

A Critical Study of Lotha Folktales

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By

NYANBENI NGULLIE

Registration No. 77/2021

Under the supervision of

DR. JANO S. LIEGISE



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND EDUCATION

NAGALAND UNIVERSITY

KOHIMA CAMPUS, MERIEMA-797004

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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I, **Nyanbeni Ngullie**, hereby declare that my dissertation entitled “**A Critical Study of Lotha Folktales** “, is a bonafide record of research work done by me, under the supervision of **Dr. Jano S. Liegise** and that it has not been submitted, either in full or in part, to any other universities or institutions for the award of any degree, diploma or title.

Place: Kohima

Nyanbeni Ngullie

Date: 21th Nov. 2022

Research Scholar

Countersigned

Dr. N. Das

Dr. Jano S. Liegise

Head

Supervisor

Department of English

Department of English

Nagaland University

Nagaland University

Kohima Campus, Meriema

Kohima Campus, Meriema

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Place: Kohima

Nyanbeni Ngullie

Date: 21st Nov.2022

Research Scholar

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Folktales, as an oral literature were the first means of education for the children during the primitive time and so parents and elders took interest in telling the folktales. However, folktales were told not to just evoke social and cultural norms in the children but were also told purely for entertainment sake. Folktales are a gateway for the people to learn and experience their own culture and to know from where all their customs and believes have sprung from as it gives light to the background, traditions, moral values and the philosophical aspects of life of the community.

In the present study, I used the term “Folktales” to include the tales of myths and legends that have been passed down orally and some, which have been set down in a written form.

Significance of the Study

Every tale narrated and passed down always carries an allegorical or demographical legacy of the community or tribe. There are folktales that narrate man’s relationship with animals, nature or supernatural beings, while there are also tales that explains about the many unexplained myth about the origin of human civilization and their socio cultural and economic backgrounds. Folktales give access to knowledge of the historical, geographical and the social relation of the tribe under study to communities. Folktales open doors of knowledge to one’s heritage and identity, where in the study of folktales is necessitated.

Methodology

This study adopted the qualitative approach based on primary data collected from published materials like Moonlight Tales and Fables of the Kyong Nagas (2013) by Francis Kikon, A Girl Swallowed by a Tree by Jasmine Patton and Retelling Naga Narratives: More Than Thrice-Told Tales (2014) by Richard Carbo, John Coakley and Abraham Lotha. More published materials have been used, some of which were translated by me from Lotha to English as the source of the tales for the present study is in Lotha Language. Other materials have been gathered by field work through interviews and interactions and have been translated to English.

Hypothesis

- Folktales reflect the society of the Lotha Nagas.
- Lotha folktales contain significant moral teachings and etiological explanation.
- Trickster tale is a conspicuous component of Lotha Folktales.

Statement of the Problem

Naga writings in folktales started only a few decades ago. Much of the Naga traditions, cultures, customs, literature, oral terms and concepts were lost on their way with the coming

of the modern civilization. While stories entertain many, there are not many good story tellers alive who can bear the torch for generations to come. It was only some years ago that Nagas started to have an interest in collecting, preserving and writing about themselves and have been working on various aspects of folktales.

Demographic Area and people of the Lotha Nagas

Lotha Nagas are one of the major tribe that mainly resides in the district of Wokha, which is located at the north west of Nagaland.

The Lothas are a simple natured people who love to follow their culture. As a peace loving tribe, the traditional Lothas never had to lock their houses for the fear of thieves or keep any written laws and customary to govern the people. Having a rich culture and identity the Lothas carry their culture with great pride. However, with the coming of Christianity and the change in the socio – economic and political scenarios, some of their traditional beliefs and culture are left behind. They are a tribe that loves to sing, dance and participate in story time.

It is also believed that the Lothas had written records of their origin which got lost somewhere at Irrawady River during the migration.

During the field study, however it was found that the Lothas though a culture loving tribe not many strictly follow it especially with the younger generation. Also with the coming of Christianity and formal education even to the most remote areas, many people now question the illogic and rigid customs and traditions that were once carried out with immense pride. There are also very less story tellers alive now.

Limitation of the Study

With modernisation and digital media connecting every household, storytelling is seen to be declining. With everyone, even the older generation, with mobile phones and televisions to entertain them and schools for children for education, storytelling as a source of education and entertainment is losing its importance among the people. The decreasing number of storytellers in the villages has affected the sustainability of folktales among the younger generations and has also limited the source of the study.

Chapter 2: Trickster Figure in Lotha Folktales

Trickster figures have always been a popular character in many folktales across cultures as they add more elements of fun and entertainment to the story. Trickster figures are a popular

character in a folktale across different cultures. Though they all may be from different cultures they all have the same persona of a trickster figure. They are all crafty beings, possessing an extra knowledge from the rest which enable them to trick or take advantage of others.

One such character is found in the Lotha Folktales as well. Apvuho's tales of trickery and wit dominates the trickster tales in the Lotha folktales. I have made three subsections of Apvuho's tales –

- Apvuho as a Trickster Figure

Apvuho is the most inevitable character to talk about, a name in everyone's tip of tongue when speaking of Lotha folktales; a human being, a shape shifter, a spirit, a protagonist, a villain, Apvuho's existence in the story varies, therefore perfectly qualifying for a trickster figure.

Some of the tales of Apvuho that I have included in this sub section are Apvuho and the widower where he tricks the widower of killing a dog and taking her healthy pig in exchange of not telling the people or about the story of how he tricks the newlywed couple and took away all their belongings and even their mithun.

- Apvuho and its Adventure

The Nagas as a whole and Lothas in particular, were confined to their territory and barter system were done among their own but it is believed that it is because of Apvuho that the Nagas learnt about the people from the lower region, which in present time we know them as Assamese, and it is because of his cleverness that the Nagas and the Assamese started to do business with each other.

- Apvuho as a Shapeshifter

As mentioned earlier, shapeshifting is an important element of a trickster figure, which without a doubt makes Apvuho a shapeshifter. In this study I have included some tales of Apvuho as human, as spirit, as an animal or as a tiny insect.

Chapter 3: Spirits and Supernatural Tales

The narratives of a supernatural tales are completely different from that of animal tales, trickster tales or even etiological tales. The Lothas, animists in general, believed in the

existence of a supernatural being Sukyingo who is attributed for all the good as well as bad things that happened.

Under this chapter, I have included tales of Superstitious Beliefs and Tales of Spirits and Supernatural Tales as Etiological Tales.

Spirits an Supernatural Tales of Superstitious Beliefs

They typically teach lessons of right and wrong about human nature that are clear and convincing. These moral lessons they teach in the stories are one among many reasons why folktales survive the test of time and is still said and shared in the present generation.

Spirits and Supernatural Tales as Etiological Tales

Etiological tales denotes causation of things and events that are most commonly religious, mythological and historical consisting of legends, history and historical anecdotes which most commonly are found in the genres of Spirits and Supernatural tales.

Chapter 4: Animal Tales

Animal Tales are one of the oldest forms of narratives having a wide range of folktales based on both domestic and wild animals. Use of humanised animals in a folktale lightens the mood and allows the story to make a point without boring the listener. Animal tales are short in narration and can depict the folly or cleverness of the animal character it can give a didactic lesson or are just plain simple but it definitely evokes the interest of the listener and reader.

Under this chapter as well I have made sections, one with Moral Tales and the other Etiological tales. Animal Tales as we read are rich in moral lessons and etiological tales.

Animal Tales as Moral Tales

Moral tales teach a lesson of right and wrong, gives a guideline to what is considered proper behaviour and manner or may even give a general lesson on how to live one's life.

Animal Tales as Etiological Tales

Animal tales are most commonly associated with etiological tales. Those tales are usually associated with the origin of certain phenomena occurring on earth or tells about why things are as they are.

Chapter 5: Tales of Origin

Tales of Origin or Etiological tales are very important part of folktales as it attempts to answer many myths related with our origin or the causation of some events or the discovery of some things. For instance, in Lotha folktales we find how night and day was separated, or how animals like monkey, serow came into being, about how the Lothas started using machu (chilly) as part of their food or learnt the use of Notsu (Poisonous root) which is commonly used by the Lotha tribe during community fishing.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Conclusion part consists of a short summary of all the chapters that was done, along with that a review of the objectives and hypothesis has been carried out. There is also mention of limitations faced while engaged in this study.

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Abbreviation

LFT – Lotha Folk Tale

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Folktales as Oral Literature:

Folktales are essential elements of folklores. Every community has their own fables and tales. Folktales that are told and read now are a result of oral hand downs which have been circulated among the people from generation to generation. It is because folktales are passed on from mouth to word, it has many variations to the same story depending on which community it is being told. Folktales, as an oral literature were the first means of education for the children during the primitive time and so parents and elders took interest in telling the folktales. However, folktales were told not to just evoke social and cultural norms in the children but were also told purely for entertainment's sake. Folktales are a gateway for the people to learn and experience their own culture and to know from where all their customs and believes have sprung from as it gives light to the background, traditions, moral values and the philosophical aspects of life of the community. Though there are few written forms of folktales available much have been left that are still only orally told. With the onset of modernisation and the need for preservation and cultural continuity, a need for intellectual and academic orientation is in demand.

1.1 Demographic Area and People of the Lotha Nagas

For the purpose of the study, the folktales of the Lotha tribe from Nagaland have been selected. Lotha Nagas are one of the major tribe that mainly resides in the district of Wokha, which is located at the north west of Nagaland. With an area of 1,628 sq. km, which is around 9.82% of the total area of Nagaland, Wokha was designated a district in 1973. It has a total area of 35.74% covering subtropical hilly area, 23.64% coming under subtropical plain area

and 40.59% in the mild tropical hill area with the number of populations of the Lotha tribe being 166,343 according to the census report of 2011. Wokha has a literacy rate of 87.7%.

The Lothas are a simple natured people, they love to follow their culture. As a peace-loving tribe, the traditional Lothas never had to lock their houses and keep their written laws and customary to govern the people. Having a rich culture and identity the Lothas carry their culture with great pride. However, with the coming of Christianity and the change in the socio – economic and political scenarios, some of their traditional beliefs and culture are left behind. They are a tribe that loves to sing, dance and participate in story time.

Although there is no definite account to how the Lothas migrated to their present homeland as the story of migration was done entirely through oral narrations, it is commonly believed that Lothas migrated from Khezhakenoma who started their journey somewhere from South East Asia or Eastern or Western China. It is also believed that the Lothas had written records of their origin which got lost somewhere at Irrawady River during the migration.

During the field study, however it was found that the Lothas though a culture loving tribe not many strictly follow it especially with the younger generation. Also, with the coming of Christianity and formal education even to the most remote areas, many people now question the illogic and rigid customs and traditions that were once carried out with immense pride. There are also very less story tellers alive now.

1.2 Chapterization

The present study consists of six chapters with chapter one and chapter six as the introduction and the conclusion. The tales collected for this study has been divided into four segments: tales on trickster figures, spirits and supernatural tales, animal tales and tales of

origin which comes under chapter two to chapter five. Furthermore, the chapters are divided into subheadings.

The second chapter consists of “Tales on Trickster Figures” which has subheadings of Apvuho as a trickster figure, Apvuho and its adventure and Apvuho as a shapeshifter.

The third chapter consists of “Tales on Spirits and Supernatural” which is also further divided into subheadings of tales of superstitious beliefs, spirits and supernatural tales as etiological tales and moral tales.

The subheading of “Animal tales” consists of animal tales as moral tales and animal tales as etiological tales which makes the fourth chapter.

The fifth chapter which is ‘Tales of Origin’ has one sub heading, causation and discovery tales.

1.3 Folktales Definition

Folktales are stories that have been told over and over again from generation to generation among different group of community and tribes since time immemorial. One cannot date back the exact timeline for the origin of the folktales nor can one give a specific definition of folktales as opinions varies.

Often time folktales and fairytales are used interchangeably by many people. In a general term, in a fairytale, there is much occurrences of fairies, magic, good and bad angels, a charming Prince or a Princess as the protagonist and is set in an imaginary world. However, in folktales, tales of myths and legends are popularly told. Myths though have gods and supernatural beings in the narration, it generally narrates about foundational or origin tales with much inclusion of animals and stories that were mostly created through people’s experiences and imaginations; Legends generally are stories about a particular person or

place which may or may not be true. According to M.H. Abrams, “*if the protagonist is a human being, the traditional story is usually called not a myth but a legend.*” (A Glossary of Literary Terms, 178)

In the present study, the researcher will use the term folktales to include the tales of myths and legends that have been passed down orally, some of which have been set down in a written form through generation.

1.3.1 Significance of Folktales Study

Folktales are popular stories that circulate among people in a community or tribe. Every culture, every society has their own fables and tales which play an important role in their social customs or culture and this circulation of stories were done through oral narratives. Oral narratives were the first form of education among the primitive people, it was passed on from generation to generation; tales with morals or those that transmit social, cultural, moral or customary values were told as an educative learning while some tales with characters of a trickster figures were told for entertainment purpose. Every tale narrated and passed down always carries an allegorical or demographical legacy of the community or tribe. There are folktales that narrate man’s relationship with animals, nature or supernatural beings, while there are also tales that speaks about the origin of human civilization and their socio cultural and economic backgrounds. Folktales give access to knowledge of the historical, geographical and the social relation of the tribe under study to communities. Folktales open doors of knowledge to one’s heritage and identity, where in the study of folktales is necessitated.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse how folktales reflect beliefs and life styles of the people through a study of the trickster figure, origins, spirits and supernatural tales and tales of animals.
2. To bridge the gap between the fading traditional oral folktales and the modern generation.
3. To further a conscientious research and analysis in folktales of Lotha tribe to sustain the rich identity of the tribal community of Lotha Naga.

1.5 Methodology

This study adopted the qualitative approach based on primary data collected from published materials like *Moonlight Tales and Fables of the Kyong Nagas* (2013) by Francis Kikon, by Jasmine Patton and *Retelling Naga Narratives: More Than Thrice-Told Tales* (2014) by Richard Carbo, John Coakley and Abraham Lotha. More published materials have been used, some of which were translated by the researcher from Lotha to English as the source of the tales for the present study is in Lotha Language. For the primary data, materials have been gathered by field work through interviews and interactions and have been translated to English. The translation for all the materials is done solely for the purpose of the study. All the materials used have been cited in the bibliography. For citation, latest edition of MLA Handbook has been referred.

1.6 Hypothesis

- Folktales reflect the society of the Lotha Nagas.
- Lotha folktales contain significant moral teachings and etiological explanation.
- Trickster tale is a conspicuous component of Lotha Folktales.

1.7 Statement of the Problem

Naga writings in folktales started only a few decades ago. Much of the Naga traditions, cultures, customs, oral terms and concepts and beliefs were lost with the coming of the modern civilization. The oral narratives that were once told with pride diminished and the people begin to dwell more on the western way of living and thinking, confusing the Nagas to follow and preserve their old tradition. Nzanmongi Jasmine Patton clearly says in the introduction of her book, “A Girl Swallowed by a Tree”:

“These folktales are the very fabric of early Lotha Naga life till the entry of the American missionaries with the new faith and changed lifestyle and the British colonial forces with their ‘refined’ ways and mannerism. They made a huge positive impact on the Lotha Naga society, but in the end, what they left behind was a set of people who were trapped between worlds, sceptical of their indigenous identity that distinguished them from others.” 13

The gap that was created after the westerners left is still seen today. While stories entertain many, there are not many good story tellers alive who can bear the torch for generations to come. It was only some years ago that Nagas started to have an interest in collecting, preserving and writing about themselves and have been working on various aspects of folktales. Never the less, a systematic study of the folktales can help in understanding the culture, custom, tradition and beliefs of the particular tribe under study and their relationship with other cultures. However, existing collected materials are not enough as Nagas are rich in folktales and very few have been written and documented so far. Folktales reflect the values and customs of the culture from which they come from.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

There had been certain set back that were seen by the researcher while carrying out this study. As written literatures were scarce to find, the researcher had to collect the folktales orally from story tellers as much as possible but there were few disadvantages seen in it too. With the covid-19 pandemic hitting even the interior villages, there was a problem to visit many villages for this purpose. Also, it is observed that with modernisation and digital media connecting every household, storytelling is seen to be declining. With everyone, even the older generation, with mobile phones and televisions to entertain them and schools for children for education, storytelling as a source of education and entertainment is losing its importance among the people. All these issues along with the decreasing number of storytellers in the villages have affected the sustainability of folktales among the younger generations and have also limited the source of the study.

1.9 Review of Literature

During the process of the study, related materials on the subject have been studied which includes written materials on traditional folktales, oral narratives and written general folktales, at the same time, keeping in mind that the writings of the oral folktales of the Lotha tribe is still at its initial stage. Jasmine Patton in her article titled *Contemporary Naga Writings' Reclamation of Culture and History through Orality* said,

“For many decades, rather centuries, Nagas have been written about or spoken about/ for by others as the ‘other’ and it is only in the latter half of the last century that they have begun to actively write and speak for themselves.” 1

- *Moonlight Tales and Fables of the Kyong Nagas*, (2013) – Introduction by Francis Kikon

Kikon highlighted in his book that folktales give an insight into the background of a culture and also enhances people to equip themselves with their culture in a fast-shrinking world. It is the indigenous folktales that will bridge the gap between losing culture and the need for cultural continuity and literary development in the modern society.

- *A Girl Swallowed by a Tree: Lotha Naga Tales Retold*, (2017) – Nzanmongi Jasmine Patton

This book is a collection of folktales that reflects the lives, beliefs and traditions of the Lotha Naga tribes with the use of Lotha words that are untranslatable in its original terms but where the author also gives the glossary of the words to bring the readers closer to the stories. A pioneering work that opened windows to a culture that has not been open to the people quite often and as Easterine Kire puts it, “a pathfinder for other books on oral narratives” vii.

- *The Lotha Nagas*, (1980) – J. P. Mills

A book of great value, it provides knowledge not only of culture and customs of the Lotha Nagas but of their domestic life, religion, laws, language, songs and folktales. It is a significant book for preservation and generational use.

- *Retelling Naga Narratives: More than Thrice-Told Tales*, (2014) – John Coakley, Abraham Lotha and Richard Carbo

This book has a collection of 74 folktales from the many different Naga tribes which has been passed down through generations by word of mouth. A book that shows how the Nagas have passed down their folktales for generations and though along the way many interpretations and variations in the stories from different storytellers are seen, this book confirms that Naga cultures and their stories can stand the test of time.

- *Naga Folktales Retold*, (2009) – Easterine Kire

A book showcasing the rich culture of the Naga tribes, the author has sample the collection of stories in categories of tales on love, warrior tales, people tales and tales of the supernatural, strange husbands and so on.

- *The Folktales*, (1977) – Stith Thompson

A collection of great folktales from around the world, this book deals with not just stories but showcases the culture, nature and form of folktales. This book introduces the folktales from Ireland to India, while giving a special focus on the North American Indians.

- *Folktales from India*, (1994) – A. K. Ramanujan

A collection of 110 tales, the book engages people with its comic, mysterious and romantic tales from the land of many varied cultures. According to Ramanujan, folklores grow wherever people live, in the form of jokes, proverbs, tales and songs which are then circulated in the oral traditions.

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CHAPTER 2

TRICKSTER FIGURES IN LOTHA FOLKTALES

2.0 Introduction of the Character

Trickster figures have always been a popular character in many folktales across cultures as they add more elements of fun and entertainment to the story. They are typically intelligent characters whose intentions are always to play pranks and mischief on others, either for gaining advantages or for the sake of having fun at the expense of others.

As Dallas Matier says:

- *“The Trickster, is a figure who relies on guile and trickery in order to get what they want, that it is a common feature in the narratives of a wide variety of different cultures. Sometimes cast as the hero of their particular tale, and sometimes taking on a more villainous role, what they all seem to have in common is that they are unpredictable, potentially dangerous, and often extremely intelligent – though, just as often prone to fits of foolishness. Most often depicted as male, they will also often be given the ability to change their shape, taken on whatever form best suits them, including the form of animals. In general, whether depicted as heroic or villainous, a Trickster can be taken as representing a direct defiance of the natural order –“ Owlcation 2.*

Trickster figures are a popular character in a folktale across different cultures. Among the Native Americans, Coyote could most probably be the most popular trickster figure along with Raven and Spider. Rabbit is a common trickster figure among the Africans so is Anansi the Spider or Indra, a trickster figure from the Indian mythology. Likewise, Apvuho, is a popular trickster character from the Lotha folktales. Though, they all may be from different

culturesthey all have the same persona of a trickster figure. They are all crafty beings, possessing an extra knowledge from the rest which enables them to trick or take advantages of others.

Tricksters can be both good and bad as such there is no specification of their goodness or evilness as they are never conventional and always plays by their own rules. They are greedy, cunning and lustful but sometimes they can also be friendly and helpful. Trickster characters can survive the most dangerous fall or the most brutal turn of events, they amazingly have a unique power of survival in any circumstances. They keep reappearing in tales even after a repeated death in different stories.

2.1 Elements of Trickster Tales

Tricksters exhibit great skills and wit, where readers and listeners are commonly presented with a situation where the trickster, is always deceiving others and the others submitting to its tricks.

Trickster figures can be shapeshifters with no one can exactly tell their original state as they shift from one form to another as per the situation demands of them. Trickster tales are not only told for entertainment but it popularly includes stories attributing to the origin of things or situations.

2.1.1 Tricksters Tales as Entertainers

Folktales were the first form of education among the Naga people and folktales like trickster tales have always taken the place of entertainment among the people. Trickster tales may or may not have meanings but they were told as part of entertainment during the social gatherings or narrated to children as a source of entertainment. Trickster tales are always entertaining and is told mostly as part of entertainment since generations. Trickster tales

could be a reminder for people that folktales are meant to be shared and enjoyed for generations to come.

2.1.2 Trickster Tales as Etiological Tales

Etiological tales includes the origin and causation of things and events. Trickster tales are given much credit for their Etiological tales. Since tricksters always wants to try out new things and wander off in new places, they stumble into something new, often making them the reason for why some aspects of the world came into being. A lot of credits for discoveries and creations hugely go to the Tricksters.

2.1.3 Trickster Tales and its application to life

Trickster tales mostly have stories about how they tricked some innocent, honest but naive. The stories sometimes may be less than decent for everyone to listen and they may not be the most favourite character in the story but there are still a lot to take in from a trickster tale.

Tricks played by Tricksters not always give them advantages but sometimes those tricks they play on others may back fire on them which maybe a moral lesson for misconduct and misbehaviour. Trickster characters may bring a light to people and make them realise how one should not live such a life of the tricksters.

2.2 Apvuho as a Trickster Figure

A trickster figure like Apvuho dominates the genre of trickster tales in the Lotha Folktale. Exhibiting great traits of intelligence and greed, Apvuho is attributed for the creation of many present events and legends among the Lotha community. Apvuho is the most inevitable character to talk about, a name in everyone's tip of tongue when speaking of Lotha folktales; a human being, a shape shifter, a spirit, a protagonist, a villain, Apvuho's existence in the story varies, therefore perfectly qualifying for a trickster figure.

Apvuho never falls short for playing pranks on others, possessing intelligence beyond the mind of others, a creator and a schemer whose plans always give advantages to him and as a result, its stories are often told as an entertainment for all young and old. Though no proper meaning to the name 'Apvuho' could be found, its name is a name known to all the Lotha people.

Some of the tales of the famous trickster, Apvuho, from the Lotha Folktales are:

LFT 1: Apvüho and the Children

LFT 2: Apvüho and Mesao

LFT 3: A Traveller Tricked by Apvuho

LFT 4: Apvuho and the Widow

LFT 5: Apvuho and the Newlywed Couple

LFT 6: Apvuho and the Mohru

LFT 7: Apvuho and the Wooden Vat

LFT 8: Apvuho Tricked the Villagers to Escape Death

LFT 9: Apvuho and the Plainsmen

Attempts have been made to translate LFT 1, LFT 2, LFT 4 and LFT 6 into English from the original dialect of the concern society studied through oral interview. LFT 5 has been re-translated from a written English record of *Our Lotha Naga* by LilanthungLotha, LFT 3, LFT 7, LFT 8 and LFT 9 have been cited from the book *Moonlight Tales and Fables of The Kyong Nagas* by Francis Kikon.

LFT 1:Apvüho and the Children

Once Apvüho went to a certain village but unlike other times, he had no fear he might be harmed in this village by some people whom he had caused trouble before. He hid inside a big hollow tree at the edge of the village waiting for the villagers to leave for their field. When he was sure all the villagers had gone to their fields, he quietly entered the village.

It was customary for parents to leave their little children behind who were yet to be able to work in the field. The parents though will make sure to keep lunch for their children wrapped in a plantain leave. Apvüho would chase the children, snatch their lunch, and eat it then when evening comes, he would go back to the hollow to rest for the night. It went on for many days and the children kept reporting to their parents that a stranger was chasing them and stealing their lunch after they had gone to the field.

One day the villagers decided to see who this stranger was and pretended to go to the field while they hid and watched. As told by the children, Apvüho entered the village as usual and tried to steal the children's lunch. Just then the villagers came out from their hiding places and caught him. Apvüho was made to do labour works in the village for seven days as a penalty and was sent off after given a stern warning.

In this folktale we see the trickster Apvuho dishonestly depriving the children of their meals when their parents are in the fields. This time they caught him in his trick and was punished.

LFT 2: Apvüho and Mesao

One of the years when harvest was plenty, Apvüho and his friend Mesao decided to cultivate a corn field together. Apvüho asked Mesao which part of the corn he would like to take as his share. Mesao said he will take the stalk part of the corn while Apvüho can take the upper part

of the corn. When it was time for the harvest, Apvüho got all the corns and Mesao was left with just the stalk of the corns.

The following year again they decided to cultivate together but this time a sugarcane field. Apvüho likewise asked Mesao which part he wanted. Mesao replied that the previous year he took the stem part and got nothing so he will take the upper parts of the sugarcane where it has the leaves. As decided by Mesao, he took the useless upper parts of the sugar cane and Apvüho took the prized stem of the sugarcane. For a continuous two years Mesao had nothing to feed his family.

We do not see Apvüho tricking his friend as such, but we do find him taking advantage of his gullible friend.

LFT 3: A traveller Tricked by Apvüho

Apvüho was once travelling to a place when he met a traveller who had heard many tales about him and was impressed by his wits. The man wanted to hear more of his stories and as Apvüho was relating some of his exploits, another traveller with a new machete in a wooden holder passed by. The traveller who knew him wanted to test him and told him to trick the man and get his machete then he will vouch what people say about his wits as true. Apvüho agreed to his bet and went on to trick the stranger with a rice beer. Taking the hot sunny day to his advantage, he approached the traveller with a cup of rice beer and told him to rest as he took a sip of it as his mouth will be dry due to the hot weather. The stranger appreciated the gesture and became acquainted with Apvüho.

As the traveller took the last sip of the beer, Apvüho made an excuse that he wanted to offer more beer to him but he had no machete to cut some bamboo to make a cup for him to drink. With that, the traveller willingly offered his new machete. Apvüho taking the opportunity

took the machete and went deep in the jungle. Apvüho called out to him from the deep jungle and upon hearing the traveller responding to his call from the intersection of two roads, Apvüho responded back saying if intersection of two roads was a place for anyone to respond. Apvüho then returned to the first traveller from another route and showed him the machete.

In an interesting way in this story, Apvüho proves his wit and skill as a trickster. He tricked the stranger by winning over his confidence and successfully took up the challenge of the traveller.

LFT 4: Apvuho and the Widow

There lived a simple living widow with her daughter in a certain village. This widow wasn't a picky eater but had deep love for penjung (Black sesame seeds) curry. One day as she was pounding the penjung, Apvuho came along carrying a dog killed by him and as bad luck could have favoured the widow, Apvuho was looking for a person to put the blame on. When he came nearer to the house of the widow, he called out to the widow saying her rice was boiling and was spilling over.

When the widow ran to the kitchen to check the rice, Apvuho immediately put the dead dog's head into the pounding table and called out to her saying that a dog was eating her penjung (black sesame seeds). From a distance it looked like the dog had stuck its head inside and was eating the penjung. The widow was outraged thinking the dog was eating her tedious preparation of the penjung (black sesame seeds). Without thinking she took the pestle with which she was pounding and started threshing the dog's head. Apvuho exclaimed that she has killed the dog and threatened to tell the owner of the dog if she did not give one of her pigs to him. The widow had no choice but to agree with the deal.

Some days passed but the widow did not give the pig to Apvuho as she was reluctant to give away a fat healthy pig for free. So, one night Apvuho returned to take the pig but when he came, he lit some wooden torches along the pathway up to the widow's house and told her that people were approaching her house to collect the fine for pulling the dog. When the widow told Apvuho to go and stop them from coming, he went and put off all the wooden torches and returned to the widow's house and took away the widow's well-fed pig.

This story exemplifies Apvuho as a master trickster. He not only escaped being caught as the killer of the dog but walked away with a fat pig. He effortlessly tricked the widow into thinking she was the one who killed the dog. He not only transferred his guilt onto someone else but made a profit out of it too.

LFT 5: Apvuho and the Newly Wed Couple

One day Apvuho and his villagers went down to a big pond and decided to swing from a khuruzu (Creeper). Apvuho was the last to swing and when it was his turn to swing, nobody helped to fetch him from there and left him swinging there all alone. It was a dead end for anyone who falls in the pond. As he was swinging helplessly, he was encountered by a newlywed couple with whose help he could get down and be out of danger. Apvuho noticed that the couples were eloping, he told them to get on the khuruzu and swing as it was very pleasurable. But in doing so they have to leave all their ornaments down and tie their tsuro (mithun) on a tree. The gullible couple believed him and went off to swing over the pond.

Apvuho then put on all their ornaments took the tsuro and went back to the village. To the utter surprise of the villagers, he was asked where he got all the precious ornaments and tsuro (mithun). Apvuho told them that there were plenty down in the pool but he took just enough for himself. Delighted, the villagers asked Apvuho to take them there. Upon reaching the

pond, Apvuho picked them one by one and threw them over making an end to the lives of all of them.

Once again, this story shares how the witty trickster keeps his wits about him even in times of trouble and overcome danger profitably. In this story, Apvuho gets his revenge too.

LFT 6: Apvuho and the Mohrū

Apvuho and Mohrū(Tiger) has long been a rival to each other. One sunny day, Apvuho saw some boys fishing and decided to play tricks on them. Just when he was about to trick the boys, Mohrū (tiger) came out of nowhere. Seeing the Mohrū (tiger), Apvuho stood stunned in panic as he knew the Mohrū would easily defeat him in physical combat.

As Apvuho stood there in great fear, he saw a beehive on a tree, giving his quick mind what to do next. When the Mohrū (tiger) pounced on him, he begged the Mohrū to let him go and in return he will let him play the sacred drum. The Mohrū became excited and started to ask about the drum. Apvuho pointed towards the beehive and told theMohrū that he was the guard of it and he would take the permission from the villagers for him to play the drum. Apvuho pretended to walk towards the village whilst finding an escape route. When Apvuho was far away from the beehive, he called out to the Mohrū (tiger) saying the villagers have granted the wish and that he could beat the sacred drum. Happilythe Mohrū beat the beehive as a drum until he was attacked by a swarm of bees.

There is a belief among the Lotha tribes that the animals could live and talk among the people but at the same time hunt them as prey. In the case of the Mohru, a tiger, who approached Apvuho on the pretext of hunting him down was eventually tricked by Apvuho.

LFT 7: Apvuho and the Wooden Vat

It was one of the times when human beings, spirits and animals co-existed together that Apvuho befriended a tiger. One day he asked the tiger if he will be interested to join him to go to the forest to make a wooden vat. The tiger was ever grateful to join in and both of them ventured into the forest across the river where trees used for making wooden vats were found in abundance.

After the vats were made, the tiger who has no experience, asked Apvuho how to carry it. Taking the advantage, Apvuho made the tiger to carry the vat with its hollow facing upward while he carried the vat facing downward.

They took the path to the river. Apvuho crossed the water with ease while the tiger struggled to cross the river as its vat was filled with water making it heavy for the tiger to carry it. Apvuho noticed that the tiger was struggling to cross the river and offered his help. Apvuho, though pretended to give his help, was filling the tiger's vat with boulders only to push the tiger into the river.

The tiger was swept away and Apvuho followed the stream at the bank of the river to see the tiger getting drown. However, it did not happen as he expected. Instead, he saw the tiger resting on the riverbank with exhaustion after struggling to fight back the current of the river. The tiger was filled with rage when he saw Apvuho and threatened to eat him. Apvuho, terrified, ran away from there while the tiger tried to catch up with him from behind. The tiger gave all his might to catch up with Apvuho but could not, as he was already exhausted trying to save himself out of the river.

Apvuho tried to run as much as he could but his strength could no longer sustain him. as smart as he can be, in an instant, Apvuho came up with an idea to get rid of the tiger. He

remembered the huge hornet nest that he had seen in the morning and went there and waited for the tiger near the hornet nest.

When the tiger caught on him and tried to pounce on him, he stopped the tiger and told him that he had been entrusted a work by the boys staying in the Chumpho (Morung – a traditional dormitory for young boys, a modern day's School) to look after the drum and to restrain anyone from playing the drum.

The tiger was so inclined to it that he asked him if he could play it. Apvuho wanted to take that chance to run away from the tiger. He showed reluctant to agree with the tiger to make him more interested.

Apvuho told the tiger that he was just a watchman of the drum and to give permission to the tiger he has to go and ask the boys in the Chumpho (morung). Apvuho then instructed the Tiger that he would shout from there if the boys agreed. The tiger impatient told Apvuho to go and ask the boys if he could play the drum.

Apvuho, after getting to a great distant, shouted at the tiger that the boys had agreed. The tiger ever eager to play; stretched it great paw and hit the hornet nest and was stung to dead by the hornets.

This story has a similarity or a longer version of the story to LFT 6. Like mentioned earlier, a folktale could have a double version of the same tale.

LFT 8: Apvuho Tricked the Villagers to Escape Death

One day, people of a certain village decided to kill Apvuho for all the things that he did to them. They knew it was not an easy task but they made the plan nevertheless. Lotha people who practice jhuming cultivation decided to burn him when they burn the field. They plan to keep a tree in the middle of the field and ask Apvuho to climb the tree and cut down the

branches. Apvuho who was smarter than them and who never trusts anyone had already dug a hole near the tree and cleaned the surrounding of the tree. He also had found a flat stone to protect himself at the time of burning the field.

In the noon time when they started the fire, Apvuho took refuge in the hole he had dug for himself. When the fire was lesser, he came out of the hole and as luck could favour him, he found a fawn which was burnt by the fire. He took out the intestines of the fawn and placed it on top of himself to make the people think it was his intestine. He placed the intestine on himself and laid a little off the road so that many people will see him as they go home after their work.

Apvuho pretended to be dead but could hear everything that the people were talking about him as they pass his body. Some lamented on his death saying they will miss him while some expressed happiness of his death. Apvuho, took note of everything he heard as he lay there pretending to be dead.

After everyone was home, he got up from there, took the fawn and went home. He divided the fawn into two parts, one with the meat for the ones who lamented over his death body, the other with just bones to the ones who showed happiness for his death. The story also says that after giving a share of meat and bone to everyone, Apvuho went to every house knocking for a value of the meat he has given. There never was a win for the villagers in any way when there was Apvuho.

This tale though talks about Apvuho and his tricks; it also highlights the cultivation style of the Lothas that is Jhumming Cultivation.

LFT 9: Apvuho and the Plainsmen

Apvuho was causing a lot of problem and damage to the people of his village as well as the neighbouring villages that his action did not only disgrace the villagers but created animosity between his villagers and the other villages as people speculated everyone from Apvuho's village maybe like him or they were using Apvuho as a scapegoat for all the wrong that was done to the people.

The villagers had enough and planned for a way to make an end of Apvuho's life. There had been several occasions where they tried but Apvuho escapes it using his wit but one unfortunate day he was captured. The villagers decided to bury him alive which made Apvuho to be very scared and pleaded them to pardon him. The villagers were no way going to pardon him this time and so they went ahead with the plan of burying him alive. Apvuho knew the villagers were adamant and would not listen to him so he proposed the villagers to instead put him in a drum with some fire, bitter gourd, lenkyum (soyabeans), onyi (sticky tree gum), rhujak - rhuyen (dried bambooshoots), machu (chilly), mani (taro), osüng (ginger) and hanbong (rooster) then put the drum in a canoe where he will float away to death.

The villagers thought since they were about to kill him anyways, they might as well listen to him this time and put him in a drum according to how he requested. The canoe floated downstream getting stuck sometime in the driftwoods then sometimes it will rush down with the current of the water. Apvuho slept away and woke up in the morning with the crowing of the rooster. He burnt a small hole of the hide that covered the drum to make an opening through which he can take a peek outside and when he is satisfied, he would paste it up with the onyi (sticky tree gum). Each day he did that until he reached the plains of Assam.

When he reached the plains of Assam, his canoe was stuck on some driftwood in the river and as luck had been with him, there were two plainsmen, a couple, working in the field

nearby the riverbank. When they saw the canoe, they got frightened as they could hear some sound coming from inside the canoe. The couple was afraid but went near the canoe and pulled out the canoe. They found a drum inside the canoe covered in hide skin and so they tried to find out what was in it.

Apvuho came out of the drum with all the things that were put in by the villagers as he requested and told the couple that he came from the hills of Nagaland and that his people have sent him all these stuffs with an instruction that he open trade and commerce with the brothers of the plains. The man introduced Apvuho with his wife and took him home as their guest.

The couple treated him well and taught him their language and when Apvuho learnt their language, he was treated more like a son than a guest from the hills. He stayed with them and worked with them for as long as he wanted.

One day after a long hard work, Apvuho got thirsty and asked for a water to his adopted father, the father told him to ask his mother. Apvuho went to the mother as told by his father but instead of asking for water, he said to his mother that his father has asked her to give him the money pot. The mother was a little confused and so she called for her husband from far and asked if he asked to give Apvuho what he asked for. The woman did not mention what Apvuho asked for so the husband replied with yes. The wife then took out the money pot and gave it to Apvuho.

Apvuho who was waiting for this opportunity took the money pot and left for another place where he purchased a herd of cow which he drove it towards the Naga Hills. The weather suddenly got really bad when he was just half way there. Apvuho was terrified as he had nowhere to take refuge and so he held on to a pongi tong (kapok tree) that was there.

It is believed that Apvuho died holding the pongi tong (kapok tree). When a brunch of a pongi tong (kapok tree) is cut latex oozes out from it which the Lotha people call it as the intestine of Apvuho.

It is said that Apvuho was the first man to trade with the plainsmen though not in a very agreeable way. Through this tale we also see that trade between the Lotha Nagas and the plainsmen started way back with the geographical terrain giving more advantage to it as the district of Wokha, the place where the Lothas settle is closer to the plains of the Assam.

2.2.1 The Adventure of Apvuho

With the first utter of the name Apvuho one can easily think of the word ‘adventure’ as they speak. Apvuho’s adventurous stories are what make Apvuho’s tales an interesting entertainment for all listeners. The Nagas as a whole and Lothas in particular, were confined to their territory and barter system were done among their own but it is believed that it is because of Apvuho that the Nagas learnt about the people from the lower region, which in present time we know them as Assamese, and it is because of his cleverness that the Nagas and the Assamese started to do business with each other.

Some of the adventurous tales of Apvuho are:

LFT 10: Apvuho’s Adventure into a Strange Land

Attempts have been made to translate LFT 10 into English language through oral interview for the better understanding of the tale in this chapter.

LFT 10: Apvuho’s Adventure into a Strange Land

Once Apvuho journeyed into a strange land where he encountered people born without holes in their fundament. Apvuho was welcomed warmly in their village and was served with

delicious food. After sometime he had a stomach ache as he over ate. To ease his pain he defecated in the full view of the people. The people of the village were amazed and bewildered by it. The people wanted their children to have a hole in their fundaments too and so requested Apvuho to make their children like him.

He made a deal with them and asked for a cow in return. He heated an iron shaft in the burning fire and directed the children to face down. When the iron was burned red hot, he took it out and pushed it through to make a hole. Apvuho instructed the parents to keep their children inside a big wooden vat and not to take them out even if the child cries.

After the turn for all the children had come, he packed his stuffs and instructed them to let the children out from the wooden vat only when he gives a signal from the opposite mountain. When Apvuho set off and gave a signal, the people rushed to let the children out from the vat only to find that the children had all died inside the wooden vat.

The villagers ran after Apvuho to catch him for he had tricked them. On seeing them he tied up the cow on a tree and climbed up to hide. The villagers saw the cow and gathered near it. At that moment, he urinated on them from the tree. The villagers thought that it was raining and so they rushed back to their village. Apvuho then happily climbed down from the tree, took the cow and went back to his village.

Though this story ends with Apvuho off to his village with the cow he profited from tricking the people, Apvuho does not have a particular village or place he calls home. His trickery and wrong doing towards the people always would end him up from expulsion from the village as it was a customary for the Lothas to banish anyone who does not abide with the customary laws or sometimes it is he himself who runs away to avoid being punished by the people.

2.2.2 Apvuho as a Shapeshifter

As mentioned earlier, shapeshifting is an important element of a trickster figure, which without a doubt makes Apvuho a shapeshifter. There are tales of Apvuho as human then there are tales of Apvuho as spirit, there are times where Apvuho has tails like monkeys or is a tiny insect.

Some of the tales of Apvuho as shapeshifter are:

LFT 11: Apvuho and Alasao

LFT 12: Apvuho and Mesa gathering lishii

Attempts have been made to translate LFT 12 into English through oral interview while LFT 11 has been re-translated from a written English text *Our Lotha Naga* by LilanthungLotha for the better understanding of the tales in this chapter.

LFT 11: Apvuho and Alasao

One day a man named Alasao went to the forest to trap animal with Apvuho. Alasao told Apvuho that an animal came and ate the food but there was no catch. Apvuho told him to kill his pig and keep it properly for the animals. Alasao did as advised by Apvuho and dug a hole to keep the meat as a trap for the animals. As soon as Alasao left the place, Apvuho ate the curry kept as bait for the animals.

The next day Alasao noticed that the meat was eaten but there was no sign of animals in the trap so he went and reported to Apvuho. Apvuho scolded him and asked if he had kept more meat to which Alasao replied he did. Apvuho then told him again to prepare a nice meat and keep it in the trap properly. This time too Alasao obeyed Apvuho and did and followed his

suggestion. The clever Apvuho ate the curry again but this time he hung himself in the trap of Alasao.

Alasao took a wildcat along to check if he was successful this time. To Alasao's excitement, he saw that his trap had caught an animal and happily took it home not recognising that it was Apvuho who had turned into an animal. Just a mile ahead to the village, Alasao went to fetch fire. Just when he was gone, Apvuho took the opportunity to take the wildcat home before Alasao returned. Upon Alasao's return, he found the wildcat and the trapped animal missing so he went to Apvuho to tell him what had happened. When Alasao was done with his story, Apvuho scolded him again.

Apvuho was not only witty with tricks up his sleeves but did also know how to turn the table around and make someone feel guilty and manipulate their mind in thinking they have done something wrong. One typical feature of a trickster is in their ability of shifting shapes according to the requirement of the situation and this story has highlighted that aspect of shape shifting when Apvuho changed its form into an animal to trick Alasao.

LFT 12: Apvuho and Mesao's Lishü Bundle

Mesao is known to be a close friend and a constant victim of Apvuho. One day Mesao was gathering lishü(hay) for making his thatch. He told Apvuho that he was almost ready to carry the lishü(hay) home for the thatch. Apvuho who always has a trick up his sleeve, went ahead of Mesao to hide inside his lishü (hay). When Mesao came to carry the lishü (hay), he found his lishü (hay) was exceptionally heavy that day. Upon reaching home, Mesao found out that Apvuho was hiding among the lishü(hay) metamorphosed into a small being. Mesao was not happy with Apvuho but didn't say anything just then, as he wanted to take his revenge on him. Mesao had tried to trick Apvuho on several occasion but failed to do so everytime.

One day when Apvuho was carrying lishü(hay) early in the morning, Mesao went ahead of him and hid himself among Apvuho's lishü (hay). As Apvuho is always a step ahead, he brought a spear and tried to pierce through the lishü (hay) saying to himself that the bundle of lishü (hay) seemed bigger and that there might be an animal hiding inside. Mesao then immediately replied that he was inside and begged Apvuho not to pierce the spear inside the lishü (hay). As a result, Mesao once again failed to trick Apvuho.

This story also brings out the shape shifting ability of a trickster figure when Apvuho changed its form to trick Mesao. We can also not overlook that Mesao too had the ability to change shape and tried to trick Apvuho, making him a possible trickster figure but only to have been overshadowed by Apvuho.

2.3 How Trickster Tales Reflects Ancestral Lotha Society

Through this chapter we see that the folktales of Lotha Trickster figure, Apvuho, is more about entertainment than being moralistic. It of course sends out a deep meaning of how one should not follow the ways of Apvuho but other than that there isn't much that gives us moral lesson.

However, Apvuho folktales, like many other folktales reflect the native Lotha folk life and folk practices like how the children were left behind at home with their nshu (lunch) packed in a plantain leaf when the parents go to the field to work. Plantain leaf is another very significant leaf that is still used not only by the Lothas in general but the whole Nagas to wrap food in it even to this generation. In the story where we saw Apvuho tricking a couple, we came across the mentioning of the animal Mithun, another significant animal to show the wealth and status of a person.

Customary law of banishment to disserving people was also very common in the Lotha society. It can lead from anything as following a different faith, incest marriage, stealing, causing nuisance and disturbance to the villagers and in the case of Apvuho, tricking the villagers and thus stealing from them. In one of the tales of Apvuho we read a widow pounding a penjung (black sesame seed) curry. Penjung is a curry common to the Lotha tribes even now and then, and a delicacy cooked during special occasions. Apvuho though falls under a trickster tale brings out a lot of native folk practices that are still relevant in the present generation.

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CHAPTER 3

SPIRITS AND SUPERNATURAL TALES

3.0 Introduction

Spirits and supernatural tales are one of the essences of folktales. The narratives of a supernatural tales are completely different from that of animal tales, trickster tales or even etiological tales. The Nagas, animists in general, believed in the existence of a supernatural being who is attributed for all the good as well as bad things that happens. They believed in a benevolent god who they believe is the creator of them, while also believing in the existence of evil spirits.

In this corpus of the Lotha Folktales, it was found that primitively the Lotha tribes believed creation and events were caused by some metaphysical entities or omens. Such tales make one comprehend with fear and curiosity of the many unexplained situations that led to their beliefs.

3.1 Elements of Spirits and Supernatural tales.

In Spirits and Supernatural tales, one would come across characters like gods, witches, anthropomorphized animals, spirits – both good and bad, angels and ghosts. As one can guess, in Spirits and supernatural tales, occurrences of miracles and magic are very common. Sometimes a tale of spirits and supernatural may be far- fetched but tales of such categories nevertheless evoke curiosity, engagement and wonder to the metaphysical events.

3.1.1: Tales of Spirits and Supernatural as Superstitious Beliefs.

One essential part of folktales is that it contains moral lessons. They typically teach lessons of right and wrong about human nature that are clear and convincing. These moral lessons they

teach in the stories are one among many reasons why folktales survive the test of time and is still said and shared in the present generation. Also during the study, a good number of spirits and supernatural tales belonging to the Lotha tribes contain values which till date govern their social norms. The tales of spirits and supernatural as illustration of moral tales are:

LFT 13: Sukyingo and Ngazo

LFT 14: The woman who got Married to a Momon

LFT 15: Shoshamo and the Lumkumros

LFT 16: The Orphans and the Parents' Spirits

LFT 17: The Man Who Travelled to Echu-Li

LFT 18: The Story of Likonthung

LFT 19: The revenge of a Man on Rakhenshumi

Attempts have been made to re-translate LFT 13 and LFT 14 into English from a written English record of *Our Lotha Naga* by LilanthungLotha, LFT 15, LFT 16, LFT 17 and LFT 18 has been cited from *Moonlight Tales and Fables of the Kyong Nagas* by Francis Kikon and LFT 19 has been cited from the book *A Girl Swallowed by a Tree* by Nzanmongi Jasmine Patton.

LFT 13 Sukyingo and Ngazo

It was the time when they said earth was still at its inception and spirits lived freely on earth. One such story among the Lotha folktales is about two spirit friends called Sukyingo and Ngazo. One hot summer they went to dig voles from the ground. After toiling the entire day Sukyingo got many voles but Ngazo got only one. Dejected Ngazo told Sukyingo that it wasn't his day for luck as he got only one, to which Sukyingo replied that even that one vole

he got was because he made him to get it. By hearing what his friend said, Ngazo became very angry and defended himself saying it was because of his hard toil he got that one vole and demanded Sukyingo to take back his words.

Sukyingo challenged Ngazo to try setting the vole free and see if he could catch back again. Ngazo knew where this was leading to but he accepted the challenge as not accepting the challenge would make him a loser even without trying. Ngazo let go of the only vole he caught and kept digging the holes till morning but to no avail.

Filled with rage Ngazo wrestled with Sukyingo and grabbed him by his head and twisted his neck. The neck was irreparable and Sukyingo could no longer turn his head to the normal way again for eternity. This is the reason why there is a believe that luck looks on at only one direction, whose side Sukyingo faces are blessed with many blessings but whose side his back is turned towards, faces bad luck.

Sukyingo's name is often used in many Lotha household till date. Though the present generation may not relate so much to the superstitious believe associated with Sukyingo, in the olden days Lothas would always leave some food in their cooking pots for Sukyingo believing that if they don't, Sukyingo will mind. Also another superstitious belief related to Sukyingo, by the Lothas is that if younger ones sleep at the side of the bed while sleeping with elders, the spirit of Sukyingo will push them down.

Sometimes Sukyingo's name is used to scare and lull little children off to sleep. Sukyingo also called as the house spirit, has many Lotha fables attached to its name, for instance, one believes that it is Sukyingo who pulls us home that we feel reaching home takes shorter time than leaving from home though the same distance.

LFT 14 The Woman Who Got Married to a Momon (woolly worm)

Many years ago, a young, handsome man proposed a beautiful lady of a certain village. Not much was known of the man except that he was good looking and had good commands over his words which impressed the parents of the woman. Therefore, the man and the woman were soon married. The man's hut was situated far off from the village. Everything went well for the new couple; the wife was a good homemaker and the man kept the wife happy. However, the wife longed for a child but everytime this topic was brought up the husband evaded the topic.

Unknown to the wife, the husband had one big secret which could be the reason for him not wanting to start a family. The husband was a momon and he would turn to a momon at night and back to a human at day time.

One day the wife told her husband that she would go to the forest the next day to collect some oyo (plantain leaf) for both. The next morning when the wife went to the forest to collect the leaves from the usual spot, she saw that the leaves were all gnawed off as though by a momon (woolly worm) and kept ready for her to collect. Having felt lucky she collected the leaves and went home to tell her husband what had happened. The husband took that opportunity and told the wife that it was him who bit off the leaves for her to collect and that, in fact, he was actually amomon who becomes a human being during the day time. The news was too much for her to contemplate and she became restless and sleepless after having learnt the truth from her husband. That night they decided to sleep together on the same bed now that the wife, have learnt the truth.

The wife pretended to have fallen fast asleep as she waited for her husband to fall asleep. After long she called out to her husband to check if he was asleep and when he did not respond to her call, she pushed him off the bed to the fire that was blazing hot near their bed.

During the primitive time it was common to sleep near the fireplace for many reasons. As the husband fell over the fire, he transformed into his real self and got burned to ashes.

Though the husband was burned to ashes he was never officially gone. Everytime the wife cooked or boiled something from the fireplace she would always find a hair of the momon (woolly worm) in her food or water which will go poking inside her windpipe giving her severe allergy and cough. One day the wife choked on the hair of the momon as she was eating and died. It is for this reason it is still believed that if you burn a momon it always makes you cough.

LFT 15 Shoshamo and the Lumkumros (Leprechaun)

A courageous man was Shoshamo that his very presence gave confidence and strength to others. When villagers cultivated fields, where attack from wild animals and enemies were highly anticipated, he would choose the side where it was more dangerous.

One day as he slept alone in his field, about midnight, he heard loud chant and noises as though people were merry making and having feast with mithun. He was curious but went off to sleep.

The next morning when he woke up, he went to check the place where he heard the noises. There, he was surprised to see a carcass of a serow that was killed by a spear. He suspected that it was not the doing of a human being but by some other being, nevertheless, he cut the serow and took it to his hut. That night as he slept, the lumkums (leprechauns) came and called out his name and demanded that he makes payment for the mithun he took from them; now for Lumkums (Leprechaun), a serow was a mithun and a mithun was a serow. From that night on, Shoshamo never had a peaceful night as he was regularly visited by the lumkums demanding their mithun. It was becoming very annoying; at the same time, he anticipated

their attack so he covered all the holes of his house and sharpened every machete and spear in his house in case of any imminent attack.

One night the lumkums (leprechaun) came and told him that if he cannot pay for the mithun he took from them, he must push one of his fingers through the holes of his hut. They were insistent in their demand that Shoshamo burned one of his spear's head in the hearth and when it was red hot, he struck it out of the roof. When he pushed out the spear's head, the lumkums thinking it was his finger, discussed among themselves who would go and grab the finger.

After a short discussion they all agreed that Tssotyuro (small mosquito – the Lothas also give a nickname to someone who has a very small structure physically) the bravest among them, should be the one. So Tssotyuro climbed the roof and grabbed the red-hot spear's head burning his finger. Tssotyuro was caught off guard and fell to the ground.

The lumkumros thought the body that fell down was Shoshamo and carried the body in turns chanting happily. When they were all exhausted taking turns to carry the body, they stopped to see the body they carried. To their utter disbelief it was not the body of Shoshamo but of Tssotyuro. Their chanting notes drastically changed to that of wailing. Thus, wailing they went downstream, never to return to disturb Shoshamo.

Lumkums are very popular supernatural beings among the Lothas and to this day some people still believe in their existence. It is said that for lumkums, everything is opposite to that of human beings. They run in a bad road and walk slowly in a good road; sunny day is a bad weather day while foggy and cloudy day is a good weather day when they go for a walk. Hence, people are afraid of being caught by a lumkum during foggy days. Also, for the lumkums, big and heavy things are light and tiny and light things are heavy. For that reason,

they got tired of carrying tssotyuro and alsotssotyuro was the bravest of them as it was the tiniest of them all.

Also, if we look at how Shoshamo was continuously disturbed by them, it is believed that once some things that belong to lumkums are taken away, they will not stop disturbing until it is returned back to them. There is a very popular saying in Lotha for people who keep pestering others, “Lumkumzolaefuachotuv” which means “like stealing a lumkum’s bag”. However, in this story the lumkums, though did not get back what belonged to them, stopped disturbing him as they lost one of their members.

LFT 16 The Orphans and the Parents’ Spirits

Once in a village, there lived two young orphans by the name, Lupkathung, who was the older brother, and Senjolo, the younger sister. They had been orphans for as long as they remember as their parents died when they were very young. Little orphans without parents, they were bullied and looked down upon by the people. They lived a poor life; their hut was old and shabby as it was never repaired after their parents died. The roof was decaying and water seeped through the roofs, their hearth has just two earthen pots they use for cooking. They could not do farming as they were very young and so to barter for rice and salt, they would gather firewood, fetch water, run errands for the people.

Years passed and when they were old enough to till the land, they farmed at the foot of a hillock where the land was not very fertile. The god of the field was however good to them as the crops grew in plenty. However, among those healthy crops, weeds sprouted too. The sister was so excited with the prospect of weeding the field for the first time, but her brother told her to wait for the right time.

When the weeds and the crops took its own form, Lupkathung told his sister that they shall gather the weeds the next day. Excitedly the sister waited for the next day but as they went to the field, they saw the weeds had been gathered and stacked neatly under every tree stump. They were bewildered at what they saw that they asked themselves who could have done that for them. That day they spent their day in the hut wondering who could it be. In the evening when it was time for everyone to return home from their field, the brother waited and asked all their relatives, friends, and neighbours as to whether anyone of them had cleaned their field. Their question was met with scorn and rebuke though some sympathized with them.

When weeds grew again in their field and they went to clean it, the work was already done as before. Every time weeds grow in their field and they plan to clean it, the next day it gets mysteriously cleaned. They were very curious to know who may have cleaned their field and decided to find out who had been clearing the weeds.

Weeds grew again and this time they decided to wait at the edge of their field to see whose doing it must be. At night when they waited at the edge of their field, they saw their parents gathering the weeds for them. They both were overwhelmed with mixed emotions. They missed their parents and so they wept in silence, afraid their parents' spirits would hear them, but at the same time they were ecstatic to see their parents after a long time.

The brother gave an idea to his sister that they shall quietly jump into their zola (woven bags) and quietly go with them to the land of the spirits. The brother jumped into the father's zola while the sister jumped into the mother's zola (woven bag). They gave such a surprise to their parents that the spirits left in fright carrying them to the other side. The mother's zola was however shallow that Senjolo yanked out of the mother's bag.

When Lupkathung reached the spirit land, he saw everyone looked so blissful, happy and healthy. He loved the place and requested his parents' spirits to let him stay there, but they

told him that it was not possible. If he really wanted to stay there, he must leave his body in the land of the living and come back to this land of the dead. He agreed to do that. His father then gave him a mysterious pouch and a lunch packed in an oyo (plantain leaf – Lothas commonly use this leaf for wrapping anything). His father instructed him that he should open the lunch before he crosses the river of the dead then open the small pouch after he cross over the river to the land of the living.

He followed the path that his father told him but he didn't open the plantain leave until he crossed over the other side of the river. When he crossed the other side of the river, engrossed to see what was there inside the plantain leave, he found dead leaves and husk of rice inside it. He was upset for defying his father's words and so he gingerly wrapped the lunch again and crossed to the other side of the river to the land of the spirits. There he opened the lunch again and saw that there was delicious meal wrapped in it. As he took a bite of the lunch, he found himself slowly drifting to the land of the living. When he opened the pouch that his father instructed him to open it in the land of the living, in a flash he was taken at home to his sister.

They were so happy to be reunited again, but before the brother could relate everything he did and saw there, he died and went to the land of the spirits.

Long time ago it was believed that the spirit of the dead takes the living form and visit near and dear ones to help them in their distress. Lothas also popularly believe that when one keeps dreaming of dead people, they either fall sick or do not live long. Thus, this story also brings out some superstitious beliefs of the Lotha people.

LFT 17 The Man Who Travelled to Echu-Li (Land of the dead)

There are stories among the Lotha tribe that a place called echu li (land of the dead) existed and that it was hard for any men to discover the place and if by some luck they discovered, it was hard for them to return. Such was the story of a man who lost his way while looking for a fertile plot of land to till a farm. This man was very picky about the plots he used to till as there were many stories of families and children going hungry due to poor crop field and the least, he wanted was for them to go hungry.

After many days of searching, he found a very fertile land deep in the forest. That land was filled with vegetation that made him wonder how it was possible as the harvest time was long past. But on a second thought he realised that this land must be very fertile and he should claim it before anyone does it.

As he got nearer to the field, he noticed that the trees were full of fruits; the creepers were flowering and bearing fruit. He kept down his pharü(bamboo basket), which carried his essentials for farming, walked around the whole field and tried almost all the fruits that were growing. After trying out almost all the fruits he even filled his pharii with the fruits and vegetables found in the field. After filling the pharii he started to walk home happily. He walked for a long time he realised he had walked enough to have reached his village but he had not. In fact, when he turned back, he was at the same spot that he started. He thought he must have mistaken his route and started his way homeward again, but this time marking every step he took. But this time as well he was back at the same spot where he started.

Now the man got scared and started to panic. He suddenly realised it must be the fruits that he had taken and left the fruits and vegetables he collected and ran as fast as he could to the village. In no time he was back at his village all shaking and trembling as he narrated his

story. As he narrated the story, everybody concluded that he must have landed up in the Echu Li (land of the death).

Echu Li is a place as told by the forefathers that no one has seen it and if by luck they have, no living being were allowed to take back anything from there as the living and the dead cannot mingle and share the same food. Up to this day it is said that when one gets the view of Echu Li it is seen nestled far away in the mountain where no one can ever reach.

The Lothas say that Echu Li is situated somewhere in Mount Tiyi and that the spirits of the death would have to first cross the mountain to go to their final fate.

LFT 18 The story of Likonthung

Once in a faraway village, there lived a rich man by the name Likonthung. He was a very rich man and as rich as he was, he was also generous and helped his villagers in time of need. Poor villagers would not leave his sight for the hope of getting his love. Villagers would come to him asking for rice as a loan and he would give them the best rice from his barns and tell them to return only when they can; it was a customary to pay back double of what was taken from someone. He would give to the widows and weak and ask for their blessings instead.

One day Likonthung felt so ill that his dog kept barking and howling through the night. At length of time when he became worsen, the dog had stopped barking inside their fence and now was barking outside their backyard. Even when the wife of Likonthung went to stop the dog several times, it wouldn't cease to stop barking. The health of Likonthung worsened and passed away before he could see the next day. It is a superstitious belief among the Lothas that when dogs howl it is a sign that someone is to die. There is also a belief that dogs can see sense and see spirits.

It was sad news for the whole villagers for both the ones who genuinely liked him as well as people who did not favour him much as they were jealous of him. All the villagers gathered at his house, some sincerely paying their homage, some pretending to be sad while some thinking of ways to repay their loans.

Many days after Likonthung passed away, some villagers came to his wife asking her to pay back their loan of rice she has taken from them. His wife was surprise of the accusation that was being made at her as she had never taken anything from anyone till date. When she said it was them who took, they refused and were adamant that it was her and her husband who took from them.

When they would not listen to her, she at last said that she will take the help of a shaman who will then summon her husband's soul and decide who is speaking the truth.

With that said, a shaman was called and the soul of Likonthung was summoned. When his soul was told of why he was summoned, he took out a long list of names of the villagers who owed him. When he did, the elders of the villagers present there were angry at the people falsely charging the widow. It is customary in a Lotha society that whenever there is an issue to solve, the elders of the village were always addressed to be present in the discussion so that they can give the final verdict.

Soon when the judgement was done, Likonthung went back to the land of death. At the gate of the land of dead, the gate keeper asked Likonthung why he had to go back to the land of the living. Likonthung retold the whole story of why he had to go there, how the villagers were accusing him and his wife of taking rice from them when, in fact, it was them he was giving rice when he was alive. When the gate keeper heard the story he was so furious and decided that she will never let those that carry debt, greedy and evil to set foot in the land of peaceful death. She will rather banish them where trouble and hardship resides.

It is through this tale that the old folks would say not to leave any debts behind and to repay everything if one wants their soul to dwell blissfully after death.

LFT 19: The Revenge of a Man on Rakhenshumi

Once upon a time, there was a man who had two sons. One day unfortunately, his elder son got sick and died. The parents did not remember to leave any gifts for Rakhenshumi, the spirit that guards the gate between the death and the living, so Rakhenshumi did not allow the spirit to drink the water from the pond that makes the dead to further travel into the world of the dead. So, the spirit of the man's elder son got stuck in the middle world where it was no place for the living as well as the death.

After some years had passed, the second son of the man too fell very ill and died. He prayed to God to give him back his only son but it was of no avail. The man was so heartbroken that he sent off many expensive gifts along with him so that Rakhenshumi will allow him to pass through the gate.

The elder son who was still stuck in the middle world saw how his younger brother was decorated with expensive gifts and got really angry and sad at his father for not even sending a simple gift so that he can cross the gate while his brother had all expensive gifts with him.

The elder son approached his younger brother and snatched away all his gifts and presented it to Rakhenshumi. The elder son of the men was able to cross the gate while the younger one was left again in the middle world. The younger brother begged his brother to at least leave him some gifts so that he can cross the gate but his brother did not even turn to his side.

The man heard about the fate of his younger son through some people who gets in touch with the spirits of the dead people through dreams. The man was dejected for not being fair with

his two sons. He was also angry with Rakhenshumi for being mean even towards little children and thus took an oath to slice off Rakhenshumi's breast when he dies.

The men instructed his wife and family to place a lepok (machete) covered with oyo (plantain leaf) when he dies and when the leaf cut itself through it will be a sign that he has slice off Rakhenshumi's breast.

At leangth, the men too died and his wife and family, as requested by him, placed the finest lepok (machete) covered in an oyo (plantain leaf). As the man has said, the oyo (plantain leaf) that was used to cover the lepok (machete) cut through itself. When they checked to make sure they were even more amazed to find that there was bloodstain on the lepok (machete). It is for this reason said that Rakhenshumi has only one breast.

This story brings in many fables that are still believed by the Lotha people. For instance, the mentioning of the pond where the men's older son was denied to drink from, is a pond that is believed to be existed even to this day in the mountains of Tiyi which the Lothas believe is the gateway that separates death and alive. Also, there is a believe which is found practiced still by some people to keep a lepok (machete) near their door if they feel the presence of some bad aura at night or is disturbed by some unexplained paranormal activities. It is said the lepok (machete) scares the spirits away.

3.1.2: Spirits and Supernatural Tales as Etiological tales.

Etiological tales denotes causation of things and events that are most commonly religious, mythological and historical consisting of legends, history and historical anecdotes which most commonly are found in the genres of Spirits and Supernatural tales. The tales of Spirits and Supernatural under this sub-heading are as follows:

LFT 20: The Boy and the Water Spirit

LFT 21: Man Who Turns to an Atsang

LFT 22: The Story of Humchupvuli woman

Translation of the above selected and numbered Lotha folktale LFT 20 have been translated from Lotha to English by self for better understanding of the Lotha Folktales through an oral interview. LFT 21 and LFT 22 have been referred from the book *Moonlight Tales and Fables of the Kyong Nagas* by Francis Kikon.

LFT 20: The Boy and the Water Spirit

On a bright morning day, one February month, which is usually the best time of the year for fishing, a boy went down to the river side for fishing. It was already dark but the boy did not return home. The father, worried about his son, took some men from the village and went down to the river in search of him. The villagers turned the place upside down but could not find the boy. The father filled with remorse wandered alone along the bends of the river when he suddenly saw a long strand of hair on the ground. The father picked up the hair thinking it belonged to his son.

The hair was so long that he kept winding it around his finger. So long was the hair that he continued to wind the strand of hair and lost track of time. Before long, he realised he had already passed eight bends of the river.

Suddenly a water spirit came ashore. The water spirit had forgotten about the hair ashore the previous day. The water spirit cried out to set her free but the man replied not until she returned his son to him. The water spirit begged him to let her go and promised to bring his son back. The man let go of the spirit and trusted the spirit to keep hers too. The spirit having liked the trust and integrity shown by the man gave the man a gift of dried fish and promised

to bring his son the next morning at the same place. As promised, the boy was set free and the man and his village got the gift of ngasü (dried fish) which is a popular food item till date.

The love for ngasü among the Lotha people is not something to be missed out. Ngasü is a popular food item that the Lothas would include in any and every cuisine possible. The most popular food item of the Lothas, “Machu-han” cannot be completed without the addition of ngasü in it.

LFT 21: Man Turning to an Atsang (Catfish)

Once upon a time, a man from far away Lotha village took some children down to his oli(field) to work. It is customary for the Lothas to take people to work in their fields and when they do, the owner has to prepare the lunch for everyone he took to help him in his field.

At noon time when the children ask for nshu(lunch pack) the man told them it was still not the time for nshu and made them to work. At intervals when the children ask for lunch, he would give the same reply over and over again. The man made the children to work from morning till dusk without any food.

Having had enough refusals, the children went down to the river and became catfish. The man called out to the children to come out and that he would offer them food but the children refused as they knew he would do the same as before. The children responded to the man that they have now forgotten about human food and that they would rather stay as catfish and feed on the foods available in the water.

The children each had a lejub (Machete holders)on their back. Lejub are a significance of manhood to the Lothas and likewise, it was customary for every Lothamale to wear a lejub while at work. When the children turned into an atsang (catfish) the lejub (machete holder)

took a prominent mark at the back of their body. That is why it is believed that atsang has a mark on them like a lejub (machete holder).

LFT 22: The Story of Humchupvuli Woman

It was a custom among the Lothas that if any man wants to take a wife, the man has to go to her parents' house for lonhyaka (a period of betrothal) and work in the house of the parents of the woman until he is proven fit to marry their daughter. Once in a certain village, there was a man who wanted to marry a girl from the other village despite of his parents' constant suggestion of women from their same village. He went to that woman's village, completed the lonhyaka (period of betrothal) and married her. When they were on their way back to the man's village, excited that he got himself a beautiful wife, the man put his wife inside the wooden basket that was gifted to them as a wedding gift. It was a long way home and he was tired. It is not clear what the man did exactly but it is said that the wooden basket was left alone nearby a stream. There are versions we could find that the man went to the village to call his relatives to carry the wooden basket home as it was heavy and he was tired. The other version also brings light to us that the man was tired and did not want to call his relatives from the village therefore he slept away near the basket. Whatever the version of the story maybe, his wife inside the wooden basket came out of the basket and went to the stream. The water cleared its ripples to let the lady see her reflection clearly. The lady looked at herself and went back inside to the wooden basket.

Now a spinster, by the name of Humchupvuli, happened to cross that path where the basket was lying and was filled with curiosity of what could be inside. Curiosity took over him and she tried to peep inside the basket only to find a beautiful lady and was instantly jealous. She drew the lady out from the basket and with her bare hands tried to tear the lady into pieces and threw away its remains after which she went inside the basket pertaining to be the lady.

The husband without any knowledge of what had happened carried the wooden basket on his back and started his way home. As he reached his home, his family, relatives and friends were already there to see his new bride he brought from another village. When he summoned his bride to come out from the basket, the man as well as the people gathered there were equally shocked to see the bride. Where a beautiful bride should have come out from the basket, an ugly woman stepped out from the basket. The man was equally stunned like the people gathered there. The people mocked at him for bringing an ugly bride when he could have married beautiful maidens from his own village. The man knew it from his heart that it was not the same woman he married to but he continued to stay with her.

One day when he went down to collect rhujak (bamboo shoot), he saw very beautiful ones that has sprung up from the place he had last seen his bride. He collected them and took it home thinking those rhujaks (bamboo shoots) looked like his beautiful lost bride. When he put it in a pot and the water boiled, instead of making its usual sound it started to say something else when Humchupvuli turns that side. It would boil with the words,

“Humchupvuli.....Humchupvuli.....the one who tore me into pieces and took away my husband.”

Humchupvuli when she heard of it for the first time did not understand what it was saying so called her husband to listen how the pot was boiling that day. The husband heard what the pot was singing and thought that it was a bad omen and threw the curry away. Many days went by and from the place where he threw the rhujak (bamboo shoot) sprung an orange tree. The tree bears luscious oranges that were not very common to the land they lived. Every time the husband was around, the tree would bear beautiful fruits and bend toward him for easy pluck but when Humchupvuli was at home, the tree looked as though infested with pest but the tree remains upright so that she cannot pluck any fruit from that tree.

When the end of the season for oranges came, the tree too had its last piece of beautiful orange grown on it that the tree made the husband to eat it. The husband after eating the fruit could not find the heart to throw away the orange peel kept it in the wooden basket given to him and her wife on their wedding day. The husband still was not over yet with his first original bride.

Something magical happened that night as the orange peel inside the basket turned into her beautiful bride but she did not reveal her identity to them. She would wait for her husband and Humchupvuli to leave the house then come out of the basket to attend to wifely duties. She would clean, cook and even make the beds though it was only in the side of her husband. At first, they thought it was their neighbour so went to thank them but they denied it was them saying they could not even finish their own work at home.

Having no such answer to the many things happening in their house, one day he decided to let Humchupvuli go to the field while he stay back to check who was doing all those work in his house. To his surprise, he saw that his first wife jumped out from the wooden basket. When he saw his first wife, he was so stunned but was ecstatic to see her again. The bride then told her husband how Humchupvuli had torn her into pieces and was thrown away which turned her into a bambooshoot then an orange. When the husband heard the story he felt he was betrayed and could not forgive her that he started to sharpen his machete and waited for Humchupvuli to return home from the field.

When Humchupvuli returned from the field bringing a basket full of taro, she called out for her husband to come and help her to unload her things. The husband without hesitation drew her neck with his lepok (machete). As he cut her head, Humchupvulli last uttered the word “Wild taro” before her head hit the ground. For that reason, it is believed that if one eats a

wild taro cut from a lepok (machete) it will give incisive itching sensation in our throat no matter how well it is cooked and consumed.

Lotha people to this day advice taros to be cleaned properly and cut by knives before cooking but never with a lepok (machete).

3.1.3: Spirits and Supernatural Tales as Moral Tales

The Lothas being an animist during the primitive times, Spirits and Supernatural Tales influences much of their superstitious beliefs but we too can find tales that gives moral lessons as in the tales mentioned below.

LFT 23: The Tale of Tchupvuo

LFT 24: The Angel and the Village Maiden

LFT 25: The Widow and the Boys from the Chumpho

In the tales of this sub-section, LFT 23 has been referred from the *A Girl Swallowed by a Tree* by Nzanmongi Jasmine Patton. LFT 24 has been referred from the *Moonlight Tales and Fables of the Kyong Nagas* by Francis Kikon, LFT 25 has been translated into English from a written record of *Kyong TathiJuli (The Lotha Naga Customs and Cultures)* by N. T Ngullie.

LFT 23: The Tale of Tchupvuo

Unlike in our present times, long time ago, people did not make their works an excuse to take a time out to socialise with their tribesmen. They had time to spend time with each other and organise activities to create a spirit of brotherhood and to entertain them. A certain group of man from certain village decided to go for pyozhu (community fishing). It was post harvest, the best time considered by the Lothas for fishing and so they decided to meet at the

Chumpho (dormitory) and make plans. Fishing especially pyozhu (community fishing) was an activity that the Lothas took it with outmost interest.

On the day of their pyozhu, the men started their day with a rice beer as they would do to begin with any activity. After a cup of rice beer, the men went in the water and begin to thrash the ono (a poisonous root) in the water. They waited as the ono takes time to sedate the fish after which they all set about in different directions to collect the fishes. During this time, the younger ones will always be warned by the elders to be careful at the deep ends as there could be a chance to get drowned.

Among them was a man who always looks for an opportunity to do things that he could brag about later to others. That day too he went on the other side that the elders warned the young ones not to go. The fishes after being sedated by the ono (poisonous root) always floats towards the deep ends and so he wanted to catch the fishes from there. When the man went towards the side, he chose to collect the fishes, he saw countless number of fishes floating on the surface; he was happy at that sight but at the same time he spotted something that gave him chills to his bones. He saw a heart at the deep of the water, a heart that was made by three human skulls. During the olden times a hearth was made by three stones for a sturdy support while cooking as they had no iron rods or pipes to make a proper fireplace like what the present generation do. A hearth made of skull was something he had never seen before. The mud around that deep end was grey in colour to show the remnant ashes of fire.

The man was in great shock that he stood there lost in many thoughts. Tchupvuo, the water spirit who was much feared by the people, interrupted him. Tchupvuo told the man that the place he stood was his area and that he will give him a lot of fishes since he is already there but to make no mistake of coming back. He instructed him to take the fish back to the village never to return again. Tchupvuo then tied a huge quantity of fish and put it in the omvu (a

thin bamboo splinters used by the Lothas to tie things). The longer the omvu the bigger was the bundle. He thought to himself that even if he collected the fishes that floated towards his side it would never be amounted to the fishes that were given to him by the Tchupvuo. Thus, taking the fish tied in the omvu (a thin bamboo splinter) he promised Tchupvuo never to return again.

He took the fishes to the village and told everyone that it was given to him by Tchupvuo and distributed the fish among the villagers. The elders knowing how he wanted to face opportunities to brag about, reminded him not to go back to the river as he promised.

Days passed and the man got restless and wanted to go back to the river where number of fishes spontaneously floats towards the deep end. He remembered the promise he made to Tchupvuo but the thought of the fishes made him restless even more. Greed took him over and the man expecting for a greater bargain from Tchupvuo went back to the place where he saw the strange hearth and met Tchupvuo.

That was the end of his life and no one really knows what happened to him as he never returned. Story goes that he may have been killed by Tchupvuo and used him as his next cornerstone or maybe as a bragging person he never returned out of embarrassment as he never met Tchupvuo.

This tale gives us a moral lesson to not fall for greed and abstain from bragging. It warns us from showing off and bragging a lot about ourselves as someday we may fall and never come out of it.

LFT 24: The Angel and the Village Maiden

In a far away village, thoroughly blanketed by jungles, there lived a beautiful maiden that was as fair as the clouds. She possessed all the beauty and qualities that was adored by any

male suitor. Anyone that set eyes on her was charmed. Male suitors from far and near came to ask for her hand in marriage but she set her interest on none as the ones she was interested in all belong to not very wealthy families.

Since it was customary, for the Lothas to charge a high price for their eligible daughters, it was not an easy task for a man coming from a poor family to get a beautiful maiden from a well to do family.

Words about the beautiful maiden even reached the angels that one angel took the challenge. The angel took the form of a handsome man and courted her. The maiden was captivated by his easy charm and gave her word of consent if her parents approve of him. The angel went and presented himself as a rich suitor from a far away village. He was poor as he had no earthly possessions, yet his desire to take the beautiful maiden forced him to lie about his wealth.

The family was convinced of his wealth and they willingly consented to their marriage. The marriage was hosted lavishly befitting the beauty of the maiden.

When the newly wedded couple left for their home, they had to walk for months. They traversed through mountains, rivers and valleys but did not come across any land that he had described to her. When she asked her beloved husband how far they need to go still, he would reply a little further more. The Angel now had to wander in the wilderness like a nomad in search of a settlement as he had no earthly possession and he had lost all his supernatural possession after he deceived to betrothed the maiden.

The maiden who gave her heart to the stranger, regretted over her decision and everytime the sun sets she would nostalgically turn towards the direction of her parents home and cry herself to sleep.

She loved her husband so much, whose child she now carried inside her, and at the same time she longed for the comfort of her parents' home. Years after she again gave birth to another baby but even the business of motherhood and her love for her children and husband could not stop her longing to go back to her parents.

One night, while the family was asleep, she quietly left her children and husband behind and traversed the many mountains, rivers and valleys to get to her father. When she finally reached her father's home she narrated everything to them of all the hardships she had to endure after marrying the handsome stranger.

The maiden then received the proposal to marry a poor man from her village whom she once rejected. The maiden keenly observed her new husband and learnt to respect him for who he was and not for how he looked.

This story sends out the moral that marriage is not about good looks and material wealth alone.

LFT 25: The Widow and the Boys from the Chumpho

In one of the Lothavillages called Lumkhumchung there lived an old widow who dwelt in an old hut that leaned on one side and water trickled from the roofs when it rains. She was old and lived alone that she could not even till her field like the rest of the villagers but still worked hard to make ends meet.

She thought that if she lived in the mercies of some younger people, she would be in a good condition but feared that such gesture would demean her in the eyes of her village folks which was the last thing she wanted from them.

Every morning she would venture out in the forest to collect wild berries, nuts and other wild foods that the villagers flavoured but had no time to collect it and bartered it for rice and

some other basic things she needed. Along with that she reared chickens and some animals. She also had a hog which was considered the biggest in the village and everyone had an eye on it.

Every evening when the boys gathered to sleep in the Chumpho (Morung- a dormitory for boys) they would talk about how much they wanted to eat the old widow's hog. Every evening when they engaged in trivial subjects after a drink of rice beer (a locally brewed beer, a delicacy for the Nagas) that they brought from home or is presented to them by the village damsels, they would talk about how prestigious it would be to have a feast with the old widow's hog.

One day they planned to fool the widow who was always so anxious to barter her goods from others. The boys from the Chumpho (morung / dormitory) went to the widow and made a sincere proposition to her. They told her that her hog eats a lot and it was a burden for her so to exchange it for a paddy from them during the harvest. The widow thought for a while and being convinced by the sincerity of the boys, she agreed to the proposal and gave the healthy hog to the boys. The boys had a big feast that went on for many nights mimicking and making fun of the old widow's stupidity.

Harvest season was over but the boys did not give the paddy to the old widow. The old widow waited patiently thinking that the boys would bring her the paddy. Months went by but the boys did not bring her the paddy so she went to the Chumpho (morung / dormitory) and demanded for the paddy.

The boys, instead of being apologetic and ashamed for their inability in keeping their promise, they mocked and rebuked her asking her how much of paddy she would require before she dies.

The old widow was so disturbed by the harsh words thrown at her by the boys that she made up her mind to seek for the paddy that was promised to her in return of the hog she gave them.

She fixed a pointed iron shaft on her walking stick and applied some magical powder on it. She then would go to the chumpho (morung / dormitory) demanding her paddy. She would go round the chumpho japing the grounds around it with her walking stick. As she circles around, she mumbles and demands for the paddy for her hog. She repeated this for many days and every time she goes the boys would make fun of her.

One gloomy day, when the chumpho boys were making merry as usual, there was a terrifying sound that came and shook the earth that holds the chumpho and suddenly the chumpho and the boys were all engulfed by the earth. It was the area that the old widow had japed with her magic powder walking stick.

The villagers rushed to the incident and tried to rescue the boys but it was in vain. The earth had already swallowed them in. The only thing the villagers could dig out after several attempt was a bag of paddy.

The Lothas reserve respect for elders which is being transgressed by the boys who made fun of the widow and callously fooled her and deprived her of what she deserved. This story gives a moral lesson to people to love and take care of the old and the widows who have no one to help them.

3.2 Reflection of Lotha Society in Spirits and Supernatural Tales

In this chapter, we have come across tales of spirits and supernatural omens which is a clear indication of the Lotha community as people who followed animism. Tales like Sukyingo and

Ngazo (LFT 10), Shoshamo and the Lumkumros (LFT 12) and The Orphans and the Parents' Spirits (LFT 13) bring out the superstitious beliefs of the Lotha people.

In the folktale of "The Woman Who got Married to a Momon" (LFT 11), we see the structure of a Lotha house where they sleep in what we call kitchen where there is fire. Fireplaces are made in the middle of the house where they cook during the day time and sleep next to it at night. In this tale too we come across the use of plantain leaf which was usual for the woman folks of the village to collect oyo (plantain leaf) from the forest to wrap their lunch as they go to their oli (field) to work. Plantain leaves till date, are very commonly used by Lothas to wrap food or lunch, a common tradition and style shared with the other Naga tribes.

Lothas even in modern generation love fishing which is clearly reflected in the tales mentioned above. Like their primitive ancestors, Lotha people would organise themselves into groups of villages and go for community fishing. A culture, a sport, a tradition placed highly by the Lothas even to this day. The tale of "The Boy and the Water Spirit" (LFT 20) introduces us to how ngasu (dry fish) came to the Lotha people, an ingredient favourite of the Lothas even in this modern generation. The Lothas who are known for their famous machuhan (chutney) is incomplete without adding ngasu (dry fish) in it.

Through the tales in this chapter, we see that the ancestral Lothas were not just tillers but were also food gatherers. Fishing and hunting were some of the activities the Lothas practiced besides tilling their fields.

The Lothas in general are people who like to give respect since they believe that if they do not give the proper respect, they are not blessed. The Widow and the Boys from the Chumpho (LFT 25) thus, is an example through a tale of what fate awaits for one if one do not pay respect to others. The boys from the Chumpho (morung/dormitory) who merry makes in the evening with a rice beer they bring from home, or given by a maiden reflects the way

the male bachelors are made to stay in a morung together until they get married. A Chumpho is where the male bachelors are taught of all the moral and social values from the elders, a centre of their social life during the ancestral time.

Thus, Spirits and Supernatural folktales of the Lotha Nagas contain the community's superstitious beliefs, etiological and moral features, besides reflecting their socio-cultural practices, mindset, and material culture.

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CHAPTER 4

ANIMAL TALES

4.0: Introduction

Animal Tales are one of the oldest forms of narratives having a wide range of folktales based on both domestic and wild animals. Use of humanised animals in a folktale lightens the mood and allows the story to make a point without boring the listener. Animal tales are popularly found in many cultures across the world and Lotha folktales do not fall short of it. Animal tales are short in narration and can depict the folly or cleverness of the animal character and the tales most often give didactic lessons or are just plain simple but it definitely evokes the interest of the listener and reader.

4.1: Features of Animal Tales

In an animal tale, animals are the main protagonist of the plots having mostly the traits and behaviours of human being where they can talk, walk and behave like man. In the animal folktales, a man can be seen as an intruder in the animal world.

“A man in an ‘animal tale’ is an intruder in a strange world inhabited, ruled, and dominated by animals. One of the oldest forms of the narrative folktale, the animal tale is found at all culture levels in all periods.” - Jewish Virtual Library 1

Animal tales are usually fanciful as the main protagonists are always an animal making the story more interesting and imaginative.

Animal tales are meant to entertain and teach often times the endings are the basis for the morals in the tales.

4.1.1: Animal tales as Moral Tales

Folktales are characterised by the moral lessons they offer to readers and listeners. Moral tales teach a lesson of right and wrong, gives a guideline to what is considered proper behaviour and manner or may even give a general lesson on how to live one's life. In a story when animals are personified, children are more intrigued towards the story and the moral that is brought out from the story becomes even more prominent in their relevance. The following are the folktales taken up under this category:

LFT 26: The Barking Deer and the Tiger

LFT 27: The Tiger and the Bear

LFT 28: The Squirrel and the Green Pigeon

LFT 29: The Skylark and the Raven

LFT 30: The Hardworking Ant and the lazy Cicada

LFT 31: The Wildcat and the Rooster

LFT 32: The Simpleton Cricket

LFT 33: The Outcast Susuro

Attempt of translation by self has been made on LFT 28 and LFT 30 from Lotha to English through oral interview. LFT 26, LFT 27, LFT 29, LFT 31, LFT 32 and LFT 33 have been referred from the *Moonlight Tales and Fables of the Kyong Nagas* by Francis Kikon.

LFT 26: The Barking Deer and the Tiger

When the earth was first created, there lived a barking Deer in the forest. It was a proud deer as it was the biggest deer in the forest. In the same forest there also lived a ferocious Tiger who was not afraid of any animal in the forest.

One day as both were foraging in the forest alone, they came face to face on a small passage way. Both did not want to give side to each as both were filled with pride and giving side would mean capitulation of one. Both were in awe of each other but pretended as though they were filled with no fear. The tiger called out to the barking deer and challenged him to a fight as he felt confident to win. The deer, feeling the tiger's decision stupid, agreed upon the duel and asked what will be the nature of the duel. The tiger replied, "Let us see who has the sharpest teeth by nipping off the grass" to which the deer agreed.

They met near a marsh with tall grasses on the fixed date and started to nip off the grasses. It was not a problem for the deer as it was accustomed to nipping off grasses and it went on to nip off grass after grass. On the other hand, the tiger whose teeth were not made for such purposes snarled and roared in frustration as each time it tries to nip off the grass it goes between its teeth which infuriated the tiger even more.

Seeing the tiger suffer, the deer began to laugh which made the tiger to panic and meekly surrender to the deer. The deer was overjoyed and laughed even harder that the tiger wanted to run for its life but was afraid. The deer out of his excitement did not notice the fear of the tiger and shared with it that his teeth was sharp but was loose and on saying that the deer showed how its upper teeth wiggle.

Upon the stupid act of the deer, the fear and respect the tiger had for the deer disappeared. In rage the tiger roared as loudly as it could, consuming the whole forest with fear. Roaring he pounced on the deer, thus killing the barking deer.

Old folklores believe that it is because of the foolish act of the deer that tigers to this day feed on them. This story also gives a lesson that one must never expose one's weakness to anyone.

LFT 27: The Tiger and the Bear

Once upon a time there lived a young tiger and a bear who were abandoned by their mothers as they were matured enough to fend for themselves. Though they were old enough in the eyes of their mothers, at heart they were still young and were afraid to face the world alone. They missed their mother's company and it was during that time that they both met each other. Since the day that the tiger and the bear met, they spent most of the time together, playing and hunting together.

They were young and were not the best of hunters. As a result they went hungry most of the time. One day the bear dreamed of his mother and missed her dearly. In the morning the bear asked the tiger if he was interested to hunt somewhere where there was abundance of food. The tiger was obviously excited and agreed on the plan. It was a faraway place but they continued to walk when way they came across a deer's carcass. Both of them were starving but both knew that it won't be sufficient for both and so none of them took the step to claim the carcass.

After some hesitation, the tiger told the bear that it saw the carcass first so it belonged to him. But the bear also said that it was him who brought him there so it belonged to him. The tiger roared to intimidate the bear but the bear did not bother and stood its ground. In rage, both attacked each other and battled until both were exhausted and were bleeding to death.

At that time a hungry Shali (fox) happened to be passing that way and when he saw the carcass he wanted to make a claim of it but seeing the tiger and the bear, he was both hesitant and perplexed as to why they would not make a move on the carcass. The shali (fox) realised that both the animals could not make a move and so he gingerly went towards the carcass and took it away.

This story is a great lesson for everyone to not let greed take over anything as that will lead to one's downfall. If one is greedy and selfishly thinks only of oneself, there is the danger of losing everything in the end.

LFT 28: The Squirrel and the Green Pigeon

Once there lived a green pigeon that could fly onto a fruit tree and camouflaged itself with the green leaves of the fruit tree. One day while fluttering among the trees it met a squirrel who soon became friends with each other. There was no rain for months in that forest so the fruit trees did not bear any fruit, thus making it hard for the green pigeon to survive. The pigeon had new ones coming soon but there was no food so it could not even gather the strength to make an oshup (nest) for the young ones. With so much trouble the pigeon gathered twigs and laid her eggs which were soon hatched. But as times were bad in the forest there was no food for the young ones too.

However, the squirrel that lived on fig tree lived a life of abundance. The pigeon starved and so was the young ones. It was so worried it thought to herself, "I shall sell my young ones and save myself so that I can breed again the next season."

The squirrel overheard the pigeon's musing and went to inquire if it meant what it said. The pigeon told the squirrel that there have been some offers already, to which the squirrel told the pigeon to sell it to him instead of selling it to some strangers. The pigeon thought for

some time and thought that was a reasonable idea and agreed to sell it to the pigeon only if he brought something in return for the young pigeons.

“What would you give me?” asked the pigeon to the squirrel, to which he replied he would give chestnuts in return for the young ones. So, they both agreed on the deal and the squirrel brought a chestnut to the pigeon and took away the young ones.

The squirrel took the young green pigeons and rushed hurriedly. The pigeon was excited to have something at last and excitedly cracked open the first chestnut and found a lot of kernels. Hopeful, it cracked open the next chestnut but that time there was no kernel and the next one and the next but there were no kernels in any of the other chestnuts. The pigeon realised the squirrel has fooled her and lamented what she has done to her young ones. She said “I must return these chestnuts and take back my young ones from the squirrel” and flew to the squirrel.

When the squirrel saw the green pigeon flying towards him, he killed the young ones and started to roast the young pigeons. When the pigeon reached the squirrel’s place and told him that the chestnuts were all empty except for one and so she wants her young ones back, the squirrel threw the young pigeons that he was already roasting towards her. The pigeon looked at the young ones and began to cry uncontrollably saying “Aka....Aka” (this sounds like a pigeon’s cry and the direct translation of this word in Lotha means my sister but at the same time it also means my daughter in a loving emotional way). The pigeon was sad and regretted for her act towards her children and continued to cry “Akao...! Akao...!” for which the Lotha people called the green pigeon as Akao bird in Lotha dialect. Lotha folklores share this story as a lesson of friendship that friends should be the ones that stick together in times of trouble and not take advantage of those in bad times.

LFT 29: The Skylark and the Raven

The skylark would always fly around entertaining the other creatures with its beautiful melodious songs but was not happy as the eagles would always swoop down and hunt on them and their little ones. For that reason, the skylark wanted its young ones to be as swift as the swallows and grow big as the other big birds of the skies.

One day the skylark got an idea to request the swallow and the raven to lay eggs for her so that her young ones could be as swift as the swallows and as big as the ravens. The skylark went to the swallow and requested if she could lay eggs for her as she wants her young ones to be as swift as the swallows. The swallow found the request rather unusual and thought for a while. After some thinking the swallow agreed to lay eggs for the skylark. Next the skylark went to the raven with the same proposition. The raven who was perched on a tall tree responded that the request was rather odd but since the skylark sings beautiful song for them, the raven agreed to lay the eggs for her.

When the eggs were hatched the skylark was happy that the young ones could fly as swift as the swallows and would grow as big as the ravens after some time. When feathers gradually grew on the young ones, the skylark was surprised to see that the young ones hatched from the raven's egg had dark shaded feathers and grew faster, while those from the swallow's egg had colourful feathers. The skylark nevertheless loved the young ones dearly and took special care to raise them up.

One day when it was time for them to leave the nest, they flew with the skylark. They flew for a long time but they could not forage anything, until one of the young ones spotted a rat. It immediately swooped down and caught it by its claws. It asked the mother and the other siblings to join him in eating but none of them joined except one of them who also hatched from the raven's egg. The skylark reprimanded saying they do not go after rats, but each day

they went out looking for food the young ones from the raven's egg did the same. However, the ones from the swallow eggs were obedient but they flew very fast for the skylark to catch up with them.

When the young ones grew older, the ones from the raven's egg behaved like the ravens and the ones from the swallow's eggs twittered like a swallow. The skylark realised that the young ones behaved more like ravens and swallows than skylarks. It started to miss and think of the days when she would hatch her own eggs and bring up the young ones like a close knitted family.

As seasons changed, the skylark was once woken up by a gentle breeze of a spring morning. It flew and raced the clouds singing its melodious song. None of her young ones followed, in fact the young ones were scared of their mother for behaving in a strange way that morning and flew their own way. The skylark, rather depressed, perched on a tall tree and saw that the young ones from the raven's eggs were flocking with the ravens and the young ones from the swallow eggs were flocking with the swallows. At that time a squirrel came by that way and having seen the skylark depressed, asked what had happened to her. The skylark then told her the squirrel about her desire for her little ones to be like ravens and swallows.

The skylark being helpless cried and asked the squirrel for his help to bring back her little ones. The squirrel listened keenly and told the skylark that he would love to help but there was no solution for the problem the skylark has presented. The squirrel thus left the skylark with words of wisdom to appreciate and be contented with what one has in order to lead a happy life. Thus, this tale teaches the lesson of contentment, and not to be envious of others.

LFT 30: The Hardworking Ant and the lazy Cicada

Once, a Cicada and an Ant coexisted together in the same forest. The cicada sang such beautiful songs that it would fly from tree to tree singing its beautiful melodies from dawn till dusk. One day as the cicada was doing its usual round of singing while flying from tree to tree, it saw the ant had made its nest and was gathering food. The cicada watched the ant for a long time thinking to itself why the ant was always working and why such a tiny insect needs plenty of food. The cicada called out the ant and asked, “Why do you never rest and gather food all the time?”

The ant smilingly replied that it loves to do work. Some conversation exchanged between the cicada and the ant. The cicada asked, “Do you ever feel tired?” the ant replied, “NO, I am used to it.” “You are so small why to you need to gather so much food?” asked the cicada. The ant replied that it collects food now for winter. During winters when it was extremely cold the ant was afraid that it would die out of cold so it always gathers food during summer and saves it for winter.

The cicada could not understand the logic and laughed at the ant saying it was too early to think of winter when one could not even think of the next day. The ant too looked at the cicada and thought in his mind that the cicada was a fool to be wasting its time singing when it could work so much. The ant said to the cicada, “You’re laughing at me right now but you will know why I toiled so hard when winter comes.”

Winter approached and soon the fruit trees and other plants struggled to grow in that cold weather, leaving no food for most of the animals. Food that was abundant during summer now grew scarce and most animal went hungry. The cicada grew hungry and flew around in search of food but could find none. As it was flying seeking for food, it met the ant as the ant was getting ready to get inside its borrow. The cicada asked for some food to the ant but the

ant refused saying that it had collected just enough food for his family to last the winter so that his family would starve to death. So saying that the ant went inside its borrow. The cicada starved for days until it could sustain no more and died of hunger.

This tale is popular among the folks where it is narrated to children to make them realise the importance of time and how one should use it wisely and not wait for tomorrow to come when it will be too late.

LFT 31: The Wildcat and the Rooster

One day a wildcat took shelter on the same tree that a rooster lived. The next morning the wildcat was woken up all startled by the loud crow of the rooster. The wildcat got curious and went closer to see where the sound came from and saw a thick plumage of feathers on its back. The wildcat thought it must be a fearsome animal and ran away. The wildcat would observe the rooster with adoration and awe every time it crows in the morning and evening. The wildcat thought that the rooster's head was the thick plumage on its back and got even scarier. However, the wildcat could not get over its curiosity for it was the first time that it saw such an animal, and gathered all its courage to go and ask the rooster if he can be his friend. The rooster welcomed the offer with much gladness and so from that day they became good friends.

The rooster also happened to have a fox friend who invited him to his place for food. The rooster declined the offer but the wildcat insisted and which at last the rooster agreed to go only if the wildcat agreed to feed him with its hands.

The wildcat that had high regard for the rooster, took the best portion and stretched it towards the tail thinking it was the head of the rooster. The rooster burst out into laughter saying that that wasn't the head and laughed heartedly with the wildcat. It took a while for the wildcat to

realise that the supposed head was the tail and the supposed tail was the head. After the realisation the wildcat lost all respect for the rooster and stopped laughing. The wildcat then pounced on the rooster and killed it for which reason wildcats still feed on domestic animals. This story is also told as a moral lesson to listeners to never show the weakness of one even to a close confidante.

LFT 32: The Simpleton Cricket

A simpleton cricket once lived at a hollowed oak tree near the edge of a great river. It had long sturdy legs that could help in jumping and hopping from leaf to leaf. It was proud to have great legs. The cricket would prance from one to another while chirping its sound just to grab the attention of the other creatures. Everyone knew and talked about the cricket that dwelled in the hollow of the oak tree who possessed beautiful strong legs.

One day a locust passed by that way and told the cricket that it possessed beautiful legs while it has weak legs that often tired fast. The cricket was flattered and thanked the locust for the compliment. The locust then taking the chance requested the cricket, “Could you please let me use one of your legs for a few days?” the cricket was already flattered by that time and agreed to give one of its legs to the locust.

Another locust that heard of the story of how a cricket gave its legs away to one locust, tried its luck with the same trick of flattery the other locust had done on the cricket. The cricket as usual was flattered and gave away another one of its legs. A young locust also heard of the tale and approached the cricket the same way the other two locusts had approached. The young locust told the cricket he was very weak and small and it would be a great honour and kindness if the cricket would lend him the remaining legs. The foolish cricket was touched by the young locust and gave away all its remaining legs.

The cricket now had no legs with him and he realised he had made a big mistake in lending his legs to the locusts as it needs its legs to spread its wings to fly. This tale teaches and reminds children not to be fooled by flattery from strangers.

LFT 33: The Outcast Susuro (Bat)

Once upon a time, in one of those years when there were no differences between the birds and the animals, a fight broke up between the birds and the animals. All birds and animals were called for their presence to seek for an amicable solution to the fight. All the creatures came hopping for a solution but unfortunately found themselves even deeper into the argument. The birds were on the other side and the animals to the other.

They decided to select the wisest amongst them from both sides and let them decide but fight broke up between them as well. Days passed and with each passing day the situation got even worse and neither one wanted to step down for any compromise. Thus, they decided for a dual to decide who the winner is. There was a mix emotion among the animals as some wanted to fight yet some reluctant to fight.

The Susuro (bat) who has not taken any side to fight flew among the birds who were getting ready to fight. When the Susuro was asked to join them, he refused saying that he was an animal and flew away. The animals saw it and happily called the Susuro to their side but he refused them again saying that he was a bird and thus flew away again.

The day of the battle came and everyone who was not considered a bird or an animal gathered to witness the fight. As the two parties approached to fight, some strange apparition appeared before them in a cloud like form that shocked everyone present there. The thought of fighting with each other vanished from their mind. Everyone present there were baffled as

none had seen anything of this like before and none could explain what it was. Everyone went on their own way.

When peace once again prevailed among the creatures, Susuro (bat) realised its mistake and went to the birds to make peace with them. However, the birds chased the Susuro away saying he was not fit to be one of them.

Since he was not welcomed among the birds, he went to the animals and pleaded for their mercy saying he has realised his mistake. The animals who were infuriated at the susuro (bat) for being an opportunist roared at him and chased him away. The susuro escaped and from that day on dwelt in the darkness and never came out during the day. Susuro since then chose to live in between being neither a bird nor an animal.

This tale gives a moral lesson to never act like a Susuro of not having a proper side to stand for.

4.1.2: Animal Tales as Etiological tales

Animal tales are most associated with etiological tales. Those tales are usually associated with the origin of certain phenomena occurring on earth or talks about why things are as they are.

LFT 34: The Story of the Zuro

LFT 35: Oni and the Tiger

LFT 36: The Story of Ranfu

LFT 37: Hapvuro Lantssa

LFT 38: How Dog became a pet

LFT 39: How the Sepvu lost its Tail

Attempts of translation of the folktales LFT 36 and LFT 37 have been done through oral interview, LFT 34 has been re-translated from a written English record of *Our Lotha Naga* by LilanthungLotha, LFT 35 and LFT 38 has been referred from the *Moonlight Tales and Fables of the Kyong Nagas* by Francis Kikon and LFT 39 has been translated from Lotha to English through an oral interview.

LFT 34: The story of the Zuro

Long ago before the distinction of man and animals were made, there was a Tiger who visited all the animals in the forest. At that time there were two kinds of Züro(rat), small Züro and tsuntsan(bamboo)Züro. One day the tiger visited the house of both the Züros (rats) but both weren't at home.

After a while, when the mother of the small Züro came home her children informed her they had a visitor, to which she asked curiously, "Who was the visitor? How did he look?" Her kids replied that the visitor had a beautiful face like her. The mother was so happy and touched to hear that she was beautiful. So, from then on, she loved her kids more and lived together in the same house with them.

At the other house of the tsuntsanzüro, when the mother came home and inquired if they had visitor, the children told her they had a visitor who had a face as ugly as her. The mother was disheartened with the reply that she left them alone and lived separately never wanting to see her children again. For this reason, till today TsuntsanZüro never live together with each other.

LFT 35: Oni and the Tiger

Oni (wild boar) and tiger were friends for a very long time until Oni challenged tiger for a duel. Oni adhered his friend, the tiger, thus calling “Akhum(my friend), let us see the strength of each one and see what we shall do to protect ourselves.”

Tiger said he will take a cane of bamboo to wind him around his body while the oni (wild boar) said he will take some clay and mould it all over his body. The day of the fight was fixed six days from that day.

Oni clayed his body at length for six days and the tiger cut splinters of bamboo cane and wound it all around his body again and again for six days.

On the day of the fight the tiger flew to the Oni (wild boar) to bite him but got himself a mouthful of clay. When the Oni attacked tiger, he bit pieces of the bamboo cane one after another until he reached the tiger and bit him to death. While the Oni (wild boar) was heading his way home after the victory, he found a thin piece of bamboo obstructing his way. Very angrily, he seized the bamboo with his mouth for blocking its way. As he took the bamboo on his mouth to throw it away, a small splinter of that bamboo cut through his tongue which led him to his death on the spot. Another tiger came along that road and on seeing the dead Oni (wild boar), he ate it.

For this reason, it is said that when a tiger wants to catch an Oni (wild boar), he stalks the Oni for a period of time about two to three months to attack the Oni.

LFT 36: The Story of Ranfu (wolf)

Long ago, there was a hunter who lived his life hunting. He would keep ranfus as his hunting partners. He was said to be a good hunter but as days went by, age seems to have given him up so was his strength.

One day he called all his ranfus (wolves) to assemble before him. He then distributed some starched meat to every ranfu but as the meat was less, the youngest ranfu did not get a share. The man now told his ranfus, “Listen, I am old now and so I cannot go hunting. Aaranfuden (my wolves), whenever you kill any animals, always keep a piece of flesh for me at the lanshumro (crossroad).

The ranfus had forgotten what their master told them and they asked the youngest one if he remembered. The youngest one who did not get his share of meat was still disappointed with his master and so he told the other ranfus that their master told them to keep their excreta at the crossroad whenever they kill any animal. The others believed it to be true and started to keep their excreta at the lanshumro (crossroad) for their master after every hunt. For this reason, it is said that one would see the excreta of wolves near a crossroad.

LFT 37: Hapvuro lantssa (crab’s walk)

Once upon a time, in a small stream by the house in a certain village, there lived a hapvuro (crab) who made a home for itself in that river bank. A monkey happened to live nearby that stream with whom the crab became friends with. One day the hapvuro suggested to the monkey to leave behind the monotonous lifestyle they have and to venture in the forest collecting delicious tuber. The monkey agreed to the idea and they went into the forest together to search for tubers.

The monkey looked for a creeper plant that has tuber roots and when it was found the monkey would dig it out, eat it and throw it away saying, “What a tasteless tuber!”. The monkey then went ahead looking for more and when he found another, he would eat it and throw it away saying it wasn’t tasty. He did this for he was selfish and did not want the hapvuro (crab) to find any. The hapvuro (crab) who was also searching digs out a tuber when he finds one.

When the hapvuro (crab) realised the sun was almost down he called out for his friend the monkey but there was no sound as the monkey had ventured far off to the forest. The hapvuro (crab) followed the trail that the monkey left behind and finally came upon the monkey. Hapvuro was shocked to see that the monkey had no tuber with him. Lying, the monkey replied that the whole day it ventured about looking for tubers but could find nothing. Since the crab was tired it suggested to head home.

As they headed home, they came upon a huge flat rock and decided to stop and rest for a while. When the monkey saw the load of tubers hapvuro (crab) has carried he felt a pang of greed and wanted to take all the tubers for himself. As they started their journey the monkey appeared to help the hapvuro (crab) as it was getting dark and they need to reach home soon. Hapvuro (crab), refused but the monkey insisted to help him so hapvuro gave in and handed over the load of tubers to the monkey. With the load on its back the monkey went into the forest telling hapvuro (the crab), that he would bring a branch to support the load. The monkey went into the forest and away to his home.

Hapvuro waited and waited but the monkey did not return, so it took the road the monkey took and went looking for him. Up in one of the trees the monkey sat and was nibbling away the tubers. Hapvuro (the crab) called out to him to come down and give its tuber but the monkey replied "Do not disturb me while I am eating." Realising the monkey would not come down the hapvuro told the monkey that it would clamp its tongue with its pincers whenever he comes to the stream to drink water. The monkey replied that he was never returning to the stream. Hapvuro (the crab) challenged the monkey of how long he would be able to avoid the stream, and went home much disappointed.

One hot day the monkey returned to the stream to drink water from it. The monkey approached the stream being careful to encounter the hapvuro (crab). The monkey looked

around for the hapvuro but could not see it so he started to drink the water carefully and cautiously. The hapvuro (crab) had camouflaged itself in the chonphyali (slushy mud) and waited for the right time to attack the monkey. When the monkey could not control its thirst and splashed its head into the water, hapvuro (the crab) took its chance. It quickly raised its pincers and stung the monkey's tongue.

The monkey cried out in pain and requested the hapvuro (crab) to release him but it only pressed its pincers even harder. At last when the monkey said he would carry its young ones and look after them, hapvuro (crab) released its grip.

One day hapvuro made the monkey to look after its young ones as it ventured out looking for food. The monkey ate the young hapvuros (crabs) and carried a stone in its place. When the hapvuro returned home and asked for its young ones, the monkey released the stone which fell on the hapvuro (the crab) breaking some of its legs which changed the crab's lantssa (walking style) and it could walk only sideways. This is why it is believed that the crab walks sideways. This story narrates how the crab came to walk like it does.

LFT 38: How Dog became a Pet

Once in a faraway village, a man from far away reared a dog and a pig. One day the master told the animals to till his farm. The pig and the dog went into their master's field to work. The pig stomped the field throughout the day as instructed, while the dog slept the whole day under the shade of a tree. The dog slept the whole day and he woke up in the evening, he saw the pig returning home and asked the pig if there was more to plough. The pig was annoyed and angry at the dog as he did not work and made him do all the work, so he went home straight avoiding the dog's questions. The dog stayed back and stomped all over the field removing the footprints of the pig. When the dog was satisfied with its work it went home.

In the evening, when the master brought them food and asked how they worked, the pig who toiled the entire day confidently responded that he ploughed the field entirely all by himself. The dog however retorted back saying that the pig lied in the shade the whole time and made him do all the work alone. The dog and the pig began to argue among themselves so the master stopped them and said they will go in the morning and see who had done the work.

The next morning, they all went to the field together and when the master walked around the field, he saw only the footprints of the dog. When the master returned to the hut, the pig who was confident asked his master if he was satisfied with his work, but the master replied, “Not at all.” The master was so angry at the pig for lying to him. He told the pig that from then on he would stay outside the house and live on what is being served to him. The pig requested and pleaded with the master but the master did not listen to him as he was very angry at the pig. The master then turned to the dog pretty satisfyingly and told the dog that for its hard work and obedience, the dog shall forever be beside the master and eat whatever the master eats.

Since that time it is believed that dogs are kept as pets inside the master’s house by their owners while pigs were cast out never permitted to get inside the house.

LFT 39: How the Sepvu (stag) lost its Tail

Once upon a time there lived a sepvu (stag) and a monkey who were very close with each other, almost inseparable. Sepvu (the stag) had a long beautiful tail with which it chases away flies while the monkey having none, always looked at the sepvu’s tail and admired. Each passing day the admiration and desire to possess such a tail grew stronger and stronger with the monkey.

The monkey was selfish and scheming in his friendship with sepvu (the stag) and friendship with it only to possess its tail. On the other hand, the sepvu (the stag) had no alternate motive in his friendship with the monkey and appreciated their friendship and rendered any help to the monkey whenever needed.

The monkey would praise the sepvu (the stag) of having a beautiful tail, to which the sepvu (stag) becomes quite excited with the compliments. Every day the monkey would shower sepvu (stag) with flattering words and made him feel pampered. One day as they were foraging through the forest, the monkey tried to tell something to the sepvu (stag) but pretended as though he was embarrassed to say it out loud. The sepvu (stag) encouraged the monkey to speak up and told the monkey “Speak up my friend without any worry and if there is anything that I can do it for you I would most obliged to do it for you.” It was the right word the monkey wanted to hear from the sepvu (stag) and he took the chance and spoke up. The monkey asked for a chance to wear the sepvu’s beautiful tail, for once, to which the sepvu agreed with no reprehension. Sepvu pulled out its tail and handed it over to the monkey. The monkey put on the tail and said it feels good and on saying that he climbed up a tree never looking down to return the tail to the Sepvu.

When the Sepvu (stag) realised the monkey was not going to return his tail back, it pleaded the monkey to return its tail as it would be difficult to live its life without it. Annoyed with the stag’s cry the monkey climbed a higher tree and went away. The Sepvu (stag) hung its head in despair and embarrassment for trusting someone such as the monkey and blamed itself for not being wise.

Whenever the Sepvu (the stag) looked over its shoulder towards its missing tail it would feel more dejected and embarrassed. The Sepvu would often think what it should do to fix its look. It wondered for days and at last the Sepvu (the stag) took out a small portion of its liver

and made a tail. It is said that for this reason the meat of a stag's tail tastes like a liver, a portion that is a favourite of every hunter.

4.2: Reflection of Animal Tales on Lotha Society

Animal tales has a lot of moral lessons and it is not uncommon for Lotha parents to train their children from the morals that an animal tales has.

Reflection of animal tales on Lotha society could also be seen in how the hunters determine their path for hunting. For instance, a hunter knows the presence of a wolf in the forest whenever they see excreta near a crossroad like the tale The Story of Ranfu (LFT 32) brings out. It is also said that excreta of a wolf can be differentiated from the rest of the animal's excreta because a wolf's excreta will only be full of furs of an animal.

Naga areas are rich in flora and fauna which is especially reflected in these animal tales. The mention of different kinds of animals and birds such as tiger, bear, deer, wildcat, wild boar, wolf, fox, stag, squirrel and birds like green pigeon, skylark, raven, rooster, and insects like cicada and cricket only affirms the rich fauna in the land of the Lothas. There are also mentions of crab, bat, rats and dogs.

Bamboo is very significant for the Nagas in general, and it is used for different purposes besides using it as bamboo shoot delicacy, like in making baskets, tying strings, making fences or even used in making houses.

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CHAPTER 5

TALES OF ORIGIN

5.0: Introduction

The many unexplained phenomena in the world and the gap of not knowing the answers of why certain phenomenon occurred can sometimes make one come up with tales and fantasy to fill the gap. Tales of Origin or Etiological tales are narratives that explain the origin or causation of some events, customs and answer the questions of why certain things are the way it is or why some events occur or exist of us. Etiological tales are very common in the folktales of communities and one can find number of such tales even among the Lotha tribes.

5.1: Features of Tales of Origin

The most common elements of tales of origin are that it talks about why certain things are the way it is. Origin stories have affiliations with supernatural events or with events and situations created by people intentionally or unintentionally. One can find a lot of early history and heritage through origin tales which can be a great tool for learning and revisiting ancestral history and culture.

In most cases, origin tales have one storyline where it shows human relation with nature, to animals, of primitive people's beliefs and their interdependency with nature and animals. For instance, in Lotha folktales we find how night and day was separated, about how animals like monkey, serow came into being, or how the Lothas started using machu (chilly) as part of their food ingredients, or learnt the use of Notsu (poisonous root) which is commonly used by the Lotha tribe during community fishing and Onyi (sticky gum latex from a banyan tree). The discovery of Machu (chilly) the most common ingredients of the Lotha tribe, happened by chance and there may not be an exact narration of how it came into being. The Lothas

believe that they started using chillies in their curries after a family discovered it in their backyard. Having first thought of it to be poisonous, the father asked his mentally and physically slow son to try it, the chilly miraculously healed on the son, after which they started to use machu (chilly) in everything they cooked.

The Lothas living around the Doyang river from time to time, host community fishing where they use notsu to poison the water and catch the fishes, a trait learnt and picked by a man, who according to the tales, once overheard the fishes and the birds fighting over how one can destroy the other.

5.1.1: Causation and Discovery Tales

In this study we will look at some of the causation and discovery tales of the Lotha tribes that has been passed down for generations and have been taken as the centre for their existence.

LFT 40: The Story of a Mother Turning to a Serow

LFT 41: The Story of How Machu was Discovered

LFT 42: The Boy Who Turned into a Mungya

LFT 43: The Story of the Sunbird and the Owlet

LFT 44: The Sun and the Moon

LFT 45: The Story of Gibbons

LFT 46: The Story of How Notsu was Discovered

LFT 47: The Challenge Between Fire and Wind

LFT 48: The Story of Hotsu and Two Friends

Attempts have been made to re-translate LFT 45 and LFT 47 from *Our Lotha Naga* by LilanthungLotha. LFT 40, LFT 41, LFT 42, LFT 43, LFT 46 and LFT 48 has been referred from *Moonlight Tales and Fables of the Kyong Nagas* by Francis Kikon and LFT 44 from *A Girl Swallowed by a Tree* by Nzanmongi Jasmine Patton.

LFT 40: The Story of a Mother Turning to a Serow

Once in a small house at the edge of a forest their lived a woman whose husband would often get drunk and beat her or abuse her with bad words. Life was very hard for the wife as she has to do all the work of taking care of the house and tilling the field. Thoughts of returning to her father's house often come to her mind every time she is treated badly. However, the thought of separating from her two daughters pain her heart so much that she gives up on the idea of going back to her father's house.

To ease her pain, she would chant melodies of sad, lamenting strains while working in the fields Her eldest daughter would join in from the hut where she was left to take care of her little sister. Everyone and anyone that hears her stirring strains fill their eyes with tears as the people could feel her emotions in the melodies of the song she sang.

As time went by, the eldest daughter grew into a responsible girl, who besides taking care of her sister, knew the works that were beyond her age. One day as the mother went to rest in the hut, she had an unusual itch on her head and asked her daughter to check if there was something. The daughter did not see anything and thought it was trivial to keep checking.

The following day again she called her daughter to check through her hair as the itching was excruciating. The daughter was shocked to see what she found in between her mother's long strand of hairs and exclaimed there were horns growing from her head. Her mother was taken aback by the daughter's anguish and asked her to check it again to confirm it. The daughter

was so shocked that she could not hold her tears back and cried inconsolably. The mother however consoled her and made her promise not to utter a word about it to her father or to her friends.

As days went by, the eldest daughter would lovingly preen her mother's hair to check if horns were growing any longer, while she puts the youngest one to sleep. As days turned to weeks the horns grew longer that it was difficult to be covered with her long thick hair.

One day as they went to the field to work as on normal days, the mother did not work but sat with her daughters and sang melancholic songs the whole day. In between, when she stops to sing, she would narrate stories or advise her eldest daughter about life. The daughter was somewhat puzzled by her mother's behaviour that day. As evening drew upon them the mother asked the daughter to come to her and sit next to her. As she hugged her daughter, she could no longer control her tears and amidst her tears told her daughter to be a good and strong woman when she faces challenges in life and to take care of her sister and to remember that she loved her and her sister so much.

The daughter still crying and still not getting what her mother meant kept asking why she was telling her such things and continued to cry. The mother told her that she was turning into a serow (a goat with long mane) hence the horns were growing on her head. She told her daughter to relate everything to her younger sister when she comes of age and to let her know she loved them both so much.

As the day came to an end the mother knew it was time for her to go but could not leave her daughters. It is believed that even the birds of the forests, the trees and rocks, wept at the sad scene.

The mother made the daughter promise not to disclose it to anyone of what had happen to her as she slowly takes the form of a Serow. The daughter looking at what was becoming of her mother lifted her sister and ran home. Looking back at the hut from a far distance, the daughter waved and cried out to her mother to be watchful of hunters and wild animals. The daughters dearly missed their mom.

The daughter's warning to her mother who then has transformed into a Serow to be watchful of hunters and wild animals is believed to be a reason why Serows are difficult to be spotted by predators and hunters.

LFT 41: The Story of How Machu (chilly) was Discovered

Long time ago when people migrate to different lands in search of a proper land to settle or to establish a village, a family had also made their home in a new land. As they settled in their new home, there was much to do as they had to build up everything from scratch. An urgent need being to lay food on the table, the family gave more time on tilling their field and had no time to clean their backyard.

One day the father noticed that weeds had grown around the house and decided to cut it. While he was clearing the backyard off the weeds, he noticed an unusual small plant growing among the weeds and thought to himself that it may be different from the rest of the plants and decided to keep it to see what comes out of it.

After many days, the father went to see the plant and noticed that it had grown much healthier with new branches shooting, he thought to himself, "Surely this plant is different." After many days again he went to check on the plant, but this time he noticed that there were some fruit like parts sprouting out from the plant. By then some had become like red flowers while

some were still green. He wondered to himself what kind of plant it must be and if it was safe to eat the fruit of the plant.

Now this man had three sons. One of the children, the middle one called, Yimben, was mentally and physically not as sound as his two brothers. It seems as though the son literally took after the name, “Yimben” which means “little imperfect.” Yimben not only was slow mentally but also stammers as he speaks. So, when the father discovered the fruit, he showed his wife and they decided to let Yimben try it first as it looked edible.

They plucked the machu and went in to call Yimben for him to try it. When Yimben took it and ate it, his expression started to change. His face flushed red and his mouth was burning but he got a tasty sensation after having it. As parents waited impatiently for his reaction, Yimben surprised them by saying without stammering that it was fit to be eaten and that it was tasty. The parents tried it too and found out it was hot but tasty. However, the most surprising thing for them was not the discovery of machu (chilly) but that their son could now speak properly. Hence, from then on, the family decided to use chillies in everything they cook except for rice.

This tale is about how chillies came to be a regular food ingredient of the Lotha tribe.

LFT 42: The Boy Who Turned into a Mungya (a flying lizard)

In a village blanketed by a thick forest, there lived a little boy with his parents. Since the people in the village depended on agriculture, all the village folks were farmers. As was the custom of the villagers, when the grown-ups go to the field, the children were left under the care of their elder siblings who, themselves, were also not matured enough to go to the field or were left under the care of older people who were too weak for vigorous labour.

One day when the parents went to the field, the little boy was left at home with his sister. The sister was lazy so she would not do any work and asked his little brother to do all the chores. When it was afternoon, the little boy became a little hungry and asked for food from his sister. The sister who was lazy as well as manipulative, would always ask him to finish a chore when he demanded for lunch just because she was lazy to prepare it. She asked him to fetch water, collect fire woods and clean the house every time he asked for food.

The sister was lazy but she knew that her brother could not pound the rice in the pounding pit, so she did the work. The little boy was extremely hungry by that time so he went and asked for food but once again his sister refused and angrily asked why he pesters her so much and that he will be offered the lunch after she was done with her work.

The little boy was so sad at the callousness of his sister towards him that he wept uncontrollably and went in the kitchen to drink water to subdue his hunger for some time. He then went into his parent's room and collected some rags and tied it on his neck, hands, legs and bodies, after which he went to his sister and told her that because he was not given anything to eat, he has decided to become a Mungya (flying lizard). He then went on to climb a huge tree near his house and made a sound "Mung-ya! Mung-ya!" furthermore, he looked down at his weeping sister who by that time was crying and looking up at him half sad, half afraid of what to tell their parents. The sister begged the little boy to come down and she will prepare lunch for him. However, everytime the sister calls him, he would climb up a higher branch.

The sister was filled with tears, regret and remorse at what she has done to her little brother and cried inconsolably. The little boy from up the tree threw down a twig at his sister which it hit her eyes. While the sister bent down to clear her eyes of the pieces of the twig that fell on her eyes, the rags that were tied to his neck, legs and hands turned into wings. The little boy

who turned into a mungya (flying lizard) flew across the trees singing “Mung-ya...Mung-ya”, and from then on the creature was called a Mungya (flying lizard).

Feeling sad that the boy had turned into a mungya, everytime its sound was heard the villagers lamented and replied that they love him.

This mungya is said to appear in the month of September and November. Since it is said by the Lotha people that a little boy turned into a flying lizard, they warn people not to harm any mungya (flying lizard).

This folktale tells of origin of the mungya (flying lizard) and of why Lothas refrain from harming the mungya.

LFT 43: The Story of the Sunbird and the Owlet

In the beginning of time there was neither proper day nor proper night and the sun would shine for days and the darkness would fall for nights. All creatures living on this earth were finding it difficult to survive and therefore decided to have a meeting and fix the problem.

The news thus spread out and the animals gathered at one spot to decide whether keep the day or the night. The discussion that almost felt like a fight, went on for days and nights but they could come to no conclusion as the creatures that roamed by day supported for Day to continue and the animals that roamed by night supported for Night to continued. However, there were also some that lost interest because of the prolonged argument and went away. The ones who stayed back could also not come up with a proper decision.

Finally, an owlet perched in a corner, spoke out and gave its opinion to have day and night for nine days alternately. When out came those words from the owlet’s mouth, everyone present there shouted, yelled and threw abusive words at the owlet. Then they all gathered around the owlet and smacked at its face one after another. The owlet who had a round and a

beautiful face, was now flat and ugly. The owlet was so embarrassed that he flew away from there, dejected and disgraced, promising never to fly in the daylight again.

Days passed after what had happened to the owlet, but none wanted to take their chance to speak, until a red chest sunbird took the courage to speak. The sunbird gave a suggestion that they should have a day and a night alternately with equal interval of time, which made all the creatures happy. The idea was applauded and cheered by all present there. They all gathered around the sunbird and showered their praise and appreciation for the good idea as they stroked and kissed the sunbird. The sunbird that was believed to be as big as a rooster was eventually toned down to a small bird. However, it was the idea of the sunbird that both day and night alternately follow each other.

This story tells of the reason why owlets now fly and hoot only in the night time. This story also gives a reason of the division of day and night.

LFT 44: The Sun and the Moon

During the time when the earth was still at its beginning, the Moon, which was then the sun, gave out such great light and heat that plants withered on the surface of the earth and animals parched for water. It was difficult for both animals and plants to survive on earth.

The people were filled with anxiety and frustration as more animals died and more plants withered. They could do nothing for their survival as the Moon continued to aggressively shine upon them. The people prayed to the Moon and requested the Moon to reduce its brightness but the Moon who was consumed with pride, did not bother to listen and continued to shine even brighter.

People were now more angry than worried. One day, an old widow, could not contain her frustration that she picked up a handful of mangsuchu (cow dung) and threw over the Moon

with all her strength and might. It covered part of the face of the Moon that it lost its brightness. The Moon never got back to its old form and to this day Lothas say that whenever we look up to the clear full moon, we can see the spots of mangsuchu (cow dung) on the Moon.

LFT 43 and LFT 44 may have some similarities to the stories yet may vary in the story style of how the Moon got its dark spots. This kind of origin tales however, attempts to answer many facts and situation though may not give clarity in the tales. It is most possible that parts of this story has been lost.

LFT 45: The Story of Gibbons

Once in a big village lived a very wealthy man called Kimongthung. One day he invited his brothers-in-law and treated them with the best brewed rice beer and told them of the reasons they were invited. He told them that he has a plan of erecting a monolith. It was an honour not many people get to erect a monolith in their name so the brothers-in-law were delighted and excited about the plan.

He then requested his brothers-in-law to bring a tree that he has cut down and kept near the paddy field for the monolith as an initial rite before erecting; they were to fetch the tree without shedding a single leave from the tree. The in-laws after consuming large quantity of rice beer heed for the task followed by their wives. They joked and jostled on their way with excitement until they reached the spot.

When they arrived at the site, they lifted the tree from the stem and dragged it while singing along their way. They have not gone for when, they saw leaves shedding away from the tree so they lifted the branches above the ground and went ahead singing and celebrating, but they saw that even in that position they couldn't control the leaves from falling off.

They could do nothing as the tree had been cut down for days and it needed only a slight touch for the leaves to fall. However, knowing that, the in-laws were too embarrassed as they failed to do one work entrusted to them. They decided not to return to the village as it was a matter of honour for them which they clearly failed to keep it. They had no courage to face their wealthy brother-in-law, Kimongthung and after much deliberation and contemplation, they decided to transform into a Myna bird making weird sound - “kion...kion”. The female too smeared their forehead with white yeast used for making rice beer and flew away becoming a Gibbon making the sound - “Okang...okang”.

It is believed that, for this reason, we see white patch on the forehead of a Gibbon bird and the hill Myna originated from Kimonthung’s brothers-in-law, and they make the sound - “kion...kion”.

LFT 46: The Story of How Notsu (poisonous root) was Discovered

In a time when water creatures and land creatures lived as one, there was a big gathering to discuss how land creatures and water creatures should respect each other’s rights and privacy.

However, because of some reasons a quarrel sparked out between the fishes of the water and the birds of the sky. During their quarrel, they insulted one another saying how it was easy for one to kill the other. The birds shouted with anger that if they wish to, they can collect a poisonous root and throw it in the water for the fishes to die. The fishes took it to their heart and resorted back saying that if they want, they can collect the sticky gum and wind it on a bamboo twig with some bait attached to it. The quarrel, however, was pacified before the meeting was over.

The quarrel was pacified but there was a man behind one of the trees that overheard everything that was said by the birds and the fishes that he went on to try if what each said

was true. He went to look for the notsu (poisonous root) and when he found some, he threw it into the water but nothing happened. He then thrashed the notsu and threw it into the river. Like the birds said, the fishes panicked and darted in every direction in vain as they all got poisoned and became a good meal for the man. The man named the poisonous root as Notsu and from then on Lothas started to use the word, Notsu.

He then went on to try the other trick and collected the sap the fishes revealed. He went on collecting the sap from every tree and laid a trap for the birds but it did not work. He kept searching for the right sap and when he finally found it from the banyan tree, he laid a trap for the birds again. The birds immediately flew to the trap, this time it was successful. The man called it Onyi (sticky gum latex from a banyan tree) which till date is used by the Lotha people.

This folktale tells of how man learnt to catch birds and fishes from the creatures themselves, of the use of Onyi (gum) and Notsu (Poison).

LFT 47: The Challenge between Fire and Wind

Long time ago it was believed that the fire and the wind were good friends but they always had the inner insecurities. Each one thought oneself to be mightier than the other, for which they were friends, but they were never at ease with each other when they were together. One day, however, they decided to see who was stronger and for that they asked water to stand as witness for them.

It was the turn of the wind first. The wind began to blow and created havoc through twister, tornado, cyclone and into many other forms that the trees, plants and houses could not withstand the strength and got uprooted. The wind was so strong that it could blow off the fire had not the fire been hiding inside a tree trunk and between the rocks.

When the wind stopped blowing, fire sparked out from between the rocks and inside the tree trunks that it annihilated everything and anything that was around it to ashes. The animals and birds were so terrified that they ran for shelter and when they could find no more shelter, they pleaded the fire to stop burning, but the fire was too stubborn to stop. Finally, the water had to intervene and pour upon the fire to stop it from burning everything. The water then declared the fire as the mightier and untameable of the two.

It is believed that fire still lives in between the rocks and trees for which reason fire could be made while striking stones together or rubbing fire sticks together. Man, who lived to witness the duel between the fire and wind kept with them stones and fire sticks to create fire whenever needed, a trade that was also passed down to generation by the man who witnessed the great dual.

This story tells of how man learnt to make fire by striking stones or rubbing the sticks together in the primitive time.

LFT 48: The Story of Hotsu and Two Friends

Once upon a time there were two friends who were inseparable of each other. They were closer than any blood brothers. The two friends supported each other and drew strength from one another when they were together. However, as days went by and they grew older, one friend prospered and became very wealthy while the other friend, despite of many attempts to surge ahead and improve in life made no prosperity. Though there were a lot of differences in their wealth, it did not affect their friendship. They were closer than before.

As years went by, jealousy started to grow in the heart of the other poor friend. He began to envy his friend's prosperity and the attention he receives from the villagers owing to his much-accomplished wealth. He thus began to plan a way to harm his rich friend.

One morning the poor friend went to his rich friend with a business proposal of trading live stocks like cows and mithun. The rich friend was not impressed with the idea but did not tell his friend as he did not want to hurt his feeling as it was the first time that his friend has brought to him such proposals. He agreed with his friend to venture the business together and thus planned out everything they needed to do. They came to a decision to travel one day to get the live stocks.

The two friends had set a date to travel. On the night before that day, the rich friend made all arrangements they needed for travelling and went to sleep. He had a very disturbing dream that night. He dreamt that he was drowning in reddish water and one end of a rainbow falling upon him as he struggled to come out of it. He woke up confused about the dream and thought to himself if that dream did not mean something bad that will happen in their journey. He was all awake but still lay down on his bed thinking of what his dream would have meant.

When his friend came to call him, he was not ready yet as he was reluctant to travel because of his dream. He told his friend to cancel the trip as he had a very bad dream. his friend however, brushed him off saying it may mean that he was to gain huge profit. The rich friend didn't feel very good about their journey but he didn't know how to convince his friend. The poor friend however, couldn't wait for the trip as he had a different plan cooked up in his mind. The rich friend can no longer insist his friend from not travelling that they started off with their journey.

The two friends had travelled a long way but still had a long way to reach the market place. They both were exhausted and since it was getting late, they decided to pitch a tent for the night. The poor friend went and collected some firewood and post for the camp after which

he went to dig a tuber that he had noticed when past that way once. He was after a particular tuber that grows big and deep into the ground.

He came back to the camp exhausted and covered in mud. The poor friend came and called his rich friend to help him dug out the tuber. The rich friend went along and took turns to dig out the tuber. As the pit was deeper, the poor friend asked his friend to go down. When the rich friend bent on his knees and went further down to scoop up the soft mud with his hand, the poor friend from behind struck his friend from behind with a machete which killed him instantly. The blood of the rich man flowed from his body and filled the pit that they had dug. The poor friend killed his own friend that he considered more than a brother.

For this reason, that particular tuber has a colour that was more red than white and when the tuber cover is scratched it oozes out blood like liquid. Lotha people calls that particular tuber as Hotsu which means big tuber that lies deep in the ground or which also mean cut and flow.

After betraying his friend and murdering him, the poor friend took all the belongings of his rich friend with him and went away.

The Spirits of Life were not happy with what he did to his friend and thus cursed the poor friend and struck him right then with an incurable disease called Mmyok (refers to people who murder others and still have food and socialises with the family of the person he murdered). Hence, the poor friend became blind. The spirits cursed him with mmyuk as he murdered his friend, saw his fresh blood and took away his belongings.

The Lothas hence, refrain from taking things of those people who dies in an unnatural way believing that a similar fate may also befall on them. The story also is about the origin of the Hotsu tuber which oozes blood-like juice when scratched or cut.

5.2: Reflection of Lotha Society in Origin Tales

Origin tales are the foundation of how a society or a community is built and such tales are very common among the Lotha people. We can see a lot of practices carried by the Lotha people that have been mentioned or passed down from the folktales. The Story of How Machu was Discovered (LFT 41) tells us of a child with physical imperfection being healed, Lotha people still belief that chillies have a healing property and that chilly makes any dish tasty.

The Tale of The Challenge Between Fire and Wind (LFT 47) tells us of how man learnt to make fire by striking a stone to another stone or rubbing a stick, a way by which our ancestors made fire before matches and lighters came to us.

Notsu (poisonous root) and onyi (Sticky gum latex from a banyan tree) mentioned in the tale The Story of How Notsu was Discovered (LFT 46) is still used by the Lotha people when they go for fishing or wants to catch a bird. The Lothas even in the modern generation have a fishing celebration where different villages come together in clans to beat the notsu in the river. Hence, we see that origin tales has are also portrayals of the Lotha society.

Trapping birds with banyan tree gum, fishing with poisonous roots are so common among the Lotha people and is reflected here in the origin tales

Erecting monoliths were very important for the Nagas. Monoliths were erected for many purposes, some erect a monolith just to show prosperity and gain respect from the society which we see in the tale The Story of Gibbons (LFT 45) where Kimongthung entrusts his brothers-in-law to bring a tree from the forest to erect as an initial rite before erecting a monolith. Erecting a monolith was held with much pride as it will become a proof of their glory and existence to the future generation.

Dreams were a guide to the primitive Lotha society. Like in the tale The Story of Hotsu and Two Friends (LFT 48) where the rich friend dreamt a dream the night before their journey and was reluctant to travel because of his dream. They believed in dreams and seek for interpretations most of the time, but interpretations of dreams were able by just few.

The tales in this chapter points out the day-to-day life of the Lotha people. It makes us known that the adults go to the field while the children stay home with an older person. The little children would run small errands like fetch water, collect fire woods or pound rice paddy which is also a significant activity for the Lotha people that is pointed out from the tales included in this chapter.

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CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Folktales as we know are an integral part of any society, as people's believe, habit, custom, and tradition if not all, stems from the folktales that are passed down to the people from generation to generation. It is also through folktales that people are educated about their roots and their duties and obligations towards the society and in carrying out themselves as a member of a society. This research work is on the study of folktales and how folktales relate to the culture of the Lotha Society. Like any other folktales, Lotha folktales too have stories of Tricksters, harmonic life between human and animals, presence of spirits and supernatural omens, of how the world or the people came into being, etc. Lotha folktales however lacks in stories that has female protagonists owing to its patriarchal set up. Female characters are mostly included as a shadow character where their presence in the story do not really add any differences in the story like in the story of "The Orphans and the Parents' Spirits" where the mother and the sister was just a shadow character. Sometimes they are the evil stepmother or the evil wife, rarely we come across a female protagonists but when we do, they are short lived like in the story of "A Mother Turning To a Serow".

These folktales were told as part of education at home, in a dormitory or in a social gathering. Recitation of folktales by the elderly to the younger generation was the form of formal education that was given to the children.

The present study has been chapterized into 6 chapters, inclusive of the Introduction, Trickster Figures in Lotha Folktales, Spirits and Supernatural Tales, Animal Tales and Tales of Origin and Conclusion.

In Chapter 2 of this paper, the stories of Apvuho, a very popular trickster figure among the Lothas has been brought about. Through the stories of Apvuho we see how wit was used to gain advantage over someone. Though possessing wit is a desirable quality for every individual, Apvuho's wit was not an admirable one as his wits always puts someone into trouble or suffering.

Through this chapter we also learnt some of the social practices of the Lotha Tribes such as the parents leaving their children at home with a lunch packed in a plantain leaf, a leaf that is still used not only by the Lothas but by the Nagas in general. Apvuho's collection of stories in this study makes us know that Apvuho did not have a specific place or village he calls home as he is banished from many villages he resides in which introduces us to the customary law of banishment from the village by the tribesman if someone default the laws of the village. Nevertheless, Apvuho's stories though some had morals, were told for the purpose of entertainment.

In Chapter 3, Spirits and Supernatural tales are taken into consideration with sub headings of Tales of Superstitious Beliefs and Spirits and Supernatural tales as Etiological tales. Through this chapter we see how some superstitious beliefs of the Lothas traced back to the folktales narrated and passed down to them for generations. The name of Sukyingo is still very common among the Lothas that sometimes this name is used to scare and lull little children off to sleep. Sukyingo has many Lotha fables attached to its name and it is believed that every house has a Sukyingo with them.

Spirits and Supernatural tales also has introduced us to tales where humans and supernatural beings co-existed like in the tales of The Angel and The Village Maiden where an Angel comes down from heaven to ask for a hand in marriage to a beautiful woman on earth. Though Angels aren't negatively represented in this story, we see that the Angel loses all his

supernatural powers when he came down on earth and lied to the woman to marry her. Their marriage obviously didn't work out and the women had to go back to the comforts of her father's home at last, but such tales show the close proximity of humans and spirits.

In Chapter 4 we are introduced to Animal Tales where a lot of moral tales and etiological tales are discussed in this chapter. This chapter also is here to make us see the peaceful co-existence of humans and animals and how through this peaceful co-existence of them have given birth to many moral lessons that are taught as moral guidance in the Lotha society. . In the "Animal Tales as Etiological Tales" we come across tales of how the most common pet, a dog, became a pet of the house or how a stag lost its tail. Animal tales are funny, entertaining and fanciful since it is full of imagination.

Tales of Origin, Chapter 5 has just one sub heading which is titled Causation and Discovery Tales. In this chapter we find that Origin tales usually crosses paths with supernatural tales and animal tales. Origin tales are good visitation to old ancient world.

In this chapter, while we learn how certain phenomenon on earth came into being, we also have a heart wrenching story where a little boy became a Mungya because he was made to starve by his sister. Story of the origin of how Notsu (a poisonous root) was used by the Lothas or how machu (chilly) was discovered is discussed in this chapter.

As Nzanmongi Jasmine Patton wrote in her book, "*A Girl Swallowed by a Tree*"

"Folk stories become markers of the tribe and their legacy" (19)

The tales discussed in this study are not merely just a tale but these are tales that helped shape the society, history and the moral ethics. Folktales because it was first hand down orally, it has many version of the same story. However, it always has the same meaning and approach. Folktales were primarily oral narratives and because it was passed down orally it has its own

limitations and trying to seek the authenticity of the origin of tale would only take them further away from attending the truth. However, one thing of importance is that folktales always remind one to follow the social norms and tradition of the one's culture.

Through this study, it was found that folktales were merely not just stories told to the children or shared during social gatherings but were shared to impart moral values, beliefs and life styles of the community. Folktales in other sense was a guideline in governing the people especially during the time when people were lead with superstitious beliefs or were not fully equipped with the knowledge of the universe. Folktales are an important tool in preserving and knowing the rich tradition of one's community as folktales reflect strongly on the ways people lead their life.

However, with the coming of Christianity and education in the land of the Lothas, a lot of villages gave up every practices of animism along with that folktales begin to fade away as then the people had newer things for discussion during social gatherings or family time. Hence, the study of folktales is important to sustain the oral tradition of the people since it is through folktales one's root is found.

In another 50 years down the line, there may be no single person who can retell the folktales that were once so proudly held by the Lotha Nagas. Hence, the study of folktales is an integral part in preserving and keeping the rich tradition of the people.

The folktales that were discussed in this study has mentioned a lot of the tales of how the Lothas lived an agrarian life, the use of plantain leafs, mithun, young bachelors staying in a morung, fishing or the use of rice beer which are some of the common practices and lifestyles of the Lotha people that are reflected through the folktales. It also shows that the Lothas were not just tillers of land living an agrarian life but were also food gatherers. For the Lothas,

besides meat and fishes, dry fish, bamboo shoots, taro and chillies were important food ingredients.

Abundance in flora and fauna in the Lotha land is seen with the mentioning of the many animals, birds and insects in the story like tiger, bear, deer, fox, wolf, wild boar, wildcat, squirrel, stag, bat, raven, skylark, cicada, cricket, crab to name a few.

The folktales discussed not only brings out the light to the lifestyles lived by the Lothas but also has a lot of moral lessons that still governs the people. In the story of The Angel and The Village Maiden (LFT 17) it gives a moral lesson that marriages should not be about good looks and material wealth alone or also in the story of The Widow and The Boys from The Chumpho it gives a moral lesson that old and the widows who are helpless should be loved and taken care of.

Through this study, we also see how Apvuho, is a prominent trickster figure in the Lotha Folktales. Apvuho is a name that is very common to all the Lotha people even in the contemporary Lotha society. The reason for Apvuho's name being very common among the Lotha people is because Trickster tales take a dominant part of the Lotha folktales.

There were some limitations faced during this study. Firstly, with the pandemic, it gave some disadvantages in visiting villages. Also, the main drawback was that there were not many people alive to tell the folktales they were either too old to recollect their memories or because telling folktales in a social gathering was not a priority anymore with a fast pacing world, recollection of folktales faded. Finding written records on folktales were also not available in abundance.

Since the objectives was to analyse how Lotha folktales reflect the social life and beliefs of the Lotha people and how folktales sustain the rich identity of the tribal Lotha community,

comparative study of Lotha folktales with folktales of other Naga tribes and beyond or with the folktales of other tribal communities around the world, will greatly enrich tribal studies.

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