies in kick fighting, spear end kicking, and other such games are held. These are conducted under the watchful eyes and supervision of the senior members or elders who sees to it that the right spirit of the game is kept in a healthy environment without any grudges.

The Apuki therefore serves as an educational institution, a hostel for boys, training centre for warfare, sports, homemaking and all other skills and moral values required.

Illiki:

The Illiki is a morung for women folk usually located at the centre of the village. Similar to the Apuki, it also has a cubicle and a hearth. The women in Illiki sleep on an elevated place where beds are prepared in order to be safe from enemies or encroachers. Besides cooking and other works, they are taught different skills like spinning, weaving, dyeing and embroidery from their elders. They were also taught how to sing and dance. Illiki is a kind of school where women learnt all kinds of conduct, morals and skills that were considered necessary to be labeled as a proper woman. Though more restricted than her male counterparts, she is not only given full freedom to develop her talents and personality but also gets the freedom to enjoy her maidenhood.

Thus, the origin and migration settlement narratives of the Sumi Nagas form an integral part in constructing and safe guarding their identity. Their history are inextricably linked with myths, which however can be accounted for by their relation and similarities with some other Naga tribes specially in its origin stories and myths related to the same. Village was the larger part of the world and also an element of identity for the Nagas in general and Sumis in particular. They lived in self sustained villages and the greater part of their concern was the organization in the village which consisted of a handful of important people like the chief, warriors, village priest and a few other elders. As the Sumi society was an agrarian one, everything that they needed or desired was within the premises of the village, except of course when they wanted to conquer enemies through head hunting, or when the population became too big for the village to sustain itself and thus called for the formation of a new village.

Another element of identity after the village was the existence of clans. Clan as a unit of identity did not exist in the beginning, however with the growth of population and the problem of several people with the same name, the need for a further classification to differentiate double identities came about. It was then, that a person came to be named according to his actions or state of being, something that identifies him, and gradually this name was passed on to his lineage and the idea of clan came into being.

The whole concept of village, the guiding principles of this village structure; the social, religious, educational and cultural activities was taught and trained to the young people in the morung which served as guarded houses, recreation club, centre of education, art and discipline. Here they learnt about everything that was required for their existence from skills, tactics and diplomacy to family values, and this structure acted as a guiding

light for young people before entering adulthood until the arrival of Christianity and western education.

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CHAPTER III

FOLK SONGS, FOLKPOEMS AND NARRATIVES ABOUT FOLK DANCES OF THE SUMI NAGAS

Songs and dance forms are important part of any community. While they serve as a source of entertainment on the surface, they have more functions to them. They serve as the vital element of any living culture. They act as unrecorded tradition of the society and reflect man's relationship with nature, animals and human behavior at various stages of life. They not only help in understanding the socio cultural and religious life of the community, but also human psychology and the adjustment of an individual to his natural surroundings and environment. Sumi folk songs and dances, similarly, functions as tools of education teaching the younger generation the norms and proper conduct of their society and functions as a communication channel for knowledge and believe of their ancestors, keeping their roots alive, which otherwise would have been lost.

Sumi Folk songs:

Folk songs are an important part of the Sumi lifestyle. Songs accompanies any kind of event, further it was a part of their day-to-day life. Songs were used for different purposes, as an outpour of their different emotions, as a way of conversation or as a way of socializing.

Chief categories:

- Lejole- Songs sung in the house
- Luxah leh- songs sung while clearing or cleaning the field.
- Akih kishi le- songs sung while constructing house or other such structures.

- Asuh kippe le- songs sung while carrying wood.
- Anga kumzuu le- lullabies sung for infants.
- Aghu le- songs of or about battles.
- Lu-u le- songs sung while working in the fields in Luu qhi(first month)
- Alukuhole or Alukumlale- Songs sung at work in the field
- Phushele- Songs sung while digging
- Mozale- Songs sung while plucking
- Lotisale- Song sung while plucking out weed from ripening crops.
- Lephile- Song sung while reaping
- Aokishile- Songs sung while husking paddy
- Yemusale- Songs sung after successful head hunting raid
- Aphile- Songs of festivals
- Avikukhole- Songs sung while sacrificing a mithun
- Laghele- Songs sung while clearing the path.

There are variations in singing lejole according to the different areas of habitations among the Sumis as well. It is generally sung in four parts somewhat like Soprano, alto, tenor and bass or mid, low, high, very low. Lejole generally starts with Wolo, wolo followed by zulo zulo, later, it ends with wolo. However if they sing the song till the end and continue with zulo zulo after singing wolo, it signifies that the song is to be repeated from the start again. While singing Lejole, it is sung in groups, following each other, with soprano taking the lead. Thus the people sing the other parts listens to, and wait for the soprano group, to continue the song or to move on to the new song, as the lyrics sung by the other parts are repetition of the same lyrics that was sung by the soprano group. Lejole was sung by different people for

different reasons, however given below are some common themes or circumstances under which it was composed and performed.

* Lejole was most commonly sung by lovers. Many Lejole are sung in praise of love or glorifying love between two lovers. It is also sung in praise of lovers by their partners, and how they long to hold on to that love. Apart from that love songs on heart breaks are also sung by lovers where they lament the love they lost or the love they could not keep. In the olden days, marriage was an institution which was arranged keeping in view the family status or relation by the parents, or by the groom in some cases but never by the bride. As such there are numerous stories about lovers being separated by marriage to other people because of class barrier or other reasons. Therefore lejoles are sung in lamentation of their heartbreak, in some cases the discontentment follows even after marriage and as such, songs about such experiences forms a part of Lejole.

* Another important group of Lejole is that which is sung by or about an orphan. Tales about step motherly ill treatment of orphans are common in Old Sumi tales and the same overshadows Sumi Lejoles. There are a great deal of songs which are sung by orphans about their sorrows in life as they have none to call parents, no siblings to take warmth in, or no friends to support them. Another thing of sorrow for a Sumi orphan was the inability to get married. Sumi marriage is a complicated process which involves, man power, that is, relatives to serve as go-betweens for the two families. The groom is also required to pay 'Ame' or bride price and the bride to prepare 'Asanah' or bride treasure, Both of which is beyond the means of an orphan. Thus there are songs by orphans, lamenting their plight in life.

* Another form of Lejole are those which are sung in praise of the wealthy or the able for their service to the society or village. There are a number of songs which are sung by the common man, praising the wealthy or the nobles, and blessing them, for their contribution to the society. In the olden days, the elders, the wealthy and those of upper status, looked after orphans or needy people making them their children which was known as ‘Anulikishimi’(taken as their children). Further these nobles, hosted different kinds of feast and fed all the villagers with good food and wine. Therefore a number of songs can be found praising them for their good service to the community. Songs sung in praise of worthy warriors after they emerge victorious in battles can also be found.

* Another group of Lejole are those which are didactic in nature. There are songs which talk about how one should live their life, what one should refrain from and the like. These songs are generally sung by the old to teach their younger generations about virtues in life. Further, it should be noted that the ancestors of the Sumis also communicated through songs, therefore songs can be found in the form of dialogue as well, whereby they warn or teach each other about certain things through songs.

1. Inakha Ghonili

Wolo wolo no hilili wolo, ho wolo wolo no hilili wolo, ho ishe hoi,

Zulo zulo no hilili zulo, ho zulo zulo no hillili zulo, ho ishe hoi,

Inakha noye kiu pumiye, ho inakha no ye achu pumiye, ho ishe hoi,

Inakha noye kiu pumiye, ho inakha no ye achu pumiye, ho ishe hoi,

Ghonili noye kiu limiye, ho Ghonoli noye kiu limiye, ho ishe hoi,

Ghonili no ye asulimi ye, ho Ghonili no ye asulumi ye, ho ishe hoi,

Kiulono ho inguno tomo, kiu lono inguno tomo, ho ishe hoi,

Zuta kihi lono ho ingu no tomo ho, zuta kihi lono, ingu no tomo, ho ishe hoi,

Kiu lono ho oh inino tomo, ho kiu lono ho ini no tomo, ho ishe hoi,

Sutsa suli lo no inino tomo, ho sutsa suli lono ininotomo, ho ishe hoi,

Kiu lono ho lomino tomo, ho kiu lono ho lomono tomo, ho ishe hoi,

Phijo kivi lono lomi no tomo, philo kivi lono lomino tomo, ho ishe hoi,

Wolo wolo no ho ileno wolo, ho wolo wolo no hilili wolo, ho ishe joi. (Zhimo, Ghoheto.63)

This is a song about the story of Inakha and Ghonili which is a popular lore among the Sumis. Ghonili and Inakha were lovers. Inakha was an Achumi(clan) and Ghonili was an Asulimi. They got married happily and were blessed with many children. There were always many visitors in their house, and they were always very prosperous. However after some time of such prosperity and happiness, a women named Chevili got jealous of the lives that the couple was living in happiness and lured Inakha to separate from Ghonili. After Inakha's separation with Ghonili, he went to the fields with his new wife, but she was nowhere to be compared to Ghonili. She could not work like Ghonili, neither did she possess half the grace, thus Inakha's previous life of prosperity was reduced to regrets. Ghonili who was now separated from her husband, still loved him from afar and warned him about dangers despite the fact that her husband betrayed her.

The story of Inakha and Ghonili is a story which is known by many Sumis, however with slight variations in the story. There are also a number of songs in relation with this story, some which are in the form of song sung by Inakha in regret, some by Ghonili, while some other, singing of their lost love.

The above is a version sung by Inakha in regret. He sings about how Ghonili is irreplaceable. His new wife cannot be compared to Ghonili in any aspect. He sings about how gracefully Ghonili worked with the machete and other tools swiftly, how gracefully she talked to people and visitors with respect and dignity. He sings that woe is he, because he has lost the true jewel which was the best as could be, and how she cannot be replaced now, of how he cannot undo his mistake.

2. Alukhe le

Ho oh wolo no oh, ho oh wolo no oh, niye wolo wolono oh no hilli wolo ohi, ho wolo heo.

Ho oh zulo no oh, ho oh zulo no oh, niye zulo zulono oh no hilili zulo ohi, oh zulo heo.

Ho oh achoki oh, ho oh achoki-o niye muzuthiueva ye.. niye ilhuu ni noghi tila abalo thochibolo iku wolo, ohi ho oheo

Ho oh achhiji-o, ho oh achhiji-o niye muzuthiueva ye niye ilhuu ni, noghi tila abala mutubolo iku wolo, ohi ho oheo.

Ho oh ashuki-o, ho oh ashuki-o tsala tsuzuuva ye niye kilo woveni noghi tila abalo subolo ikulu wolo, ohi ho oheo.

Ho oh wolo no oh, ho oh wolo no oh, niye wolo wolono oh no hilili wolo oh ohi, ho wolo heo. (Zhimomi, Kahoto)

In the olden days, it is said that when the millets starts to bear seeds, the Sumis went to the field very early in the morning before the sunrise with fire lighten in a wood, so as to protect the millet from being eaten by birds and other animals. This was done to ensure that they reach the field before the birds wake and attack their fields. In the evening too, they would stay in the field way past the time that they usually leave, so as to wait for the birds to fly to trees for their day's rest and they would disperse home only after they were sure that birds have retired to rest.

The song given above is sung by a farmer who sings about the hunger after guarding the field the whole day. He wishes to retire home to eat and sleep peacefully after a tiring day. He therefore asks the bird to go and retire for the day too, so that he can go home and be relieved of his hunger and pain.

The lyrics of the various folk songs given above serve as a portrayal of the social and personal life of the Sumis. The background of each of these lyrics gives us an impression of an agrarian society, where the entire life of each of the characters revolves around the rural agricultural setting. In the song about 'Inakha and Ghonili', we can see the value system that was attached to people, and the kind of character that was expected, desired or undesired especially of women, which is evident through the characters of the two wives of Inakha. While Ghonili is portrayed as an embodiment of a paragon woman, Chevili is the diametric. In the two songs, we witness the exemplum of a village life, particularly of agriculture and the normal life of a farmer who without question has to go to the field.

Leshe/ Leshele

Another form of art that existed among the Sumis were Leshe/ Leshele which are chant-like recitations. These are neither songs nor can be clubbed under normal poetry. It is a mixture of both, whereby poetry like compositions are recited with certain musicality to it. Leshe was an important part of the Sumi people in the olden days. It was composed and recited for different events, honoring the event as well as the host or sponsor of that event, it also served as an outpour of emotions, whereby people sang about their happy or sad plight. There are a number of Leshes recited by orphans on their pitiable plight, by lovers who love each other, or lovers who are separated, by widows, or by villagers while going to the field. In fact, Leshe was also a form of expression for two parties where, two people or parties exchange Leshe as a form of dialogue between the two, and hence, some Leshes are found in pairs, the later as a kind of response to the former. Therefore it served social as well as personal purposes.

Leshe is one of the most endangered form of art among the contemporary Sumis owing to its complexity of diction and musicality. The kind of language that is used in Leshe originally is that of old Sumi language. Sumi language have undergone quite some changes from the past and most part of the language is in its simplified form. However the words that are used in Leshe are in Old Sumi language which makes it difficult for the younger generations to understand as well as recite it.

Following are a collection of Leshe recitations which are composed and recited under different conditions:

1. Omugha

Oishe! Oghoshi

Oloshi,

Tishi tiye shie

Nono muza aye,

Olomino sakiche ju

Aloino alo

Nono tughu aye,

Olomino pite

Chejupuqho, chejupiqhi

Tsala phi wolo

Tinhe mugha aye

Ghochile nicheke,

Timi xuye

Pechile mulae

Hino omugha ye,

Omulo

Muku haye lo.

Your Luck (Translation)

Alas! Upon your will

Upon your liking

Your mate you chose

When in hunger

Upon your beloved's locks

May you gaze,

And in bliss, may you be.

When in thirst,

Upon your beloved's calves

May you ponder,

And the days, may you count away.

Of things, were she

We would have given away

Of flesh, she is

We never can give away

Your luck, this is

Your heart,

Be not forlorn.

(Swu, Ahikali.1,2)

The above Leshe, is addressed to a son who married to a woman of his own choice without consulting his parents. Later, it was learnt that the woman's only virtue was her beauty, and he led a life of poverty. The Sumi society was an agrarian society where a hardworking woman was considered a great asset. The qualities of a woman were considered more worthy and were given importance to, above physical beauty. The home of a hardworking woman normally prospered. Further, the features that determined a woman's beauty was usually her hair and calves. Further, divorce was not an easy option. Therefore, in this Leshe, while the parents laments the unworthy bride that their son opt for, they tell their son to look at her locks and calves as he married her looking at those aspects of her beauty. They wish to return her, however marriage was a very serious institution, and they will not be able to do so despite her incompetency. There they tell their son that it is his plight and his doing so he should face the reality of his actions.

2. Mighimi no Anipu Lumlakeu Mlo Ghime

Ni mighimi no kiu,

Kiniuno kilo,

Ilolumoe wo!

Niye apu kuhake,

Mishi kuha wo:

Niye aza kuhake,

Woli kuha wo:

Niye cheli kuhake,

Sutsa kuha wo:

Niye thikuzumi kuhake,

Puqhemula wo:

Niye qhemi kuhake

Kuphumla wo.

Nimighimi kuxu

Ishe kucho le!

An Orphan's Plight on Marriage(translation)

Alas! An orphan

Upon rich man's house,

How can I ever enter!

As I have no father,

The cow, I do not have:

As I have no father,

The swine, I do not have:

As I have no sister,

The voice I do not have:

As I have no brother,

My load, I cannot bear,

As I have no peer,

The help, I do not have

Woe is an orphan's life,

O! truly so.

(Swu, Ahikali. 13,14)

The leshe talks about the plight of an orphan to take a wife. Traditionally, the marriage system of the Sumi Nagas is complex as there are certain procedures to be followed by both the bride and groom side. While the bride has to present 'Asanah' or bride treasure, the groom is supposed to prepare 'Ame' or bride price. The amount of bride price was not fixed, however it depended on the position of the girls family. Normally the price was given in the form of livestock. However, the character in this Leshe is an orphan so it is beyond his means to pay an Ame and marry the rich man's daughter. He laments about how he does not have a father to support him or a cow to pay as Ame, how he does not have a mother or a swine, because usually swine was reared by mother of the family. He then laments on the absence of a sister because traditionally it was women who played the role of a mediator but he has none to mediate his situation. He does not even have a friend, who can support him, thus he laments over the life of an orphan.

3. Ghi muzu khavelai?

Aghakhulo pumi

Aghulo khahimo

Ivehu kighini kumouili

Ipulo aza kumano

Ime chunili

Inakukhu itsu cheni aza

Oishe! Atsala ghi,

Tuqhu tsala shingo

Ishe shesheli

Oishe! Atsala ghi

Mnutsu tsala shingo

Nisa kiyenilo

Ilomukali,

Ilheghope

Cheqi ghoki mukulono

Cheju puhu

Cheju puwo,

Ipuno izano kuma ghami, ghi muzu khavelai?

Has the Paddy Yellowed(translation)

Young men upon our land

There was not a day,

When my hand they did not ask.

My father and my mother both, a better price to take

Upon other lands they ventured.

Alas! On seasons of spring,

He showered me with praises

Alas! On seasons of rains,

He treated me with harshness.

With heart forlorn,

My pack I tied

Down I went

Beside the river bank,

High and low,

I cast my glance

My maiden village lands,

Their paddy, has it yellowed?

(Swu,Ahikali. 29,30)

This leshe tells us about a girl who was married off to a man from another village for a higher bride price. The girl talks about how her husband treats her well in the dry season when the river was easy to cross and ill treated her during the monsoons when the river was high and difficult to cross. She longs to return to her parents home. She keeps on looking out towards her village to see if the paddy is ripening.

The Leshe gives us an insight about the institution of marriage apart from the agrarian undertones. Marriage was an important structure in the Sumi society. It was not just the coming together of two people to form a family, rather it was an institution that functioned to regulate both the personal and community life. The failure of a wife or husband to perform their roles meant failure to establish a proper family, affecting all spheres of life as seen in the first Leshe. Further, Sumi marriage being a complex ceremony with certain rituals and roles to be played by different members of the family sidelined orphans into a disadvantage which is evident in the lamentation of the young orphan in the second Leshe. Yet again another image of marriage through the perspective of a woman is seen in the third Leshe. It demonstrates how marriage depended on a number of factors but never upon the wish and consent of a woman, how it was a social setting and not a matter of personal choice.

Folk Dance:

Folk dance is an important part of the Sumi tradition. It accompanies every celebration and gathering. It is practiced and performed by the Sumis in different events and occasions. There are different kind of folk dances performed by the Sumis which hold different meanings. However one thing that holds true for all dances is that it is always performed in an open space, created as a stage for an event or in an open area in front of the host of the feast.

Aphilokuwo- Sumi war dance.

The Aphilokuwo generally known as the Sumi war dance is one of the important cultural dances of the Sumis which is usually performed during feasts of merit and after a great head hunting victory in the olden days. It was performed wearing a set of colorful dancing gear. Each piece of jewellery and cloth worn for this dance has a meaning and each piece had to be earned. It was considered a genna to wear this attire without gaining the required achievements, and it symbolized victory at war.

Origin of Aphilokuwo:

The origin of this dance makes the dance more interesting as it originated not out of earthly man but as a dance learned from the sky people or sky spirits according to legend.

The story of its beginnings takes us to Chisholimi village in the Southern Sumi area. There was a man called Rotoki in Chisholimi Village who had a daughter named Eli. One day he went out to the jungle with his daughter Eli to set a trap for wild animals. As they reached the field, he instructed his daughter to wait for him there as he needed to cut down some thin wood for them to use as walking stick. Having said that he went deeper into the jungle. Not long before they parted a storm arrived and a big tree fell in between them blocking their way to each other. Rotoki returned to the same spot where he left his daughter but could not cross

the fallen tree, so he kept on calling out for his daughter but to his utter dismay found no response because his daughter was taken captive by the spirits rendering her unable to talk. Rotoki went back to the village, asked around and went searching for her daughter with the villagers but no trace of Eli could be found. After many years had gone by, Eli returned at midnight knocking at the door of her parents and asking them to let her in, further stating that she was the daughter that they lost. Rotoki and his wife hesitated to open the door at first as it had been so long and they had lost all hope of meeting their daughter again, but upon Eli's narration of their past experiences together and how she was lost in the jungle they finally opened the door for her.

They embraced their daughter who explained about how she had been taken by the spirits and now she lives with the spirits who happily performs "Aphisa" or dancing. Eli further explained that she came back only to teach them the "Kungumiphi sa", the heavenly dance which is performed by the heavenly beings or the spirits where they jump making different movements and sing, after which she shall return back. Eli thus instructed her parents to get ready with wine and finest feast to welcome the spirits the next day. She brought three frogs and told her father to kill and use it for the feast. She also asked her father to gather the villagers at their house so that they can learn the dance, they were however informed to stay inside the house and not make themselves visible to the spirits.

The next day, as soon as the sun rose from M Tsugho (A sumi village to the east of Chisholimi), the spirits arrived and devoured the food prepared for them, their faces were however not clearly visible when Rotoki and the other village men tried to peep from inside the house. After indulging in the feast, the spirits started dancing in high spirits and the villagers followed up learning the steps. After dancing the whole day, when the sun began to set, the spirits slowly made their retreat taking Eli with them and they vanished with the

setting of the sun. Thus it is said that the Aphilokusa is taught by the spirits whereby they lift their left leg first followed by their right leg and so on.

While performing the Aphilokuwo or Aphilosa, the Atou/ leader, leads the dance and the rest of the other dancers follow his command for foot tapping and different movements. Angu(spears) and Azuta (machete) are usually kept in circle as the warriors begin their dance.

The song of folk dance heard and learnt were simply Ho-he ho-he with one group saying Ho and the other group saying He. It is said that long ago, during the feast of merit, it so happened that the older brother could not start or lead the song so the younger brother instructed his brother to start by saying Imu(referring to one's elder brother) lai, imu lai or Emurai, Emurai(In Tuku). This was taken to be part of the song, and since then the Sumi start Aphile or song of feast with Hemurai..Hemurai..

The Aphilokuwo which is performed by Sumi men or any other kind of folk dances are performed in groups in synchronized manner which is a reflection of their society that revolves a great deal around socialization and team work. It also gives us an image of how the ancient Sumi society is inclusive of different kinds of supernatural being, how they lived, acknowledge their presence and even appeased it.

Sumi folksongs, folk recitations and narratives about folk dances are integral part of the community and reflects their history, activities, sentiments, zest for life, and way of life.

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- Naghipu Swu. 4 October 2020, Lazami.
- Saluvi Sumi. 4 October 2020, Lazami.
- Toniho Awomi. 17 January 2020, Dimapur.
- Tsakiye Sumi. 4 October 2020, Lazami.
- Viheto Achumi. 17 January, Kohima.
- Vinito Sumi. 20 January 2020, Dimapur.
- Xukiye. 5 October 2020, Lazami.

CHAPTER IV

FOLKTALES, FABLES, IDIOMS AND PROVERBS OF SUMI NAGAS

Folktales are an important component of a society. The folktales of a community reflect both its natural and cultural settings. It can help determine the world view and thought process of the community, it helps in creating a better understanding of why a community is as it is and vice versa which is no less true for Sumi community. However, it cannot be ruled out that with the coming of modernization and urbanization, the folktale of various smaller communities have undergone slow but gradual transformations in order to accommodate the changing values of the society and reflect the changing cultural heritage. The Sumis are also in the process of transition, and with the introduction of modern education, influence of Christianity, cultural contacts with other groups and modern technological forces are the folk cultures are getting affected in many ways. Some folk narratives have lost their vitality and significance and in the worst case, many have been lost because of the community's inability to document it for the next generation. As such keeping in mind, the vulnerability of folk narratives in changing times, an effort has been made to document a number of folktales, fables, proverbs, taboos and the like.

4.1 Folktales

1. Kasho papu ghau / Kasho's fathers bird

Long ago when Sumis had not determined the right time of season to grow crops, there was a man called Kivigho who had a son named Kasho. One day Kasho's father told him that after he dies, his spirit will come as a spirit and sing 'Kasho Papu(meaning Kasho's father) and Kasho should plant paddy only after that sign is given. Not long after that, Kasho's father died and everyone in the village started planting their paddy. However Kasho kept on waiting

for the bird while also wondering why his father told him not to go ahead with the plantation like the rest of the villagers. After waiting for long with no trace of the bird, Kasho decided to plant his paddy in the fourth month i.e, April. As he was preparing the field one April day, his father really did appear in the form of the bird and started singing 'Kasho papu', Kasho was relieved that he was indeed planting his paddy in the right time and he completed his plantation and went home happily.

That year too, as before, the villagers were not able to reap good harvest. On the other hand Kasho's paddy were in abundance. The villagers came to ask him how he harvested a good yield, therefore Kashu told them about his father whose spirit gave him the sign on when to plant the paddy. He then instructed the villagers to do the same and wait for the bird to sing 'Kasho papu' before they start planting their paddy.

Starting from that year onwards, the villagers took his word and started planting only after the sign was given. Thus it is said that Sumis plant their crops only after the arrival and chirping of the bird and as a result harvest bountifully. (Zhimomi, Kahoto)

2. The Spirit, the Man and the Tiger

The Sumis has a tale about Spirit, Tiger and Man living together as they were born of the same mother. As their mother became old, the three brothers would take turns to take care of their mother, while the other two would go to the field. When the Spirit and the Man looked after mother, they would bathe and feed her well and mother would look healthy. However when the Tiger looked after mother, he would scratch her and leave her mother bleeding after which he would lick her and her mother's health withered. Her mother soon came to realize that her son Tiger was only interested in her blood and flesh.

With mother's health deteriorated, she realized that she would not live for long. One day when the Tiger was away she instructed the Spirit and the Man to send Tiger to the field and bury her body beneath the hearth and to cook their meals over it as she was sure that she would not survive another day. As instructed by mother, the two brothers sent Tiger to the field and soon their mother passed away. The two brothers wept and buried their mother beneath the hearth and cooked their meals over it. When the Tiger returned to see mother missing he kept on asking where they had hidden their mother. However the two brothers only told him that their mother had passed away and her body had been taken to far off land by her people. Not convinced, the Tiger scratched around the house searching for mother but not beneath the hearth. When at last he was unable to get any trace of mother, the Tiger said that it was useless to stay home if not for mother and he fled off into the jungle without bidding farewell to his brothers.

It is said that the Tiger scrapes around beside the jungle foot paths to this day in search of its mother's body. (Jimomi, Ghokheho)

Fairy Tales

Fairy tales can be defined as tales of wonder or magic. They generally entail mythical entities such as fairies, giants, witches, enchantments or the like. Fairy tales were part of Sumi life whereby, such tales were told to children. Further such tales also support their olden way of life, of their belief in existence of supernatural beings.

1. The Witch and the Wife

Once upon a time there was a smart and brave man called Tsuipu who had travelled to many places and has thus witnessed mysterious people and places. On one of his adventure journey, he met a beautiful woman; a fairy called Khaulipu and fell in love with her. He proposed to marry her but her father made one condition that her daughter had to be carried home to her

husband's home without letting her touch the ground and without stopping on the way. Tsuipu agreed to it and prepared a bamboo cradle, made his wife sit upon it and started heading for his village. However on the way, he became exhausted so he carried her up to a tree that stood beside a pond and left her there, telling her that he would return with help. When he was away, a witch called Muchupile came to the pond to fetch water and upon seeing the reflection of the beautiful fairy, thought it to be her reflection. She then became proud, and started talking to herself how such a beautiful woman was carrying water. On hearing that, Muchupile started laughing which angered the witch. The witch became jealous and climbed up the tree, and bit her on the skull so hard that she died. The witch then buried Khaulipu beside the path and set herself on the bamboo cradle.

When Tsuipu returned with his brother and saw how ugly the wife was, his brother commented in disgust how their brother brought such an ugly wife and he returned home. Tsuipu then asked her who she was and she replied saying that when she stood up to watch him go, her feet turned thin and ugly and when she looked to see if he was coming, her eyes bulged. On hearing that Tsuipu thought that it has happened because he did not follow the instruction of his father in law, and so he carried her home as his wife.

After sometime, a sweet lemon tree grew upon the grave of Khaulipu and bore many fruits. People plucked it and when Tsuipu came across this tree there was just one beautiful lemon left so he plucked it, took it home and gave it to his old elderly neighbor. The old woman found it too good to be eaten so she left it and went to the field. As soon as she left, the lemon turned into Khaulipu, the beautiful fairy bride. When the old woman returned, she saw that the house was cleaned and food ready. This went on for quite some time and the woman kept out calling in the village for the person who was doing it as she wanted to repay. One day the woman pretended to leave the house and peeped inside to see that the woman turned into a lemon and started doing the chores. The old woman jumped out and caught Khaulipu but

Khaulipu begged the old woman to let her go lest she turned to water. So the woman set her free and they lived together but the fairy warned her saying that she would turn into water if she goes out in the hot sun.

One day Tsuipu came up to the old woman's place and saw his real beautiful wife weaving inside, he asked the old woman how it all happened. After all the explanations, Tsuipu and his beautiful fairy wife Khalipu began living together as husband and wife, but not without the witch Muchupile. In everything the witch was always behind the fairy but she was devoted to Tsuipu. One day as the wives returned from the field, Tsuipu told Muchupile to come inside the house backward with her calf facing him. Khaulipu warned her not to do so as it may lead to something bad. However Muchupile was so loyal to her husband and she decided to obey him whatever the outcome be. Next, Tsuipu cut off Muchupile's leg and she died there. Out of her grave grew a plant called Apoxibo, Tsuipu plucked its leaves and cooked it to feed it to the pigs but the sound of the boiling water accused Tsuipu of lies so he threw it outside and from that pot grew Thumpubo tree(sumac tree), so he cut it and burnt but even the fire accused him so he threw the firewood outside and on that spot grew Axipibo(an addictive tobacco leaves).

Tsuipu and Khaulipu lived very happily, they had a ladder made of Thumsu which they used to climb upon a shelf to fetch coal there. One day people informed Khaulipu that her husband was returning home with an enemy's head and she made fire in haste. She told the dog to hold the ladder while she climbed it to fetch coal to brew the liquor. While doing so some jealous neighbor called out the dog and the dog left the ladder and jumped out of the door which made Khaulipu to fall into the fire and she died. Tsuipu returned and mourned and finally buried Khaulipu and on her grave grew a lily /Lapuxamunu. (Jimomi, Inavi.226)

As in this tale, a marriage between a human being and a fairy is not uncommon in Sumi folktales.

2. Fairy Husband

Once upon a time, there lived a husband and a wife who had nine sons and a beautiful daughter. A kungumi (fairy lad) came across the daughter who was on her way to the field, and they fell in love. After sometime her daughter told her parents to prepare food and brew rice beer for the settlement of her marriage but her parents and brothers did not believe her saying a Kungumi would not marry her. One day she prepared a meal for them and told them that she would be leaving, they still did not believe her. It was only in the morning that they realized she was gone and beside their house were deers, goats and other animals tied to a post with a single thread as a bride price.

Months passed till one day the daughter came home with a boy child, the brothers were so excited that they dandled the baby boy one after the other and when the youngest one was carrying the baby, it died. Soon there was a smoke in the star and having seen its signal, the daughter said that her husband and his father want their child back, saying that she asked them to make a huge bonfire on the rock beside the house and so it was done. The daughter applied some mixture of wild leaves on the nostril of her child and told them to go inside the house and never watch her go, and if they happen to do so, they were warned that they would never see her again. And so the fairy husband came down in a red gown and took his child and his wife and ascended to the heavens. The mother of the daughter parted the thatch and watched them go, for which the daughter never came back to meet her family again. (Jimomi, Inavi. 225)

The insatiable curiosity of man as in the above story, is a popular ingredient of folktales.

4.2 Sumi Fables

Fables refer to short stories typically with animals as characters, conveying a moral. The Sumis have uncountable fables in their body of literature which has been passed down by word of mouth by their ancestors. They are generally narrated to children for the moral of the story, for didactic purposes.

1. Awuchobo eno Amughobo- The Banana Tree and the Hairbrush Tree.

Once upon a time the Banana Tree and the Hairbrush Tree were friends. One day, the Banana Tree came across the Hairbrush Tree and asked it whether it bears fruit from the stem or from the branch. The ever lying Hairbrush Tree lied saying that it bears fruit from the stem. Taking it to be true, the Banana Tree started bearing fruit from the stem, however after its fruit got ripe the Banana Tree died, but the Hairbrush tree lived on because it bore fruits from its branches.

Moral: The moral of the fable is to warn against taking advice from an untrustworthy person.

(Zhimomi, Kahoto)

2. Miquedu ngo Achuyi Ghili- The Home Dove and the Wood Pigeon.

Long ago, there lived an Apuza(grandmother) in the woods who had a daughter called Miquedu (Home Dove) and a step daughter called Achuyi(Wood Pigeon). Achuyi always had the habit of waking up early and cleaning the house after which it would feed Apuza and do all the other chores while Miquedu was very lazy and would always wake up late. One day Apuza instructed her own daughter Miquedu to come to her early the next morning, but as lazy as she was, she was sleeping and did not turn up. And as any normal day, Achuyi came to Apuza early in the morning so she patted her and blessed her by giving her beautiful beak, feet and feathers, she also showed her woods filled with fruits. When the Sun was already high up, the Miquedu came to Apuza wiping and cleaning her eyes to seek her blessings but

Apuza told the Home Dove that she has nothing to offer to a lazy late riser. She further cursed the Miquedu that she will always be dull and plain and may she only wait upon human waste in their homes and fields.

Therefore it is said that the Wood Pigeon lived in the woods full of fruits and became so beautiful and blessed. The Home Dove on the other hand, became plain, dull and unattractive and live near human settlements where man kill them easily. In remembrance of Apuza Gutuli and her blessings, the Achuyi is said to sing praises as “OH Apuza Gutuli oh oh, oh” till today while Miquedu cannot but just utter “ku,ku” like a fool.

Moral: The story is told as a lesson to children and adults alike to be hardworking to have favorable conditions in life, that waste and short life is what a lazy and gloomy person get. (Jimomi, Inavi. 222)

3. Anengu eno Akhakhu- The Leopard Cat and the Night Jar.

Once upon a time, the Leopard and the Night Jar were friends. One day, as they were talking, the Night Jar expressed his fear and apprehensions of being attacked by other animals at night, to which the Leopard Cat comforted him, telling him not to be afraid. He told the Night Jar that if he hears any hustling sounds at the top of the tree, it should not fear because it is him, his friend, and, if the hustling sound comes from the ground, then, it is the doing of the wind. That night the Leopard cat crept up the tree slowly and the Night Jar heard it but he thought it was just the wind blowing. Soon the Leopard Cat caught the Night Jar off guard and devoured it. (Swu, Inakha)

Moral: This fable is told as a warning not to be close to or trust a wicked man.

4. Akili eno Atsungu ghili- The Squirrel and the small short-tailed Quail.

One day the Squirrel and the short-tailed Quail met in the woods. They got into a conversation and agreed to become friends, and to help each other when or if caught in the snare of men. One day the Quail got into a snare and it beat out its wings for help, upon learning that, the squirrel came hopping and running, gnawed the rope off the snare with its sharp teeth and freed the Quail. The next time, the Squirrel got caught in a man's snare and so it tried to wriggle out tossing and turning. The Quail soon came to know about it and so with its toothless beak gnawed at the rope but the ropes got harder and the loops got tighter as the Quail's saliva wet it and soon the Squirrel died. Thus it is said that the Quail got frightened not only of the snares but also of the Squirrel family that it keeps to the open fields. (Jimomi, 221)

Moral: This fable is told as a warning or precaution not to agree upon friends or other people upon what one is not capable of doing, or not to agree upon something which is not workable.

4.3 Sulekutho (Idioms)

1. Akili mulo/ Squirrel's heart.

Akili mulo is an idiom widely used by the Sumis to refer to people who have irretentive memory or hearts, owing to the old believe that the squirrel has a forgetful mind, that it collects and hoards many nuts and forget where it left them or they leave their work in the middle of something to do another thing.

2. Amsu kukuzu toi/ The act lie shaking a burning wood/log.

The idiom, "Amsu kukuzu toi" is used to refer to people who are savvy and shrewd while carrying out different works or tasks.

3. Akhino akole lo qutsu- Bee sting on the neck.

This idiom is used to describe a state of being where a misfortune is added by another mishap.

4. Migheu ghugha.

This idiom suggests a condition where one hurts oneself while pretending to be like someone or something else that is above him/ her.

5. Khamla Sheshu.

This idiom is a term used to refer to people who says or declares something but on the other hand is unable to live up to their own words.

6. Lokobomi lekiphe- Lokobomi's singing.

The idiom is used to refer to fraudulent people who praise people in their presence but talk ill about people in their absence.

7. Ino imu pulue imu no awoba qhazu- I entrusted my brother, he slept in pig's dung.

This idiom is used with reference to something or someone who cannot be trusted.

8. Aminino alu chupe wuve keloze Achui kichi hedatsu- While the wild boar dug the field and left, the Pigeon got punished with a hit on its beak.

This idiom is used to express a condition where the innocent are punished for the wrong doing of someone else.

9. Lochipu kuqa toi- Like the cry of allergy-worm.

This idiom is used to refer to persons or groups of people who do not get along well with each other or with people.

10. Pulumo liche lono laliu me- Getting a hunt from an unexpected trap.

This idiom is used when a person who has no hope succeeds in flying colors.

11. Kiu je ku kumo tukutibo je ku.

This idiom means knowingly lying.

12. Achuwa lakiche- Crab's walk.

This idiom is used to refer to people who are unable to blend with people in the society.

13. Alabolo su- Wood/ tree on the roadside

This idiom is used to refer to persons who are hated by people.

14. Anengu kughu kighe- Wild Cat's arguments

This idiom describes a work which is done in an unsystematic and inefficient manner leaving loose ends behind.

15. Atsu lakiche- Dog's manner of walking

This idiom is used, referring to people who do not have trustworthy character or to people who do not have purpose in life.

16. Iqhora Iqhura.

The term, "Iqhora Iqhura" is used referring to people who keeps on loitering around without any purpose or work.

17. Khetsushi ithukulu

This idiom is used while referring to people who constantly sing self praises.

18. Muthamu iki ghili kugha

The idiom means talking about a situation or a particular topic whilst pretending to have knowledge about it while in reality one is not fully aware of it.

19. Nilaumino niyiku xa

This idiom express a state where one is betrayed or put to loss by one's own people.

20. Qha-amu anhezu ipeghimo- Tearless even after crying.

This idiom is used to express a situation with is entirely unsatisfactory or unfulfilling.

21. Topumi yezu kulu- Like a vegetable marketing of a woman.

This idiom is used to describe a situation or a person which is unclear or has no boundary, or a person who puts his nose in everybody's business.

22. Chu lu aye ino chuni, chumla aye otsuni- Will eat it if it is edible, will give you if it turns out to be inedible.

This idiom is used to refer to people who are fraudulent and keeps on deceiving people for their benefit.

23. Ipami no poche niye, nighi pocheni- I run because my friend is running.

This idiom is used to describe a person who simply follows the crowd blindly without any purpose or knowing why.

24. Litsami ye aghi lupu woche- Litsami(people of Litsa village) are returning with their grains.

This idiom is used as an expression to slow workers that people have finished their works long back, that they should also hurry up.

25. Awu kimiye toi- like a white cock

Since a white cock does not usually exist, this idiom is used to express a situation or define a person that is pointed out by people because of its rareness. This expression might be used either in a positive or negative manner.

26. Saghelimi- this is a derogatory term:

Saghelimi is used to refer to a person to constantly drop things while working or does not complete a work in a neat and sincere manner.

27. Khecheli kupo.

This idiom is used to refer to a person who keeps on imitating people and their ways without filtering or knowing the difference between good and bad.

28. Liliti shesu

The idiom, “Liliti Sheshu” refers to a voice or opinion that is wise, to the point and of priceless value.

29. Aphi no apo khapu- Tying the stomach with a piece of cloth.

This idiom is an expression of doing well, or working for the right even in difficult times.

30. Kughuzumi ghuzuye kuptomi ghuzu sa- Sane man’s madness is far worse than crazy man’s madness.

This idiom is generally said to people who ill treats or even argues with demented people and it is considered that such people who do not have conscience to let go or be understating towards demented people are in far worse mental sickness.

31. Awudu amugha lo kuzuu- A rooster who sleeps in the roof

This idiom is used to refer to old unmarried men who are unable to marry.

32. Ino ikho gholunike, okho peluvelo- I will rest by heavy basket(may mean burden as well), take your basket way.

This idiom is an expression used to describe selfish people who only care about themselves or their problems without considering others.

33. Ajukivi aji shokusau

This idiom means something that looks good on the outside but tastes bad or bitter inside/ or a person who looks good outwardly but has evil intentions.

34. Akuhu lache.

Akuhu is a monkey like animal who jumps and hops, it is said that it does not step on the ground firmly afraid that it will sink into the ground, and lache means manner of walking. Thus Akuhu lache is an expression used to describe a person who is timid even in times uncalled for.

35. Atsu baxa lo ikulo- like entering a dog's mouth.

This idiom is used to refer to people who do not return things or money once it comes into their hands or possession.

36. Awoti ani junu- laughing at the smallest pig

This idiom expresses a situation where one laughs at others without evaluating one's own situation.

37. Sheshe bebe

This idiom expresses a loss incurred or added to a condition which was already unfortunate.

38. Khaghilomi chuchu kebe

This idiom refers to a person who is selfish by nature, such that he/she is unable to retain any profit, neither does he/she allow the other people to gain from the situation.

39. Pilichu- Malichu

This idiom is used to describe a person who is full of guile and deceptive.

4.4 Ahole(proverbs)

Proverbs are short sayings or sentences that contain truth, wisdom, morals and traditional views of a particular culture or society in a metaphorical or literal manner. They are handed down from generation to generation by elders as teachings or warnings to their younger ones. Proverbs are one of the most important form of folk narrative that throws a good light upon the belief system of a particular community. They act as the carriers of traditional wisdom and their significance can be measured or understood when used in a particular context or situation. Like any other folk narrative, they regulate the behavior among members of a society. The traditional wisdom and knowledge of the Sumi Nagas are manifested in the form of Ahole or Proverbs. These are sentences that are employed by the elders in their oratory. The Sumi proverbs are no doubt drawn from the accumulated experiences and thus may be understood better by understanding ethos and practices of the Sumi society.

Given below are some Sumi proverbs:

1. Akuha ghiye kishe pulu chemo

Translation: One cannot wear/ layer more than one elephant tusk at the same time.

Meaning: This proverb can be better understood by knowing the context. In the olden days, among the many ornaments that the Sumis wear, an ornament made of elephant tusk is one that was worn on the arms. This sentence literally means that can wear or layer other ornaments like necklace or other arm ornaments, while wearing an arm ornament of elephant tusk, but one cannot wear or layer more than one elephant tusk at a time. Metaphorically, it

stands to explain that people of different status can coexist because they have different status and functions and thus will be able to adjust to one another accordingly; however people of the same class cannot coexist peacefully because they will have the same expectations or demands but none to fulfill or adjust.

2. Nono tsuqhupu amu timighi tsuqhupu ani nono mighipu aghimu timighi mighipu ani.

Translation: Whatever is hanging on you (wearing) is hanging on others too, whatever you have weighed/ measured in your possession is in another person's possession as well.

Meaning: This proverb means that our fortunes are not rare, that there are people with similar condition or possession and therefore we should not be proud of it. It can also be understood in terms of misfortunes, that we are not the only ones facing such unfortunate experience and we should be facing it as others did.

3. Akuxu kiqu eno akuxu pasu ithighi xulo.

Translation: Know the meaning of life, and live life evaluating your life's experiences.

Meaning: This proverb is often used by elders as lesson or warning to young people to know the worth of life and to make every action or deed in life as something worthy and not to waste life or time.

4. Opelo thalaxu, chuwati kughuko toi ikowo peni.

Translation: May you multiply like the offsprings of spiders and crabs.

Meaning: This proverb is said by the elders as words of blessings to young people. Having much offspring was considered a great blessing. And because of the fact that spiders and crabs lay eggs in terms of hundreds and thousands, the old people blessed the younger ones so that they may multiply like spiders and crabs.

5. Opukhu mutsu, owu mutsu kighishelu peni.

Translation: May you grow new toe nails and fingernails.

Meaning: This proverb was used by the old people to bless their younger ones, figuratively, meaning to say that, ‘may all your work/ all that you do with your hands multiply, may all the places that your feet take you, be a prosperous path’.

6. Atine ghini kishhe.

Translation: Fox’s errand/ Fox’s like errand.

Meaning: This proverb is linked to a tale about a fox’s errand. In the tale, the Fox’s mother taught her children how to hunt preys and at the end, the mother instructed her children to leave pieces of meat of their preys on the way while returning. The siblings tried to inquire mother what advice she gave at the end as they were unable to hear her advice clearly, however before they could ask their mother, the fox told its siblings not to ask mother anymore because she knows what mother advised them. Then, as the other siblings gathered to hear from the fox what mother had advised, the fox told them that mother asked them all to excrete their faeces along the way while returning.

Thus this proverb is used as a warning against doing things hastily without much thought or running errands in an incorrect or inefficient manner.

7. Khetsu shihah shikevilo

Translation: Do not imitate the hunt of khetsu(fox like animal).

Meaning: Khetsu (in Sumi) is a fox like animal that is said to lose track of its hunt. Even will returning after hunting down a deer, if it sees ants on the way, it is said to get distracted and

go chase the ants halfway. Thus to warn against lacking focus or interest in doing works or completing tasks, this proverb is used.

8. Ikuwola kumsuju ghi xulo.

Translation: Do not forget your way back home while living your life.

Meaning: This proverb is used/ said to a person who is thriving to remind him that the same path that he is plying to get ahead in life, will be the same path that he will use to get back later on. It means that a person should be kind to people on his way up or in his good days because he will face the bad days or misfortunes with those same people at one point in life. It is a kind of reminder not to get very high in life even while one is prospering.

9. Achuyi no Amishi ghugha shiju.

Translation: A frog imitated a cow.

Meaning: This proverb is said in connection to another tale about a frog who imitated a cow. In that story, two frogs were having a conversation when they saw a cow in a distance. One of the frog held his breathe, pumped itself and asked his friend if he was as big as the cow now. The other frog was amazed at how his friend had doubled up in size, however it was not as big as the cow yet so he told his friend that he is still not as big as the cow. The frog took pride in his friend's compliment and kept on pumping himself until it burst and died. Thus this proverb is said as a warning to live within one's limitation and not imitate something that is greater than oneself.

10. Atsu awo kimye toi xukevilo

Translation: Do not live like a white dog or pig.

Meaning: In the Sumi society, white colored dogs and pigs were very rare. Therefore they are used metaphorically to mean people who are hard to get along with, or people who do not blend in with the society. It has a negative connotation.

11. Kini kulu ye alokivi alokughuno qhulu chemo.

Translation: Wealth cannot buy happiness and peace of mind.

Meaning: This proverb holds the meaning that happiness and peace of mind are state of mind which can be earned through good deeds and clean hearts, and cannot be bought by money.

Following are some more folk sayings, in the form of instructions or warnings:

1. Akha khawu kelo asachu-u no akichiu sa jesuche.

Whenever any aloji(group) go for fishing, it is a compulsory practice among the Sumis that the best or the big fish is unquestionably reserved for the eldest one among them.

2. Aliche kishilo aghau akijeu melukeuno aitiu kukumughano kepino ayitiu sa jetsuche.

When snares are made to trap birds, the biggest bird is offered to the youngest among the group on the virtue that they are able to catch birds through the blessing of the youngest one.

3. Alulo tuxa tini athi pithimiphilono aphu aghunalo salha shupu keu ipeghi aye tuxatini vichemoe ipiche.

It is believed that the harvest will not be good if there are cases of immoral lifestyle in the village before the harvest.

4. Ayepulo amichi phoaye ayeghikhalo ayehkipemi momu ajekipimi hawuve cheni ipiche.

If it appears like smoke coming out from the stars, it is believed that some important persons will expire soon.

5. Aphulo aghunosu ilave aye aphulo apu amu timi alokutsumi hawuve cheni ipiche.

If big remarkable trees where people take shelter from, falls down, it is believed that an important and wise man from that village too will pass away.

6. Ayichi kuwulo ayichi hetamo kelo totimiye azu puthapiyemoe, akha thimove nani kepi tishiche.

Fishing in groups was common among the Sumis. The most common way of fishing in the olden way was by blocking the water ways above and below the fishing area and beating in certain kind of plants into the water so as to kill the fish and get hold of it, which is known as 'Ayichi kuwu'. It is said that a woman should not be made to cross the river unless the 'Ayichi Kuwu' is completed, the failure of which, is believed to result in ineffectiveness of the process, that the fishes will not die.

7. Aphulo apumi ilimi nheo thikelo akumo aphulo qhomoe, kutami xeno sae ipiche.

When old unmarried men and women in the village die, their bodies are not buried in the village but are supposed to be buried far from the village, for the believe that not doing so will repercuss the other youths in the village.

8. Amusuno asu chepithivekeu suye amipholo sughumoe tiye kusukini musake piche, amusuno chekeu sulo pukachelu aye akhonhe sucheni ipi che.

A tree which is struck by lightning is not supposed to be burnt or used in the fireplace at home for the fear that it may induce diseases. Further it is said that people should not cross over such trees or wood, as it would give them knee pains.

9. Azuhu thakelo, akhummu xikelo, aboshu ghi sughi tughulo totimi pelo peitha tughu shi peyimo, totimino peitha tughushi aye itheno ikove ipi che.

While making water containers, making pounding sticks, and bringing home large structure for pounding wheat, women are not supposed to make the first use of these articles, lest it will not last for long.

10. Akusu xinikeu khawu momu akusu totimino ikhucheve aye aghau memoe ipiche.

If a woman walks over a snare or the wood which is to be used to make a snare, it is said that that particular snare will not be able to trap any prey.

11. Akibolo annuli khuwuno chilo qachenikeno apu aza qapithi momu palikhi pa qapithi vecheni ipi pulu che.

It was believed that the child who cries excessively at home would either cry himself/ herself to death or would lead the parents to death.

12. Awuquno awudu ghugha shi aye aphulo topumi salha cheni, eno awu alino awudu ghugha shi igha aye ilimino salha cheni ipi cheni.

If a matured Hen cry like a rooster it signifies that a married woman has committed adultery, and a young hen cries like a rooster, it signifies that than a young unmarried woman is living an immoral life.

13. Athonhe shiye khilemu lhothemi tsumoe akumla shikelo apa ikomokepi tipiche.

Turtle meat was never served to youths as it was believed that by doing so it would only reduce the stamina and would prevent them from working effectively.

14. Angushu-u kughulhomi pelo angushu-u ilhopiye movenike ghenguno awukhu jukuu mo chuve piye cheni.

Lycanthropy was common among people in the olden days; it was believed that to stop people from transforming into animal-spirits, they should be fed with eggs that are abandoned and by the hen, to break the chain of lycanthropy

15. Ayeghi chilo tushoqhi kemiye thinikelo ayeghi mughuno thi cheni ipi cheni.

Taking oaths by and upon earth/ mud from the ground was a common practice among the Sumis. This practice, however, was done only in very serious cases as it was something to be revered. It was taken only as a last resort when they are unable to settle disputes by other means. The above taboo/ proverb state that those who swear or take oaths by the name of earth/ ground too much, vomits mud before they die.

16. Abolomi ashelokumi dolo ashi tsukile kelo ashi mili chemo, ashi mili veaye akibolo kusukini sholu cheni ipi che.

Meat which is offered between family relatives is not supposed to be rejected on any grounds, if it is not accepted it is believed that sickness falls upon the family.

17. Anipuno axusa chekelo chuqukini eno axathi tsumo keulono annuli amutsazu chilo ipeghi cheni ipiche.

It is said that if a person salivates excessively, it is because the mother was not fed proper foods or fruits in her cravings while she was pregnant.

18. Anuli ithulukelo atughushi alejokivi ghau paghi kimiche cheni, annuli pelo atsa zheli pithi piyenipi tishi che.

A newborn baby was first fed with the meat of a bird whose sounds are pleasant and melodious so that the child will grow up to be a good orator.

19. Aphu-aghunalono phuthe wuche kelo khilemu igho aghami akusami kinikile piyemoe, shopuka ideighive nani pi che.

When a group of people sets out to migrate and form a new village, the departing group should not look back and greet their friends from the old village once they have started for their journey. It was believed that doing so will lead them into failure to form a new village and bring them back to their initial place.

20. Aghiluakelo tiphi mini pitive aye shopukave cheni. Aghashuno pove chenikepi shopukave cheni.

If clothes get burnt while harvesting, it is said that the harvest will not last, no matter the quantity. It will vanish without being of much help to them.

21. Axone xe akelo kiptimi ye jumo, ju aye inamo shi cheni piche.

Axone, the delicacy of the Sumis is prepared by boiling, drying it for few days near the fireplace and then pounding it to further pack them into leaf-wrappers and dry it. Men were

prohibited to look at the process of pounding, if they look it is said that they would become incapable like cowards.

22. Abolo alilo aki alu kijeveni ipi tughu shichemo, eno kije akelo ghi ino hiluni ipitughu shikemiye axu ikho ipicheni.

There are generally certain land and properties which belong to a clansman or a group of family relatives, passed down their ancestors. It is said that the first person who voices out about the division of such ancestral property or the ones who claim certain part of that property calls upon himself/ themselves short life.

The undertones, themes and concerns that are present in the folktales, fables, idioms and proverbs documented in this chapter mirrors the structure and cultural values of the Sumis. The various kinds of narratives contains motifs such as exogamy or endogamy, headhunting, patriarchy, marriage and agricultural practices which adds up to form a unique cultural identity of their own. It further portrays how gender roles are determined by custom and how relationships between villagers, clansmen and even between family members are customary in nature and bounded by tradition. The different tales and narratives throw light on the relationship that exists between man, nature and different kinds of spirit.

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CHAPTER V

BELIEFS, TABOOS AND RITUALS OF THE SUMI NAGAS

The Sumi people believe that plants, objects and natural things have living souls and so one may call their religion as a kind of “Animism”. But unlike an Animist who tends to become a polytheist by recognizing several deities, the Sumi believe that there is one God known as ‘Alhou’ or Creator (sometimes referred to as Kunguu' or 'the one above’). Alhou is the supreme God who has authority over birth, death and things around them. The Sumi acknowledge their own strength yet give more importance to the Soul and the Spirit in their daily affairs. Thus elaborate practice of rituals are carried out, in which an offer is made to the benevolent and malevolent spirits, especially an offering to appease the malevolent spirits. Alhou, the Creator, to a Sumi is all good and all righteous, he does no harm nor shows his power to command respect and obedience, on the other hand there is "Tughami or the devil who is all out to harm, for which Sumi perform ceremonies to propitiate so that they will not harm them or their properties.

5.1 Folk beliefs:

1. Aghau

Aghau is a Spirit which inhabits certain house, field, man and places. There are ‘Aki Ghau' or House Spirit , Alughau or 'Field Spirit', 'TimiGhau' usually referred to as ‘Aghaukusami' or 'one who host Spirits' and even certain places which host Spirits. To propitiate these Spirits the Sumis would scatter pieces of meat, rice beer or eggs that cannot be hatched into such spots deemed to be possessing spirits that may harm them or their property. The ‘Aki Ghau’ or the House Spirit guards the house and also brings wealth to the house it resides in, it sometimes becomes violent and causes harm to the

family members and intruders. Akighau which looks like an ape is said to have been seen by many Aghaukusami or person who host few spirits sometimes has many as a dozen, they are usually rich and powerful for they are helped by their Spirits. However, they sometimes mislead the possessor causing him to do rash things or even causing the death to someone near or whom they hate.

2. Aghungu

The Soul of a person is referred to as Aghungu or Angulho. The Sumi people believe that the Soul of a person comes into this world by birth and continue to exist even after death. Every Sumi takes care that his/her Soul does not leave him/her for they believe that sometimes the Soul leaves the body when frightened or when they go to strange places or reside in some particular place for quite some time.

“While migrating, he makes a hole in the roof of his old house just above his bed so that the soul may fly out of it and follow him, when leaving his temporary shelter he burns it down so that it may not confuse his Aghungu and when leaving for home he says ‘come follow me, we are going home’.” (Jimomi,170)

When one kills a tiger he sleeps in the bed made of split bamboo so that the uncomfortable bed and the crack of the bamboo would make him wakeful, sleep light and be alert so that the tiger may not kill his Soul while in deep sleep.

“Nagas believe in the existence of of soul in two general ways, there is a soul which... goes to the land of the dead. It is also this soul which may inhabit the body of a leopard or tiger. The other kind of soul is liable to be attacked by spirits which can make the person ill, or it can wander away.” (Hibo& Ngullie,33)

Daos and spears or weapons usually accompany the dead man. For a warrior, a male dog is buried along with its master with a belief that it will guard him, for the Sumi believe that the people killed by the dead warrior will lie in wait to kill the warrior's soul.

The soul of the dead remains in the house for three days and after certain ritual is performed, the soul is said to depart to 'Kithilato or 'dead man's hill path', a plateau like hill of Wokha eastward facing the Sumi area. It is said by the neighboring villages of Kithilato that the souls of rich man comes with the beat/ sound of the hooves of cattle, the poor comes with the clattering sound of their empty bowls; the warriors comes with shouts and wails of a warrior and the people who died after a life of misery, sorrow, pain and torture come howling or weeping. The soul carries with them a chicken to be presented to the chief of the village on which he/she is to settle and on its way the grown man defends himself with weapons from Litsawo or Khalavu, the spirit who devours the soul. When proper ritual cannot be performed upon certain dead person his soul turns into a bird, a butterfly, insect or lost spirit drifting in the woods or sometimes even with men. The Sumis believe that a certain species of hawk that circles the villages high above are the souls of the dead. The souls after setting in some particular place are believed to pass onto another world where the good becomes celestial beings.

Some certain spirits have certain power and the Sumis either propitiate them so that they may become beneficial or see to it that they do not harm them in any way.

3. Latsapa

'Latsapa' is the spirit of fruitfulness and must always be propitiated in order to obtain good harvest. 'Shikheu' or 'Keeper of wild animals' guards the animals and it is only by his favour that the animals are allocated to the hunters. A naughty spirit which can be classed as a kind of Aghau is Muzamuza or Echo.

4. Muzamuza or Echo.

"Muzamuza, Echo is no attractive nymph, but a malicious spirit of the woods who leads men astray in the jungle." (Hutton, 197)

It leads a man away into the jungle and gets them lost temporarily or sometimes even permanently. The muzamuzas are said to be less harmful than other aghaus who devour the souls of men once they capture them. Sometimes they are also referred to as tree spirits who entices humans, singing unearthly songs and keeps the humans stranded in the forest for three to fifteen days, but they do not take the lives of humans directly. It is believed that when they release the humans after taking them as captives, the muzamuzas leaves their songs inside the head of humans making people go insane. People who had experience of being led away say that muzamuza makes them run when in an uneven ground or in cliffs and walks slowly when walking level ground, it also makes a man do all sorts of unpleasant things which causes death to the man in many occasion. The Sumis perform rituals for almost all activities and these rituals are all about propitiating the spirits.

5.2 TABOOS

The Sumis were very particular about rules and regulations in life. There are certain guiding principles which were taught to be strictly followed, failing which it was regarded a taboo. The concept of Taboo acted as a kind of guiding light for the Sumis in the past. Taboos acted as a blocking force for people to commit crimes because of its attachment with a supernatural God. No doubt there were certain punishment that were decided upon defaulters of certain crimes by the chiefs and elders of that particular village. However for most cases, taboos acted as a force preventing people to perform certain actions that were considered deadly or unethical. In this regard, respect played an important role and many taboos were in the form of respect to elders, on how to respect and hold high, the voice of the elders, and to give them the best of whatever was due to them, be it in respect or in material things. In some cases however, the youngest one had his share of perks by virtue of being the youngest.

Taboos for a conceiving or pregnant mother

1. A pregnant woman is forbidden to lay eyes on ugly or fearsome sights for if she does, her child will look or behave likewise.
2. Never to carry crabs that have been by the waist or the child after birth would bite the mother or have too much saliva.
3. Never eat ekra root rats , bamboo rat (Achighi , Ajifu in Sumi) or the child will have unclear breast or breathe.
4. Never eat mushroom of any kind, because the child will become weak and be allergic to many other things.
5. Never eat any 'kitechu'(food to be eaten only by the old).
6. Never eat meat of any animals that died at birth, for it is believed that he will face the same fate, known as "Nhapithi" (death at childbirth).

The Sumi women particularly women who are expecting are one group upon whom a great deal of taboos are imposed. They are restricted from consuming various foods.

Kitechu (Food to be eaten only by the very old)

Food taboos apart from being restricted to pregnant women, extends to young people in the form of "Kitechu". There are certain group of food that are considered as 'kitechu' which means, it is supposed to be eaten only by the very old people. The idea behind the kitechu is that, these food are not good for the physical as well as mental well-being of a person, as such, only the old people consume it because they are way past the stage of learning or development, however, if these food are consumed by the younger people, it will hamper their growth and make them prone to different kinds of lapse, according to the forbidden food they consume. Following are some foods which are considered as 'Kitechu', unfit to be consumed by the young people:

1. The young must abstain from eating brain of animals for it makes the hair grey early and brain become smaller.

2. The young must abstain from eating the egg that could not hatch, for like the egg, the young will never grow out of his immature mind and will not be wise in life.
3. The young must abstain from eating the head or the heart of fowl for like the bird's head and heart, the one who eats become forgetful and small minded.
4. 'Atulo' or Flying Squirrel must not be eaten by the young. It is believed that if the young people consume it, they will become as idiotic as the flying squirrel that sleeps during the day time and comes out only at night.
5. 'Aqhaqho' (the Owl), 'Akhakhu' (Night Jar) and 'Tughukhu' (the crow-pheasant) should not be consumed by the young because these category of birds and animals are considered as being foolish, thus it is believed that the children of people who eat their flesh will become idiots.
6. Eagles, Hawks, Kites or other birds of prey are not eaten by the young for they live on the meat of other birds and the young may likewise become cruel and hurt others.

Other Common Food Taboos

1. Shoqheti (Sparrows) are not eaten because it is a house bird that feeds on germs in and around the house.
2. Mothers do not allow their daughters/ young women to eat mutton lest they should become libidinous and unfaithful.
3. Meat of chickens that lay here and there without laying on a proper set place, are not given to young women for the fear that they may become like the chicken that do not care for its young.

There are numerous social folk customs or ritualistic practices that the members of Sumi community follow in the name of family tradition/ social tradition whereby certain taboos are imposed upon a certain person or upon a certain character like an expecting mother, youths, etc. Of the many taboos that were practiced by the Sumis, food taboos forms an important

part of it. Food taboos are universal phenomenon and can be witnessed among sections of society or among different religions. Each society, behind its idea of food taboos, has certain reasons as to why they consider certain food as unfit or filthy for consumption; however, there may not be rational explanations for certain taboos as one thing which is regarded as taboo for one society may be a perfectly accepted norm for another society. Thus food taboos, or any other taboo can only be considered and looked at by understanding the lifestyle, beliefs and nature of a particular society.

5.3. Folk Rituals

1. Apunu Chinne

When a mother gives birth to her first child (a girl or a boy) Pinne rituals of ten days is observed. Other than the first born, six days ritual is observed for a male child and five days is observed for the female child. During the days of the ritual a plant called Ayilo is stuck into several holes of the roof and the mother may not speak to any one nor leave the house except to defecate. As soon as the child is born, the mother is given the soup of the chicken of the same sex of the child born. The meat or the soup of the chicken is never given to his brothers or sisters for it is said that if the meat is shared the new born child and his siblings or elders will hate each other. During the days of ritual the members of the household should not eat meat or food that is unclean. The outsiders and strangers are not allowed to enter the house of the new born baby. The family of the new born is forbidden to eat khechishi; they must eat of their own provision only and must work only in their own field. Should the father be out when the birth takes place, he may not enter the house till sunset. The woman who buries the waste of after-birth, baths herself and eats separately for three days.

As the baby grows old, the parents perform the ritual of 'setting out' or 'Shape'. A wood called Thumusu and some liquor is splashed on a plantain leaf and the right foot of the

baby sitter is made to be placed upon the wood. The mother then rubs the child's feet on the waist of the baby sitter for five times (six times for boys). After this, to befool the evil spirit the mother takes a grown child of about four years to the village gate and calls out "I'm going to the field for my child is old enough", with this she returns to her house and the ritual is ended in six days for boys (five days for girls). During infancy, the meat of a bird called Tstopu (a singing bird that can imitate sound of all animals and birds) is given to the boys that they may be able to learn and to adjust with all of people and environment. A girl child is given eel fishes that she may be able to hold on for some time before she goes away for the girl child is expected to get married and live away from her parents. Should the mother die in childbirth (nhapithi) she is taken out by the back door and buried behind the house. The husband observes pinne ritual for eleven days. All her ornaments and clothes are thrown away and the husband's personal property is not touched till the next harvest. If the child lives, she/he is given to childless couple who eventually takes half of the dowry (marriage price) of the girl. If the child of the dead mother is a boy, the boy is fed by the husband's relative or given to his father or brothers, that in either way, the boy becomes his clansman.

2. Akithi Chinne

When a dying man recovers after the grave is dug, a substitute like stool or some domestic animal is killed and buried in his/her stead. In case of real death, the household may not eat or drink that day and in the morning of the next day, that is after the burial, a pounded paste of akini or white oil is put into the mouth with thatching grass and spat out! Before the dead body is wrapped a hen is set upon the dead with its leg tied to a post nearby, the chicken is let loose only after all the relatives have arrived. After burial of the dead body, the dishes, vessel, cups, spoons etc are properly cleaned, after which only the food and meat can be taken. On the second day the dead man/woman share of food with

pieces of meat is put in a platter with rice, chillies etc for the ghost of the dead. On the third day a pig is killed, and all the clansmen gather at the house of the dead man/woman and bid the dead farewell. They console the dead family members and tell them to look forward to the future and not backward towards the dead no matter how much they loved him/her. A pinne/ritual of ten days is observed by the deceased's clansmen. The dead men and women's clansmen are forbidden to go to the field or go outside the village. They abstain from eating vegetables. In burial, the dead is given sharpened bamboo to defend himself and a peg-top to play with, while a woman is given the iron-shod stick used by her and some clothes. The men, particularly the warriors are given daos, spears, to defend themselves while on their way to the place where good men go after death. Male dogs are killed and buried along with the dead warrior so that they may protect and help the master (warrior) for they say the wild Animals and the people killed by the warrior lay in wait to kill the soul of the Dead warrior. In the dead of men particularly of Chiefs and Warriors who are known to have exploits in war and women, shod sticks representing wives and lovers are also also buried along with the dead. When chiefs or renowned person dies, mithuns and male pigs are killed and 'the last feast' on behalf of the dead man is given to the whole village.

3. Anivu Chinne

Piercing the lobe of the ear ritual is called "Anivu". It is a must for all Sumi Nagas to observe this ear piercing ritual. Those who cannot perform Anivu even though their children have crossed puberty stage were looked down by the village folks. In social life, they were not allowed to speak even their rights, for it meant failing to give himself and his child an identity. The Sumis have a saying "...How dare a man who did not perform Anivu speak and

report against me?” All Sumis can perform Anivu directly without having to cross any bar of Merit, for Anivu is the rite that declares their Sumi Naga identity. The Tukumi clans pierce their children's ear three days after the child's birth and a wisp of cotton is put into the hole. Six pebbles and six pinches of ashes and some leaf are put into a tiny basket and this basket is made to be carried by the brother or sister of the child to the boundary fence of the village and is thrown away. Just before the boring of the ears the child is given the soup of a chicken of the same sex of which the mother may not eat, while some Sumis do not pierce the lobe of the ear on the third day. Any rich man who has a son or daughter of suitable age about the age of puberty performs a ritual called Anivu in which he kills a pig and prepare a large quantity of rice and liquor and gives a feast to the Clansmen. Anyone in the village who has a son or a daughter with ears unpierced can have them pierced on that day. Six pieces of pork meat is put into the basket of Lapu (the man who pierce the ear of the boys) and five pieces of meat is put into the basket of 'Yipu (the woman who pierces the ears of girls) as offering. No Sumi Man or Woman is allowed to marry unless they perform Anivu

4. Aphikimithe Chinne

Aphikimithe or Purification of the body is performed by the Sumis as Passover (like the Passover of the Israelites) after any long and hard work or before some very important activity. In Agricultural activity too, Aphikimithe marks the end of long hard days and the beginning of reaping the main staple crop. All male folks observe Aphikimithe, outsiders and women folks are not allowed to participate nor come near. All males of the village move or sleep away from their wives, must abstain from rice, beef, dog meat and 'khechishi'(wounded or animals killed by another animal).Before dawn the males of the village go to the nearest river and wash their bodies, weapons, cloths and as the evening

approaches bring back with them new 'Azuhu' (bamboo vessels) filled with fresh water. They gather at the place of one clan member whose house is the biggest and cleanest, there they collect fermented rice for the liquor, kill a pig and with the new water make their liquor, cook the meat without mixture and eat it. All the food and meat must be consumed inside the house on that very night and nothing of it should be left by the next morning. The unconsumed meat and drink is burnt inside the house or buried in one out near the village and should a dog defecate over it, it is regarded bad omen.

5. Alhupekikili chinne

When crime is committed or unknowingly, compromise ritual called 'Alhupikikili' is held. The Sumis say "curse befall the opposite" or "Angusu ye bidelau", they believe that the party at wrong must apologize in a proper manner so also the party who was wronged should be able to forgive. Thus the two family, one who committed crime and the other upon whom the crime was committed pain was inflicted upon meet. Both families having prepared their own food exchange with each other, holding plantain cup filled with water, both parties utter, "may this water clean the germs, hatred and diseases that may befall us" and they eat the food that is exchanged. The curse comes upon individual who breaks the ceremony. However when an individual is in the habit of committing crime continuously he is either allowed be killed by the village mob or driven out from the village depending on the degree of crime committed.

5.4 The Tiger-Possessed and Rituals

The Soul of Man or Woman becoming a leopard/tiger or a python is well known among the Sumis. The soul enters a tiger or python during sleep and returns to the human body by daylight; when possessed, the limbs move convulsively during sleep or move about during day time, there used to be pain in the joints and the smell in the body or a sign on waking up

can be related all that has happened, even showing the marks they have left when possessed. A possessed human being would jump about like a lunatic, will try to hide or escape when hunted. While hunting or being hunted, the person whose spirit is in the python becomes lethargic. It moves around in the corner, it often has dry skin that sheds. When wounded, the wound appears on the human body and when the tiger or the python is killed the human body dies too. When a Sumi dies, clothes or the things that the person loved dearly are put beside the dead body and buried.

There are still few remains of Lycanthropy in Sumi Areas. No doubt they have given up on the transformation into spirits after the arrival of Christianity. The olden ways of living along with spirits and other forms were along animist lines, however, one - Kiyeli Tenna from Lazami Village still lives to this day to narrate her experiences of having a tiger spirit. Tenna a woman in her mid nineties states that she knew about her spirit being a tiger during her teenage days. Prior to this, she had dreams about eating raw meat incessantly for several weeks, and wake up feeling nauseous. Her spirit tiger initially started off as a tiger cub, the size of cats. She recounts her adventures of running above people's roof and scaring people, about hunting down animals like deers and even stealing her neighbor's hens and cows. Towards the beginning, whenever her tiger spirit went out for adventures, her body would be asleep and wake up only after the spirit's adventures was over. It is said that her human body form had traces of the spirit's preys. Sometimes she would wake up with feathers of hens and birds on her mouth, other days with blood around her mouth, while some days she would wake up feeling tired and her body aching because of the ventures the previous night. She claims to have frequented the Mishilimi area and hunted down more than hundred deers in total. The food consumed by the tiger spirit would fill her body as well, also whatever her tiger spirit consumed was excreted as faeces through her human body. She also had friends from the village who had tiger spirits, snake spirits and even eagle spirits.

Later on as she grew more accustomed to her tiger spirit, her spirit could go around even with her human body form was awake. She recounts her ventures to the fields in mainland Sumi area towards Zunheboto where she was tempted to devour a child left to sleep by the parents who were working in the field. She and her friend, another lycanthrope saw the little child and played with it, as they tickled the child it giggled happily apparently tempting her to feast on the child. She recounts that she would have devoured the child had it not been for her friend who stopped her.

At one instance, as the spirit needs to dine on flesh, she was waiting on a prey in a place known to attract deers because of abundance of certain kind of fruit in that area. Eventually, the villagers also came up to hunt for deer and having being spotted by the hunters, they decided to hunt the tiger instead. She was shot in her limbs and had a narrow escape. Later, she was taken up to a mountain cave by her friend and left there to recover for around three months. Tenna still has the gunshot mark on her lower abdomen area which she shows saying that it was a mark of near death. Her experiences and adventures are many, she recounts that she and her friends had visited many places since they could teleport. However despite their many long tours they did not know the name of those places.

Lycanthropy, she says is claimed by some as being hereditary, however it is also said that this experience of having animal spirits befalls those who avoid different kind of meats like rat meat and others of those sorts. The subject, Tenna, also kept away from those kinds of food even before she realized her tiger form.

The Lazamis hold that throughout history, people who practiced Lycanthropy possessed certain powers. They were like the soothsayers; they dreamt dreams and warned people about ill luck that are to befall people. People sometimes consulted them while making major decisions. Further they acted as a bridge between the living and dead. In case of the deaths of some people, if the family or loved ones of those deceased wish to talk to the death, they did

so through the people whose spirits could turn into animals. The spirits apparently went up to the hill of death while their human body remained at home and meditated or sleep. However before meeting the soul of the deceased, they would seek permission from the gate keeper to meet the soul. Sometimes, they were not granted permission to do so.

Tenna also narrates certain experiences on how she went to afterlife to convey messages between the dead and the family. The people who act as a link between the two world are generally termed as “Tungumi”. The family or relatives would give two piece of grain to be passed on to the deceased. The two piece of grain however gets multiplied into basketfuls when taken to the land of death. This was a spiritual venture, where the body would take rest as this ritual demanded a lot of energy and aura. While performing the role of a tungumi, She would first go to the valley of death and ask permission from a person called ‘aqomi’ and ask him if the deceased person was there. The aqomi responds by telling her, “panoye akho pe ighi kemu kungughalo wova”, meaning, the deceased came with his/her luggage but left heavenwards. Whilst doing so a sudden light shines through and disappear, after which they are able to converse with the dead. The dead tells her about the reasons of their death or relay messages. Some of them say they died because of land or property issues, and some because their days as counted by God is over. In some cases, it is also discovered that some are devoured or killed by different spirits, as in the olden days there were many encounters between man and spirits. In doing so, they go through a kind of gatekeeper called, “lakhawo”. Before they go through to meet the deceased, the ancestors of the deceased who were long gone lines up as statues on both sides of the road and form a passage through which she can walk through to meet the soul. These ancestors just act as a wall and cannot speak or hear since their souls are long gone. After she completes her assigned meeting with the souls of the dead, she returns to her body quite exhausted requiring proper rest and nourishment. The family or relatives of the deceased bestowed favors in the form of baskets of rice or

vegetables to the lycanthrope for relaying their message to and fro. In some cases if the family is well off, they even bestows land to the tungumi for their service.

5.5 Marriage Ceremonies and Rituals

Marriage among the Sumi was exogamous. Generally, it is said that Sumi men married in their late 20's which seemed quite late to some. However this was done so to ensure that the man attained adulthood not just through age but by achieving feats worthy of a warrior, and by securing his own social status and property. The period that is spend to achieve this social status is called 'kutupu'(let bloom), during which he learns trade, folksongs, dance, art of warfare, and all skills that are required to live in the society.

On the other hand, when the Sumi woman has given at least five years service to her parents in the form of exchange of labour from her 'Alojimi' (working group), she is said to have reached marriageable age. It is said that has to be at least 18 years of age to be able to join Alojimi thus adding the 5 years of service, a marriageable Sumi woman was approximately around 22 years of age. The Sumi woman like the man, learns all the important skills and knowledge required at Iliki (girl's dormitory) before she is able to shoulder the responsibilities as a wife and a mother.

However, while the men were free to marry at his own will and choice, the Sumi women married at the will of her parents. It is said that it is very rare for a Sumi woman to marry at an early age, which may be because she not only has to equip herself for a settled life but also to prepare gifts for her in-laws and to gather her 'Asanha'.Asanha refers to the bride's treasure. The bride along with the help of her mother, makes ornaments, weaves, collects treasuries and other precious things to be taken to her husband's home, as well as whatever

she has earned, and this Asanah is usually displayed by laying out in the mat during the ‘Amekukugha’(settlement of marriage).

After a proposal has been made, when the bride’s parents agrees to it, the go- between along the groom’s relatives arrive at the bride’s home and settle the class of marriage and also fix the date of ‘Amekukugha’. The dowry is usually fixed basing on the Asanha or ‘bride treasures’. When a girl is betrothed, she wears a plaited band of red cane and yellow orchid stem as a sign of bethrothal. A dowry paid to the bride’s parents or whom the bride is dependent on which is known as Ame.

There are different categories of Sumi marriage:

i) Amini Kimiji Xe

It is the highest class/ status of Sumi marriage, only the daughter of the mother who is married in the class of Aminikimiji can marry in the same class. It is said to have started by a man called Khumutsa Amighiu Jimomi of Nunumi Village. He was a rich and powerful man who found that one of his daughter’s heart beats uneven and unusually loud. It is said that Khumtsa was a self made man who was earlier a poor orphan but rose to power because of his diligence. He told his wife that no one would have thought that such beautiful children would have come of Khumtsa,. However owing to his past pain and experiences, it was a given that at least one child would have turned out this way(referring to his daughter with unusual heartbeat), and so he took the blame on himself and declared that the best pair of whatever he possess that is used by the Sumis be given to that child as ‘Asanha’ during her marriage that it may please her for she will not live long. However it should be noted that Sumi custom does not permit to give immovable property to daughters. In this class of marriage, the parent of the bride present the couple a basket pair of all agricultural products, ornaments, domestic animals, household utensils, clothes and the most precious of them all ‘a

pair of Achikula' (a necklace made of precious beads, now costing 1-3 lakhs). As dowry, the groom gives mithuns and other livestock. Pieces of seashells upon a wrap around known as 'Amini kimiji mini' and 'Kiyepu mini' (wrap around to be worn only by the wealthy) is specially made for the bride. 'Azanulashi' literally means making way for mother and child is a meat given to the bride's paternal uncles and cousins that she and her children may not be forgotten .

ii) Ashoghi Xe

This is another class of marriage which is somehow similar to the previous class. However, here the ritual of using shells and giving pairs of every ornament, utensils and domesticated animals given is not practiced. Almost all the higher class consisting of chiefs, nobles and rich men known as 'Kivimi' marry in this class. Different kinds of feasts are given out to show their class. In Ashoghi Xe there are certain different classes. In the first class known as 'Achiku Xe', the bride's parents give 'Achikula' (precious necklace) along with other utensils and the bride's 'Asanah'. In another class, when the bride's parents arrange 'Achixathi' (3 to 4 strings of red coloured beads of necklace which is inferior to Achikula) and lesser gifts of Asanah or bride's treasure, the groom too arranges lesser dowry and spends considerably lesser than the Achiku Xe and this is called Achuzathi Xe. All Sumi women's wear is usually provided to the bride by her parents , another necklace called 'Achipu' usually accompanies 'Achiku' or 'Achixathi' necklace. Here Azanulashi and presents are gifted to the closest of the bride's relatives and to the chief and nobles of both the villages.

iii) Latha Xe

When a man and woman take a liking to each other during marriageable age, the man makes it known to his family or relatives. At this instance, a go-between 'Anisu' is sent to the girl's

parents to propose marriage. If the girl and her parents agree, marriage is settled in which both the parties prepare whatever they can afford.

Achixathi necklace along with clothes and all Sumi ornaments are prepared by the bride's parents. The groom gives 3 to 7 cows or just one cow or mithun as custom bound called 'Aphithomi' or replacement of one body (as they are taking one body i.e, the bride) to the bride's parents and supplies meat for the feast.

In Lathaxe too, a feast is given to the guests during engagement day, marriage class and dowry settlement day and marriage feast day.

iv) Topunasho Xe

It is a marriage of convenience. When a man marries a widow or one who is bearing his child before marriage, a day is fixed in which guests are invited and a feast is given to officially mark that the said woman is now the wife of that man. No Azanulashi or gifts are given in such kind of marriage, however if the man is well off, he can give gifts to his wife's parents or family.

Sumi woman is never bought or sold as generally thought of, despite of the dowry, the bride also prepares Asanah, further, the bride's parents also spend as much as the groom. The relationship between a Sumi husband and wife was centered on respect, further a Sumi women had more freedom in comparison to wives of many other communities. Wife generally shares the husband's entire confidence on matters of domestic economy; further husbands consulted wives for almost all activities, even of warfare.

The Sumis believed in the existence of a supreme being, a benevolent god, but they also believe in the existence of a number of various other spirits and they believe that the different phenomenon are controlled by the spirits and thus different kind of rituals are performed to

appease the spirits. They believe that the spirits can bless them so also curse them if they fail to appease the spirits thus we can see that any activity or even that is considered important, an equally weighted ritual is linked to it. Thus the socio-cultural lives of the Sumis are inextricably linked with their religious beliefs, and form a greater part of their identity.

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This dissertation entitled, “Folk Narratives of the Sumi Nagas” takes up the study of the narratives of the Sumi Nagas with the intent to document and preserve it in print form, which was realized as a much needed step in the midst of the onslaught of globalization and changing pattern of life. The Sumis sustain their history and culture through narratives which are oral in nature. Christianity and globalization are major factors that can affect the personal and community identity of the Sumis. Thus the ardent need to document, preserve and educate ourselves as well as the present generations is needed to save the culture and history from oblivion and the risk of losing it. The present generation in the quest to fit into the needs of modern world, disregards and neglects their age-old tradition and culture, and far worse, fails to learn their history and how their ancestors came about or lived. The very less of culture which remains among the people of this generation, is compromised following new trends and narratives, threatening their history and identity. Sumis cannot deny or live past the fact that every society goes through changes and cannot remain static. It has to adapt to the changes brought about by modernization, however this also poses a threat to the old culture and tradition.

Most people still look to J.H Hutton’s book, “The Sema Nagas” as a guide to the history, culture and identity of the Sumis, and it does contain a good deal of information . However it should be noted that it is an account of the Sumis by a colonial writer who was alien to this culture, and thus, at times fails, to capture the essence of how things are or why it is, the way it is. The narratives collected from the Sumi Nagas form an important part of their culture. Though limited in number, they reflect the socio-cultural aspect of the community. The different kinds of rituals practiced by the Sumi community are expressions that reinforce their shared values and beliefs. Throughout their lifetime, the cycle of the activities that they

perform is related to the structure of their society which is guided by certain attached rituals, and this in turn regulates their social roles and behaviours. The belief system of the Sumi Nagas are manifested in their rituals and practices and very closely linked with their environment. Their rituals apart from having a socio-cultural basis, is inseparable with their notion of religion. Religion is a pervasive domain that represents not just their cultural beliefs, rituals and spiritual ideologies but also myths with regard to creation, nature, role of God, spirits and other supernatural beings or happenings. People link themselves to the supernatural through allegiance to unknown God or spirits and thus their religion established a kind of identity among the Sumis.

The origin narratives throw light upon the roots and history of the Sumi Nagas and their relationship to their neighbours. The identity apart from being formed or understood through their values, practices and belief system, is given more meaning and basis through their link with the other Naga tribes.

With the passage of time, and with influence of different culture and languages, there are also various irregularities, changes and confusions due to elisions, clippings and inversions in the Sumi language.

Examples of elisions and clippings:

Khijehi (how much) becomes khije

Moayesa (necessary) becomes masa

Hipau (this) becomes hi/ hihi

Hipau (that) becomes hu

Tipau (that one) becomes ti

Khamis (some) becomes hami

Examples of inversions:

Kipitimi (boys/male) is wrongly used as pikitimi

Kitila (small/ less) is wrongly used as tikila

Pukukami (robber) used as kupukami.

It is said that there was a Sumi oral tradition that said that a person or group who migrated to a new place or creates a new village was supposed to create a new word in the past. And this might be another reason why there are dialectical variations according to different areas of settlement like the addition of the words 'a', 'e', etc before or after words.

Further, it has been observed that the structure and nature of oral narratives reveal the patterns of Sumi Naga society, their political life, their religion, and other aspects of their folk life. It, however cannot be ruled out that many folk narratives, especially those which are performed, continue to change its shape and form to adapt itself in the Christian era so also with the changes brought about by modernization and urbanization.

Like all folk narratives, proverbs and Taboos fulfil the functions of educating and regulating behaviour among the members of a society, they act as authorities on the accepted norms of social and personal behaviour. The Sumi culture like any other folk community is rich in traditional wisdom and knowledge, and the value system of their society is reflected in their old sayings and proverbs.

The different kind of rituals like akithichinne, apunuchinne and the like, reflects the religious life of the Sumis and their submission to an unknown god, so also, in all kinds of rituals, there is the prevalence of social norms and an unnamed yet unquestioned authority that guides them, which have been passed on from their ancestors. For any taboo, norms or rules that exist, there is a fear of an unknown that is attached to it, which is revered by every member of the society. Despite the absence of hard rules and law of contemporary times, and the often branding of the old folk societies as being barbaric in nature, laws were observed

with seriousness. There was the presence of a sense of respect that each person attached to the society had upon himself/ herself to be called a member of that society.

The socio-political life of a Sumi can be partially decided by birth, however, if that person is not diligent enough to keep that title inherited from his father, it becomes insignificant, and therefore in most cases the social standing of a person is determined by his own hard work and diligence. Man was in charge and control of community life, while women took care of the family and domestic affairs. In Sumi dialect, the husband is referred to as the 'Akimi' and the wife as 'Anipu'. These names itself were derived keeping in mind the role that each of this character was expected or desired to have. The word 'Akimi'(husband) has been taken out from the word 'Akimipeu' (meaning owner of the house) or 'Amheghimipeu' (owner of the property) as men were regarded as the inheritors or owners specially of immovable property like house and land. The word 'Anipu'(wife) on the other hand is derived from the word 'Akinnikupu-u' meaning the one who carries, stores or/and manages money or wealth. Thus, whatever money or other commodities the men earned, were handed over to the wife, who in turn managed the house with whatever was brought to her. Wives who managed the finances modestly thus brought fortune to the husband and the family, however if the wife was not efficient in managing the finances, the family sees downfall in their fortunes and life. The fortune or wealth of a family thus was considered as being built with joint efforts of both the husband and wife. Similarly, before marriage, the parents of the man/ groom to be, gave much importance and discernment that their daughter in law is equipped with wisdom and skills to be able to lead the new family into prosperity. There are many stories in relation to this whereby a good woman led the husband and the family into a prosperous life. On the other hand there also tales as seen where men who chose a wife based on her physical beauty and fascination against the parents' warning were reduced to downfall and poverty.

Further, the words ‘Amu’ (elder brother) and ‘Afo’ (elder sister) were derived or formed with certain significance to it. While ‘Amu’ is taken out from the word ‘munu’/ ‘mungu’ (lean), the word ‘Afo’ is taken from the word ‘pufu’ (hang/ grasp). Parents apart from being loved and respected were considered as figures of provider and protector. However in the absence of parents, especially if they were deceased, the orphaned children depended upon one another. Elder brothers were regarded as a figure upon whom the other siblings could lean upon. In the absence of an elder brother, the elder sister was seen as someone whom the siblings hang or grasp on in life.

The life cycle and the practices throughout constructs gender identity through different socio-political, religious or economic aspects of life and weigh them as successful or unsuccessful members of the community.

The position of a Sumi woman in general can further be said to be much better and sharing equal power with his male counterparts in comparison to most of the other folk women. No doubt, women had lesser power in terms of deciding their own marriage matters or on the part of land inheritance, however, apart from that a Sumi women enjoyed certain privileges. A Sumi woman was treated as a precious being and loved by her father, brothers and husband, protecting her. This however did not stop Sumi women from exercising her strength. Sumi wives were generally consulted by her counterpart before taking any decision, further, there have been true stories in the past where Sumi women unlike many womenfolk of other Naga tribes, had even participated in the battle and emerged victorious.

Another observation, noteworthy, is that despite the fact that many oral folk narratives have already been lost, and some are on the verge of being lost, part of these narratives still lives on among the Sumis. Through the documentation and analyzing of the different narratives, it was observed that most of the narratives if considered according to their didactic value, it reflected how important respect was in the Sumi society. Taboos and proverbs show how due

respect should be given to the eldest, youngest or to the wise, further different tales and fables are basically teachings on how to be wise or to take wise decisions in life, so also to be truthful, brave, loyal, hardworking and the like. And these principles, till date are an important part of the Sumi society, given much importance, the Sumi elders still teach these virtues to their younger youths. Thus it can be said that though more effort had to be put in to document and preserve the folk narratives to keep the history of their culture and tradition alive, in its folk form, however, the values and underlining principles are still continuing as a part of the Sumi lifestyle.

Many traditions are being forgotten in the face of social change. Because many fail to understand why their culture was the way it was, because they fail to understand or connect with it, many cultural practices have lost their vitality and significance.

Forces of legitimacy, authority and power are no longer the same. Law and power which was in the hands of village elders and leaders are now centralized into a larger set up. Institutions of polity, religion and economy have changed which automatically changes the age old culture and tradition. Most of the folk laws and beliefs are no longer relevant to people and their lifestyle. With widespread of population and especially flocking of people to urban areas, and also the change in mind set of the people, the unquestionable authority and power that the various village heads and figures had are now visibly reduced and ever ready to be remonstrated if it exceeds certain limits. Similarly, institutions of polity has almost entirely being wiped off, religion has undergone metamorphosis. The belief in many spirits, the respect and reverence given to each of them, and the appeasement which followed in the earlier ways of life has now being replaced by Christianity and Christian celebrations. In an interesting way, the acknowledgement of one supreme God, the creator, exists in both traditional ancestral worship and Christianity. Economy, likewise has taken a divergent route. While agriculture and livestock were basically the sole source of income, urbanization has

now offered varied income opportunities to people and thus the interest of the people has also become versatile. Further, farmers and those engaged in such professions no longer practice the same old ways of farming with the realization of new farming equipments and methods which evidently had side lined cultures and rituals related to ancient farming. And for this reason, the heritage should be preserved in print media and far more effectively by adding audio- visual forms if possible so that the culture, tradition and history of the Sumis may be documented in its fullness lest it be obliterated with the changes of time.

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