

# ***The Animist World in the Angami Folk Tradition: An Eclectic Study***

**(Thesis submitted to Nagaland University in partial fulfilment of  
requirements for award of Ph.D. degree in English)**

**By**

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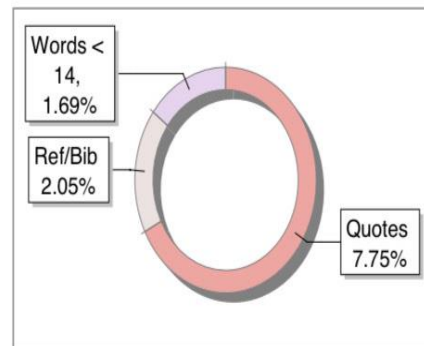
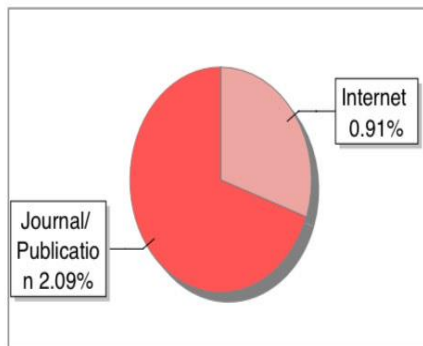
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Map of India





Nagaland map (Area of Study)

## GLOSSARY OF TENYIDIE WORDS USED IN THE THESIS

- *Bou* -Box or container
- *Cha* - Pathway
- *Chaprei* -Woven decorated item worn in front of the *Kesüni*
- *Chiepha* -Traditional woven belt
- *Chü* -Huge bamboo woven containers to store granaries
- *Chüchü* -A young girl
- *Chükhriütsü* -Traditional angami necklace made from Chükhri shi
- *Chüthuo* -Armlet made of elephant tusk used on arms
- *Chütienuo* -Millet
- *Ciekhie* -A bench like wooden keel used for pounding rice
- *Da* -To clear pathway
- *Dahou* -An open space for meetings
- *Dziene* -An agricultural procedure performed by the first sower
- *Dziepa* -Woven ornamental cloth tied on both wrists
- *Dzübe* -A pond
- *Dzüseva* - Hitting the fresh waters
- *Füge* -A house design earned by host of feast of merit
- *Fütou* -The middle pole earned after the second feast of merit
- *Geiziemou* - The appendix of the sacrificial cock
- *Goanburas* -Administrators in customary courts
- *Kayie* -The property inherited from kinsmen

- *Kekinyi* -Friendship festival between villages or Khels
- *Keli* -Squirrel
- *Kemhonyü* -To dream
- *Kene* -Wrestling
- *Kenhyo* -Indigenous rain coat made of thatch
- *Kenyii* -Taboo/Prohibition
- *Kepenuopfü* -God
- *Kerhukhru* -To bury the dirt
- *Keshu* -A cultural tactic used in war especially while using spear
- *Kesia Nyie* -Funeral rites
- *Kesiini* -Traditional kilt worn by men decorated with cowries
- *Ketsa ca* -Food for elderly people
- *Ketsiapie* -Shot put
- *Kewhu* -Gradually starts in a softer tone and increases
- *Kezei* - February month in Tenyidie
- *Kezierü* -River of darkness
- *Kha kelie* -To stop
- *Kharu* -Village gate
- *Kharunouko* -Women's breasts carved on the village gate
- *Khel* -A social institution consisting of same clansmen
- *Khepru* -Long jump

- *Khetse* -High Jump
- *Kipoutsia* -Village foundation stone
- *Khrietho Rüle* -Portion of food given to the deceased's closest friends
- *Khrüdzü* - Full moon
- *Khrüluo* -Full moon
- *Khukhu* -A portion of food in Viswema dialect
- *Ki* -House
- *Kichiiki* -Dormitory for young men and women
- *Kikia* -House-horns
- *Kikiakepfümia* -Intending host for feast of merit
- *Kiluo* -First compartment in an Angami house
- *Kinutshetu* -An outhouse found at the back of the kitchen
- *Kipfhükhro* -Front/porch
- *Kona* -Eatable snails in Viswema dialect
- *Leisü* -The process of walking around the village ponds
- *Lhaprie* - Undelivered
- *Liedepfü* -First reaper typically a woman
- *Livau* -Mediator between men and spirits
- *Lorü pfhe or phichü pfhe* -Shawl worn by the priest
- *Miali* -An individual
- *Miakra* -A group of people
- *Mechü* -Whole community

- *Miphu* -Hearth
- *Mekho* -Traditional bamboo basket
- *Melo* -Someone who is deaf and dumb
- *Mepfü* -Loud ululation
- *Mepfümewhi* -Ululation in an intimidating manner
- *Mithie* -Lighting
- *Mhachaki* -Kitchen
- *Mhokuo* -Pride
- *Mi* -Fire
- *Misi* -Gun
- *Misou* -Stones used in a hearth
- *Mithu* -Cow
- *Nanyü* -Ritual
- *Nhyü* -Marriage/Wedding
- *Niaki* -Sun
- *Nietse* - In between or in portion or intervals
- *Nuobo* - Child confinement after birth
- *Nuokhrienuomia* - Only child/ youngest son
- *Nuovü Nuorhü* - Illigetimate child/ child born out of wedlock
- *Nuoze* - Birth
- *Nuozephe* - Lullabies for putting babies to sleep.
- *Olo* - Wood borer larvae in Viswema dialect

- *Pe* - Bridge or it may also mean trembling
- *Penie* - Non working day
- *Peyo nhyü* - Elopement
- *Peziemei* - Colourful feathers of birds used on the ears
- *Pezü* - Shield
- *Pfhenyü* - A type of banana leaf
- *Pfü* - Female termination in Tenyidie
- *Phe* - Village
- *Phetso* - A village square
- *Phichüü* - The elderly man in the village
- *Phoudi* - The main common hearth
- *Phousanyi* - The festival to mark the new beginning
- *Phouse* - Young virgin bachelor
- *Pozephü* - Property given to women acquired by her parents
- *Prii* - Hailstone
- *Pu-du* - Horticultural step performed by the first
- *Ramei* - Insignia/ Trophy/ Reward
- *Rüle* - Portion of food served at funerals
- *Rüngou* - Spear
- *Ruopfü* - Spirit of human beings
- *Rüpprie* - Meal subjected to the head hunting ceremony
- *Rütsü* - Slained head

- *Rüzie thie* - To dig a pond
- *Se* - Death
- *Sekrenyi* - Festival of purification
- *Senyü* - Five days mourning period
- *Shaphruomia* - Hosts of feast of merit after the first *Sha*
- *Siahe* - A lamenter at funerals
- *Siephruo* - Share
- *Siruzha* - Two days mourning period
- *Tatsü* - A traditional Angami necklace
- *Teikuo* - Drought
- *Teinyie* - Sun or sunshine
- *Teirü* - Rain
- *Tekhu* - Tiger
- *Tekhu* - Paddy fields
- *Telhakre* - Paddy stalk
- *Terha* - Hornbill bird
- *Terhünyü* - An Angami festival
- *Terhümewhi* - Ululation while surrounding an enemy's village
- *Terhümiavimiapuo* - A great and reputed warrior
- *Terhuomia* - Ghosts or malevolent spirits
- *Terhuopfï* - A person who can speak to the dead
- *Thapru* - Stand and Jump sport

- *Thekrii* - Songs of lamentations
- *Themia* - Human being
- *Themoumia* - Shamans in the Angami context
- *Themvü* - Stars
- *Theprie* - A portion of food received at funerals
- *Thesa* - A celebratory donation given to the bride's peer group
- *Thesa thema* - Charity given to the bride's peer group
- *Theii* - A cone shape made of indigeneous leaves
- *Thevo* - Pig
- *Thevü* - Chicken
- *ThevüdzüNyeli* - Cotton balls, the size of an egg
- *Theyu-u* - Toad
- *Thinuo* - A social institution found in Angami villages/Society
- *Tholeiro* - Elephant creeper
- *Thudo* - Ox
- *Thupfe-ü* - Sung while herding cows and cattle
- *Tiepfhe* - Portion of food wrapped in leaves
- *Terhuo* - Spirits or ghosts
- *Terhuope* - Specialised Necromancers
- *Tsana* or *Pfütsana* - The animist religious cult of the Angamis.
- *Tsanu- ü* - Sung while wandering in the forest



- *Tsazepfhe* - Songs sung while spinning cotton
- *Tsiakrau* - The first sower typically a man
- *Tsüla* - Head gear
- *Tsütho* - Neck piece
- *Tuonyümia* - Swift Walker
- *Tuoünuo Rüle* - A portion of food
- *Udzürieu* - An older brother
- *Weüo* - Tune to communicate
- *Zariü* - A bamboo woven basket used to clean rice
- *Zhachü* - The second step of feast of merit
- *Zhie* - Machete
- *Zievou* - The Priest
- *Zochü* - Worm
- *Zowhe* - A type of indigeneous plant
- *Zu* - Locally Brewed rice drink/beer
- *Zuchü* - Young boy at weddings
- *Zudie* - Locally brewed wine
- *Zunuopa* - Woven ornamental cloth tied on both arms

## NAME OF THE MONTHS IN TENYIDIE

English	Tenyidie
January	Doshü
February	Kezei
March	Kera
April	Ketshü
May	Cacü
June	Cadi
July	Mvüsa
August	Tsierie
September	Rüyo
October	Thenyie
November	Ziephie
December	Rüde

## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Animism, derived from the Latin word '*anima*' means breath, life or spirit, is basically the belief that every object, places and all creatures both animate and inanimate as a whole possess a distinct kind of spiritual essence. Animism normally perceives all things; animals, plants, rocks, water sources, the cosmos, human handiwork, and in some cases even words as animated and alive by nature. Animism is used extensively in anthropology of religion as a term for the belief system and institution of many Indigenous people around the world, which is in contrast to the relatively more recent development of organized and systematic religions that came into being. Animism distinctively focuses on the metaphysical universe, with a specific focus on the concept of the immaterial soul inhabiting in each.

Although each and every culture has its own perceived mythologies and rituals, animism in general is said to describe the most common, foundational thread of indigenous peoples' spiritual or supernatural perspectives. The animistic concept is so widely held and inherent to most indigenous societies they often do not even have a word in their languages that corresponds to animism or even religion for that matter. The term animism is believed and is accepted to be an anthropological construct.

Largely due to such ethnolinguistic and cultural variance, opinions usually differ and become debatable on whether animism refers to an ancestral means of experience common to indigenous communities around the world or to a full-fledged religion in its own right. The currently accepted definition of the term animism was developed and

coined only in the late 19th century (precisely in 1871) by Sir Edward Burnett Taylor, an English anthropologist. He states that it is one of anthropology's earliest concepts, if not the first.

Animism encompasses beliefs that all material phenomena have agency, that there is no categorical distinction between the spiritual and physical world, and that the soul, spirit, or sentience exists not only in human beings but also in other material entities like animals, plants, rocks, geographic object like the mountains and rivers, and other structures of the natural environment and connects them to one another in the circle of life. For instance, it also includes aquatic spirits, vegetation deities or even tree spirits. Animism may further attribute a life force to abstract concepts such as words or metaphors in mythology. Animism as a whole is often used to illustrate the contrasts between the old ancient religious beliefs and the present day modern organized religion. In most cases, animism is not considered to be a religion that exists firmly on its own but rather a system of various practices and beliefs clubbed together to form a larger agency.

From the historians' point of view, Animism is the foundation to human spirituality which can be dated back to the Paleolithic age when the hominids existed . Over the due course of time, attempts have been made to define the spiritual standpoint of mankind by philosophers and other religious leaders. Based on studies, around 400 B.C., Pythagoras also discussed the connection and union between the individual soul and the divine soul, indicating a belief in an all-inclusive "soulness" of humans and other objects. He is thought to have enhanced these beliefs while studying with ancient Egyptian researchers, whose reverence for life in nature and personification of death point towards aspects of animism. Plato in his work Republic identified a three-part soul in both individual and cities. Meanwhile, Aristotle in on the whole defined living things as the

things that possess a spirit. The basic idea of a world soul was derived from these ancient philosophers and then shifted to scientific thought. However, the word 'animism' was later coined in 1871 by Edward Tylor from an anthropological point of view to define the oldest existing religion. Based on Tylor's work, animism can be commonly associated to primitive cultures but also has associations with other world's organized religions. Taking the example of the Japanese religion called Shinto wherein the core belief in spirits known as Kami which often inhabits all things.

The concept of totemism is found in within the Australian tribal communities. Here, the totem; usually plants or animals possess some kind of supernatural powers and is considered the emblem of tribal communities. The source of the spirit of this totem is the living entity, i.e, the plant or animal rather than an inanimate object. However, in contrary, the Inuit people of North America believes that the same spirits can possess any entity regardless of whether it is animate or inanimate. The belief in spirituality is much more broader and holistic in nature as the spirits are not dependent on particularly plants and animals but the entity is dependent on the spirits that it inhabits it.

Animism cannot be termed as a single religious tradition but instead a tradition where various differing traditions exist within this system. When attempting to fully understand the term 'animism', it is important to first understand three closely related philosophical doctrines; Hylozoism, Panpsychism and Vitalism. Hylozoism is the view that the universe is itself a living organism and that all life is inseparable from matter. Panpsychism is the belief that everything material in nature, no matter how small possesses the element of individual consciousness. Vitalism doctrine states that all living organisms consist of a primordial substance i.e soul or form which can transform it into a specific thing.

This Chapter further analyses the functions of an Angami community in a critical manner and elaborates the social, cultural, literary background of the Angami tribe of Nagaland.

Before the arrival of Christianity in the Naga hills, the Nagas in general were ignorant about the existence of an organized religion called Christianity. All their religious practices were perceived as savage by nature, animistic in their religious approach, and their cultural ways of life always associate with some elements of animism. The Angamis like any other fellow Nagas practiced a religion that is characterized with animistic ways of life. From the spiritual sense, they believed in the existence of a higher authority called *Kepenuopfui* which was considered as a male figure however the suffix *pfui* in the end denotes a feminine termination in the Angami context. This God supposedly resides in the sky. The evil spirits were referred as *Terhuomia*, though their dwelling places were not precise but believe that they are omnipresent. They also believe in other spirits that are categorized as both benevolent and malevolent and the appeasement of such spirits was taken into great consideration. Offerings and prayers are extended to avert from their rage and monthly or annually sacrifices were made to them. Some of the spirits which they believe existed in those ancient times are :

1. *Meciemo* : The spirit of paradise of Darkness.

2. *Rutshe* : The ill tempered spirit.

3. *Keshüdi* : The supreme ruler of darkness.

4. *Chükhieo* : The chief spirit of wildlife.

5. *Telepfui* : The spirit of phantasy.

6.*Dzüräü* : A female munificent spirit.

7.*Miawenuo* : Goddess of wealth.

8.*Vicho* : The protector of the people.

9.*Kamvülhouphreimia* : Flock of evil spirit.

10.*Temi* : Spirit of wind.

11.*Rapu* : The spirit of nightmares.

In almost all animist societies, performing rituals play an integral part of worship. The Angamis' way of performing *Nanyü* was elaborated in all aspects. Rituals were performed in almost all occasions including childbirth, marriage rituals, funeral rituals, calling of lost soul rituals were also popular. Headhunting was extensively practiced in the pre-Christian era and the rituals performed after such activities were important to them. The lack of performing rituals could lead to misfortune or in worst case scenario even lead to death. In the Angami society when Agriculture was the main source of income, much importance was given to the *Zievou*, the priest who plays a pivotal role mainly during all major occasions. *Tsiakrau*, the first sower and *Liedepfü*, the lady who performs the agricultural harvest rituals on behalf of the whole village.

The proceedings of the funeral rites of the Angami animists contrasts with the contemporary ways of funeral rites. Burying the corpse in a wooden casket was done only by few, rather they choose to wrap the corpse in bamboo woven mats and hang it on the cliffs for the body to decompose gradually with time. The belongings of the deceased were placed next to their mortal remains with the belief that they may experience a swift passing into the after life. The concept of afterlife in the animist era is vague, however the

mention of encountering spirits like *Meciemo*, the spirit of paradise of darkness indicates that they might have a pre-conceived notion of paradise.

Angamis are also very superstitious by nature. Most of the decision makings were based on dreams or the decisions taken by the elderly people in the village. Before proceeding with any major events, they usually say “*Umho rünyü rie tuo!*” meaning “I shall first listen to my dreams”. For instance even at the time of marriage, the bride and groom are given time to dream and only after favourable dreams indicates positive outcome that guarantees good fortune for the couple in the future

Nagas in general are known for their rich culture and tradition which is exhibited at time of festive celebrations. Multiple festivals are celebrated by the Angamis which most are associated to Agriculture; celebrations at the end of every annual harvest season to show their gratitude to their Gods for bountiful yield. Or some festivals are dedicated to appease the Gods asking for good yield.

It is difficult to set an exact date for the festivals as the Angamis followed the lunar calendar however one impressive trait is that without any exposure to literacy, People in the olden times were able to predict the weather, tell time based on the placement of the sun or even predict dates based on the movement of the sun and moon. Such knowledge guided them to set dates for festivals and count months based on nature.

Some of the popular festivals celebrated by the Angamis are :

1. *Sekrenyi*, Famously known as the festival of purification where menfolk participate to purify themselves mentally and physically.



2. *Terhiinyi*, Celebrated in the month of Doshü, January. A festival of sacrifice to God for providing and blessing the people through the agricultural period.

3. *Nyonyi*, This festival was celebrated approximately between March and April. The festival to re-energize from all the hectic agricultural activities in the previous cycle.

4. *Kerunyi* is the festival where the community come together to render their services to those in need.

5. *Chadanyi* was dedicated to clear all the village paths that leads to the paddy fields.

6. *Khoupfüinyi* falls in the month of August and September. During this period, cooked food or other items are shared among family, friends and neighbours to maintain the love and unity. No physical labour was involved except merry making.

7. *Vatenyi* was observed in the month of December. The rituals revolve around sustainability for the next agricultural cycle.

8. *Te-l Khukhu* festival was mainly dedicated to celebrate womenfolk and young girls.

9. *Khriethonyi* is not a major festival but during this time, two villages come together to celebrate their historic friendship.

The wave of change precisely in the religious world arrived in Naga hills through the Baptist Missionaries. Initially, The British invaders faced a fair amount of challenges attempting to get acquainted with the Nagas as the outside world remained alien to them and they were described as a hostile race by the first invaders. In their attempt to neutralize situation and relationships, The Britishers paved the way for the Baptist missionaries as they came to a concluding point that the only strategy to get close to this

group of people was by converting them and gradually changing their ways of thinking and living.

In the beginning, the Nagas were said to have been unapproachable but with due course of time, some were employed by the Britishers while some were converted and began to work in the mission schools. They were granted with privileges which only the converts got access to, This was the starting point as the eye opener for the rest to join in. In the process, the non-Christians would call the convert as fools but with the growing of Christian churches and schools, such accusations were overshadowed.

Angamis were definitely not the first to be Christian converts however not the last to convert and follow a new religion called Christianity. Christianity then invaded the traditional religion and shattered their faith from supernatural belief and implanted the Christian teachings. *Themoumias* also lost their influence and sorcerers also began to convert themselves. The *Morungs* played an important role as the medium of instruction but these institutions were considered heathen which led to the disappearance of *Morungs*. Christianity also brought an end of the curious raids and head hunting practices.

From a different point of view, Christianity in a way liberated them from a world view in which they were so to say socially and psychologically enslaved by superstition in various aspects.

The important and major findings of the research will be summarized in this chapter which will be done chapter-wise and emphasis on the need for further indept studies on this topic which may contribute in the field of literary world.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

The origin and the ancestry of the Nagas have always remained unclear and debatable among many historians till date. There are multiple interpretations regarding this issue. However, the most accepted theories are based on the myth of autochthonous origin, myth of migration from somewhere supposedly from the east. V.K. Nuh in his book, *Origin of the Nagas*, traced the origin of the Nagas and says the Nagas are Mongoloid by race, and are found as tribes and sub-tribes with various customs and traditions broadly scattered between the great rivers of Brahmaputra in India and Salween River in Myanmar. He also added that, The earliest home of the Mongoloid people was on the upper reaches of Hwang-ho river in China and further moving down the South-East Asia then to these mountains. Another Naga researcher and anthropologist, Abraham Lotha stated in his work that according to oral traditions, Nagas migrated from Mongolia, and then through Southwestern China and Myanmar into their present territory of habitation. Except for some groups who live in Assam, the Nagas inhabited a contiguous territory, though they and their land continued to remain divided between India and Myanmar. The scholar here indicated that the areas were west of the Chindwin River, bordering the Kachin state and Sagaing state. Having said this, anthropologists have all agreed and expressed difficulty in coming to one concrete conclusion to find a common place of origin of this particular race called the Nagas. Some researchers also suggested that there was a wave of mass migration that must have taken place out of China to various parts of Southeast Asia and beyond that vicinity.

The ancient history of the Nagas always remained unclear due to the absence of documentation in written form hence history is recorded in the form of oral narration, myths, legends, folk songs, or folk tales. It is believed that the Nagas originally did not call themselves 'Naga', It was probably the outsiders who gave them this terminology. The origin of the word 'Naga' remains unknown even up to this present time; however, it is largely believed that it was supposed to have been derived from some Sanskrit word for 'snake-worshipper' and also viewed by many as a reliable source of interpretation. However, some scholars and historians also debated and refused to accept this theory stating that Nagas were not related to any snake worshipping practices nor followed any such traditions. Adding to this, it is also said in another version that, the British colonizers referred to the Nagas in a derogatory manner by associating it to terms like 'naked', 'uncivilized', or sometimes 'savage' and 'primitive' due to the ways of life lived by the them at the time of invasion. This could possibly be due to the very fact that the Nagas were subjugated by the Britishers at one point of time which changed the Naga social structure including their beliefs; especially in the religious sense. Another narrative that historians extracted is that the word Naga is derived from the Chinese word *Natcha*. General Mowu Gwizan claimed that the Chinese would often call the Naga people as *Natcharemi*, when translated it means 'people who ran away' during the building of the Great Wall of China through oral narration, this version was often narrated that this group of people ran away because their service was utilized and exploited yet they remained unpaid labourers. Another interpretation says that the word was derived from a Burmese word '*Naka*' which means perforated ears or people with pierced ears. J.H Hutton, an anthropologist and an administrator for the then Indian civil service in his book *The Angami Nagas* also states that;

*“The word ‘Naga’ has been given all sorts of derivations; the most probable explanation of it is that it is merely a European lengthening of the Assamese “Nāga” (pronounced Nôga)” (1921: 5)*

Stating all these, it still remains a difficult task to collectively agree and accept a common narrative about how or from where Nagas exactly migrated and what the word precisely means. Currently, the Nagas are scattered in different parts, i.e., a group of Nagas are presently residing in the state of Nagaland while another group of Nagas are found in Myanmar. Nagaland state is bordering with Manipur in the south, the Brahmaputra Valley in the west, Tirap and Changlang in the state of Arunachal Pradesh in the north. While on the eastern part, the Nagas roughly inhabit up to Chindwin River valley. Such division of territory was roughly made by British administrators before their departure from the South Asian Empire. This could be the reason why we find Nagas living both in Burma and India. Very interestingly, the house of the chief (also called the Angh) in the village of Longwa bordering Burma (Myanmar) is divided in a way that one half of his house lies in Burma territory while the other in Indian territory. Such markings were based on the maps of the Britishers. There are sixteen recognized districts in Nagaland; namely Dimapur, Kohima, Longleng, Chumoukedima, Kiphire, Mokokchung, Mon, Niuland, Noklak, Phek, Peren, Shamator, Tseminyu, Tuensang, Wokha and Zunheboto. The Nagas in Nagaland comprises of seventeen recognized tribes known as the Angami, Ao, Chang, Chakhesang (which again is divided into sub-categories namely Chokri and Kezhakeno), Khiamniungan, Konyak, Kuki, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sangtam, Sumi, Tikhir, Yimchunger and Zeliang. Among the Naga tribes, we further find various sub-categories. Firstly, there is Tenyimia group which comprises of the tribes Angami, Chakesang, Mao, Poumai, Rengma, and Zeliang. Prior to 1946, Chakhesang

tribe was known as the Eastern Angamis but later, this group separated itself and presently became the Chakhesang tribe. Nonetheless, it still comes under the Tenyimia category. Initially in the pre-colonial era, the Tenyimias used *Tenyidie* as their common dialect to communicate but at present, *Tenyidie* is only used by the Angamis and some Chakhesang villages only. Secondly, Nagas are also categorized into a sub category called 'Eastern Nagas' wherein the Konyak, Phom, Sangtam, Yimchunger, Tikhir, Khiamniungan and Chang tribes constitute this category. Moving further, the various tribes all have different values, cultural beliefs, principles, etc. However, the Nagas in general are often famous for their headhunting skills. During pre-Christian era, the Nagas practiced headhunting to a great extent. There is no concrete reason as to why the Nagas practiced this but it maybe for an obvious reason that Nagas greatly participated in warfare in order to protect their village and territory. Headhunting was often considered as a prestige issue where men folk in particular were judged and recognized based on how many heads they collect to prove their bravery and manhood. Through oral narration, it is also added that a village was protected based on the reputation of the warriors, meaning the more reputed warriors a village possesses, the more sense of fear an enemy would have. An enemy would often think twice before attacking a village. Another narration was that the collection of heads also means the collection of souls which in the pre-Christian era is believed that it was somehow connected to nature that would guarantee fertility of soil or in human and animals (livestock) too. For this section of the chapter will contain the elaborated description about the Angami Nagas in particular. Since time immemorial after the existence of a race called the 'Nagas', the Angami Naga tribe has always been considered one of the major tribes with a higher population comparing to the other tribes. The Angami Nagas, as mentioned earlier,

belong to a larger group called Tenyimia. Most of the interpretations states, that the name is derived from the very word *Tuonyümia* meaning swift walker. It is often narrated that the Angami's brothers are Sema and Lotha and so the rightful epithet was basically given to the third brother Angami for the reason that he always walked ahead of his two brothers. Like most narrations of migration of the Nagas, it is vague and not convenient to come to a particular conclusion to where they came from or from where they originally migrated. However, when it comes to the case of Angamis, there are two versions to it.

First, it is believed that the Tenyimis as a whole migrated from Burma (modern day Myanmar) before they initially came to settle for a certain period of time in Kezhakeno, a village situated in the Chakhesang area which lies in the Manipur border. Another oral narration regarding the migration traces back to when Tenyimis must have migrated to the Mongolian regions which first brought them to Vietnam and then to China. In the larger scenario, it also traces back to the building of Great Wall of China. Angamis also believed in the myth of autochthonous origin as it is generally a widespread belief for many Naga tribes. These kinds of narration are mythical in nature but further found in some scripts. J.H Hutton in his book *'The Angami Nagas'* also mentioned:

"The Angamis, too, spring from ancestors who emerged from the bowels of the earth, but that not in Angami country, but in some other land to the south...believed to be descendants from two men, sometime described as brothers who came from out of the bowels of the earth through a hole. The place is not known to the Angami but if found it is believed that the prints of the hands, knees and feet will be seen in front of the hole left by them when they emerged." (1921:6).

As such, there are multiple narrations mostly oral regarding the origin but regardless the Angamis presently occupy the Kohima district (capital of Nagaland), Chumoukedima district and its vicinity. The Angami region is spread over a large area. Hence, during the British colonial era, the need to divide the region for better governance arose. It was during this period that the Angami territory was divided into four categories based on the underlying boundaries where it lies i.e, Northern Angami, Western Angami, Southern Angami and Chakhro Angami region. The Northern Angami villages comprise of:

- |                              |                        |                    |
|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| ●Kohima Village (Northern 1) | ●Chedema Village       | ●Thizama Village   |
| ●Meriema Village             | ●Tsiesema Bawe Village | ●Dihoma Village    |
| ●Rüsoma Village              | ●Kijümetouma Village   | ●Nachama Village   |
| ●Zhadima Village             | ●Phekerkrema Village   | ●Chiechama Village |
| ●Nerhema Village             | ●Prezha                | ●Viphoma Village   |
| ●Ziezou                      | ●Tsabazou              | ●Seiyhama Village  |
| ●Teichüma Village            | ●Touphema Village      | ●Botsa             |
| ●Gariphema Village           | ●Tsiemekhuma Village   |                    |

The Western Angami villages are in the following:

- |                     |                     |                    |
|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| ●Khonoma Village    | ●Jotsoma Village    | ●Kiruphema Village |
| ●Peducha Village    | ●Mezoma Village     | ●Sechüma Village   |
| ●Menguajuma Village | ●Thekrejuma Village | ●Mezo Basa Village |
| ●Dzülekie Village   | ●Dzüdza Village     |                    |



The Southern Angami villages are as follows:

- |                    |                      |                    |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| ●Khuzama Village   | ●Viswema Village     | ●Jakhama Village   |
| ●Kigwema Village   | ●Mima Village        | ●Phesama Village   |
| ●Pfuchama Village  | ●Kidima Village      | ●Kezoma Village    |
| ●Kezo Basa Village | ●Mitelephema Village | ●Sakhabama Village |

Lastly, the last category of the Angami region falls under Chakhro Angami wherein the following villages belong to this category. They are:

- |                    |                     |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| ●Urta Village      | ●Diezephe Village   | ●Bade Village       |
| ●Vidima Village    | ●Seithekema Village | ●Tsiephama Village  |
| ●Piphema Village   | ●Pherima Village    | ●Medziphema Village |
| ●Razaphema Village | ●Tsüma Village      | ●Sirhi Village      |

The number of villages under Angami Naga tribe is based on the reports recorded by Rural Development Department under Nagaland Government.

As mentioned earlier in the initial part of chapter one, the Angami Nagas speak a dialect called *Tenyidie*. The language classification according to Sir George Grierson, *Tenyidie* is closely related to the Tibeto-Chinese family and Tibeto-Burman sub family. This could be again associated to the history of origin that traces back to the possibilities of the migration waves that could have taken place when the Nagas migrated. The first three divisions of the Angami region are found in Kohima district while the fourth (Chakhro Angami) villages lie in Dimapur district and now the new Chumoukedima district. Interestingly, each Angami village speaks a typical dialect which is different

from its immediate neighboring village. No two Angami villages speak the same dialect or tune meaning the words could be similar or in some cases are the same but the sound of the words uttered may vary from village to village.

For instance, taking the example of Kohima Village (Northern Angami), Khonoma Village (Western Angami) and Viswema Village (Southern Angami):

Kohima Village	Khonoma Village	Viswema Village
Tsiehushi (gooseberry)	Khulhu (gooseberry)	Khronüshe (gooseberry)
The-ü (catapult)	Pathuli (catapult)	Phür/Ptsülu (catapult)
Rütsü (beans)	Cüpei (beans)	Ketishe (beans)
Süko (corn)	Zharsi (corn)	Tsakoshe (corn)

Table 1 (Compiled from personal experience and personal interview)

Given such diversity in dialect, mostly every village can understand the other village's dialect though differences in tone may exist. Evidently, the essence of sociolect remains within different regions. *Tenyidie* is also a recognized language and has its own script. The alphabets are presented with similarity to the Roman script. The *Tenyidie* alphabets are presented below for reference:

A(a), B(bü), C(cü), D(dü), E(e), F(fü), G(gü), H(ha), I(i), J(jü), K(kü), L(lü), M(m), N(n), O(o), P(pü), R(rü), S(sü), T(tü), U(u), Ü, V(vü), W(wa), Y(ye), Z(zü)

*Tenyidie* can mostly be translated to English however the difference in tonal representation becomes a problem. One of the most distinct feature of *Tenyidie* appear in

composite form and the presence of composite words is established using one word that births multiple meanings. Taking the example *Mithu* in *Tenyidie* is cow in the general sense. Here, the word *Thu* is extracted from the word *mithu* which results in *Thudo* that creates another word which means ox or bull in *Tenyidie*. *Thuii* means young female cattle. Another example, *Themia* in *Tenyidie* means human being. The extraction from the word *mia* can create another word like *miali* in the singular sense and *miakra* in the plural form but still holds a meaning. *Tenyidie* also experiences the presence of dialectal variations. *Tenyidie* professor Dr. D Kuolie in his work *Structural Description of Tenyidie* also states ;

“Since *Tenyidie* is spoken by number of ethnic groups over a wide geographical area, the dialectical variation are but natural. Basing on mutual intelligibility, dialectal areas can be demarcated as the following.” (Kuolie, 2006 : 5)

#### 1. Angami

(i) Northern Angami

(ii) Central Angami

(iii) Southern Angami

(iv) Western Angami

#### 2. Chakesang

(i) Chokri

(ii) Khezha

(iii)Pochury

### 3.Rengma

(i)Upper Rengma

(ii)Lower Rengma

### 4.Zeliangrong

(i)Zeme

(ii)Liangmai

(iii)Rongmei

### 5.Mao/Maram

(i)Mao

(ii)Poumai

(iii)Memai

(iv)Sopu Maram

Nagas in general rely mostly on oral narrations to transmit the knowledge of the ancestors to the younger generations. Running on similar lines, the Angamis follow the oral narrations mostly to gain information that is closely related to the Angami culture and tradition. Based on superstitious humorous lines, oral narration on how the Angamis lost their original script was also narrated. The story goes; in the beginning, the Angamis wrote their script on pelt of animal. As time passed by, the pelt was said to be eaten by the dog and that led to the disappearance of the Angami script. Another similar narration,

The Ao Naga tribe also believe that an Ao written script existed; A renowned Ao Naga author Temsula Ao in her book *The Ao- Naga Oral Tradition* also mentions:

“In the beginning, when the earth was still young, and there was no sharp differentiation between darkness and light, man and a beast lived together. During this age, according to the Ao’s claim, there was a written script. The script was written on the hide of an animal and was hung on a wall. One day, when the people were away in their fields, a dog dragged it down and ate up. From that time onwards, the people had to commit all knowledge to memory and begin transmitting the same by word of mouth to succeeding generations.” (2012: 8-9)

Such assumptions have been a part of the oral narration for generations and oral tradition has been the repository of every learned and acquired knowledge. In addition, *Tenyidie* in present times is extensively taught in schools with the main intention to sustain the use of one’s mother tongue and to cling closer to one’s own traditions through language.

### **Angami Village: An overview**

Nagaland in general is situated on the mountainous regions and Kohima district was also established on a hill top. New village settlements were situated on hilly regions mainly for two reasons, i.e, era prior to the conversion of Christianity in Naga hills, headhunting has always played a vital role in protecting the village (general perception and belief). Hence, one dominant reason could be for the strategic defense purposes.

Village raids and warfare were very frequent and, therefore, the selection and establishment of a new village was based on the advantage of location where the possibility of enemy entry could be easily detected from the hill top. The Angamis practise agriculture as a way of sustaining themselves which is why it is important to select the plot of land that may guarantee the availability of water for terrace fields and also for domestic purposes.

Milanda Ganguli precisely explains the manner and structure of the terrace fields :

“The carefully graduated terrace are walled by solid embankments of stones taken out of the soil at the time of preparing the fields, and are irrigated by the remarkable system of channels, in which water is carried by the stream that may be miles away, flowing from terrace to terrace. In some places there are long hollow bamboo trunks that carry the clear mountain water from a higher up to flow an adjoining smaller field. The human effort that must be necessary to construct the enormous network of water channels paved with stones dug out from the soil is undoubtedly tremendous.” (Ganguli , 1984 : 48)

Agriculture is a labour intensive cultivation activity and due to this reason, land is considered to be the most important forms of property/wealth to the Angamis. Almost all rituals performed by the Angamis were closely related to agriculture. Besides indulging in agriculture and cultivation, The Angamis also practiced crafts like black smithy, pottery, weaving, basketry, wood and stone carving etc. Among the earliest settlements of Angami villages, It is often orally narrated that Kigwema and Viswema villages of the southern Angami region are considered to be the oldest settlements of the Angami Nagas.

Another significant element of Angami villages is the village gate which is called *Kharu* in *Tenyidie*. The most notable feature of the village gate is for mainly protecting the villagers as a whole and also for the promotion of cultural and spiritual values that has been transmitted from generation to generation since time immemorial. *Kharu* is usually made of one block of single wood and kept shut at night mainly used as the main entrance door to the village. The village gates are not blunt and plain bough of wood but often decorated with carvings of human heads, animal heads and paintings of fertility that symbolizes security against external forces. *Kharu* also in this sense symbolizes life. It also symbolizes masculine entity where some gates have carvings of warriors in full ceremonial dress on the frontispiece. When it comes to women, there is a clear distinction between married and unmarried women based on physical appearance which a relation is to be drawn relating to *Kharu*. Unmarried women were not allowed to grow their hair until they were engaged or married. Either their hair was cut short or their heads were shaven to indicate their virginity and purity. The main idea behind such practices was that the girl was not expected to look attractive or indulge in unwanted sexual activities with the opposite sex until they are of age. In some cases when a girl wishes to grow her hair but at the same time refuses to marry a man then she could perform a ritual of marriage with the *Kharu*. After this ritual is done, she is permitted to grow her hair from thereafter.

The Nagas in general is very superstitious by nature, people who greatly depend on their dreams to make any decisions, both in social and cultural aspects. Dreams are perhaps the deciding factor before drawing any conclusions. Similarly, the Angamis are believers of dreams and it becomes the binding factor to make any decisions. Taking the example of the construction of a new *Kharu*, when the need arises, the village elders and

leaders firstly share their dreams and decide whether or not a new village gate should be erected. There are various reasons that necessitate the construction of new village gate, *Kharu*. Firstly, the already existing gate may begin to decay over time and no longer guarantee security for the villagers residing within the jurisdiction. Secondly, no signs of decay may prevail but it may be more about prestige issue and maintaining one's social prestige of being capable to erect another gate as the process is elaborated and extensive. Thirdly, In situations when the majority of the village population constantly faces hardships and misfortune, it may signify that they must seek the blessings of the God to prosper again. Last but not the least, the *Kharu* is located at the entrance of the village and with due course of time, the village population may expand which requires the village boundaries to develop in a larger aspect.

In instances to build a new *Kharu*, the process begins when the elders of the village go in search of a particular tree that may be appropriate for the occasion. Trees required for making a village gate has to be considerably huge in size as *Kharus* are usually made with a single block of wood which the thickness runs four to six feet and ten to twelve meters in height. The search for the most suitable tree continues until the dreams results with good omen. After the finalization of choosing the suitable tree, a ceremony is performed by two individuals who have earned the title of the feast of merit, people who has a higher social standing in the village. This ceremony is performed to guarantee the increase in village population, to receive food grains and wine in abundance, to multiply more livestock to sustain them and their economy. The ceremony concludes after they declare "Let good luck be with us". After which the young male folks begin to cut the tree on the following day. In this process, they are not allowed to eat or feast, In case the men folk return to their respective village before the timber falls,



they are still forbidden to eat until the tree is cut down the next day. Again, even after extreme labor of cutting the tree, they are compelled to abandon it if, there are cracks in the interior part of the tree or if the tree falls towards an unexpected direction or if any wildlife creatures take refuge under the tree nor any holes must be pecked by birds. The fallen tree echoes till the village to which the villagers rejoice as it signifies the victory of building a new *Kharu* in the village that may bring prosperity and blessings.

In the following days, the craft men and artisans assemble and begin the work of carving which is the first step for the tree to take considerable shape and form. Meanwhile, villagers gather to clear the pathway to pull the *Kharu* later as they prepare for the pulling ceremony. A day is fixed to pull the *Kharu* to the village and the block of wood is tied with traditional ropes like the vines of cane, bamboos, vine of entada rheedii, commonly known as elephant creeper (also called *Tholeiro* in Tenyidie) where the *Kharu* is then pulled with ropes tied on all sides as it is mounted on the top of a big V shaped bough of wood and securely fastened together by crisscrossing the ropes woven in the form of net.

On this particular day, two young virgin lads are selected by the villagers to perform the pulling ceremony. They arrive at the site accompanied by a rooster for sacrificial purposes. They consider the tree as a gift and hence the rooster is sacrificed as a token of appreciation is placed on the remains of the tree to appease the God. In the process, if the rooster crows in a loud manner, it is considered to be a matter of celebration as it signifies that the sacrifice was of worth. Then, the similar ritual done on the initial day of tree cutting is repeated again. After the invocation of blessings, the two young lads proceed to pull the *Kharu* in a pretentious way to give the signal that the rest of the villagers may begin the actual pulling of the large timber.

A respondent recalls past experiences and narrates,

*“There are instances when the Kharu slips down the slopes of the deep forest and kill some people on the way though maximum precautions are taken to avert accidents”.*

Considering such possibilities, majority of the participants pull the huge block of wood from behind or if walking downhill, pull it upwards to minimize applying pressure for the ones walking downhill.

Upon reaching the main road, it remains there for the main pulling ceremony. The final *Kharu* pulling is done on the eighth day of the *Sekrenyi* festival where women folk engage in preparing the traditional attire for the men folk to participate in the grand occasion. The participants of the gate pulling ceremony are expected to compulsorily wear traditional attire but the families that recently experienced misfortune such as death are exempted from participating. This occasion is also considered to be an exhibition of one's achievements. For example, extraordinary warriors wear their trophy, an enemy's head kill reward (called *Ramei* in *Tenyidie*) over their attire. Therefore, brave warriors who have killed five enemies for instance, five *Ramies* are worn. In some cases where a man wearing such significance of insignia without actually earning it is considered undeserving and such act of false exhibitions are believed to detach from one's attire and blown away by the wind. These beliefs may seem absurd but it binds people from stepping beyond their undeserved entitlement.

The traditional attires worn by men folk on such auspicious cultural occasions are:

- Head gear : *Tsüla*

- On the ears : *Peziemei* (Colourful feathers of birds) , *ThevüdzüNyieli* (Cotton balls, the size of an egg)
- On the arms : *Chüthuo* (Armlet made of elephant task) , *Zunuopa* (woven ornamental cloth tied on both arms) , *Dziepa*(Woven ornamental cloth tied on both wrists)
- On the waist : *Kesüni* (Traditional kilt worn by men decorated with cowries) , *Chiepha* (woven belt) , *Chaprei* (Another woven decorated item worn in front of the *Kesüni*)
- Neck piece : *Tsütho*, *Chükhürütsü*, *Tatsü* (*Tatsü* is commonly worn by young boys)



Picture Plate 1 Men in Angami traditional attire for *Kharu* pulling ceremony

(Photo Courtesy : Kikru Solo's Photography)



Picture plate 2 Menfolk in procession at the *Kharu* pulling ceremony



Picture plate 3 Menfolk participants at the gate pulling procession



Picture plate 4 Older village headmen leading the gate pulling ceremony

(Photo Courtesy : To the rightful owner)



Picture plate 5 Womenfolk in Angami traditional attire  
participating at the gate pulling ceremony.

(Photo taken by self)

Every member of the village then assembles at the village ground and proceeds in queue towards the venue (the area where the *Kharu* is kept for pulling). It is strictly prohibited for anyone to cross or walk in between the grand procession for which act is considered to invite bad omen and misfortune for the village as a whole. In cases of violation of such rules, he/she is liable to face the repercussions. On this day, people from neighboring villages or khels and well-wishers are also invited to participate and assist in the ceremony. During this ceremony, the *Kharu* pulling is led by the village's reputed warriors and elders then followed by performances relating to warfare, display of war

tactics is also exhibited while holding their *Zhie* (Machete), *Rüngou* (Spear), *Pezü* (Shield). Once the *Kharu* is pulled to the desired site for erection, the participants lay down the rope and gather at the village ground for feasting and merry making and followed by families hosting the well-wishers for the night. The celebration comes to an end on the ninth day. In the following days, final touches for carving are done. Yet again, a day is dedicated for the final erection of the village gate. On this particular day, the village elders announce the dedication and the village gate remains closed until the next day. This marks the end of the *Kharu* ceremony and the construction of a new *Kharu*.

The carvings and art motifs on *Kharu* are symbolic and hold great significance. It is usually their expression of gratitude and acknowledgment to their Gods and also reminders of their victory and prosperity. Some significant carvings found on *Kharu* are discussed below:

- A warrior (*Terhümiavimiapuo*): Symbolises that the village has great warriors. A warrior holding a head in hand signifies the head of a slain enemy as a trophy.
- Full moon and sun (*Khrüluo mu niaki*): Symbolises clear vision and prayer to exist as long as the sun and moon exists.
- Cow (*Mithu*): Symbolises abundance of livestock.
- Cattle head (*Mithu Tsü*): Symbolises wealth and prosperity.
- Spear and shield (*Rüngou mu Pezü*): Symbolises victory during warfare.
- Machete (*Zhie*): Symbolises skills in workmanship.
- Paddy stalk (*Telhakre*): Symbolises abundance of harvest.



- Women's breast (*Kharunouko*): Symbolises fertility and increase in population.



Picture Plate 6 *Kharu*

An Angami Village gate located at Khonoma Village in the Western Angami region.



Picture Plate 7 Art motifs found on the village gate, located at T-Khel

Kohima Village (Northern Angami region)

(Photo Courtesy : Pelevizo Meyase)



Picture Plate 8 The Oldest village gate of Kohima Village. (*Üsoumia* gate)



Picture Plate 9 It reads : This gate is the first and oldest gate of Kohima village. Therefore, dead bodies are not allowed to carry through.

Another common feature of the Angami villages is the circular seating area called a *Dahou* in *Tenyidie*, which is set up in an open space. Originally these were built as lookout posts to monitor enemy movements. These spaces are found at the elevated points in Angami villages. In all Angami villages we find a square called *Phetso* meaning *Phe* village and *Tso* meaning centre so it can be understood as village centre in simple terms. Such spaces/squares are used during times of mass celebrations to perform folk dances or singing. Relating to this, J.H Hutton also gives a detailed elaboration of *Dahou* and states that:

“Some of them are built of stone and arranged with tiers of seats one behind the other in a straight line, an arc, or in the form of an E without the central projection..... Angami villages these lookout places are usually to be found at all higher points of the village.” (The Angami Nagas; 1921:47)



Picture Plate 10 :*Phetso* (On the left) *Dahou* (On the right)

Located at Khonoma village in the Western Angami region.

(Photo courtesy: Pelevizo Meyase)



Graves are another prominent feature of Angami villages. It is evident that the Angamis followed the religious rituals even prior to the arrival of Christianity in Nagaland, they believed in something that could be the spirits of such sort but one prominent belief is in the repose of a soul. It is common in Naga religious culture to believe in the afterlife. With this belief, the Angamis take into great consideration that the mortal remains of a deceased is taken great care of to guarantee a swift passing into the afterlife. This kind of belief was applicable to both pre and post Christian conversion. For such reason, grave sites were normally well maintained. Graves were built with stones on higher ground and in rectangular shapes so in this sense it may look like a rectangular box for the casket to fit, this is also related to post conversion after the Nagas began to learn the use of wooden boxes (casket) to bury the mortal remains of a deceased. Prior to this period, dead bodies were wrapped in bamboo mats to place it at a particular area until the body decays. Hutton also mentions in his book *The Angami Nagas*;

“These are normally built of stones and are either circular or rectangular...” (1921 : 47)

## **Angami House Architecture**

The Angamis called a house as *Ki* literally meaning a house in *Tenyidie*. The typical Angami houses are built in one story on the ground. The materials used to build Angami houses is bamboo mats for walls, wood or stones for foundation, thatch for the roof, rope like string made of bamboo to bind the bamboo posts and mud for flooring. One distinct feature of Angami architecture is gabled roof. However, only men who has hosted the feast of merit, erected a monolith and hoed a lake are only entitled to use a

gabled roof. And this is also called the *Kikia* or house-horns. This is made of two planks of wood that has carvings of the full moon, *Khrüluo* in *Tenyidie* and a machete or *Zhie* on the horns. Hence, if the house is in such design, it indicates that the owner is a man of wealth as such architectural designs are earned. The members of such houses also strive to host feast of merit which symbolizes generosity and industriousness of that household. House ornamentations are the only indication of the status of members in the community. An Angami house is normally divided into three compartments and names are assigned for each room. Before entering the main house, the front/porch area is called *Kipfhükhro*. Then the first compartment is called *Kiluo*, which is the biggest room comparing to size. Paddy is stored in huge bamboo woven containers called *Chü*. *Ciekhie*, a bench like wooden keel used for pounding rice is also kept in this room. Second compartment is called *Meiphubou*, *meiphu* meaning hearth and *bou* indicates that it is a box or container in *Tenyidie* but in this particular case, it can be understood as space. It is also called *Mhachaki* meaning *mhacha* to cook and *Ki* meaning house. By this term we understand that this space is basically the kitchen. The last compartment serves as the sleeping area. An outhouse is also found at the back of the kitchen which is called *Kinutshetu* where they store *Zu* meaning traditionally brewed rice drink/beer. It is also a rule that all Angami houses must face the east direction. The reason being that the sun can shine onto the porch where the members of the family sit out while doing household chores or other extra co-curricular activities like weaving and basketry. The Angami people are superstitious in their beliefs and approaches. This is evident even in present times which could be the result of cultural conditioning in the religious aspect. The Angamis also make major life decisions based on their dreams. It was most of the time even considered to be the deciding factors in life events such as marriage, going to warfare, choosing a

location to build or construct a new house etc. With this, back in the olden times, the building of a new house first begins only after performing certain rituals. Once a site has been selected, the man who intends to build a house places two flat stones at the site. That night he dreams and if the dream is favorable, he then goes to the site the next day with his wife around evening carrying fire, fruit, a fowl, food and builds a fireplace with three stones and begin to make fire. The couple after having food returns home and dream again. If the dreams do not involve an ill omen, the site is then adopted to execute the plan. After building the house, one must bring fire from the house of a man (*kikiakepfümia*) who has performed the *Lesü* genna and has horns on his gabled house.



Picture plate 11 *Ki An Angami* house



Picture plate 12 The entrance



Picture plate 13 *Kipfhühkhro* The front porch



Picture plate 14 *Kiluo* The front room



Picture plate 15 *Mhachaki*

An Angami kitchen



Picture plate 16 *Chü* Bamboo woven container

to store paddy





Picture plate 17 *Ciekhie* Wooden keel  
used for pounding rice



Picture plate 18 *Kinutshetu* An outhouse  
to store traditional wine *Zu*

Located at Kohima Village, in the Northern Angami region (Photos taken by Self )

## **The Role of Morung**

### ***(Kichüki or Thehouba)***

The *Morung* is another important structure in Naga culture. In the pre-Christian era of Naga society, we generally call it *Morung* but it is called differently in every tribe. For instance, the Lotha Naga tribe calls it *Chümpo*, Konyaks call it *Baan* and in *Tenyidie* the Angamis call it *Thehouba* meaning meeting place or *Kichüki* which means a place for sleeping. In the sociological perspective, the *Morung* is considered to be a key institution

for imparting life skills to the youths, particularly young unmarried men. The sizes of the *Morungs* depend on the size of the village, comparatively small villages will have one *Morung* and villages with more *khels* would have one *Morung* in each *khel* depending on the marked geographical territory that mainly functions as a dormitory and sometimes used as a guard and watch house for warriors during wars.

It is believed that western or modern education was first introduced in the Naga hills by American missionaries. Prior to this era, *Morung* was considered to be the educational institution where youths gather to learn the art of making tools, learn about one's tradition and culture, civil duties, social responsibilities, they are taught to be skillful as art like making indigenous musical instruments, carving, making wooden equipment played an important role. They were also taught the techniques of war as they learn how to handle a spear *Rüngou*, machete *Zhie* and shield *Pezü* in the battlefield. *Morung* was the institution of instruction where they not only learn and equip themselves for life but also render their services to the community. Announcements were also made at the *Morungs*. For instance, to announce important events such as a village meeting, death or to even send out warning about a possible and approaching threat to the village. During times of celebration, the *Morung* yard is also used to host the indigenous sporting activities like *Kene* (wrestling), *Khepru* (long jump), *Khetse* (high jump), *Ketsiapie* (shot put), *Thapru* (stand and jump), *Tholeikerütou* (roll the elephant dice) etc. In Naga culture, the virtue of respecting elders is taught extensively. Every decision making, tasting of food, giving advice were done by the elders of the community. In the Angami tradition, an elderly person would say “*A khrü ngurie*” meaning “I have seen the moon first” to indicate they have lived and experienced life first which is why they are better equipped. Therefore, great offense is taken when young members of the community overtake the

elders and pass their opinion and express their thoughts first. Such things were taught at the *Morung*. Easterine Kire in her book *A Naga village remembered* mentions the role of *Morung* and how it impacts the life of an individual. She writes;

*“But if the elders were there, the younger men listened closely without speaking much. They came to learn the stories of the village. It was good to be called a thehou no, a child of the thehou – it meant that such a person was well versed in the stories and customs of the village”* (2016 : 25)

It is at the *Morung* that the village members learn the importance of maintaining a closely knitted community. In times of misfortune, natural calamities etc, the *Mechü* (entire community) come together to render service and extend help to the affected household and fellow village members. They take it upon themselves as a social obligation to help and during such events; the different clan *Morungs* have a sort of competition on who extends the maximum help to the victims.

The issue of class is not quite evident as every male member is given the opportunity to spend time at the *Morungs* but women is not given the same privilege in the sense women had little or no say in decision making. Women were not given the permission to enter the male dormitories with the belief that if they do so, it interrupts the sanctity of the *Morung* and may in worst case scenario this act would bring bad luck to the men folk. But having said these, young girls and women do have their own dormitories called the *Kichüki*. After attaining puberty, the young girl sleeps at the girl's dormitory with her peer-group. These dormitories are usually built and attached to the house of a responsible woman. Here, they are taught the art of weaving and handicraft

skills. They are also trained to be what we call a modest woman to acquire feminine traits. They also learn to sing indigenous folk songs and folktales. Just like the men folks, girls also continue to be a part of this institution until the time they are married and leave home.



Picture plate 19 *Thehouba*

A sitting area at the Morung



Picture plate 20 *Kichüzü*

Bed found at Morung or Dormitory

Located at Khonoma Village (Photo Courtesy : Pelevizo Meyase)

## Social structure of Angami community

The basic structure in an Angami community is endogamous patrilineal clan which is also called *Thinuo* in *Tenyidie* but this unit is again superseded by the kindred called *Pütsa* literally means Grandfather in *Tenyidie* to indicate that they descended from a root that was ancient. All the Angami villages are normally divided into three or four clans where it is again divided into smaller sub-clans. These clans are famously known as



*Khels* among the Angamis. After, *Khels* have names assigned to it. For instance, in the case of Kohima Village (Northern Angami region), there are four clans namely *Lhisemia*, *Tsütuonuomia*, *Dapfütsomia* and *Pfüchatsumia*. Another example is Khonoma Village (Western Angami region), The village is divided into three clans namely *Merhümia*, *Thevomia* and *Semomia*. In the case of Jakhama Village from the Southern Angami region, has eight clans namely *Porütso*, *Pfüdia*, *Phema*, *Sophietso*, *Kulnu*, *Naki*, *Khatsonatso* and *Zhotso*. Members of the sub-clan cannot intermarry. The reason being they belong to the same bloodline and hence it will result in off-springs with deformity. The identity of an individual rests solely based on the clan they belong to. The clans are held responsible for the behavior of its members and every individual's actions were scrutinized. Their social status is sometimes reflected in the design of the house roofing. Every clan has their own fortress as they are associated to a history where they fought multiple wars with outside invaders. Hence, the need of fortress arose.

For administrative purposes, every Angami village has a council of elders who form the village council to administer the political affairs of the village, and individuals with grievances may come forward to the village council meetings. Each concerned village is appointed with village officials by the Government and the body of administration consists of what we call *Goanburas*. Their responsibilities and authorities are also similar to the village chieftains. However, their main responsibility is to act as a mediator on behalf of his fellow villagers and the government officials. Conflicts are resolved by the village council which discusses matters of dispute of any kind among the elders, the parties involved and the general public until they arrive at a negotiable situation and resolve the issue.

Coming to family structure, the typical Angami family is patriarchal in nature. The father is always considered as the head of the family and he is expected to act as the bread earner. In the absence of the father, the eldest son is given importance when it comes to taking decisions for the family. Angami family usually lives as a nuclear family but in some very rare cases, they live in joint families.

Coming to the topic of succession and inheritance, In the Angami tradition, the youngest son is entitled to inherit the family home. In case of only son, he is to inherit the family home with properties by default. The daughters are not mistreated but they are not granted the right to inherit any ancestral property. In a traditional setting, Angami daughters can use the family land for agricultural purposes but is not given the right to inherit any plot of land. Daughters are not given their *Siephruo* meaning share. The Angamis consider the inheritance of property to a great extent and which is why if a man dies without a son all the properties went to his kinsmen even if he leaves behind daughters. This kind of land possession is also called *Kayie*, typically refers to the ancestral land given to the next kin. Another kind of land possession is *Pozephü* which is presented to a daughter at the time of marriage. However, such lands are acquired by her parents and it excludes all ancestral lands.

### **Animism ; The bedrock of religion**

Sir Edward Burnett Taylor, an English anthropologist in 1871 adopted Stahl's term 'animism' to label and discuss the central concerns, characters and the striking features of religion. According to Taylor, animism is identified as a 'primitive' but ubiquitous religious error, namely 'the belief in spirits and souls'. His idea of religion

states that they evolved progressively from an earlier and more ‘primitive’ ones that may have existed beforehand comparing to fossils that later appeared as ‘higher’ cultural forms. Taylor in his thesis argued that animism was not the earliest form of religion however remained definitive of religion. Graham Harvey in his work *Animism Respecting the Living world* ;

“Religion is an animist mistake about the nature of the world in which people ‘believe in souls and spirits’ or discourse about non-empirical beings. Animism was the first significant theory that humans thought and taught to the descendants--- i.e. it was not merely instinctive or ‘natural’. Animism began and continues a way of trying to make sense of the world, it is a mythopoetic mode of discourse that explains life and events to those not yet fully acculturated to the practice of rationalist science.” (2019 : 6-7)

Taylor initially thought religion was present in all cultures, well organized and properly observed, a well structured phenomena; however entertained the idea of the existence of a pre-religious stage in the evolution of cultures and believed that a tribe like structure must be found in this stage. To proceed with the study of the problem, he required a ‘minimum’ definition of the term ‘religion’ and concluded with the idea in the ‘belief of spiritual beings’. Therefore, The central idea of Taylor’s definition of animism are souls and spirits.

Graham Harvey in his book *Animism respecting the living world* states “For Taylor animism is first a label for what he defines as the essence of religion, i.e. ‘belief in spiritual beings.’ (2019 : 7)

If it could be proven that no person was devoid of such minimal belief, then one could say that the whole of humanity has already passed the threshold into what is known to be the ‘religious state of culture’. Edward Taylor elucidated that he would have considered to use the term ‘Spiritualism’ in the technical sense to label such a system, but again explained his dissatisfaction of the term as it failed to entirely explain what he really meant. Edward’s approach to animism was certainly influenced by the study of Spiritualism which he viewed the notion as ‘a survival and revival of savage thought’. Hence, was forced to settle with another term, he adopted Georg Stahl’s ‘animism’ but used it in a slightly different manner by theorizing it as a theory of souls rather than of life forces. Taylor’s intention may be different and may have reanimated the previously existing notions however the purpose of his work included the exploration of the initial foundational human intellectual deed, i.e. the thought of religion. He states that the ‘primitive’ people or ‘savages’ considered people theorized based on their experiences that inside everything that exists in the world consists of a ‘soul’ that gave life to the material form or materialized it in that way. Taylor then wrote;

“The theory of animism divides into two great dogmas, forming parts of one consistent doctrine; first, concerning souls of individual creatures, capable of continued existence after the death or destruction of the body; second, concerning other spirits, upward to the rank of powerful deities... Thus Animism in its full development, includes the belief in souls and in a future state, in controlling deities and subordinate spirits, these doctrines practically resulting in some kind of active worship.” (Harvey, 2019 : 7 )

Patrick Curry, a Canadian-born British scholar in his book *Ecological Ethics : An Introduction* also mentions ; “ The best short term for such a spirituality is

one which early anthropologists applied pejoratively to the religion of supposedly primitive people : animism.” (2011 : 143)

Again, He mentions Edward Taylor’s theory as, “Describes animists as ‘people who recognize that the world is full of persons, only some of whom are humans, and that life is always lived in relationship with others.’” (2011 : 143)

Closely related to Animism is the Ojibwe tribe. They occupy the Southern Canada, the Northern Midwestern United states, and Northern plains. They are commonly known as the indigenous people of the Subarctic Northeastern woodlands and constitutes one of the largest population among the Native Americans in the United States. According to the Ojibwe oral narrations and their historical recordings were mostly found on birch bark scrolls possibly on rocks and believed that they originated from the mouth of the Saint Lawrence River on the Atlantic coast. Based on their oral history, seven miigis (Cowrie shells) appeared to them in the land of the dawn i.e. the Eastern land to teach them the ways of living. Their oral history states that one of the miigis was spiritually powerful and killed the people of Waabanakiing (Eastern land) wherein six miigis remained and the last miigi returned to the ocean again. These six remained and formed the doodem (clans) for the people which was symbolized by animals, Wawaazisii (bullhead), Baswenaazhi (echo maker), Aanaawehh (pintail duck), Nooke meaning tender (i.e. bear), Moozoonsii (little moose) etc. Such belief signifies their close relation to nature and its components which rests on the idea of animism. Another animistic feature traced in the Ojibwe society is their religious belief that it was Manidoog (spirits) that guided them through life; Manidoog was the source of life, existence and gave them the purpose in life. To them, all things consist of spirits, i.e. spirit-plants, spirit-animals, the earth itself including human beings. Their act of gratitude

was offered to the Gitche Manidoog or Kiccimanito (Great Spirit) or ‘great mystery’ presiding above all other spirits. Comparison can be drawn with the Angami religious belief as they believed in a greater and higher form of authority called *Kepenuopfü*. Praying to the spirits for appeasement was important to them; asking for good health and wealth, seeking assistance during times of trouble, merry making, naming their children and many more. These forms of religious practices were evident in the Angami religious beliefs. For instance, Sacrifices and offerings were made to the *Terhuomias* (spirits) to avert from facing any misfortunes and celebratory events were hosted to invoke *Kepenuopfü*’s blessings. Additionally, It is found that some of their religious ceremonies used the miigis shells (cowy shells) which may be similar to the area study of this thesis where the Nagas extensively used cowry shells not necessarily or precisely to perform religious ceremonies but used for ornamental purposes on their traditional attires used before the gradual evolution into the modern era.

In Edward Taylor’s argument, the primitive, barbarian, savage animists did not fully understand or even appreciated the advance and more rational and logical separation between two objects; animate and inanimate. In a passage that captures such arguments, Edward wrote:

“Animism takes in several doctrines which so forcibly conduce to personification, that savages and barbarians, apparently without an effort, can give consistent individual life to phenomena that our outmost stretch of fancy only avails to personify in conscious metaphor. An idea of revading life and will in nature far outside modern limits, a belief in personal souls animating even what we call inanimate bodies, a theory of transmigration of souls as well in life as after death, a sense of crowds of spiritual beings, sometimes flitting through the

air, but sometimes also inhabiting trees and rocks and waterfalls, and so lending their own personality to such material objects- all these thoughts work in mythology with such manifold coincidence, as to make it hard indeed to unravel their separate actions.” (Taylor : 1871, 1 : 260)

In another passage that expresses the succinct evocation of Taylor’s idea regarding fetishism, He again wrote;

“Certain high savage races distinctly hold, and a large proportion of other savage and barbarian races make a more or less close approach to, a theory of separable and surviving souls of spirits belonging to stocks, and stones, weapons, boats, food, clothes, ornaments, and other objects which to us are not merely soulless but lifeless.” (Taylor, 1871, 1 : 430)

Through these two quotations, Taylor distinguished the levels of savagery or primitivism from each other and from modernity, what we call his contemporary culture. He finally accepted that what we consider ‘inanimate bodies’ are inanimate by nature and the material things are from the living bodies. He attributed to the primitives’ beliefs about transmigration, personal souls, the inhabitation of material objects by spiritual beings and also the theory of separable and death surviving souls. What he called ‘animism’ was not an attribution of life but rather, of soul and personality where it was indeed unwarranted.

In contrary with Taylor’s argument, Ojibwa religion may be mentioned again to make sense of the ontology and behaviour. Rocks and stones played a significant role in the Ojibwe religion; in the form of animate stone persons in some instances. “....the stone was treated as if it were a ‘person’ not a ‘thing’, without inferring that objects of this

class are, for the Ojibwa, necessarily conceptualized as persons.” (Harvey, Graham. 2019 : 35)

“These stones, at least, are not treated merely as if they are persons, they are treated as persons. This is not human performance towards an object upon which human-likeness is projected, but an encounter with persons, who intentionally act towards and communicate with other persons.” (Harvey, Graham. 2019 : 36)

The Ojibwa religion may be considered an individual affair and the belief that supernatural power was received from the spirits through dreams and visions. For this particular reason, dreams and visions accorded great significance and much effort was put to grasp the meaning of their dreams and interpret them. The power obtained from such spiritual intervention could manipulate the natural or supernatural environment and employ it for the evil or benevolent purposes. In such quests, some received more spiritual powers than the rest, and it was these people who later came to be known as Shamans; varieties of shamans existed based on the degree of powers they received from the supernatural being. Traditionally, Shaman was the name given to an individual who possesses the power to heal people which was mostly guided by spirits. A shaman is believed to be an intermediary between the earth and the spiritual world using their connections with the supernatural spirits. During the healing session, the Shamans may enter into a trance like state to communicate with the supernatural world to validate the rituals performed by them. In some arguments, Shamanism and animism are considered to be two different belief systems however both naturally influence religion in its own ways as both stemmed out from men’s connection to nature and its environment. Moreover, Considering that it is one of the oldest belief systems, it may be inevitable that its



presence play a part in how spirituality is practiced, even in the context of an organized religion. These belief systems rest more on feelings and or life experiences. Both Shamanism and animism revolves around believing the power of spirits, but some may argue that animism paved the way to religion and it is natural progression that Shamanism branched out of animism.

Shamans are considered spiritual healers who draw inspiration from their connection to the existing world and the spiritual world. Shamans put an attempt to be the bridge between these two mainly to heal people and gain deeper knowledge, Animists mostly believe in appeasing God and the spirits. Animists considered the presence of both malevolent and benevolent spirits, their concern centres around honouring these spirits through offerings and sacrifices in different forms.

Quoting Graham Harvey's explanation on Shamans as mediators and healers from his book *Animism Respecting the Living World* ;

“Shamans are mediators. Their roles and performances, and sometimes their everyday lifestyle, gender, habits and even their very ontologies, mediate between the diverse oppositions and possibilities of their culture. If there is an above and a below, shamans mediate between them. If there are masculine and feminine genders, shamans mediate between them. If the sea and land are, in some senses, culturally dichotomous (as seen, for example, in the avoidance of mixing ‘produce’ from one with that of the other), shamans mediate.” (2019 :147)

We find essence of Shamanism in the primitive Angami religious belief. In Angami villages, we come across a variety of non-divinational healers in the form of bonesetters, herbalists, masseurs etc. Regardless of how they attained such skills or

power to heal, they can be largely categorized into three divisions. Firstly, those kind of shamans who are assisted by tutelary spirits. Secondly, those who believe to have such talents gifted from God. Thirdly, those who possess such power of healing through some animistic practices such as killing of certain animals to acquire the skills. Generally, The individuals that posses the power to interact with the spirits are also called as *Themoumia* in Angami dialect. J.H Hutton also mentioned ;

“There are, however, forms of divination and witchcraft demanding more specialized knowledge, the people who practice them being private practitioners and not public functionaries. They are known as Themuma.” (The Angami Nagas, 2003 : 242)

Some bonesetters and masseurs in Angami community believe that such talents were gifted to them by *Ukepenuopfü* (God) and have no connections with nor they are dependent on spirit possession to utilize their skills of healing. They also believe that such talents were more or less hereditary through some higher degree and in cases when the father passes away, predictions were made that one of his son or kinsmen may be the next bonesetter. This can also depend on who listens closely to such callings to become a *themoumia* by performing some rituals or learn the art of healing naturally. Those who reject such gifts and refuse to continue is feared to become *melo*, someone who losses the power of hearing and speech. The Angamis also believed that some *Themoumias* are capable of contacting and interacting with deceased souls. Such necromancers are also known as *Terhuope* which literally means *Terhuo* as spirits and *pe* meaning bridge. In tenyidie, a word may give multiple meanings. Therefore, *Pe* could also mean ‘to shiver’ or ‘trembling’. So in this context, it could denote that one is trembling in fear in the presence and influence of the *Terhuomia*. With the passage of time, some tenyidie words have been modified in the interest of the collective mass; now *Terhuope* is referred to as

*Terhuopf* meaning a person who can speak to the dead. The new term is derived from the combination of the word *Themoupf* which is commonly used in the Northern Angami region and *Terhuope* is used in the Southern Angami region and the Western Angamis often called it *Terhuokhwi*. Some people among the living have the power to communicate with the deceased. Such encounters happen after the passing of a person, usually in the mourning period, it is believed that the spirit of the dead person returns to interact with the *Terhuope* to send message to the living. Through folk narrations, a bridge is said to connect the land of living with the land of the dead where at the end of the bridge stands a tall divided wall which is so high for children and women to cross over. During such onerous times, the souls of the deceased women and children send the deceased men's souls to interact through the *Terhuope*. However, in another narration, it is said that the souls of non-Christians can only come in contact with necromancers because the destination of the Christian soul is different from that of an animist's soul.

Relating to one Angami folktale, Easterine Kire in her book *Naga Folktales Retold* mentions:

“Rhalieü was a woman of Meriema (village), a very powerful sorceress with immense powers. One of the many stories told of her powers is of how she brought an only son back to life.” (2009 : 87)

Another indigeneous religion related to animism and precisely the Animist Angami religion is Donyi Polo religion found in the Arunachal Pradesh, a state in the North East region of India bordering China, Tibet and Myanmar. It is systematized under the banner Donyi Polo literally meaning sun-moon in the local language that has close relation to animistic practices and also of Shamanic type in nature. They believe that the

sun radiates female energy and the moon is considered the male force, similar to the yin and yang in the Chinese culture.

An Indian Philosopher Osho in his book *The secret of Secrets* writes;

“There have been secret methods to get energy from the moon and from the sun too. Sun worship was born out of a certain technique; great temples of the sun arose. The sun temple of Konarak was just an expression of gratitude to the sun. It was not just worship, it was a science- how to get yang energy in you. It is particularly good for women to get sun energy in them so that their hidden, dormant yang becomes active, and it is good for men to get moon energy so that their dormant feminine principle becomes alive, moving again. It is good for a woman to be a sun worshipper and good for a man to be a moon worshipper.”

(Vol.1, Ch 7)

The name was particularly chosen to institutionalize and protect it from the onslaught of modernity. One of the chief aspects of this religion is the veneration of nature similar to Angami animist religion. The followers of this religion extensively believe in multiple benevolent spirits and deities that inhabit the natural elements such as the mountains, rivers, animals and trees. They perceive these spirits with high regard and manifest them as worthy of respect. Such belief and connections instills a sense of environmental stewardship among the followers of Donyi Polo. Their rituals revolve around offerings, chanting of hymns and prayers to the spirits. This religion encompasses a set of moral and ethical values that guide them; living a virtuous life, contributing to the welfare of their society, respect for elders. The name of the religion itself draws similarity with the belief of the animist Angamis as evidently the Angamis in

the animist era was greatly dependent on nature not only considering it as a higher form of dieties but also dependent on natural elements to guide them. Such instances are found on the carvings of the village gates where the full moon and sun are seen as source of guidance in life and belief to guarantee clear vision for the unforeseeable future.

### **The Ancestor's Religion *Pfütšana***

Traditionally, Nagas are described as animists; that is; they believe in the existence of spiritual beings inhabiting the natural world. However, they also believe in the existence of Gods in various forms. Before the advent of Christianity, the Nagas did not believe in the presently existing Christian God but even before the emergence of Christianity, they believed in the existence of a supreme being and souls living in the elements of nature. Agriculture being the most important source of sustenance of life, the sacrifices made to the Gods and spirits have a close relation to the concept of 'fertility' that intervene beneficially in maximizing of good crops, heads of enemy warriors, offsprings, etc. It is often said that the Nagas generally believed in three types of spirits: a high God, a spirit who lives in the sky and the earth spirits with relation to this, myth of autochthonous origin was common among the Nagas where their history always traced back to the origin from underground or origin from stones. Nagas in the ancient times extensively practiced headhunting. This was a cultural rite done with belief that the repository of the soul lies in the head and that taking enemy heads was rewarded with fertility and prosperity. Headhunting was also done to measure a man's bravery and manhood. All these beliefs and practices prevailed during the era before Christianity arrived in Nagaland.

Prior to the Christian conversion era, i.e, 1879, even the Angamis were considered to be pagans. They believed in the existence of a supreme force and the presence of evil spirits that dwell in the elements of nature. Before the advent of Christianity, the Angami traditional religion was called *Tsana* or *Pfuitsana*. The rituals they performed were called ‘*Nanyü*’ and on the days they indulge in religious activities, they observe a non-working day which is called ‘*Penie*’. The chief of all creatures was known as *Kepenuopfü*. *Kepenuo* in *Tenyidie* means ‘birth’ which was again assumed to be the ancestors of mankind. An Angami Naga author Easterine Kire in her book *Walking the Roadless Road* calls *Kepenuopfü* as “*the creator-deity, who is acknowledged as the creator of the earth and sky and who benevolently blesses the harvests of his worshippers*”. (2019 : 64)

Again,

Before undertaking any big enterprise, the Angamis declares:

“*Tei apfu, kijü apfü, a Kepenuopfü peleya*”.

“Sky is my father, earth is my mother, I believe in the creator deity” (Tr.Mine)

The Angamis religious practices were very rigid prior to Christian era. For a matter of fact, they are still continuing to cling on to certain beliefs that may be associated to Angami culture and tradition. A religious cult called the *Angami Tsana Krotho* still existing in present times. As mentioned earlier, paganism beliefs that the spirits dwell in stones, trees, earth etc. Similarly, the Angamis also referred to these spirits as *Terhuomia*. But later after the arrival of American missionaries, they began to refer to it as *Satan*. And anything related to *Satan* in the Bible may give the impression

that it is dark and evil in every sense. However, some of this ancestral spirit is believed to possess some benevolent quality that grants wealth, health, good fortune etc. Contrary to the beliefs in such spirits, it is found in the Bible and the Bible unequivocally states “Before me there was no god formed, and there will be none after me” (*Bible*: Isaiah 43:10). Such statement directly contradicts with the animistic aspects of Angami religion and animism in general. The Angami religion consists of and functions with an extended set of taboo that is applicable for all aspects. However, this shall be discussed thoroughly in the following chapter.

## Chapter 2

### ANGAMI ANIMIST WORLD

This chapter shall discuss the religious beliefs the Angami practiced before the era of Christianity. In addition to that, the spirits and Gods in the Angami religious context shall further be discussed in this chapter. The ancestral Nagas witnessed the invasion of external forces. Two important notable contacts were the British colonizers and the American missionaries. As the terms suggest, Nagas encountered multiple warfares with the Britishers and hence, it is an indication that they were colonized in the context of administration while the American missionaries arrived in the Naga hills with the intension to covert a community that was still practicing a religion that was close to paganism. The Angami tribe existing under the umbrella of a group called the Nagas, it was obvious that they were also practicing a religious belief that can be defined and characterized in the animistic sense.

Animism is derived from the Latin word '*anima*' meaning '*breath*', '*spirit*', '*life*'. With this, animism can be vaguely and simply be understood that all things regardless of whether it is animate or inanimate has an essence of soul attached to it. It is a doctrine that believes in the existence of good and evil spirits. To appease the good benevolent spirits and escape the wrath of evil spirits, certain sacrifices were made and retreats were performed. Referring to the Ancient Greek religion it was either appease or face the consequences of your actions. Contradicting with the Christian belief, the notion of love, forgiveness or grace did not exist in animism.



Animism is also closely related to idolatry practices. The souls and spirits supposedly reside in stones, trees, leaves, animals, soil etc. and hence rituals were usually performed to and around them. Much importance was also given to animals as they are believed to have close contact with humans. In the Angami context, it is believed that man and tiger were brothers at the time of origin. The Angamis also considered *Tekhu* tiger to be *Udzürieu* meaning older brother. Oral narration of Angamis also narrate tales of spirit and human marriage in some instances, and these are all indications of supernatural forces and cases of superstition but also associated to the cycle of life in Angami tradition. Animism as mentioned earlier is the belief in the existence of spiritual beings in all natural forms. Likewise having said this, the traditional Naga religion, the existence of souls mostly dwells in the sky, wind, the village road or even graves. They, the Angamis did not build a particular place to worship such as a ‘church’ however some place were maintained and believed to be sacred while places like the grave of dead people would emit certain kinds of evil omens or energy.

The Angamis speak of *Kepenuopfü* as a male figure, but the word *pfü* fixed to the word is again a feminine termination. Some spirits that carry the feminine sense are *Telepfü*, *Miawenuo*, *Terhuoimia*. The Angami religion is made up of taboos. In a sense, taboos are what binds them, directs and controls their way of life. Taboo is derived from the Polynesian word ‘*Tabu*’ meaning ‘to forbid’ or ‘forbidden’. *Kenyü* in Tenyidie (taboo) is a term extensively used in Angami culture which is again related to all different aspects i.e. spiritually, socially and culturally. It is implied to almost every spheres of an Angami man or woman. For instances, *hau cü kenyü* (it is forbidden to eat this), *hau chü kenyü* (it is forbidden to do this), *hau pu kenyü* (it is forbidden to say this) means a person under any circumstances must not indulge in such activities or conversations. Anything

that goes beyond the *Kenyü* expression leads to infuriate the Gods and he/she may be punished in the form of death of self or close and dear ones, non-prosperity of crops, sickness etc.

Hutton (*The Angami Nagas* 2003:189, 190) used the word *genna* to explain the acts of worship in Angami religious practices.

“...because there is no suitable English word which describes them, and the word *genna*, though by derivation from the Angami ‘Kenna’, signifying ‘forbidden’ merely...”

The three notable words that one needs to understand in Angami religion are *Penie* (a non-working day). This day is strictly observed by the *Mechü* (whole village) when the head of the village announces the day and date to observe it. Again in the Angami religious context, there are two categories of *Penie*. First, *Tere Penie*. It is pronounced as *Te-re*. *Tere Penie* is considered to be the extreme prohibition and highest level of prohibition from indulging in any activity regardless of whether it may be the daily mere household chores or outdoor agricultural activities and is observed for various reasons. First, *Mi Penie*. *Mi* in tenyidie meaning ‘fire’. Second, *Teirü Tenyie Penie*. Translated in English is rain (*Teirü*), Sun (*Teinyie*). Third, *Teikuo* (drought) and fourth is *Prü Penie*. *Prü* meaning hailstone. As the terms suggest, it is evident that *Tere Penie* is closely related with natural calamities. The season of sowing and harvesting begins during the rainy seasons. Hence, these are done annually usually seven to eight days after celebrating the festivals. For instance, if a member of the village happens to be in the fields on a non-working day, he/she immediately knocks the bark of the tree with a rock and declares, “*A rie ho*” meaning “I am first” in asking for protection from the tree. In *Tere Penie*, *mi* (fire) and *teirü* (rain) are considered to be the highest degrees of observing

*Penie*. On such occasions, none of the members of the village is allowed to go to their fields, non-indulgence in activities like hunting or fishing, they are strictly prohibited from making fire or plucking even a single leaf from plants or trees. Their cups, plates and cutlery are to be kept unwashed. Their existing main door entrance are not completely closed or allowed to latch the doors with the belief that they are expected to keep passageways for the *Terhuomias* (spirits). Interaction with guests and outsiders was also strictly prohibited to maintain sanctity. The expression *kha kelie* (to stop) denotes that there is no discussion beyond this. It is the highest level in the prohibition pyramid.

The second category of *Penie* is *penie nietse*. *Nietse* meaning in ‘small portions’ but in this context, it can also refer to an understanding as ‘in-between’. The non-working day which does not fall under *tere penie* is observed in between weeks or months when the need arises. Certain *Nanyü* (rituals) are also performed but there is no total prohibition that affects the daily activities of the villagers. During the *penie nietse* days, the whole village is not expected to come to a standstill though the need to perform some rituals still remains necessary. *Thenyi thena* is another *penie* which is observed after every festival to mark the beginning of their normal lives to initiate their daily activities. Whether or not any *nanyü* (rituals) are performed on this day is unknown. *Kekinyi* (friendship festival) are hosted frequently in Angami community. Here, the members of a clan hosts feast for another clan (usually from different villages) to maintain their friendship to sustain their history. Upon returning to one’s own village from the guest’s village, they refrain from doing any activity for a day and continue to declare the next day as *penie*. The reason is to avoid greed in the coming days after experiencing such feast with abundance in food. This is also called ‘*chühya keza ketsü penie*’. Translated in Tenyidie, It means ‘to avoid craving for meat’. The intention and motive of such

observance is to minimize greed and to keep a check and maintain balance on one's capacity on over consumption beyond what is necessary for one's survival.

As mentioned earlier, the other term is *Kenyii* (prohibition, to forbid, taboo). The third important term is *nanyii* meaning ritual. Rituals are performed during days of celebration, on *penie* days, funerals and also sacrificial rituals are included. These three terms are the epitome of Angami animistic religion. Everything, i.e. ways of living (culture) revolves around this triangular notion. Due to lack of proper literacy establishment, the Angamis depends on the lunar eclipses and solar eclipses to predict the weather or even possibilities of upcoming natural calamities. These are signs that exhibit their dependency on nature and its elements.

The in-depth study of taboo can be quite fascinating. Any members of the community is obligated to follow the belief set of religious rules because failing to do so can lead to serious consequences and the other reason is to keep a check on the social conduct of every member. The Angamis were so conscious of the consequences they might face that even if an individual violates the rituals of *kenyii*, it compels the whole community to observe a day of *penie* to avert the rage of the spirits. The Angamis extremely fear to displease their God and spirits which they believe is present in their everyday life. Practicing a religion close to Paganism, yet they are aware of living a life that pleases their Gods and other spirits in a sense, they believe in the afterlife and hence, it was extremely important to them that they live on a moderate path as it is the only way to avoid *sesuo* which means 'unfortunate deaths' or 'untimely deaths' caused by accidents, drowning, death during childbirth, dying in a fire, being attacked by wild animals, dying under mysterious circumstances etc.

The actions which are considered *Kenyii* are very diverse and present in every spheres of life. Any actions that extend against *Kenyii* will only lead to severe consequences regardless of gender and age. The following paragraphs will elaborate the various taboos that are eminent in Angami religious culture. Religious culture because every action and activity always centers around and concludes with appeasing or displeasing the *terhuomia* (spirits). Even before the advent of Christianity, the Angamis believed that it was a serious matter to offend the creator for this may lead to endless misfortunes and in worst scenario, even death. Since time immemorial, the elderly people were always considered superior and the Angamis may regard them as a figure next to God. Hence, it was taboo to go against their will, dismiss their thoughts and decisions or disrespect them at any point. Even during times of celebration, the eldest person of the community is first given the honor to taste the food and that marks the beginning of the feast and anyone else doing so may be considered a taboo.

Taboo follows all social and cultural aspects. Even when it comes to food habits, there are certain acts of prohibition that binds the community. Being acquainted with war fares frequently it was important for the people to constantly be alert and keep vigil to act or react instantly at any given moment. Therefore, it was taboo to receive food from an enemy for security reasons i.e, food poisoning. Also, they believe that eating an enemy's food could lead to an ailment called *mezumezie* which translated in English is seizure. Consumption of seed-grain was also prohibited. Angamis were non-vegetarians which means killing of cattle during different occasions was very common. With this, it is *kenyii* to give away the head of animals (pigs, cows, mithuns) to one's acquaintances for it signifies that the head is superior and handing it over is equivalent to losing one's ownership and superior status. *Ketsa ca* meaning 'elder's food' was only to be consumed

by elderly people for the reason that it constitutes only the tender parts of an animal (heart, kidney, liver etc). Women especially thrived to maintain her purity by refraining from consuming *ketsa ca*. Otherwise, they could be punished and even believed that it may lead to blindness, deafness or even become dumb.

An illegitimate child born out of wedlock was always considered an outcast in Angami tradition. An illegitimate child is also called *Nuovü Nuorhü* in Tenyidie. Any Angami member of the village is adamant to claim an illegitimate child with the fear that he/she may shroud the seed of dominance and overshadow the legitimate ones. *Nuovü Nuorhü* was always disparaged and put to a level where certain taboos implied to and upon them. It was taboo to come in contact and interact with such children/person prior and during wars for they believed it will lead to defeat. Activities like hunting and even during harvesting season, interacting with a *Nuovü* may also mean no fruitful harvest.

Angamis are very stern about the disapproval of inter-clan marriages. It was not a matter of negotiation and can be considered complete taboo. Anyone who goes against this taboo may produce off springs with deformities. Nothing good or positive comes out of disputes of any kind. Likewise, building houses on disputed or encroached lands was prohibited. It is forbidden to use firewood that has been struck by *methie* (lightning) and there are possibilities of falling ill because such trees are considered tainted after the lightning strikes. Angamis believe in the sacredness of certain places. Hence, blocking the village paths, roads and springs are taboo because it may provoke the spirits and guarantee failure. To burn a forked piece of wood at the end of it is *kenyü*. This is prevalent even in these modern times as it is still practiced even till date. In the absence of a child's parents, his/her maternal and paternal uncles play a very vital role in the child's life. It is termed as taboo to displease these uncles. It is also forbidden to mock

disabled and mentally handicapped members. Recycling of items brought from a gutted house or letting the fire in the hearth die down during the five *penie* days while mourning for a dead relative are all taboo as it may attract bad omen in the future. All restrictions and prohibitions in Angami traditions are inter-related in all aspects. A concrete Christian belief did not prevail as such however the belief in something that could affect their way of living was always present.

The animist Angamis believed that the unseen authoritative figure *Kepenuopfü* created the earth and the sky but in parallel, they also believed in some *Terhuomias* (spirits) that were considered as the mediators between human and nature which among some are considered to be guardian that guides and protects them and some existed purely to terrorize and punish people for their actions.

## Meciemo

*Meciemo* was identified as an ugly spirit that sits at the entrance of the *Kezierü*, *Kezei* meaning ‘darkness’ and *rü* meaning ‘river’. Literally it can be understood as ‘River of darkness’. It is believed that the soul *Ruopfü* of every human being crosses the river of darkness to pass over to the land of spirits called *marabu*, the place where the souls of all the deceased begin to start a new life again. The concept of afterlife is evident through this belief as said by oral narration from our ancestors; *Meciemo* was also described in the physical sense. He was described as a spirit that defines ‘shabby’ in every possible manner. He had a grim-face and is ferocious. The essence around him was pungent. It is also believed that he has long locks of hair infested with lice and whoever wishes to pass this path to reach the other side is commanded and compelled to bite the lice on

*Meciemo's* head and only then the *ruopfü* is permitted to pass through the entrance to the *river of darkness*. The narration of *Meciemo* is quite elaborate as the house he resides is also orally narrated by the Angami ancestors. It is often mentioned that *Meciemo's* house is built with strands of hair. Hence, coincidentally when more females are passing away in a village, it is believed that *Meciemo* is building and extending his empire and therefore in need of hair. He was considered the spirit with no love and affection and is constantly putting an attempt to harvest as many *ruopfü* as possible.

## **Rutshe**

Another spirit that is considered aggressive is *Rutshe* and he is an ill-tempered and dangerous spirit. Figuratively, it is described that *Rutshe's* head is enormously big and look as though his head rested on his body. His tongue extends down till the lower part of his chin and his chest is covered with scars. His limbs are quite chunky and stout. His head and mouth are deep red in colour. *Rutshe's* presence is not loud but hides somewhere with a block of wood resting on his shoulder to signify that he was ready to kill anyone he encounters and does not kill after sunset (night). *Rutshe's* voice was believed to be deep and loud which is heard only from a distance but the same voice seems muffled. Oral narrations also says that this spirit spends most of his time sleeping and wakes up three times in a day and anyone who unfortunately comes in contact with this spirit may never or barely make it alive. Anyone who passes away under mysterious circumstances without suffering any ailment but excessive bleeding is believed to be killed by *Rutshe*. Even if anyone by sheer luck survives *Rutshe's* attack, spends his days as a handicapped person. Another aftermath of the attack is swollen tongue to an extent



where the victim cannot breathe which eventually leads to death. In the olden days, it is believed that *Rutshe* abominate the smell of tobacco and therefore the Angamis began to frequently chew tobacco to drive away this spirit.

## **Keshüdi**

*Keshüdi* is considered to be a male figure and believed to be created by God to be the supreme ruler of darkness and prefers to exist in darkness. He is also considered to be the spirit of cosmic proportion whose footsteps are so wide and extends from one mountain to another. *Keshüdi*'s voice is compared to thunder which is why people often find it difficult to distinguish between the thunder and his voice. He is also compared to the other spirits like *Rutshe* because of his aggressiveness. This particular spirit is also known to be the unforgiving one but in rare instances, he submits to grand wealth to some who encounters him. However, unfortunately his blessing is accompanied with misfortune. Most spirits have a designated place of dwelling but *Keshüdi* is present everywhere and often considered to be the most powerful and dangerous spirit for such reason which is why the Angamis in the olden times continue to live in trepidation of *Keshüdi*.

## **Chükhieo**

*Chükhieo*, the chief spirit of wildlife or can also be considered the guardian spirit of all wild animals. He is believed to have full control of all animals and birds.

Easterine Kire's book 'A Naga Village Remembered';

"....coming upon the struggling form, quickly realized that it was no animal, but the guardian of wildlife himself caught in the trap". (2016:50)

It is through verbal narration that he is also described in the physical sense. In odd occasion, some people who claimed that they have witnessed and came in contact with *Chükhieo* described him to have a body similar to that of human beings but comparatively humongous in size. Closely associated to wildlife, *Chükhieo* has features of animals as his body is covered with hair which may show indication of close relationships with wild life species. Generous by nature, he grants rewards to people when it is asked for, especially hunters who are on a hunting spree.

This spirit is believed to have gifted eyesight, the essence of smell and ears which contributes to his quick reflexes to react and act when he senses any human approaching. *Chükhieo* has a permanent dwelling place which in some records claims that some hunters came across such sacred place which later made them excellent hunters as they have come in contact with the God of wild animals. In ancient times, the Angamis considered hunting as a men's sport. Considering this, if any individual or group is contemplating to go for hunting, they pray to the spirit of birds and animals before they proceed. However, when they return home with no rewards, they believe that *Chükhieo* was not in their favor. However, on some days when footprints appear, that is *Chükhieo* guiding them and favoring them. In Naga author Easterine Kire's book '*Naga Folktales Retold*', She also mentioned *Chükhieo* in one chapter;

"Chükhieo replied, "Ask of me any animals you want, and I will grant it to you in exchange of my freedom". The hunter made him swear to

it and then released him. Chükhieo sprang to the ground and let out a shrill whistle. To the hunter's amazement, all the animals in the forest came out of hiding, in a great flock they came towards Chükhieo". (2016:92)

Easterine Kire's book *'A Naga Village Remembered'*;

"He had heard of hunters granted game by Chükhieo when they were fortunate enough to catch him. So he steeled his heart and said "If you give me a deer to feed my family, I'll set you free". (2016:50)

".....he gave a shrill whistle and pointed his finger in the opposite direction. The hunter looked and was amazed to see a deer standing nearby....." (2016:50)

Hutton in his book *The Angami Nagas* mentions *Chükhieo* in one chapter that states ;

"Don't kill me and I will give you what you wish for." (1969 : 266)

In the Angami folk tradition, instances of hunters shooting their co-hunters was apparent. This transpires with the belief that *Chükhieo* has blinded them which made the hunters to appear in the forms of animals and kill their fellow hunters. In an interview, a respondent narrated a similar incident from the past of his grandfather shooting his neighbor on a hunting trip. In such cases, the accused and especially the menfolk of the family is compelled to flee from the village for a period of time with the fear that they may be attacked by the victim's family.

Blessings are bestowed upon young hunters by elderly during the time of hunting season;

“Pfütsa chükhieo nhachü nhara pete nvie,

uko nhanu rüshü tuo mia uko si mo mu kha hie tsü di hie bu sevo  
thenuthenuoko tshe chücie”.

Translation:

“Grandfather *Chükhieo*, all animals and birds belong to you, they are all hidden in the forest, we do not know them, and so you provide them to us to enable us to bring them for the food of our wives and children”. (Tr. Mine)

After *Chükhieo* provide them their luck with wild animals and birds, they in return offer some parts of the animals to *Chükhieo* as a token of gratitude with the belief that the spirit would bless them more in the future.

Again, In Easterine Kire’s work *Naga Folktale Retold*;

“The clan members marveled that he always found game in his traps and they said, “You are being blest by the spirits, son, do not do anything to anger them”. In the manner of the Angami hunters, the man paid his tributes to the spirit guardian of wildlife by remembering to acknowledge Chükhieo’s generosity every time he got a kill.” (2016:93)

A respondent also added, any person who encounters *Chükhieo* must refrain from indulging in any daily chores and activities with the fear of getting injured.

## Telepfü

*Telepfü* is believed to be the spirit of hallucination. She is a female spirit and her target audience is usually those of the ones which she can lure for a period of time but not

with the intention to kill them. *Telepfü* is fond of quietness and execute her plans at night or during the stillness of day. This spirit tends to move among humans and move in the vicinity of human dwelling spaces. During such times, her presence was felt as the people begin to feel extremely sleepy and lazy.

Easterine Kire, *A Naga village Remembered* ;

“Vikhwelie came back six days after he went missing, bone-thin and near death. He had a terrifying tale to tell. Tall, dark creatures had carried him off against his will, keeping him for days altogether. When the search party came near, they covered his mouth so that he could not shout. Neither could he run nor move because his limbs obeyed their will, and they led him where they could. They traveled long distances together and went near wild animals.” (2016: 55)

A myth about *Telepfü* says that the grandfather (her ancestors) with his progeny was gathered in the midst of men by a bonfire when suddenly a mustard seed popped and caused his blindness. Since then *Telepfü* was horrified with mustard seeds. This narration was popular among the Angamis and they often used the seed of mustard as a defense mechanism to protect themselves from this spirit. The *Telepfü* capture her victims and lure them and accompany them in the deep forests for many days. She would often hide them in dangerous locations such as cliffs and steep environment. In those many days, they wander around in a paralyzed and hallucinated manner as they claim that they could see and hear everything around them but could not shout for help. The search party from the village cannot trace the missing person as the victim remains to be possessed by *Telepfü*. It is through experience where some victims narrate that *Telepfü* would come

disguised as their family or friends and call them in their voices which often leaves them confused and effortlessly tame the victims. In another narration, it says that *Telepfü* was physically very short and avoids direct contact with humans. Men with courageous *Ruopfü* (soul) could easily see and sense the spirits' presence at social gatherings. In such scenario, they would sprinkle mustard seeds to scare them off. A respondent in an interview experienced similar situation and narrated about a time when one of his fellow villager went missing for a couple of days. People believed the victim must have died under mysterious circumstances to only find him in the deep forest exhibiting all the signs of being possessed by *Telepfü*.

## **Dzüraiü**

*Dzüraiü* is considered a female spirit. “*The spirit controlling women’s crops. No sacrifices are made to her*” (Easterine Kire, *Walking the Roadless Road*: 2019:65). In another narration, one of my respondent narrated that *Dzüraiü* is the spirit that controls all the aquatic lives under the water. *Dzüraiü* was considered an old woman and is munificent in nature. It is believed that she favors some additionally. These fortunate people when blessed are expected to share it with other fellow villagers which otherwise would displease *Dzüraiü* and their catch decreases each time until they are left empty handed. To honor the spirit’s generosity, they never fail to leave some portion of their catch for *Dzüraiü* before they return home to guarantee abundance for the next catch.

## Miawenuo

*Miawenuo* in Angami folk tradition is famously known to be the goddess of wealth. Her appearance was often described in a peculiar way. This spirit had such unusual features as her hair falls till her ankles and the soles of her feet points backwards. She is described as harmless and exceptionally tiny in size. Tales of *Miawenuo* says she is quite generous but also does not grant exactly what human ask her but return the favor otherwise. For instance, someone who encounters this spirit asks for wealth in any form, she blesses them with other honors. And when asked for food grains, some other fortunes were bestowed upon them. Only the most fortunate ones witnessed such rendezvous with the spirit and goes on narrating that she appears only for a brief moment and disappears in a blink of an eye. *Miawenuo* embodies the feature of a female and as such believed to be dressed in Angami traditional attire. The Angamis believed that the appearance of *Miawenuo* was always accompanied by good fortune in the form of bountiful harvest for that year. The ancestral Angamis assumed that this spirit dwell in caves or mountains and rarely allow herself to be seen by men.

## Vicho

*Vicho* is another spirit, said to be physically one of the biggest among the many spirits believed by the Angamis. This spirit was often referred as the amiable spirit and exhibits compassion towards human beings. It is believed that this spirit was affectionate towards elderly people, the ones suffering from ailments, the less privileged ones in the

society. It mostly appears disguised as man and it was often difficult to identify him as a spirit.

As mentioned earlier, *Keshüdi*, the spirit of great proportion was always considered evil and the Angamis believed that such evil spirit was suppressed by *Vicho*. Legends narrated stories of *Vicho* challenging *Keshüdi* for fights in the middle of the village at midnight. Further they assume that *Vicho* and *Keshüdi* were involved in some fights as they heard loud uproar of two parties hitting each other with their wooden club but physically did not witness it. In this assumption *Keshüdi* was an aggressive spirit while *Vicho* was considered the people's protector and therefore they believe that this spirit was defending the humans against an evil spirit. One of my respondent narrated stories of *Vicho* and *Keshüdi* fighting at Kohima Village. No concrete evidence was found to substantiate such folklore narrations but it is believed that the fights had taken place at particular areas i.e. *Üsoukizou* (located at P-Khel), *Ketsiezou* (located at D-Khel), *Sozieba* (located at T-Khel) all located in Kohima Village. These places all still exist in the present times however such legendary histories are not narrated extensively nor it no longer exist in the transmission of oral narrations. The Angamis also believed that illness and death in the village always decreases indicating *Keshüdi*'s defeat after such encounters.

## Other spirits

*Kamvülhouphreimia*, in Angami animistic religious belief is flock of evil spirits. They do not exist individually but move around collectively. These spirits were quite intimidating, they say as they recall folktales. Their features were also described in a



rather disturbing manner. Their chest was hollow and that enables to see through. It is also described that some of the three spirits heads were missing while some were red in colour. These spirits are naturally notorious as they enter the villager's houses and consume the locally brewed wine. The leftover then tastes bland. These spirits appear after darkness sets in and believed to kill people and such victims when found looks similar to how these spirits were described physically; dead body was covered with suspicious and mysterious looking holes.

Another folktale recollects an incident that might have occurred at the British Dak bungalow at Chakhabama above the famous *Dzüü* River, towards the eastern side of Kohima territory. *Kamvülhouphreima* flock spent the whole night playing in the compound of the bungalow which was witnessed by the guard. *Terhuoüimia* was a female spirit which is also known as sky-woman. There are no records of incidents where anyone encountered such spirits and happen to appear only in legends and folktales.

*Tem*i, the spirit of wind appears during midday when everything is still and quiet. Believed to be cowardice by nature and target people who are not brave and courageous. *Tem*i would often control the wind and make the trees and plants bend to instill fear in anyone who comes in contact with this spirit. When the effect of breeze ceases, the surroundings return to normal again. *Rapu* is known as the spirit of nightmares. In Angami context, *Rapu Une* means *Rapu* attack which can in other terms be understood as sleep paralysis. In Angami legends, It says that *Rapu* has a missing thumb and that disables him from going to extreme extend of killing his victims. It was not explained to how this spirit exactly looks like as every individual experience the look of *Rapu* differently and may appear in various forms. They explained the difficulty in elaborating as for some, they could only hear disturbing noises and claim to see everything around

them but is unable to shout or yell for help while some explained the look of this spirit but in a vague manner. Reader or listeners could be skeptical about such narratives as it may pose different perspective about the existence of such unexplainable spirits. However, the Angamis in the religious aspect has proven traces of animism in their beliefs through such narrations which in some instances might be considered absurd by listeners or reader.

## Chapter 3

### ANGAMI RITUALISTIC LIFE

The Angamis as mentioned time and again extensively perform varieties of *Nanyü* (rituals) for different events for multiple purposes; one main reason is to appease *Kepenuopfü* (God) and *Terhuomia* (spirits) before they begin to execute any plans further. It could be termed as superstitious or impractical from the contemporary point of view however considering the animistic belief of the Angami religion, it was important to them to offer some realistic renunciation and sacrifices for better results. Due to the presence and influence of cultural conditioning, some of the rituals are believed to be true even in the present times. Society is dynamic in nature and rarely remains stagnant in one position. With due course of time especially from the religious stand point, the Angami religious structure has taken some turns with the arrival of Christianity. The rituals performed in the past were no longer practiced in modern times except some taboo that are observed from generation to generation till date. For instance, elders still discourages the idea of cutting one's hair after sunset with the fear that one may go bald or hair texture may deteriorate. Or another instance is the prohibition of crisscrossed legs while eating with the fear that such people may tumble and fall during times of emergencies or war. Taboos still prevail however the need to practice animistic rituals is no longer prevailing at present. It is fallacious and misleading to conclude that the practices in the past are incorrect and modern way of life is better because the religious culture in the past too had a significance of its own to justify why such rituals were necessitated. In the present Angami social and religious structure, ceremonial practices are more simplified where elaborated rituals are not observed and performed extensively.

This chapter shall discuss and explain the rituals performed by the Angami animists at various events i.e. during funerals, marriage, birth of a new family member, headhunting ritual, the role of *Tsiakrau* (the man who perform agricultural rituals during sowing season), *Liedepfü* (the woman who perform the rituals before harvest), *Zievou* (elderly member of the village) and other miscellaneous *nanyüs* that were performed for various reasons at different occasions. These are some of the prominent rituals practiced by the Angamis.

## **Marriage rituals of the Animist Angamis**

### **(*Kisükiya*; Marriage rituals)**

The Angamis prefer to arrange the preceding of marriage between harvesting to the next annual sowing season. In the Angami tradition, no auspicious event is scheduled in the month of *Kezie* (February) as the name literally means darkness. Second, wedding dates are not fixed at *Khrüdzü* (full moon) as it is believed that it may bring bad luck and misfortune over the union of the couple. Before any arrangements are made or decisions are made, the proposal is conveyed to a girl's family from the man's side through an old lady (the mediator) until the rituals of marriage concludes. It is often expected of the mediator to be someone who is efficient and well versed with the cultural values of Angami tradition for the decision of the bride and her family solely rests on this woman at most times. Before the man and his family entrust the woman to proceed with the proposal, the man who intends to marry would first assure that his omen is favorable. To confirm, he strangles a fowl to see the position of the fowl when it dies. If the right feet

cross over the left feet, it indicates optimism and expects positive response. With the assurance, the woman is employed. In some cases, the girl's family may dismiss the proposal hence, announcement of proposal were normally not proclaimed until the answer is certain. Angamis were precise about how modest a girl is meaning before extending a proposal, some considerations were necessary; the girl is expected to be a woman of great value, possess the qualities of what is termed as 'a good wife', and physique was also another criteria. However, it is always about values over physicality in most cases. A short period of time is given to both the woman and the man where a date is assigned for them to *Kemhonyü* meaning 'to dream' and make the decision accordingly. Even if the dream of one party seem unfavorable, they are again given time to consult their dreams during the next new moon. But if both sides seem to be confident in their dreams, the arrangement is further discussed.

In the Angami tradition, there are three categories of marriage. First is *Thevo nhyü*. *Thevo* meaning pig in tenyidie and *nhyü* means wedding. As the name suggests, pigs are butchered for the feast along with *Zu* (locally rice brewed traditional drink). Second is *Thevü nhyü*. *Thevü* meaning fowl or chicken. This type of marriage is not as extravagant as *thevo nhyü*. Third is *Peyo nhyü* which means elopement. The first two categories involve a proper marital ceremony. It is obvious that the event is of celebration where the families from both side, peer groups, neighbors, clan members participate in the celebratory occasion.

The procession of marriage begins only after sunset where the bride is escorted by her peer group (the peer group and friends whom she has spent her youth at the *Kechüki*, girls dormitory) and see her off at the groom's place. During the procession, they would often playfully call the groom's name and shout "*Puo ki kirapuo ba ro?*" meaning "(his

name), where is his place?”. This procession is also composed by the bride’s brothers and closest relatives, a girl (her bridesmaid), *Chiüchü* (a young girl) , *Zuchü* (a young boy) who accompanies the bride to her new home. This composition consist of less or more than seven people as the Angamis consider the number seven attracts and emits bad luck unto the community in general. In an interview, a respondent narrated that the composition of the wedding party possession consist of only the bride, her bridesmaid, one young girl and boy of the same age accompanies the bride to the groom’s house where the groom is also accompanied by his groom’s man (similar to bridesmaid), one young girl and another boy. On arrival; the bride, her bridesmaid, the *Chiüchü* (young girl) enters the groom’s house while the *Zuchü* (the young boy) is not permitted to enter the house for sleepover but a token in the form of a fowl is sent to the bride’s family through the *Zuchü*. An old lady at the groom’s house is assigned to offer a sip of *Zu* (traditional Angami drink) to the *Zuchü* before his departure. In the process, a male cousin carries *game* (pronounced as *ga-me*) to the groom’s house on behalf of the bride’s family. *Game* is the ritual where the thigh portion of a pig is presented to one party (precisely the groom’s side) and additionally cooked meat is presented in an Angami traditional basket. Invoking of blessings upon the newly wedded couple is also another interesting part of the marriage ritual. The bride’s peer group (especially the menfolk) asks for *Thesa*; a kind of donation to her male peer group from the groom where they are presented with a fully fit fowl and in return they chant their blessings;

*“Unie bu rhei kechau chü di siekelhoumia cha tha cie.*

*Mia mi chü kepekhu chie khu cie*

*Unie kikru bu mha kevi chüpie u ramia tsücie*

*Unie nuonuo bu lhou kekrau chü seguo shüro keko kemhie chü cie.”*

Translation:

“May they (dual) live long to to guide the generations to come

May their (dual) family render good deeds to their community

As long as smoke floats from others’ hearth and theirs

May their (dual) children multiply like crabs and spiders.” (Tr. Kuolie.D)

After invoking the blessings, the old lady in-charge of the ceremony at the groom’s residence receives the pitcher of *Zu* (traditional Angami drink) brought by the bride and pour it for the groom to taste first and only then the feast begins. With the fear of possibilities that misfortune may befall them, the bride and her escorts refrain from interacting with the groom’s family members. Restrictions were imposed from the first night of the new beginning. It was taboo to come in contact with fire burning in the hearth and she was restricted to touch any household items except the bed prepared for her.

The couple was still expected to maintain the sacredness of the marriage ritual for the next three days after their wedding day. The morning after the wedding, anyone who accompanied the bride on the previous night are permitted to return to their respective homes where they are all presented a fowl each to every person and they exit. The bride was expected to remain confined to her new home and village and on the third day, she visits her family and receives her *tiepfhe* (a share of food wrapped in leaves typically done by Angamis) from her parents for the first time as a married woman. But before the

visitation to her parents' place, the newlywed was compelled to observe certain *nanyü* (rituals) wherein they follow tradition and go to the fields to pretentiously do some nominal agricultural work for a brief moment and return home. On the same day, her visitation to her parents is accompanied by one or more girls from her husband's kindred to help her carry her *tiepfhe* (a portion of food) on her arrival. Once she returns home, the honor to taste the *tiepfhe* was done by her husband along with a young girl. This is followed by a feast which is to signify that they are officially recognized as man and wife. Second, to mark the beginning of a union that is capable of hosting celebration of feast in the future. This ends the marital ceremonial ritual of an Angami couple.

During times of unfortunate circumstances and events, a man and woman is compelled to cancel or withdraw the arrangements for marriage. For instance, when discussions are ongoing and in the act if a close relative from either side passes away, the arrangement of marriage is called off immediately as it was considered to be negative signs from the spirits. Under such circumstances, the Angamis are obligated to perform another *nanyü* (ritual) called *kerhukhru*. *Kerhu* meaning 'dirt' and *khru* means 'burial' so it literally means 'burial of dirt'. Here, the *nanyü* is performed by the lady who played the role of mediator between the two parties. The old lady tears a small part from the supposed bride's shawl towards the knotted hem then plucks a plant called *Zochü* (a type of dry grass) and proceeds towards the *Kharu* (village gate) and bury them and recites;

*"Lutsa hatsa rei diepfhüderhu pejü tuo."*

Translation:

"There shall be no unpleasant words spoken from either side". (Tr.Mine)



This is with the belief to avoid creating enmity between the two families. After the ritual is completed, the woman (bride) is entitled to grow her hair and expected to weave a traditional shawl and present it to her groom though the marriage was not officiated. Summing up, in the ancient Angami tradition, the groom was expected to present gifts called *Thesa thema* which means gift for bride. *Thesa* in the form of fowl and *thema* in the form of *rüngou* (spear) and *kedzï* (spade). This is the basic formalities however the quantity may increase or decrease based on the financial and social status of the families.

## **Rituals of the Animist Angamis during childbirth**

### **(*Nuobo*; Child confinement)**

The ritual during childbirth remains the same regardless of the gender. The duration may increase or decrease based on the gender. For instance, if the child is male the ritual is observed for five days and if the child is a female the ritual duration lasts only for three to four days. Generally speaking childbirth translated to *Tenyidie* is *Nuoze*. *Nuo* meaning ‘child’ and *Ze* means ‘receive’. It becomes a difficult task to translate some *Tenyidie* words into English in the literal sense except conclude with a word close enough to the translated word to extract its meaning. However, in this context, it is called *Nuobo*. *Nuo* meaning ‘child’ and *bo* means ‘confine’ because after a child is delivered, he/she is kept in confinement with the mother until the ritual is completed. The expected mother is confined to a space away from the general household hearth where an area is built for her in the *Kiluo* (front room of an Angami house) with separate beds, new hearth and other household items which may be used during the five day *nanyü* (ritual). Performance and

observance of *nanyü* is always followed by some taboo. Likewise, it was taboo to share the same hearth or share food and eat together with an expecting mother. The reason is because of what the Angamis say, '*Soca prie shie*'. *Soca* means rivalry or enmity; the fear of the child growing up and becoming a source of enmity among his kindred.

After the delivery of the child, the proper *nanyü* is performed. The father of the child spittle on the tip of his fingers and rubs it over the child's forehead and declares, '*A rie ho*' meaning 'I am first' to announce that he has claimed the child as his own and signify his superiority and ownership over the child to overpower the *Terhuomia* (spirits) who may claim the child to be their own.

In Easterine Kire's work, *A Naga Village Remembered*, We find an instance;

“As the baby squealed into the world, Kovi quickly smeared saliva on the finger and touched it to his daughter's forehead with the words, “I am first.” That ensured that the spirits could not claim the child before him.” (2016:23)

When the time comes to detach the child's umbilical cord, the use of iron was prohibited but an indigenous tool made of the outer layer of fine bamboo was used while binding the end with an organic and indigenous thread. Until the placenta is discharged, the parents of the child refrain from cooking and preparing food as it was considered a taboo mainly to maintain purity. Initially, a chicken is prepared for the mother however as mentioned earlier, her meals were not shared with any member of the household. The firewood remains used by the mother and child during the *nuobo* period was never recycled, leftover food was instantly discarded, the cup and plates, beddings, cutleries,

ladles etc were all disposed through the back door of the house and if there was no back door, a hole was made through the backyard wall for this particular purpose.

After the completion of the five day ritual, the cleansing process begins. The mother takes any young child from her husband's kindred who must be the same gender as the child and goes to the village spring. The young kid draws water and gives the mother which she carries it back home and washes the baby. On their way back, the mother plucks the twigs of *Zowhe* (an indigenous plant) to perform another ritual. To bless the child the mother takes a drop of water along with the twig and places it on the baby's forehead and utters;

*“Anuo bu lhou kezowhe kezohu tuo we”*

Translation:

“May my child grow up to be strong and tough like the *Zowhe* plant” (Tr. Mine)

She then proceeds to split the twig in two and continue this *Nanyü* by placing it on the right and left hands of the child. The following day; the child is taken to a relative's house that has not experienced any misfortune and death of off springs in the past. This ritual was followed by the mother placing a drop of rice beer on the child's lips and additionally the new born is fed with a little portion of rice (could be one or two grain) and a little rice beer then taken back home. This ritual is done to proclaim the relatives as the child's God father or a relation close to that in the absence of the child's parents. The childbirth *Nanyü* concludes with the parents of the child taking the infant to the fields the next day. They pretend or sometimes do nominal work, eat and drink then return home. This activity ends the childbirth ceremony.

In the case of ill-fated situation, still babies are born or in some cases, the infants pass away during the *Nuobo* period. In such circumstances, the child is buried inside the house in the *Kiluo*, the front room of the house. Such infants are called *Nuokra* in tenyidie meaning ‘still baby’.

If a pregnant lady is facing difficulties or complications to deliver a child, all her ornaments are removed and her hair bun is loosened. Then one of her paternal aunt plucks a strand of her hair and places it inside the pregnant woman’s mouth and this enables a smooth delivery. Immediately, the mid- wife places her finger on the child’s forehead with her saliva and proclaims “A rie ho!” meaning I am first, to indicate that she has ritually claimed the child before the spirits.

In other unfortunate events, the mother passes away during pregnancy period. Such deaths were called *Lhaprie se*. *Lhaprie* meaning ‘undelivered’ and *se* meaning death. No member of the family is allowed to lament the death of such women as they are considered to be the source of bad omen. Adding to it, it was often considered as homicide as the child was undelivered. A decent burial was denied to her where her corpse was carried out through the backdoor of the house, she was not properly clothed at the time of burial and buried only after sunset, nor her mortal remains were properly placed in the grave but carelessly handled. The legacy of such women was forgotten over time as her tombstone was nonexistent and it was prohibited to clean their graves after they were buried to avoid misfortune or mishap.

## Funeral rituals of the Animist Angamis

### (*Kesia Nyie*; funeral rituals)

The Angamis follow a pattern for the preparation of funeral. However, it is not in an extensively elaborated manner. To begin with, the corpse is cleaned and washed for one last time by the closest family member of the same gender as the deceased or in some case, by the most intimate friend of the deceased. On the same day, the clan members bring flesh, rice and rice beer to the bereaved family's home to begin preparation for the death ceremony to commence. After washing the dead body, it is laid on the surface of the bed and dressed in his/her clothes. The Angamis place the belongings of the deceased next to the body. In the case of men, a *rüingou* (spear) For women, a black cloth. Further, some items are added in the coffin next to the body. Spear (*rüingou*), machete (*zhie*), a young fowl (alive) and place a seed known as *gadzosi* in between the teeth. For infants, *Sichu* is placed in their hands to break and fool *Meciemo* at the time they face the spirit. It is also of the belief that every dead person passes the river of darkness. Hence, at the time of meeting the spirit of darkness, *Meciemo* the soul must be eating or chewing the seed which only then he is permitted to enter the path of paradise. For women, she is accompanied with beads, her clothes, a few petticoats, a reaping hook and the young fowl. To exhibit grief and remorse, the family usually maintains howling sound and women would beat the ground with their clothes/shawls. During the time of burial, the family of the deceased and men flock of the clan fire some bullets (this is done only for men).

Distribution of *Theprie* (a handful of fresh meat that consists of a piece of bone, a well composed piece of flesh and small portion of viscera/innards) is a pivotal part of the funeral ceremony. Anyone who attends the funeral must return home with *Theprie* (funeral meat). It was considered taboo to cook the funeral meat from the *Phoudi* meaning common hearth or any members of the family, relatives and well-wishers involved in this process receives a *Rüle* (a portion of meat) from the *Theprie* (funeral meat). During such occasions, a cow is slaughtered for one deceased person where various parts of the cattle are again assigned for each family members and mourners. Meaning, *Khrietho Rüle* consists of the chest part of the cattle and is given to the deceased's closest friends. *Tuoünuo Rüle* comprises of the limbs and is distributed to the womenfolk in the family, precisely sisters and paternal aunts. In Angami tradition, well-wishers visit the bereaved family with live chicken, rice, paddy or in some cases cooked meat. Such cooked food is called *Mhacha Rüle* and if the cooked meat is chicken, the family while distributing *Theprie* in return adds an extra meat in their *Rüle* (funeral meat portion/share). *Zudie Rüle* ; In some instances when a griever attends the funeral with locally brewed wine, they are known as *Zudie* and their *Rüle* consist of a piece of meat and a bone. *Siahe Rüle*; A lamenter attending the funeral to extend condolences are known as *Siahe* and they receive a part of *Rüle* separately. *Nuopa Lepa Rüle* was distributed to the closest family members, the members who are to observe the *Senyü nanyü* (the five days mourning period ritual). Their *Rüle* comprises of three pieces of meat; One innard, one portion of the skin, one piece of bone and the meat sizes are about three fingers big. The animist Angamis bury the mortal remains at sunset and *Lepa Rüle* was distributed at the time of burial. Additionally, leftovers at the funeral place were all

discarded or given to cattle with the fear that it hinders the nourishment of the body if consumed after the funeral.

The second day marks the beginning of five days mourning period. The immediate family of the deceased observes five days *senyü*, this is similar to *penie* where all daily household chores and work or agricultural activities are put on hold. The term *senyü* is used in the case of death and *penie* is used in social and cultural context but the meanings are closely related. The extended families or the neighbors also observe two days *senyü* but another term is separately used to describe this period i.e. *Siruzha* (the two days mourning period). During this period, the families would mostly gather and observe it collectively. Due to obvious reasons, there is no merry making regardless of the gatherings. If a member of a decent higher social status or a reputed warrior passes away, life size stone erections are laid to pay tribute. During the initial days after the funeral, some families place the belongings of the deceased at their graves with the belief that they may need it in the afterlife.



Picture Plate 21: ***Rübie Pfhe*** –The shawl worn at funerals.

(Photos taken by self)

## Headhunting ritual of the Animist Angamis

### *(Rütsü Nanyü; Slained head rituals)*

Nagas in general are often referred as head hunters and head hunting practices were extensive before the arrival of Christianity. In most instances, this practice among the Nagas often embodies religious, political and social connotations. In the religious point of view, they believed that the annihilation of enemies would guarantee the appeasement of the Gods and spirits which ensures fertility of land that may in return produce good crops in abundance. Socially, A village that constitutes a good number of reputed warriors was recognized and respected to a great extent. Politically, Head hunting was also practiced with a firm belief in serving justice to the victims during warfare or feud. A warrior that successfully returns home with an enemy's head gains fame and his social status is elevated. This practice of head hunting is also a time when the menfolk take it upon themselves as a test of their bravery and to proof their transition from boyhood to manhood. However, an Angami elderly person also explains that the Angamis practiced head hunting solely for fame, glory and *Mhokuo* (pride) and not for the purpose of creating enmity with neighboring villages. Further, a warrior that has earned an insignia (in the form of enemy's head) is also awarded with *Ramei* (bird's feathers). The Angamis use the *Terha*, hornbill bird's feature as a significance to proof the man's worthiness. The feather was extracted from the hornbill's tail where seven feathers are found and among which the best three feathers were chosen to use for *Ramei*. A warrior that assassinates an enemy (one head) was qualified to carry three *Rameis* where the first feather represents oneself, second feather represents the warrior's shadow and the third feather represents the slained enemy's soul. On a festival day, the warrior



places the feathers on a *Zariü* (bamboo woven basket) and his oldest paternal aunt formally declare his achievement. He then ties the three feathers on his pigtail and proceeds for the celebration. If he fails to give utmost respect to his paternal aunt for the formal declaration and blessings, it is believed that the warrior may fall ill under mysterious circumstances.

A warrior upon his return from warfare brings back the enemy's head or in instances where the distance between one's village and opponent's village may be far-flung, he returns with the slain enemy's middle finger or his right ear. Whichever among the three is brought, He places it at the *Kharu* before entering the village. And proclaims;

*“Khriekesamia Kehoupuorei terhüsakra ramei pfü nyü cümia,*

*U keselie di tsur terhüsakra kraliecie, kralie rei viho....”*

Translation :

“Young man whoever wishes to earn insignia

Prepare yourself, come to earn (fame)” (Tr. Kuolie.D)

The elders of the village awaits his arrival at the village gate and as the warrior enters the village with the *Rütsü*, They chant blessings again;

*“Kekuokeyho chütuo we,*

*Uramia tsü haki kra rei se u kharu nu vortuo we”*

Translation :

“Be strong and powerful

May our warriors bring more heads and enter through our village gate” (Tr. Kuolie.D)

The *Rütsü nanyü* is then performed at the village gate. The warrior places the enemy’s head for other menfolk to participate in the ritual by firing guns with an attempt to drive out the bad omens trapped in the head. They also *Keshu* (a cultural tactic) their *rüngou* and pierce the head in a pretentious manner while accompanied by *mepfümewhi* and *terhümewhi* (war cries) for two reasons. Firstly, to intimidate the evil spirits. Secondly, to guarantee bravery after warfare. His wife then prepares a *theü* (folded banana leaf used for rituals) and pinch a grain of soaked rice called *zumho va lie* and places it in the *theü* then pours it over the enemy’s head and declares ;

*“Chü rei terhü rei sepemhova*

*Nu ler puo mhei pezi tha di*

*A bu gei lieü hano.”*

Translation :

“Wild beast or war personal when enters into my ritual enchantment

Should stand blind and fall

To my prey” (Tr. Kuolie.D)

The preparation of *Rüprîe* (headhunting meal) then follows. Some menfolk are assigned to accompany the warrior to guarantee safety and security while some men are assigned to slaughter a *thévokrü* (gilt) then cuts it into partially huge pieces. The *Rüprîe* meal constitutes of a *themuo khrie puo* (a piece of meat) and a *khutîe rü puo* (a portion of rice in ball shape). Participants of this occasion brings along *zu* and *si ca puo* (a piece of firewood).

*Nuokhrienuomia* usually refers to only son or family with lesser number of children. In some instances, the parents of *Nuokhrienuomia* are adamant to send their children for raidings or wars with the fear of losing them in battlefields. In such cases, after the arrival of the warrior at the village gates, *Nuokhrienuomias* are accompanied with an elderly person to the village gate to perform the *rütsü* ritual. After the completion of the *nanyü*, they declare ;

“*Geilie te ho*”

Translation :

“(has) killed” (Tr. Kuolie.D)

The head of the enemy was not brought home nor the *zumho va* was not performed. However, the *rüprîe* meal was prepared and hosted by the said families.

If in the midst of performing the headhunting rituals, the victim’s family visits and plea to return the slained head, it was considered *kenyü* to refuse or reject their request. The bereaved families then say ;

“*Nie bu hie themia puo thakhrülieta ümu, Puo*

*Tsü khashüdi hie bu sevo*

*Puo kenyüliecie”*

Translation :

“It is learned that one of our men had been slain by you.

Give back his head to let us take

To perform the (funeral) rite” (Tr. Kuolie.D)

The Angamis also considered it *kenyü* to amputate the enemy’s head before he breath his last. Considering this, the warrior declares to the wounded enemy;

*“No kemezhie ho,*

*A ngou thuo N tha khrii watemu”*

Translation :

“You have been troubled

It was my lance that had befallen you” (Tr. Kuolie.D)

## Soul sanctification ritual

### *(Ruothoruorei Nanyü)*

An infant after turning one year, his or her mother takes the initiative to perform a *Nanyü* known as *Ruothoruorie*. This ritual is performed to sanctify the child's soul. For every ritual, The Angamis use a fowl for sacrificial purpose and for *Ruothoruorie nanyü*, A *vügounuo* is used for a girl child and in the case of a male child, A *vüdzünuo* is sacrificed. The ritual begins as the mother places the child on her lap and keeps the chicken ready while the *Livau* (the mediator) gets ready to perform the ritual with the mother. Ceremoniously, the mother arranges her shawl in a precise manner and the *Livau* washes the chicken then brought to the child for the infant to come in contact with the fowl and lays his or her hands on it. *Livau* then clutches the chicken's legs and blesses the child by chanting the *Ruothoruorie* blessings ;

*“Oh! Avü kemesa, Nvü thakepra, Nvü kreiekrü*

*Haha se nruochü nphou kelatuowe*

*Oh! Mia nnia nmei*

*Nketsü kebe ya rei,*

*Nvü ha bu nu mia me*

*Mia tie pfüphrei pfürhuotuole*

*Oh! Dzümhi dzürü khapfü zü rei*

*Oh! Nvü ha bu nu kepaphrei*

*Kepaphreikeparluo”*

Translation :

“Ay, My holy chick/cock, Your

This is for your sacrificial to save your soul

Although your aunt, your uncle

Speak ill of you

This of your rooster cast away

The curse of words from mouth of others

Ay, Even if the waterway is blocked

Ay, This of your rooster spew away (of misfortune or illness) (Tr.Kuolie.D)

*Livau* marches towards the village gate with sacrificial chicken and cuts the head and sacrifices the head to the *Terhuomia* (spirits) and brings back the remains of the fowl within the village boundaries after declaring ;

*“Cho! Mesa teho!*

*Terhuomia nei pete chü wateho*

*Vishürho bata le”*

Translation :

“See! It is cleanst.

Spirit has been pleased in all.

Be well, Be healthy” (Tr.Kuolie.D)

A similar *nanyü* called *Thevürase* is also performed for *Mechü* (whole community). For this *nanyü*, a full well built rooster is used for this particular purpose. The selection of the sacrificial rooster is precise as the rooster’s feet should be either black or red in colour. The usual breed with yellow feet was considered impure and unsuitable. At dawn, two efficient men are selected to perform *Thevürase* beyond the village gate. The site of the ritual must be filled with stillness and quietness where men’s echo is not heard. They then release the rooster into the wild and declares ;

*“Cho! Thevü kemesa themia phou la kezhi,*

*Haha setsur themia phousouphoulou süzemu,*

*Thephetheruo kenhakera*

*Pfü di puo khashüzhieho”*

Translation :

“See, to save the soul of man

This holy rooster is brought down as sacrificial one

Putting on with all pandemic (and) melancholic burden.” (Tr.Kuolie.D)

This ritual will only be valid if the rooster as well as the two men walks away without turning around to ensure that the bad omen is behind them and to overcome pandemic that may plague the whole community. The two participates after returning to the village is prohibited from consuming warm cooked food or drink. Additionally, it is *kenyü* to come in contact with women in their household to maintain purity.

## **Exterminated Tiger Ritual**

### ***(Tekhu Kegei Nanyü)***

In the beginning of creation, The Tenyimias believed that the tiger, the spirit and man are brothers. Running on such parallel belief, the Angamis considered *tekhu* (tiger) his oldest brother. The Angamis considered hunting as a sport and on the occasion of killing a tiger, the need to perform certain *nanyü* arises, also known as *tekhu kegei nanyü*. On their hunting spree, If a tiger is killed, the hunter plucked leaves to blindfold the assassinated tiger to avoid tiger's spirit to trace back men's footsteps to their villages. The hunter and his fellow accompanied hunters propose a site to begin the ritual. They first thrust the ground with their *rüngou* (spears) to create countless holes and sprinkle gooseberry leaves (*Phyllanthus emblica*) over it to emit an impression that countless of men were present during the time of assassination to intimidate the tiger's spirit. Upon arrival, it was considered *kenyü* (taboo) to enter the village with the slained body of the tiger. Hence, the ritual was done beyond the village gate to maintain sanctity. The hunter's family members arrive at the village gate with packed food as he was prohibited to consume any food after entering the village.



Easterine Kire in her book *A Naga village remembered* also mentions ;

*“The men laid the animal down on the open space, below the last house, and they began the tekhu kete”.* (2016 : 32)

The group of hunters leave the tiger’s remains and enters the village to perform the final ritual.

“Turn by turn, the men came to strike at the dead tiger with their spears. Male children were encouraged to thrust their spears at different parts of the tiger’s body so that their fear of the tiger would be diminished and their hearts strengthened. As this ritual began, Vilau was enetering the village gate” (Kire. Easterine. 2016 : 32)

The man responsible of killing the tiger arrives to his respective home then his family ( may be his spouse) proclaims ;

*“Hai!! No udzürieu gei was shi mu,*

*Nbu kinu vor lie ho”*

Translation ;

“Oh! You have killed your older brother,

You are not permitted to enter our home” (Tr.Mine)

He then responded ;

“A mo ho! Rüngou-u thuo thakhrü wate ho”

Translation ;

“I am not responsible for the assassination , It was my lance that killed him”

(Tr.Mine)

Again quoting Easterine Kire ;

*“They say you have killed our elder brother who was kind and gentle. Do not come”* (2016 : 32)

He was then permitted to enter the house through a narrow passage way for it was *kenyü* to walk through the main entrance. Upon entering, he performs another *nanyü* called *Zu mho va*. The hunter carefully places the *zu mho* into the *theü* and leaves it behind the main entrance door. The invocation of blessing was done next. He proclaims ;

*“Chü rei, Terhü rei,*

*A sepemhova nu ler ro,*

*Puo mhei pezi tha di, a bu gei wa cie”*

Translation ;

“Any wild beast or war personal

When enters into my ritual enchantment

Should go blind and fall to my prey” (Tr. Kuolie D)

With this prayer, they believe they are now spiritually superior than the tiger’s spirit.

The hunter observes a five days *kenyü* period meaning he remains inside the house without indulging in any household chores nor agricultural activities. Any hunter or warrior that succeeds in assassinating a tiger is expected to be regularly vigilant with the fear that the spirit of the tiger may avenge the man's spirit. In this regard, He was prohibited to consume any intoxicated items, fermented soya or black sesame.

Any well wishes participating in the feast later that night was also expected to bring along a portion of rice or two to three logs of wood. This practice was sternly followed with the belief that any participant who joins the feast empty handed may bring misfortune to their children in the future or with the belief that their offsprings follows the path of a thief as they grow older. No elaborated feasting was hosted however any fellow villagers who wish to join are given a portion of the tiger's fresh for consumption. The cutleries were made of outer layer of bamboo, similar to areca plates but collected in a *mekho* (Naga traditional basket) and disposed in the river along with the beheaded tiger's head as it was considered *kenyü* to consume the head of a tiger. Before discarding the tiger's head, The Angamis usually make a criss cross shape made of bamboo and places it inside the mouth of the tiger and kept under the waterfall. This was with the belief that if the tiger's spirit returns to enquire about the man behind the killing, The tiger would be unable to speak as his mouth was kept open.

For instance, any man who slaughters a tiger in his life time passes away, he was accompanied with a live dog at the time of his burial with the belief that at the time of transitioning into the afterlife, he may encounter the tiger's spirit which poses as a dangerous encounter. As such, they belief that the dog may distract the tiger's spirit on his way and save the man from being attacked by the spirit.

A respondent also narrates a story from the 18<sup>th</sup> century relating to this practice.

He briefly narrated;

“A man named Pulhourü Keretsü of D-Khel, Kohima village killed a tiger in his lifetime. At the time of his burial, as his relatives were preparing to bury the dog along with him, they heard a strange noise and their feet started trembling and this made them believed that the spirit of the tiger had finally avenged its death”.

Such instances were evidence that once a tiger is killed, the spirit haunts the hunter until his passing.

## Calling of lost soul Ritual

### (*Sieshü Nanyü*)

In the pre-Christian era, a person mysteriously falling ill for a period of time was consulted with a different approach. The superstitious nature of the Angamis obligated them to perform a particular ritual called the *sieshü nanyü* as they believed that the sick person has been possessed by *terhuokeshuo*, the malevolent spirit. Under such circumstances, the relatives consult the *themoumia* to take their advices. The *Sieshü Nanyü* is performed by offering sacrifices in the form of a fowl or a piece of iron to the supreme God to accept in lieu of the life of the sick person. This particular ritual is performed at dawn or at midnight. The performers are prohibited to consume any food

until sunset. It is of the general belief that after the performance of this ritual, the God will bestow his gracious blessings to the ailing person and cure him from his sickness.

The ritual is usually performed within the vicinity of the village but it must be done beyond the *kharu* or somewhere far away from the village settlement. The ritual is performed by two young *phouse* from the neighbourhood of the ailing person on behalf of the family. The performers go to one of the supposed site to perform the ritual and lay the sacrificial items then proclaim ;

“ *N phouzha kezie se tsur N sou chü wate ho, vor rie lie luo.*”

Translation ;

“We have offered more than the value of your worth, you come first.” ( Tr. Mine)

They then return to the village but they are expected not to turn back on their way to avoid attracting evil spirits along with them.

As per narrative by an actual performer of the ritual, he recalls his experience and narrates ;

“I personally performed this ritual when I was of young age. The most over whelming part of performing this ritual is while returning back home. We could not turn back but it felt like someone or something was following us.”

It was a surreal belief and truth of results that after this *sieshü* ritual, most of the victims regained their health. An instance of successive proof of consequential result of performing this ritual is mentioned below in support of the belief of our ancestors. A

respondent recounts that a person named Yalhou Sorhie who lived at Sorhie Zieke of Kohima village (present day Khedi Baptist Church location) encountered a spirit. As he was laying on his bed he could see a humongous shadow approaching his house. He silently observed the shadow touched his forehead with its finger through the hole in his wall and disappeared. Thereafter, Yalhou fell ill for five days and five nights. The family consulted a *themoumia* who advised them to perform this ritual at Ciepfüciepfhe (present day AG Colony Kohima). On the following day the ritual was performed by two *phouse*. After the ritual, they called upon Yalhou's name to which they believe his spirit responded from a distance 'yes, I am here'. Upon their return, Yalhou Sorhie had already recovered.

## **Protection from wildfire Ritual**

### **(Micie Nanyü)**

*Micie nanyü* is performed regularly once every year with the belief to save the village from spread of wildfire in the Angami villages. This ritual is performed to appease the spirit requesting it to save the village from the rage of fire. *Mi* meaning fire and *cie* meaning to latch off, therefore the term is self explanatory.

This ritual is significant among the Angami villages because they lived in thatch houses and are constantly in fear of wildfires that may consume their material wealth and belongings. They believed that such fire was sent to destroy them from the rage of the spirits for their sins.

On the day of the ritual, two young bachelors of different age groups are made to perform the ritual in the early morning. They were sent beyond the village gate to release a fowl or an egg and return to the village gate and guard it throughout the day on empty stomach until sunset. After the ritual is performed, the villagers guard all the entry points to the village by blocking the roads with bamboo barricade and tree branches. The villagers were forbidden from interacting with strangers and outsiders. Any outsider who forcefully violates the norms and the sanctity of this ritual is liable to be prosecuted.

## **The role of the Priest**

### **(*Zievou*; Priest)**

*Zievou* plays an essential role in the Angami community. He is the central figure that is related to the personal gennas of the Angamis. *Zievou* directs and performs the personal gennas without which the community cannot function. Selection of *Zievou* is done on the basis of his roots meaning he must be an indigenous native and bonafide member of the village by default. It was also done based on inheritance. Taking the example of Kohima village, only some particular clans are entitled to play the role of *Zievou* i.e. *Rame* clan, *Sote* clan and *Rutsa* clan, all belonging to a larger clan called *Pfüchatsumia Thinuo* (*Thinuo* referring to the parent sub-clan of Kohima village)

A particular shawl was worn by the *Zievou*. This shawl was exclusive to him and other members were strictly prohibited to wear it. The woolen shawl is called *Lorü pfhe* or *phichü pfhe*. It was white in colour that had black lines that runs vertically on both

sides. The ends were knotted in indigenous style but no patterns were weaved on it. This shawl was presented to the newly elected *Zievou* by the former *Zievou*. During the process of *Zievou* selection, he was firstly ordained while the former *Zievou* holds a rooster and waves it in front of the newly elected *Zievou* as he chants an elaborated blessing over him. After invoking the blessings and the ceremony concludes, the rooster is killed for the preparation of meal.

There are certain duties performed by the *Zievou*, he was entitled to announce any important event under the supervision of the village as a whole. He was entrusted to announce the upcoming festival dates, the announcement of the *Tsiakrau* (the first sower) and *Liedepfü* (the first reaper) ritual dates. For instance, if the festival is about to begin in two days, he announces that the community is permitted to work only for another two days then celebrate on the third day. In case of *Sekrenyi* and *Terhünyi* (the two most important festivals of the Angamis) he announces eight to nine days prior and advice the community to start their preparation for making *Zu* (traditionally brewed Angami drink) as it takes several days to ferment the rice. He stands at the *Kipoucie* (village foundation stone) to make such announcements.

*Zievou* is also invited to bless the newly constructed house of any member of the village. For such occasions he wears his *Lorü pfhe* while carrying a *rüngou* (spear) and stands at the entrance and blesses the host and owner of the house. To this, the host replies “*Oh! Ava!*” meaning “May your blessings be upon me”. Then the host presents the *Zievou* with flesh gourd as a token of gratitude.



## The role of the first sower

### (*Tsiakrau*; First Sower)

The Angamis' main source of income was agriculture and they are greatly involved in agricultural activities. Before such activities were done, it is the first sower *Tsiakrau* who is assigned to mark the beginning of the annual agricultural activity. *Tsiakrau* was usually an old man who by default must perform the sowing rituals on behalf of the whole community.

A respondent recollects the history of *Tsiakrau* from Kohima Village wherein a man from the *Keretsü* clan or the *Kirekhanuomia* clan was assigned to be the first sower. *Tsiakrau* was initially assigned some days and trained to perform rituals.

The *mechü* (whole community) *nanyü* (rituals) are done by the *Tsiakrau* and *Liediepfü*. *Chü Tsiakrü* (millet sowing) is done before sowing of paddy. This traces back to a folktale narrated by the Angamis. Once, the first sower went to perform the sowing ritual but found out that millet seeds were already sown by *Terhomia* (spirits) in the month of February (*Kezie*). This could be the reason why the *Tsiakrau* exclude sowing millet seeds in his thirty days ritual period. The Angamis consult the Tenyimia lunar calendar to mark the dates to celebrate festivals or begin the agricultural cycle. Hence, there are differences in dates assigned for important events that may also vary from village to village but the belief and process of performing *Nanyü* (rituals) may remain the same or similar.

To begin the sowing ritual, the first reaper goes to the fields with varieties of seeds (except millets) and clears a small patch of land and sow them. It is only after performing this first step of ritual that the rest of the community can begin sowing. After sowing, the first sower returns and starts to count days based on the lunar calendar for thirty days. In this period, the village along with the sower observe *Penie* (non-working day) every five days while the *Tsiakrau* is compelled to continue the rituals for the whole period of thirty days. It is during this period that the *Tsiakrau* wears an indigenous straw raincoat, a hat made of bamboo, carry a spear and machete. This is a sign that his crops shall get adequate rain.

He is careful of his leg placement as his feet shall never rest or be placed together for the fear that it may cause misfortune to the whole village. He avoids entering the butcher place as this may affect the agriculture activity. In the midst of performing this ritual, he instructs the villagers to avoid making fire in open area as it may provoke the spirits and burn their crops under mysterious circumstances. The villagers are also advised not to add water as they cook (rice in particular) with the fear that the paddy may not ripen or uneven ripening of paddy.

Following the lunar calendar, the *Tsiakrau* goes to the field again on April seventeenth and perform another ritual called *Pu-du* (clearing of weeds in the small patch of land), the next day is *Dziene*, another way of cleaning the patch. Few days later, he performs the *puo rünyü* the meaning plucking the tip of the seeds sprouting. This marks the beginning of first harvest which after the villagers are given the liberty to harvest the other seeds besides paddy from the jhum cultivated land. After the thirty days sowing ritual, *Tsiakrau* ends the ritual with *Tekhu Sekhrü* (first sowing of paddy). After the end

of this ritual, the whole community can now begin their agricultural activities with no restrictions.

*Tsiakrau's blessings for the cultivators;*

*“Tei Kijü Apfu Apfü*

*Kijü rüzhü a shu pepupeloulie*

*A mhatho bu keviu chü”*

Translation :

“Sky, Earth, my father (and) my mother

May the earth gives providence with longevity

May my crops be prosperous.” (Tr. Kuolie.D)

## **The role of the first reaper**

### **(*Liedepfü*; First reaper)**

The beginning of harvest is done by *Liedepfü* meaning the first reaper. Her role is as significant as the *Tsiakrau*. The selection of the first reaper is based on physically fit woman who does not suffer from any ailments i.e. someone who suffers from goiter or physically disabled person. The ritual which the *Liedepfü* performs is called *Terhü Liede* which is also done by the end of August or beginning of September.

The rituals start when the *Zievou* announces the *Liedepfü*'s date of ritual activity. The first day of her ritual was declared as *Penie* (non-working day) for the whole village. On that precise date the *Liedepfü* goes to the field and brings back a little paddy in her *Mekho* (indigenous bamboo basket carried by womenfolk) and plants it besides the *Kharu* (village gate).

The next day, she performs another ritual called *ki khrie sü*. Here, she plucks the tip of an indigenous plant called *Tsiesenyü* and places it at the entrance of her house and proceeds towards the *Kharu* (village gate) and harvest the paddies and ask for blessing:

*“Alha übu re pepupelou tuo,*

*Rüthuorüluo tuole*

*Kenyi kekrau chü*

*A ramia tsütuo”.*

Translation ;

“May my rice harvest for longer

Let it be like spring source

Wedth in plentitude

To serve to my fellow villagers” (Tr.Kuolie.D)

She then brings back the paddies in her *mekho* (bamboo woven basket) and the main part of her ritual begins. She stays in quarantine for thirty days. Her hearth was built

separated from the common hearth. Her ritual pots were made of clay and other utensils and cutlery were all kept unwashed until the ritual is over. She is strictly prohibited from interacting with anyone during this period, prohibited from bathing nor undressing and removing any of her clothes. She always leaves a few grains of rice and two or three sips of *Zu* (traditional drink) after every meal to indicate that the needs of the people (precisely food) shall never run out. It is taboo for the fire in her hearth to die down. Hence, *Chiemou si* and *riipuo si* were used as firewood as these two species of tree sustain the fire till morning. In between the thirty day period, every fifth day is declared as *Liede zha* where the *Liedepfii* is expected to perform a ritual by cooking a little bit of paddy she harvested and brought from the *Kharu* (village gate). The thirtieth day marks the end of the ritual. On this day, she walks out of quarantine before sunset. In return, offering is made to her in bamboo woven basket.

## Chapter 4

### ANGAMI ANIMISTIC CELEBRATIONS

The Tenyimia group of the Nagas celebrates their festivals in different forms. Some festivals are celebrated to show respect and offer thanksgiving to God. Some festivals are celebrated by menfolk to cleanse themselves and purify oneself not only physically but spiritually to overcome any misfortune or ill fate throughout the year. Some festivals are celebrated to mark the end of an exhausting period of hard work; precisely agricultural activities. Likewise, festivals are celebrated throughout the year in intervals bearing various significance.

The number of festivals celebrated in the Tenyimia Naga villages may slightly vary i.e. some villages celebrate six festivals while some celebrate seven or more in a year, all villages having the same meaning of the said festivals. The dates of celebrations may vary from village to village because of topography and also the differences in the agricultural cycle. The dates of celebration of the festivals starts first from the original place of the Tenyimia migrated village called as *Mekhrora* or *Kitsubo*, presently known as *Makhail* village of *Poumai* tribe in Manipur state, bordering Nagaland in the south. The celebration of festivals commence from north ward direction. Most of the Angami villages celebrate the following eight important festivals in sequence annually.

- |                |                |            |                |
|----------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
| 1. Terhünyi    | 2. Sekrenyi    | 3. Ngonyi  | 4. Kerunyi     |
| 5. Chadanyi    | 6. Khoupfhünyi | 7. Vatenyi | 8. Te-l khukhu |
| 9. Khriethonyi |                |            |                |

## Terhünyi

*Terhünyi* is one of the major festivals celebrated by the Angamis. The date cannot be precisely mentioned however, most Angami villages celebrate the festivals in the month of *Doshü* (January) every year. This festival is celebrated for ten days starting from the twenty first day of the Angami lunar month. This festival is celebrated after every crop is harvested; a festival of sacrifice to *Kepenuopfü* (God) for providing and blessing the people abundantly. In this said period, people share their yield among themselves in the village. During this festival, the ‘feast of merit’ was performed by the financially privileged section of society where they slaughter cattles, enough to cater the whole village. The feast of merit involves a numerous set of duties to perform to earn the badge of honour in the form of decorating their front design of their house. This procedure was extravagant and lavish. The first step is called *Sha* where they are compelled to feed the whole village at least twice. After achieving the first *Sha*, They are awarded with a house design called *Fütou* ; one simple pole erected in the middle of the house entrance after which they are known as *Shaphruomia*. The second *Sha* qualifies them to host *Zhachü*. The second step is called *Zhachü* which is similar to *Sha* (feeding the entire village twice again) and then earns another house design called *Füge* ; two pieces of carved wood placed together for a gabled roof structure, The carved motifs consists of *Khrüluo* (full moon) and *Themvü* (star) which signifies that these elements of nature may lead their way during warfare and second, expresses their dependency on nature to predict fortune. Such houses are then called *Zhathomia Ki*. He is then eligible to perform *Leishü* which entitles him to earn the *Kikia* house design ; House horns, the crisscross wood design of Angami houses . It is *Kenyü* (taboo) to conclude at *Leishü* with the fear that an individual may face humiliation in his lifetime. The final task is *Ketsia*

*petha* and *Rüzie thie* which the individual is given the liberty to perform any one of these task. *Ketsia petha* is also known as *Ketsukehietsia* which means stone pulling to erect at a certain place and *Rüzie thie* literally means ‘lake digging’. The stones selected for *Ketsia petha* must be spotless with no cracks or *Ketsia thega* (white spots found on stones).

A respondent in an interview narrated ;

*“In my observation and oral stories, most people preferred to opt for Tsiatha more than Rüzie thie because the stones are often erected near the village roads and passersby bestow their blessings which the host of merit believe that their whole community is blessed through their initiation of erecting the stone. While lakes were dug and situated in the outskirts of the village and villagers rarely pass by to bestow their blessings.”*

If a man has successfully completed these steps, he earns the title of a wealthy man who is entitled to design his house accordingly. The social status of a household is exhibited through the *Kikia*; house horn design which is earned through feast of merit. In other instances, The host of merit can further achieve more merits in the following years through various steps. Firstly, *Nuolhoumuo Za*. The host distributes a share of meat to the whole village. This distribution does not contain fats or offal. Secondly, *Ketsumuo Za*. Another way of distributing a share of lard to the *Mechü* (whole community) with no meat. Third is *Thechu Za* and it is the distribution of meat to other villages ; this is often considered a matter of prestige.

*Terhünyi* festival is about sharing where married women cook exquisite cuisines and offer her parents and in return she receives the same from her family. Married men



would also do the same. For married women whose parents are no longer alive, the share is given to her brothers who play a vital role in her life.

The official declaration of *Terhünyi* was announced by the *Zievou* (priest) after he performs a *nanyü* (ritual). He first loosens his *Tsükhru* (Angami men's pigtail) then shakes his *Lorü pfhe* (shawl worn by the priest while performing rituals and religious ceremonies) to ascertain that there is no bad omen trapped in his shawl. He then proceeds with *Nyie-shie* (festival announcement). On the day of announcement and the next day, the whole village collects firewood, wild edible leaves and vegetables to ensure it sustains the people during the period of festivity.

It is on the next day when people begin to perform the *Kizhie nanyü* (ritual). This ritual was performed by the lady of the house wherein men were prohibited to get involved. Here, a *Theü* is prepared; two banana leaves, each about two fingers width are put together and folded at the center by putting a few grains of *Zumho* (soaked rice used for making traditional wine) and sprinkled a few drops twice and then ties it to the *Kizhie co* (front post of the house used mainly during religious ceremonies) with a bamboo strip. This ritual marks the beginning of feasting and merry making.

In Easterine Kire's work, *A Naga Village Remembered* ;

“Megozoü carefully scooped the upper layer of the brew into a gourd, and sprinkled it on the inner posts of the house. After that she sprinkled the right post in the outer court and completed the ritual of sanctification of the house” (2016:42)



Picture plate 21

Demonstration of the folding of banana leaves for *Kizhie* ritual shown by a Viswema lady who still practices animism.

(Photos taken by self)

In an interview, A respondent elaborated and explained in detail the significance of *Kizhie co* (*co* ; pronounced as *tso* in *Tenyidie* meaning a pole) found in an Angami house which plays an important role as every festival begins by performing the *Kizhie Nanyü* (ritual). The size of the pole is big enough to be considered a block of wood which was built and attached at the middle of the main entrance door that runs in parallel with the main center post of the house to perform the religious ceremony. *Kizhie co* is considered as a ceremonial post additional to the other inner posts used for support of the house. *Kizhie co* plays a significant role while constructing new houses because during the inauguration of the newly constructed house, a cock is sacrificed for the ritual. Here, the head is smashed on the *Kizhie co* where the blood is used to stain the *Kizhie* post, *Chüü* (large bamboo woven granary) and other main posts. The households which has

achieved the title of ‘feast of merit’ adds the carving of *Mithu Tsü* (cattle head, precisely that of a cow; *Mithu* meaning cow and *Tsü* meaning head in Tenyidie) on the *Kizhie co*, this distinguishes them from the rest of their fellow village members.

On the seventh day of the festival, donations are collected from every household to present to the *Liedepfü* (the first lady reaper) as a token to show their appreciation. These donation were collected by two people; one from the *Thevo* segment and the other from the *Thepa* segment. Every Angami village is inhabited by *Thevo* and *Thepa*. Tradition wise, it was forbidden to establish an Angami village without comprising of both segments.

The festival is celebrated till the tenth day, counting from the day the *Zievou* announces the festival dates and period. In case of unfortunate turn of events, a member of the village passes away in between the celebration; it extends up to the eleventh day. With this, the *Terhünyi* festival comes to an end.

## **Sekrenyi**

*Sekrenyi* is the biggest and most important festival of the Angami tribe. Similarly to *Terhünyi*, *Sekrenyi* is also celebrated by the whole village and the *Zievou* announces the dates and start of *Sekrenyi*. It is a festival of purification where only where only the menfolk (regardless of age) participate. This is also called the *Phousanyi* (festival of purification).

This festival is celebrated in the month of *Kezie* (February) in the Angami lunar calendar. *Sekrenyi* tentatively begins on the twenty fifth of February by every male in a

household where they first prepare a *geizie* (a sacrificial cock) and offer it to God. The first initial days of *Kezie* (February) is when the millet seeds are sown.

The preparation period starts before the official date of the festival is announced. During this period the menfolk reserve a cock (one cock for each male member) ready, prepare a new hearth for it was forbidden to cook from the *Phoudi* (main common hearth). While the womenfolk collect enough water, sufficient to last during the period of the celebration.

On the first day of *Sekrenyi*, the menfolk proceed to clean the village pond to later fetch fresh uncontaminated water during the festival. To begin the festival ceremony, they perform a ritual called *kizhie*, which is done by putting and folding pre-soaked, two-three grains of rice inside a leaf called *pfhenuo* (locally available banana plant which is extensively used for ritual purposes) is damped inside the leaf with *zu* (traditional drink) then tied to the *kezie co* (the middle post at the front face of the house) with a bamboo strip.

The next day before dawn, all male members from every family of the village would make a procession to the village pond while carrying *zhie* (machete), *rüingou* (spear), a lamp to perform another ritual called *Dzüseva* meaning hitting the fresh still water. Prior to the procession, all the participants turn their shawls inside out to ensure that no bad omen is trapped inside their shawl. Upon reaching the pond, they take part in the ritual bath and cleanse their body, arms, hands, spears, machete, and spears as they utter:

“*Dzü kemesa ha ha pie kenhakera pete kechükesuowa di,*

*lhou kezowhe kezuhutuo*

*mia chü lie kelho-u chü tuo,*

*mia bielié kelho biétuo*”

Translation:

“With the clean water, all sickness and distress shall be washed,

Live like the zowhe thorny plants,

Do beyond what others can and catch the uncatchable.” (Tr.Kuolie.D)

They then shake off their shawl to eliminate any evil omen; fill their pitchers with clean water and return to the village. A new fireplace was set up in the *kiluo* (front room of the house). This marks the prohibition for women to touch anything prepared for the rituals. Similarly, men were forbidden to neither come in contact with womenfolk nor eat any food prepared from the *Phoudi* (common hearth) except food prepared from the new hearth built for the ritual purposes. They were compelled to abstain and isolate themselves to maintain purity.

The only accepted way of making fire in the new fire pit is the indigenous local system of making fire called *seguomishii*. In the process, a handful of bamboo wool is made and kept underneath a *zomhou sei* (*rhus semiatala*) branch, then a bamboo strip of two-three feet, to pull to and fro to produce friction and heat is placed between the bamboo wool and *zomhou sei*. The person selected to initiate the inauguration of this process stands vertically, stepping on the branch with one hand each on either side of bamboo strip and starts pulling it to and fro until smoke is produced. He then picks up the ball of bamboo wool and starts blowing towards that direction. It is then placed in the new hearth where the fire is ignited and made. It is forbidden to make fire in the new pit

by transferring ember from an old fireplace or any other source. The new fire pit must continuously burn till the end of *Sekrenyi* festival.

“They also brought back segoprü, split bamboo to be used for making fire in a particular way called segomi. Back in the house, one of the men deftly held a bit of wood between his toes, and rubbed the split bamboo across swiftly. Soon there was smoke followed by small flames, and a fire was made in the new hearth.” (Easterine Kire, *A Naga Village Remembered*, 2016 : 39)

Each male member holds their respective rooster in their hands then squeezes the neck to strangle them and suffocation to death by holding them in the air until it dies. No other methods were used to kill the rooster. The position of the legs is then observed critically:

Position	Placement
<i>Petsa</i>	When the claws of both the legs are spread apart and do not touch each other.
<i>Thukhrü</i>	When the claws are spread apart but one leg is underneath the other.
<i>Peviba</i>	When the right claws are over the left claws.
<i>Pezaba</i>	When the left claws are over the right claws.

<i>Tsetou</i>	When the claw curls backwards but touches each other.
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The observation of the *sekre* (cock) leg placement is believed to foresee and predict what is to come in the future. Then the *geiziemou* (appendix of the sacrificed rooster) is taken out and pierced with two feathers from the wings, hanged in front of the house at the main entrance door. The rest of the remaining parts are cleaned and cooked in a separate pot. The liver is also pierced with bamboo skewer sticks until cooked. It is then kept aside for the purpose of performing another *nanyü* (ritual) called *Chüsepe*. No member is allowed to eat before this ritual is done.

In the process of cooking, a *nanyü* (ritual) called *mhopie* is first performed. For this ritual, a scoop is made with leaves and used as a cup called *Theü* which is filled with local wine (*zu*). The cup is raised twice close to the lips then it kept behind the door. Next, the *Chüsepe nanyü* (ritual) is performed. Two leaves of *pfhenyü* (a type of banana leaf) are kept ready. The liver is now split into nine pieces, four of which is placed in one leaf while five on the other leaf. Again, nine pieces of ginger is equally divided as the liver on both the leaves. The performer of the ritual fills his cup with *zu* (traditional wine) along with some liver and ginger to place it behind the door, drops it on the ground and pronounces:

*“A chü a rü bu ha cü kerütshükerüze thadi*

*Puo gei the gei bielietuo*

*A khutie huzu bu cü pepupeluotuo”.*

Translation:

“Let creature and my foe consume this and remain idle

I shall overpower them

May my food and drink be abundant in longevity” (Tr.Kuolie.D)

After this utterance, he takes a sip of his *zu* (traditional drink) then folds the leaves of the remaining ginger and liver to place it behind the door again. This concludes the *chüsepe nanyü* (ritual). Following night, all the menfolk sleep on bamboo mats in the front room of the house while the women of the household are expected to sleep elsewhere in the house. The third day of *Sekrenyi* marks the last day of the festival to observe the concluding ceremonial rituals. They participate in merry making until afternoon. As the celebration comes to an end, the surplus *zu* (traditional drink) and leftover food were discarded before the final *Sekrenyi* ritual. By sundown, the menfolk once again gather and proceed towards the *kharu* (village gate) carrying *Zhie* (machete), *Rüngou* (spears) and *Misi* (guns) while wearing traditional shawls. On reaching a certain point beyond the village gate, the eldest male in the family instructs the younger men to repeat after him and pronounces:

“*Kesa kesou, kesuokenyüko*

*Ta tsünu tsuzie ho*

*Sekresenuo, no la vor pezilo!”*

(*Sekresenuo* is the spirit of *Sekrenyi*)



Translation:

“New fortune has been awoken,

Every illnesses are going down that way

*Sekresenuo*, revisit us soon again!” (Tr.Kuolie.D)

These rituals conclude the *Sekrenyi* festival which is to assure purity and cleanliness not only physically but mentally and spiritually. The rituals guarantee good fortune for any upcoming unfortunate events.

## **Ngonyi**

*Sekrenyi* falls in the month of *Kezei* (February) and the end of *Sekrenyi* marks the beginning of sowing season for the Angamis. After the thirtieth day of sowing, *Ngonyi* festival starts. *Ngonyi* is also known as *Tsarhunyi* by some villages. The meaning of *Ngonyi* can be understood firstly, *ngo* meaning exhausted. Secondly, another interpretation in contrary, *ngo* meaning head held high. As mentioned earlier in the previous chapters, the Angami lunar calendar may affect the dates of celebration which is the reason why the festival days slightly vary between villages. Generally and most accepted time frame of celebration of *Ngonyi* festival falls between the month of *Kera* (March) to *Ketshü* (April) which lasts for ten (10) days. Comparing to other major festivals like *Terhünyi* and *Sekrenyi*, *Ngonyi* was not a massive affair; cattles are not slaughtered on a big scale for feasting. During this period, the activities are not hectic as it was observed as a time to reenergize before the agricultural activities begin. It was

during this period when the *Tsiakrau* (the first sower) performs the sowing rituals. The *Tsiakrau* walks beyond the village gate to perform the sowing ritual by clearing a small patch of land and begin by invoking blessings for the upcoming sowing season ahead. He covers the small patch by putting up fences and then returns and starts his fasting on behalf of the whole village. He is permitted to consume his *zu* but solid food was prohibited. He then puts on his *Kenyo* (traditional rain coat) and proceeds to sow variety of seeds in the *jhum* fields and this marks the beginning of sowing for the other members. A few weeks later when the seeds start to sprout and he performs another ritual called the *Pudu* ; clearing of weed. The next day is *Dziene* which was another way of cleaning the small patch. *Puo rünyü the* is when the *Tsiakrau* plucks the tip of the seeds sprouting and this signifies harvesting. *Tsiakrau* strictly observed the restrictions as he takes it upon himself the result of good yield or misfortune and the results solely rests on him.

Womenfolk usually perform the *Kizhie nanyü* on the first day of *Ngonyi*. This day is declared as *Kenyü* (taboo) to entertain or even speak to anyone away from one's own village for they believed that such actions may lead to tragedy. The first five days are non-working days for the whole village; subjected to agricultural activities. They are allowed to do any day to day activities like basket weaving, making handicrafts, collecting firewood etc. except involve in going to the field. It is during *Ngonyi* when the village indulges in collective activities like hunting and fishing. Construction of new houses and repairing of old ones were done during this period.

In the Southern Angami region at Viswema village, a ritual called *Nüsotho* was performed on the second day of *Nyonyi* festival. This ritual was done mainly to cleanse babies and infants. After sunrise, in the early hours the mother of the infant fetches water

and makes a new hearth where she cooks food and feed the baby in a pretentious manner by slightly touching the lips of the infant with the cooked food, she then eats the food. This ritual was performed with the belief that such *nanyü* allows the baby to grow healthier and physically stronger.

For every ritual, the fifth day is always observed as *penie* (non-working day). Likewise, the fifth day of *Ngonyi* was strictly observed to appease the spirits.

Hutton also mentions in his book *The Angami Nagas* ;

*“This genna is the most important of all, after the Terhengi, to the Tengima Angamis. The kenna is very strict”* (1969: 198)

It is a festival that emphasized more on performing rituals, rendering services to one's community rather than feasting.

## **Kerunyi**

*Kerunyi* festival period is for two to five days in the month of *Ketshü* (April) for Southern Angami region and the month of *Cacü* (May) for Northern Angami and Western Angami. This festival is more about offering thanksgiving to *Kepenuopfü* (God) for granting them good seeds with the hope that it will multiply in abundance. Similar to other festivals, the first day is marked by performing the *Kizhie* ritual done by the lady of the household. The next two days were spent on feasting but field works were suspended. The third day was dedicated to *Peli* (age mates or peer groups) who gathers to narrate stories relating to tradition. It was during this time when the younger generation puts an

attempt to learn the folktales and indigenous songs. This festival greatly contributes to upholding the morals and values of the Angami tradition in general.

Another narrative was recorded through personal interview and it states that this festival was dedicated before plantation of paddy. However, no further detailed explanation was recorded due to information narrated in fragments.

## **Chadanyi**

The meaning of *Chadanyi* can be translated in the literal sense *Cha* (path), *da* (clear) and *nyi* meaning festival. It can be understood as path clearing festival. This festival is celebrated for about seven to nine days between *Mvüsa* (July) and *Tsierie* (August). It is during this time of the year when weeds and bushes are dense due to heavy rainfall. The busiest agricultural activity is at ease hence the whole village are assigned days to collectively clear all the roads, paths that lead to the fields.

First day is the *kezhie* ritual day. First narration; On the same day, two young boys are selected precisely to perform a ritual while the other men are expected to protect the community. These young boys along with two elders carry their *zhie* (machete) and proceed to perform the *Nanyü* called *Tiekriü* meaning rice mother. Here, mud was used to build two mould which looks like breasts of women to symbolize fertility. To complete it, a plant called *Zutshü* was used which symbolizes strength. After performing the ritual, they end it by declaring “*pepu peloutuowe*” meaning it will be abundant. The boys are prohibited to touch any insects or animals with the fear that it may destroy the crops; refrain from talking to strangers to maintain purity of the village. *Chadi* (main road) day

is observed on the next day. The whole village comes together to clear all the main roads and end it with feasting.

Second narration; As the term suggests, *Chadanyi* literally means clearing of paths in Tenyidie. Any individual at their own fields builds mud mould and declares;

*“Hau ha Khutie baho”*

Translation :

“This is where rice is available” (Tr.Kuolie.D)

Then asks for blessings;

*“Tei kijü Apfu Apfü,*

*A mhatho chü pie kezhi ha*

*Puo bu puo si rüchü*

*A tsü di a bu a mhatho pfhüpfü a chada kedephre*

*Kedelo üthienyü”*

Translation :

“Sky, earth, my father (and) my mother

My work that has been done

Let it grow to fruition

And after me so that I collect,

Carried and walked over my path

That may turn wear and tear” (Tr.Kuolie.D)

During this period of festivity, the members of the village are strictly prohibited from interacting with guests with the fear that their good fortunes may get diverted to outsiders. They are also not allowed to slaughter any cattles. The reason being with the fear that the cattles may consume the agricultural harvest.

## **Khoupfünyi**

This festival is also called *Theyu-u* (toad) *khoupfünyi* which falls in the month of *Tsierie* (August) to *Rüyo* (September) and lasts approximately for four to five days. In the Angami tradition, toad is considered as luck charm which possesses quality that is admirable as it effortlessly sticks out its tongue and catches its prey. This festival is also about sharing to exhibit unity and love among the families and neighbors.

The first ritual is *kizhie* done by woman of the household. The other ritual is called *theyu-u khutieka* meaning toad’s share of food which is offered to the toad by placing rice mixed with salt seeking the toad’s favour.

The mother of the household cooks a special dish. The girl child in the family is taught the role of women and the contribution she can offer to her community. This is also drawing inspiration from the toad that these girls will be lucky enough to yield and receive food without much struggle in life. The festival is not associated to any spiritual

norms but the belief is that if the festival is not observed, their food consumption may become too excessive and turn insufficient to last the whole year.

Through oral narrations, myth related to how this festival originated can be found in two versions. First, once there was no rain in our land for seven years. During this period people lost their crops and seeds and due to the severity of the situation, they seemed to have forgotten the sowing season. Here, one of the Angami women was married to a Zeliang Naga tribe. Her brothers decided to visit their sisters to ask for paddy seeds. As they reached her village (because of the crucial situation) it was learnt that the village have already resolved not to distribute or share any seeds to outsiders. However, she wanted to help her brothers to which she planned to execute secretly. She would feed her chickens with seeds and later gave one each to each brother and instructed them to kill the chicken as they pass over the *kharu* and collect the seeds from the chicken's crop. To secretly give them hints on when to sow the seed, the day of her brothers' departure, she carried her child and sang a lullaby that says:

*“Hutuo Teguo pou keba ki,*

*Tsia lalie ro vi ho.”*

Translation:

“During Kachnar-coral tree

Is the best time to sow the seed.” (Tr.Mine)

Her brothers immediately after crossing the *kharu* killed the chicken and extracted the seed from the chicken crop and reintroduced this rice grain for cultivation. In honor of

their sister *Theïnuo*, *Theïnuokhoupfhü* was celebrated every year. Over time, tales say that the name was gradually mispronounced as *Thegu-u khoupfhü* instead of the original name *Theïnuokhoupfhü*. The species of the paddy she gave her brothers is called *Thevürü* which is still found in the present times.

Second, this festival is celebrated and performed to let *theyu-u* (toad) bless the people with good harvest. It is said that this festival was introduced when our people were still migrating in search of better place to settle. When our grandfather came to a place called *Kezhakeno* (now in *Phek* district in Nagaland) they discovered a magical stone lying where a toad with a paddy plant in his mouth was found sitting on the stone. They accepted this as a sign from the divine spirit to settle down in that vicinity. When the villagers spread a basket full of paddy in the morning, it multiplies in double by evening. The paddy from the toad sustained the whole community. Hence, they donate a portion of harvest as the toad's share to constantly appreciate his blessings in abundance.

## Vatenyi

The Angamis also celebrates another festival called *Vatenyi*. This festival was often observed on fifth of *Rüde* (December) in the Angami lunar calendar. However, this day may or not be considered a typical festival for two main reasons; Firstly, no *nyi shie* (festival announcement) was done by the *Phichüu*. Secondly, Every other festivals begin by performing the *Kizhie nanyü* but no *Kizhie* was done for *Vatenyi*. Regardless, *Vakete nanyü* (ritual) was observed and performed. During this period, Fasting was done and it was *Kenyü* (forbidden) to consume food until sunset with the belief that such sacrifices



may sustain them till the next agricultural cycle with lack of hunger. Aquatic creatures like frogs and crabs can survive by hibernating and these were prepared for dinner with the belief that men can also hibernate if the situation arises; to equip themselves for unforeseeable circumstances like famine or drought. Interestingly, Snails are not used for this *nanyü* for the fact that snails do not have any rear end and it qualifies as *kenyü*. On the next day, at sunrise the lady of the house drops her body cloth into the granary and picks up two to three grains of rice and asks for blessings from the *Terhuomia* (spirits) to sustain them during time of hunger or till the next agriculture season. This concludes the *Vakete nanyü*.

## **Te-l Khukhu:**

The Angami traditional and cultural festivals mostly revolve around the essence of agricultural activities and celebrating abundance of yield. However, Te-l Khukhu festival is celebrated by dedicating it to young girls. Stories narrates that it was originally celebrated only by young innocent head shaven damsels but such practiced are no longer rigid and seen celebrating at present times as a festival. Te-l Khukhu is celebrated on the thirteenth of *Mvüsa* (July) but such fixation of date is not consistent as the dates are fixed based on and with reference to the traditional lunar calendar. As such, the latest date of *Te-l Khukhu* was celebrated on Twenty ninth *Mvüsa* (July) this year. Based on personal experience and observance, *Nanyü* (Rituals) were no longer performed with the presence of Christian conversion except the remaining six to seven household who are still not Christian converts.

*Te-l Khukhu* festival is extensively still celebrated in Viswema Village every year (One of the Angami Villages of the Southern Angami region). This particular festival is not celebrated or performed collectively as a community nor gather to perform any *Nanyü* (rituals) or ceremonies but is celebrated with families, neighbours, and peer groups by sharing cooked food as token of gifts to acknowledge the girl child.

The history and origin of *Te-l Khukhu*, as narrated by one respondent of Viswema Village recalls and narrates:

“During the *Keriekimia* (forefathers) times, a lady saw a fully ripened millet plant (also called as *Chütienuo* in Tenyiedie) in the middle of a *Dzübe* (a pond). Seeing the promising plant initially sent a *Keli* (Squirrel) to pluck an ear for her but the *Keli* (Squirrel) failed to return. She then entrusted a parrot the same task but the bird began to eat the millet instead. Lastly, the woman assigned the *Theyu* (toad)- *Te-l* in Viswema dialect, and the toad brought her an ear of millet which she gratefully received and promised to give a serving of millet to the *Theyu* which he replied that he wish his share to be given to the girl child in a household”.

This narration is the basis of the origin of the festival. Hence, *Te-l* (toad in Viswema dialect) *Khukhu* (serving) came into existence. Considering the origin *Chütienuo* (millet) is always an important ingredient in the preparation of *Te-l Khukhu* packages. As the festival approaches, the girl peer groups start preparing for *Te-l Khukhu* by collecting flowers to decorate the loft area of the house (also called *Chokrü* in Viswema dialect). Some of the most common flowers used for the festival purpose are ginger lily (*Hedychium Aurantiacum* Wall), Rock butterfly lily (*Hedychium Ellepticum* Buch) and maize cobs to make dolls for decoration. These flowers are used to hang on

the roof opening and the *Kikia* (the V shaped board used in making a typical Naga house), while the maize cobs are also lined up on the inner walls to add to the aesthetic of the decoration.



Picture plate 22 Flowers used for decoration for the *Te-l Khukhu* occasion.



Picture plate 23

Houses decorated for *Te-l Khukhu* festival on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at Viswema Village.

( All photos taken by self)

Prior to the day, both men and womenfolk begin to prepare for the upcoming festival. Men folk would gather and cut Oak trees (*Guercus griffithii*) to collect *Olo* (wood borer larvae) while womenfolk catch *kona* (eatable snails) and crabs to prepare Naga delicacies. The food is prepared the night before and the serving are packed in a leaf (*ficys* species) rolled into a cone shape and pinned with a small piece of bamboo. The handful of food items typically consist of cooked rice and millet, two pieces of pork, egg, snails, crabs, wood borer larvae etc. The respondent also added that the pieces meat must be in pairs or even numbers. No concrete explanations were given regarding this practice. However, beef is considered taboo for this meal preparation for a possible reason that the feed of a cow is considered expensive during the olden times and hence consumption of beef was not recommended or encouraged.



Picture plate 24

A girl child on her way to distribute cooked food on the occasion of *Te-l Khukhu*  
at Viswema Village.

( Photo taken by self )

Though strict restrictions are no longer observed in present times, the performance of certain rituals are done by non-Christians still existing at Viswema Village. The food kept aside for the occasion must remain sacred and hence no member of the household is allowed to taste the food until it is fully cooked which then the first damsel tastes the food before anyone in every household. The restriction of cooking food besides the festival food in the same hearth is also included in the ritual. The portion for each serving is done the night prior to the actual occasion and distribution is done on the next day, *Te-l Khukhu* festival. The first damsel entrusted to perform the ritual on arrival receives a *Khukhu* (food pack), she then drops a morsel of rice near the *Misou* (stones used in a hearth) and tastes the food. This indicates that the other member of the household may begin feasting. The damsel then proceed to other households to do the same and by the end of the rituals, the damsels gather at the decorated areas and begin the merry making session.

### **Khriethonyi :**

Another festival celebrated by the Angamis is *Khriethonyi* though it was as extravagant or popular like the other festivals. *Khrietho* in *Tenyidie* means friendship and *Nyi* meaning festival so in this context, it can be understood that it was a festival celebrated in honour of friendship and bond typically among two villages or *Khels* from different villages. This was mostly commemorated to sustain their friendships from the past and to keep their shared or similar history.

## Chapter 5

### Transition from Animism to Christianity

Ritual practices and beliefs permeate and dictate all of Naga social activity in all aspect however it does not indicate that an individual wanders and revolves in a haze of mystical experience but rather very practical by nature. Traditionally, Nagas are often described as animists considering their spiritual practices as they extensively believe in the spiritual beings that inhabits the natural world. However, this is partially true but not the whole truth because they believed in the existence of Gods. In the understanding of the Naga spiritual concept, the Gods and spirits always have a sense of relationship that is again associated to the concept of 'fertility'. This does or may not affect the society directly but rather it influences the positive or negative natural cyclical flow of 'fertility'. Therefore, when sacrifices are made during various occasions, it is usually to ask the Supreme Being to influence to maximize fertility in terms of harvest, good crops, more collection of enemies' heads during warfare, good and healthy offsprings etc. Generally, the Nagas believe in different deities that can be broadly categorized into three types i.e., a high God or Gods, a God and spirits who lives in the sky and spirits that resides on earth. This contributes in different functions in terms of what extent they may intervene actively in human lives. For instance, the Angamis recognize a high God who is also considered the creator called *Kepenuopfui* and spirits are generally referred to as *Terhuomia* and considered to be ill fated and evil by nature. Angamis usually offer sacrifices to these low-level spirits to avoid wrath and appeasement.

One of the most essential part of Naga ritual practice is sacrifice- *genna* pairing. Sacrifices are first made and followed by observance of *genna*. The subject of sacrifice is

the creator or maybe to a spirit, depending on which may be appropriate to the situation. It is during the *genna* period where the normalcy of activities are put on hold to which transgressions are severely dealt with. This may be viewed as a dramatic way of indicating that a special occasion is to occur in the next few days. The people are not prohibited from travelling or crossing a certain demarcated area nor are outsiders entertained.

In the typical Christian belief, a human can only have one soul which his/her fate is decided depending on how a person had lived their lives which again such fate were decided by God. While in contrary, the animist Nagas believed that a person may possess two souls. First, it is the soul of the person himself who on dying a normal death, goes to the land of dead. This soul may also inhabit in the body of a tiger. Second, the other soul can be viewed in a more elusive manner which is also liable to be attacked by evil spirits which may result in falling ill or in some cases wander away but the effect of such instances remains equal when unfortunate incidents happen. Sacrifices are required to abstain from such misfortune. The Christian concept of afterlife is not exactly found in animist beliefs but a similar notion is also observed. Christianity states that the fate of a person is decided after their passing whether or not he would spend eternity in heaven or hell. Similarly, the animists even before the advent of Christianity believed that the soul of a person would also pass over the river of darkness which in *tenyidie* is also called *Kezierü* (*Kezie* meaning darkness and *rü* meaning river) to reach his/her destination. The terms may not be identical but similarities are drawn from both entities as some beliefs are comparable.

The whole religious life of the Nagas revolved around apparition of evil spirits that haunt and compel them for pacification. Nagas' belief in spirits is extensive where

these spirits are considered to be hostile to human beings and is capable of appearing in the form of tiger, snakes that kills people; Easterine Kire also narrates:

“Ei, the snake he had killed must be the spirit guardian of this plain.

Therefore, Pulie’s death must have been spirit induced, and surely,

This is where his soul has found its resting place.”

(Kire, Easterine: *Naga Folktale retold*; Barkweaver; 2009)

These spirits appear in the form of lightning or other forms of curse on the crops that leads to failure. Clearly in the Pre-Christian era, the Christian missionaries, sociologists and anthropologists often branded the traditional religion as ‘animism’, ‘heathenism’ and that possess every trait of paganism, that believes in the existence of a spiritual form that resides both in the animate and inanimate things which have a soul. However, if one look closely and analyze this denomination, it cannot fully accept that all Naga religious beliefs were animistic also because they believe and worship the deities. The supposedly ‘animist’ Nagas had a different concept of belief in God and spirits which necessarily affected the society directly but it definitely influenced them in the form of both malevolent and benevolent characteristics. As such, appeasement was very important to pacify the pernicious spirits from harming the souls of the people.

“It is however, to be understood that appeasement is not necessarily worship, but it is practiced in order to ward off troubles that the demons may cause to their physical being. Evil spirits are being appeased and appeasement is thus, a general character of the people”.

(Epao, Veprari. From Naga Animism to Christianity. np.nd)



Appeasement is done through propitiation to maintain peace and harmony between the evil spirits and humans.

“Every misfortune is, as a rule, ascribed to evil spirits and such money is spent on appeasing them, the usual way being to offer fowls of which the head, feet and entrails are offered to the demon, with many enchantations. The other parts are eaten by the sacrifices”. (Elwin, Verrier. *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*. OUP. 1969)

A misconceptualized identification of the traditional beliefs grew among various scholars about the existence of these two spirits- benevolent and malevolent. Regardless, a review of the traditional Naga religion denotes that there was no such distinction but the same spirits acts as both. Hence, when the spirit is mollified, they act as benevolent but when the spirits are infuriated, it may act malevolent on the lives of the worshippers. The deities were often considered as angry gods, who tried to malign the traditional devotees and as such, proper animal sacrifices and offerings were always done to attain appeasement of the spirits. Ritualized tradition was observed extensively to obviate the spirits haunting them in remorseless manner. The animist Nagas is also of the belief that their Gods visits them often in different forms i.e. rain, disease, destruction of crops by heavy rain, hailstorms, animals or in some severe cases, death. Hence, they were always concerned about their actions to ward off the wrath of gods to spare their lives and bestow them with abundant crops.

Considering these, it is evident that the Nagas had a very vague idea of religion. They believe in the plurality of deities that have different attributes which they accredit the creation of universe being pre-existent before they actually identified gods, though

they also recognized the existence of a supreme being as the creator while the evil spirits reside in trees, rocks, rivers, cliffs and other dangerous places. The Supreme Being was no doubt personified as a primogenitor of mankind and all other living things but also failed to give a concrete explanation of the actual God. Besides his relation and association with defied spirits, his nemesis behavior towards human beings and his position in the whole circle of the pantheon, the forefathers could not describe him in the definite sense but only believe in the existence of an unseen divine power behind the creation of universe and the fate of every human being with no appropriate significance. The traditional religion is a combination of animism, superstition, supernaturalism, theism which has connection with the practices like wiseacre, theurgy and even necromancy. The fear of evil spirits from the basis of the traditional religion, hence appeasement became the core of the ritual belief. The meat of the sacrificial animal was not the main idea behind offerings but the central idea was the offering of the soul of such animals for the appeasement of the spirits. The primitive Naga religion altars were done near the village gate where rituals were performed and offerings such as meat, rice beer and other food items were laid on leaves.

There is no concrete evidence of physical contact between the multiple spirits and the diviner but the actions of practitioners invites either surplus and beneficial rewards or sickness, diseases, misfortune or death as these spirits were supernatural and to explain with evidence is near to impossible. Therefore, the performance of rituals was the bridge between the unseen spirits and people which regulates the daily practical lives of the people.

To compare, the Naga animist religion with other religion like Hinduism may not quite be possible as the Nagas did not worship idols or such embodiment in material or

physical form. It is acceptable that they believe and worship the stones and revere it as a deity. However, they do not necessarily objectify the stones but rather worship it. More or less as a fetish in the spiritual manner because it is with the belief that every object is accompanied by a spirit and such spirits dwell in it. Some particular stones were considered as 'luck stones' which when pressured can grant prosperity, ensure lasting produce of paddies and even capable of fighting mice in granaries. Stones were idolized to an extent where they are in some cases considered an animate object which consist of life and is equivalent to men as it is capable of breathing, breeding and even increase in size like the growth of human beings. Relating to such aspects, a respondent also narrates the famous Angami folklore myth. *The tale of Sopfünuo*. He briefly narrates;

“Sopfünuo was a woman from Rüsoma Village who married a man from another village. Under unfortunate circumstances, she was compelled to divorce her husband. On her return to her native village with her toddler child, it is believed that she was hit by a spiteful evil spirit which caused her death. After sometime the child was said to have pierced to death which was believed to have been caused by one of the rib bone of the mother's decomposing corpse. Both the bodies were transmogrified into stones in the shape of humans on hearing the incident; their relatives went on a search mission and found their stones. Upon arrival, they tried to pull the bigger stone but failed due to an aggressive storm which necessitated them to include the child-stone. When pulled together, the storm settled and they were brought back to Rüsoma.”



Picture plate 25 The stones of *Sopfünuo* and her child at Rüsoma village



Plate 26 The epitaph at her burial place

(Photo courtesy : Internet source)

Till date, the tale of *Sopfünuo* is spoken of as a supernatural legend in Angami myth. Even in present times, the occurrence of storm at odd season is often believed to be the result of someone touching the *Sopfünuo* stone at Rüsoma Village. The point of discussion in this particular mention is to indicate that legends in traditional tales are regarded popular in the historical sense as sometimes in the spiritual sense not necessarily authenticated. This could be associated to the theme of supernaturalism and superstition

in primitive religion where certain incidents transpired mysteriously with no tangible explanation or proof but is accepted collectively and accepted to be the truth.

Nagas since time immemorial are famously known for their head-hunting practices which were mainly done as a proof of bravery especially among menfolk and warriors. It was considered and regarded as a prestige issue for social recognition was earned through collection of enemy heads during warfare. Hence, head hunting was a requisite element of the Naga primitive religion; a religion that lack the meaning of moral code of conduct and the concept of sin was not prevalent rather than the awareness to offer sacrifices through rituals as it may appear that there is an association of fertility cult connected to such practices as the belief remains that it was more if sacrosanct than a religious sanction. A contradicting attribute between traditional religion and Christianity is the act of killing. The concept of forgiveness and loving one's enemy is extensively encouraged in the Christian way of life however such conception was not found in Naga animist religion. Human heads were considered trophies and brought back to the village to solicit and supplicate the spirits. As mentioned time and again, the idea of performing rituals with human heads and animal heads to the gods and deities in exchange of good health, abundant crops and generally the well being of the village or individual was prominent. This religion points towards the concept of absurdity and was not based on established fact of tenet but merely a set of beliefs of primitive nature for their survival and sustenance.

Change and transformation in the human society over the due course of time is inevitable, where alternation and modification occurs from one stage to another in the following period of human civilization. Human interactions, relationships continue to

evolve and transform both cultural and social institutions as society is dynamic in nature and does not remain stagnant. Majority of changes is not necessarily instantaneous but it may be a gradual process. However, regardless of whether it may consume time or change rapidly, evolution is bound to take place that leads to social change that may have an impact in social patterns, behaviors and profoundly in the cultural aspect. Transformation in a society may happen due to both external and internal forces. During the pre-British period in Nagaland, from the religious point of view the society was highly influenced & culturally by conditioned animist traits which was transmitted from one generation to another which made it almost impossible for other religion to creep in as it was deeply rooted in the Naga society. The Nagas were not familiar with outsiders nor was acquainted with them to effortlessly come in contact with any foreign power. It was only during post British era that paved a way for American missionaries to establish a new denomination in the Naga area.

The traditional Naga villages prior to foreign exposure were self reliant and independent that functioned steadily. Besides the frequent intermitted raids, external interference was nonexistent until the tranquility was interrupted with the arrival of invaders. The initial British contacts with the Angami tribe transpired sometime in January 1832. Captain Jenkins and Pemberton with 700 soldiers and 800 porters marched from Manipur to Assam to establish direct relations with Nagas. However, as per a respondent's narration, the Angamis like any Naga opposed such foreign occupation and had tendency to retaliate where villages were destroyed, houses were burnt, and lives were lost and wounded. This incident might have marked the penetration of external power in the land of the Nagas. The next expedition was under the supervision of Lieutenant Gordon with Raja Gambhir Singh of Manipur which was also accompanied by

Manipur Levy. Similar to the first expedition, they faced obstacles of fighting Angami warriors. However, the second expedition was an unsuccessful operation under the leadership of Gamghir Singh. Hence, the British government began to prohibit Gambhir Singh from conquering the Nagas which then he proceeded to the plains of Assam.

In the initial stages of the British administration establishment, their priority was the development of roads and transportation which contributed in the communication and made the recent invaded land more accessible to the outside world. Prior to the era, the local people's concern was to protect their land and prevent enemies from entering their territory and jurisdiction. Hence, the need to develop roads seems unnecessary and such ideas were discouraged. The Britisher's policy of constructing roads firstly, was to extend their influence and secondly, to keep a close check on the raids and also utilize the resources of the Nagas and gain profit that in return contributed to the expansion of their trade and commerce.

Another contributing factor that led to the transformation of Naga society is the introduction of modern education system that we considered a milestone in the history of Nagas. The only prevailing educational institution was the *Morung* that imparted the traditional learning that was subjected only to the Nagas. Considering these traditional institutions existed prior to the arrival of Christianity, it was regarded as primitive and inefficient to impart decent education.

“I asked the ‘pastor’ why the bachelors’ halls were no longer used. How could a Christian boy sleep in these houses of the heathen? was his answer. ‘to use them would be against our rules.’ (Haimendorf Fürer, Christoph. The Naked Nagas. Abhijeet Publications. 1933)

Quoting Chattopadhyaya's statement ;

“It was inevitable that the morung should incur the condemnation of the Baptist mission which put aban on it as a heathen institution without trying to understand its social implication.” (Chattopadhyaya, 1978 : 83)

Lieutenant Gordon the then principal assistant of Nagaon proposed to establish a school in 1833 at Dimapur. The need to educate the people arose when he realized during the expedition against the Angami Nagas, that the barriers can be broken only if education is used as a weapon to change the attitude of the people. In the year 1846, Major John Butler, the next Principal Assistant of Nagaon, succeeded in setting up a school at Samaguting. The government initially had a tough time to obtain and employ a teacher as no qualified man from the administration was keen to continue due to the inhospitable attitude of the Nagas, absence of security and secluded location of the land. However, in spite of all the challenge, the school was established where some Angami youth availed the opportunity using Assamese as the medium of instruction. Not long after, the non-intervention policy of the British between the years 1851-1866 was enforced. The British troops were withdrawn and this was possibly the reason why the school was closed down. As this policy was revoked in the following year (1866); Lieutenant Gregory, Deputy Commissioner reopened this school. He applied some innovative strategy to attract teacher for the particular school, offering all facilities to execute the plans. Rev. Roth, at the request of Major Butler's son Captain Butler arrived at Samaguting to commence the proposed project in Naga Hills. However, the mission was not accomplished as Captain Butler could not remain in Naga Hills due to health problems and returned in 1872. The next person assigned for the administration of the



Naga Hills district was Colonel Keatingen; he expressed his willingness to set up a school in collaboration with Christian missionaries who may render help and assistance in the educational project. By 1878, the mission school in the Ao region was already established before the school in Kohima district was settled. In the same year, Rev. C.D. King was appointed as the missionary in the Naga hills. Rev. C.D. King's first attempt to settle in Kohima was interrupted because the government refused his entry due to crucial situation. A few months later, in 1879, his wife Punaram (An Assamese Christian) accompanied him again to Kohima; however, the hostile Angamis raided their camp and once again they escaped. In the third attempt, things appeared to be slightly favorable: he successfully constructed a School, began to learn the Angami language (Tenyidie), then started with eleven (11) Naga students. He also made progress as he translated the book of Mathew, John and Acts, additionally a Hymn book containing hundred songs in Tenyidie (Official Language of the Angamis). Between 1882-1883, three schools were already established first, in Kohima under Rev. C.D. King, Second, in Khonoma under 44<sup>th</sup> Regiment and third, at Borpathar. Gradually by 1907-1908, twenty four Schools were established in Naga Hills.

The Growth and development of modern institutions remained inconsistent due to various reasons i.e, poverty, lack of transportation, language barrier as Assamese was the medium of instruction, non-cooperation from the people, the fear of losing the indigenous traditions. Regardless of the strategies employed by the British government, they indeed paved way the way for modern education, credits are given to American Baptist mission equally though their objectives differ from each other, the British government utilized the service of the Nagas after they were equipped to read, speak and write Assamese vernacular but discouraged higher education as they were intimidated with the possibility

of feeling threatened by the Nagas. Meanwhile, the objective of the Christian missionaries was to evangelize the Nagas by enabling them to read and write the scriptures. The alliance of the Britishers forces was possible as both benefitted from each other. Meaning, the Britishers gained cooperation of the Nagas with the assistance of the American missionaries and the goal of American missionaries was achieved with the approval granted to them to operate in the hills. Considering the crucial situation, the Britishers believed the spread of education could only succeed if the missionaries initiate the movement rather than the Government; as Missionaries were often entrusted to persuade the non-Christian Nagas to introduce and establish schools in the region wherein the mission schools were considered the primary and most effective agency of spreading evangelism in the Naga Hills. In addition, the school master was made responsible to undertake evangelistic activities besides his normal duties where he also played the role of a pastor after a decent number of Christian Community come into existence.

The Advent of Christianity in the Naga hills first began with Miles Bronson; where he came in contact with the Nagas in 1839 wherein the Christian Missionaries was the bridge. However, under unfortunate circumstances with the passing of his sister in 1840, this mission was suspended till 1869, until the arrival of Rev. E.W Clark who dismissed his work among Assamese due to fruitless results. His keen interest to approach and work among the Nagas as they frequently visited Assam, precisely Sibsagar Market for trade and commerce purposes. A close Assamese Christian Associate of Rev. Clark named Godhula volunteered to preach the scriptures among the Nagas; to which the attempt was successful at Deka Haimong (Molungyinsen) Village, also known as the first peaceable, Christian village in 1872. However, prior to this mission, Rev Clark

baptized an Ao Naga named Subongmeren in 1871 and following years more Nagas were converted to Christians who became members of Sibsagar Mission Church. Again, as per historical narrations, Rev. Clark again visited Dekahaimong Village and baptized another 15 Nagas. All these handful of newly baptized converts assembled to mark the establishment of the first Naga Church in the native land on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1872. Rev Clark can also be recognized as the father of Naga Christianity as he tirelessly dedicated nine fruitful years in attempt to transform the Nagas in the religious context. He was later relieved from his mission by Dr. S.W Rivenburg while Rev Clark worked mostly among the Ao Nagas, Missionary among the Angami tribe; considered to be one of the most warlike and bellicose tribe among the Nagas. Rev. C.D King's first access to Kohima in 1878 was denied by the government due to unstable and tensed situation. However, in the following year, he arrived at Kohima with his wife and other associate; Punaram (An Assamese Christian). After having to get acquainted with Angamis they earned their trust after much trial and tribulations finally established the first Kohima Mission. Then, the Kohima Baptist Church was founded on 29<sup>th</sup> march, 1883 by Rev. C.D King, Mrs Henry Goldsmith, Sarbey and Robi. The mission work and activities among the Tenyimias was Mostly done by the already- converted Angami evangelists and these Churches were sheltered under the parent umbrella of the Angami Church council until the numbers of members increased overtime that necessitated them to branch out the most recorded narratives, it claims that Lhousietsu was the first Angami convert; baptized by Rev. C.D King on 21 June 1885 at Kohima the date of Baptism of the second Angami convert Lhousielie cannot be ascertained though he was also baptized sometime in July in the same year, 1885. The list shows the names of the earliest Christian Convert in the

Angami region.

<b>Names</b>	<b>Name of the Village</b>	<b>Year of Baptism</b>
Lhousietsu	_____	1885
Lhouselie	_____	1885
Sieliezhü	Kohima	1885
Neisie	Khonoma	1897
Saho	Jakhama	1905
Vitse	Jotsoma	1906
Ulhou	Nerhema	1906
Lhouruvi	Chiechabasa	1910
Chambomo	Khanakaru	1918
Lhouruya	Kigwema	1920
Katahie	Dihoma	1923

Viriku	Viswema	1923
Thalholie	Zhadima	1929
Vikrosa	Khuzama	1930
Dietholie	Meriema	1930
Pfutso	Pfuchama	1930
Lhouru-o	Tsiemekhuma	1930
Virheiu	Seithekiema	1933
Babuti	Ruziephema	1936
Sesielie	Rusoma	1938
Hoishe	Piphema	1938
Kevisé	Kijumetouma	1938
Vizakie	Phekerkriema	1939
Hoswel	Kidima	1940

Virheizo	Kiruphema	1940
Vipire	Kezoma	1941
Dziesao	Tuophema	1941
Mekhunuo	Chiechabawe	1942
Lhoupfelie	Nachama	1942
Virühu-ü	Seiyhama	1943
Rüu	Teichuma	1943
Yiemhi	Gariphema	1944
Vithoyie	Mezoma	1944
Sahu	Phesama	1944
Chupfulhou	Mima	1944
Vikeyieu	Tsiepama	1945
Lhoukuolie	Chedebawe	1946

Dikuolie	Sechu	1946
Kruzelie	Tsiesema	1946
Ruoviu	Mengujuma	1947
Viserie	Thekrejuma	1949
Vitsozu	Sechu-Zubza	1949
Kiweho	Chakhabama	1949
Vineizo	Medziphema	1949
Medochulie	Chumukedima	1955
Dolse,Saneio, Mhalelie Zelhoulie, Thasieiï,Pelhoutuo	Chuziema	1955

Gradually, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Majority population of the Nagas was converted to Christians and the rigid belief in traditional religion was no longer present. The primitive Naga religion exhibited all the animistic traits which were interwoven by superstitious beliefs. After the advent of Christianity, a new form of faith was implanted into the minds

of the Nagas where Christianity overshadowed the previously practiced religion. Stiff resistance from the animist believers made it more challenging for the missionaries to penetrate into their land but despite such difficulties, the Christian missionaries remained in the hills of Nagaland to evangelize their religion to the non-Christians by favoring them with benefits by opening schools, Charity centers, dispensaries and even offering humanitarian services to the Native Villagers. Christians Missionaries considered the decline of animist religion as one of their major achievements, which resulted in the abolition of multiple social and religious practices. The foreign forces also concentrated on offering free medical treatment which planted doubts in the roles sorcerers and priestess who demands extreme sacrifices with no guarantee of getting fully treated well; they then began lose their influence on the other people.

Prior to Christian era, the Nagas as ignorant to other genres of music still sung during different occasions. In case of the Angamis as per what one respondent narrated, there are various kinds of tune melody while performing different activities.

- *Thupfe-ii*: Sung while herding cows and cattle.
- *Tsanu- ii*: Sung while wandering in the forest.
- *Nuozepe*: Lullabies for putting babies to sleep.
- *Weüo*: Tune to communicate
- *Thekrii*: Songs of lamentations
- *Tsazepfhe*: Songs sung while spinning cotton
- *Kewhu*: Gradually starts in a softer tone and increases
- *Mepfii*: Loud ululation



Before the introduction of Christian gospel songs, the primitive Nagas did have a vague idea of melody for occasions suitable to it. It was only after the arrival of Christianity that the missionaries translated the Christian hymn book and the scriptures in vernacular language, confounded the Nagas to accept Christianity. Animist religious ceremonies were superseded by acts of fasting at churches, coins were offered over animal sacrifices, *Penie* days were replaced by Sabbath day, feast of merit was observed in the form of feast celebrations like Christmas and New Year day. Matrimonial ceremonies were solemnized in the church by a pastor, rings were exchanged as an indication of the Christian union.

## **Chapter 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

Animism as we understand it is both a concept and also a way of relating with the world. An individual or a social group with an animistic approach and perspective attributes sentience or the quality of being animated and relating to a whole range of beings around the universe that includes the environment or other people in general, plants, animals, spirits and the forces and elements of nature like water, wind, sun, moon and the entire cosmos. Some may even relate to things like stones, rocks, metals or minerals. Thus, the principle of animation and the purpose and questions of being are the key to animism. Animism in this sense can be understood not only in terms of what it is but also in terms of what is not. Edward B Taylor first suggested and introduced the term Animism through anthropology. Although the term can be traced from the Latin word

‘anima’ meaning breath, spirit or life, Taylor borrowed the term ‘animism’ from George Ernst Stahl who proposed that the souls and spirits of every living being or other objects controls the physical processes in the body. According to Edward Taylor, animism is seen as a form of religion in which the souls of beings are necessary for life. Taylor goes on illustrating how the human spirits appear in visions or dreams. He also argued that the souls of various entity; plants, animals, humans and other objects can survive both death and bodily decay in an animistic cosmos while also inhabiting in a world that consists of deities and spirits.

The thorough study of animism suggests that it is more about sensibility, one’s tendency or the ways of engaging with the entirety of the world. To an animistic person or a social group, sentience is envisioned in the form of life force or animated property that is accessible and even immanent in the daily and everyday world even if this property is not necessarily perceivable. Studies on animism have shown the importance of animal spirits and places that are considered sacred with some presence of animistic potentialities. Animal spirits here refer to the soul like and spirits attributed to animals that are considered as the seat of an animal’s consciousness. This shows how animistic potentialities are not confined to human subject alone. In an animistic setting, animals usually show their sentience and awareness to act through their relationships with human beings. Such sentience is revealed through how shamans and hunters treat animals and animal spirits. Similar to Angami animism, they strongly believed in the chief of wildlife spirit *Chükhieo* who guarantees successful hunting sprees for hunters if they offer prayers to him. Hunters are careful about how they offer prayers to this spirit. The tiger spirit in Angami tradition also plays a major role in the Angami animistic society.

Chapter One introduced the Naga ethnic group precisely the Angami tribe in particular. An in-depth study was done on the Angami tribe; The number of villages, the four categories of the Angami villages, the Angami dialect *Tenyidie*, the significance of the village gate *Kharu* , Angami house architecture, the role of *Thehouba/ Kichüki*, the social structure of the Angami community and the Ancestor's religion called *Pfütsana* that relates to animism in most ways. A sub topic also elaborated the concept of animism and explains how it is the earliest form of religion.

In Chapter Two, the study of Angami religious belief and the practices before the coming of Christianity is done. The Angami religious system features belief in multiple spirits; both benevolent and malevolent. The essence of supernaturalism is also found which such forces are associated to the cycle of life in various aspects. The term *Kenyii* is what binds the Angamis socially and culturally. Hence, social and cultural taboo and prohibitions in Angami society is also elaborated.

Chapter Three, Discussion on various Angami rituals is done. Before the propagation of Christianity in our land, every Angami village was highly influenced by animistic way of performing rituals in an elaborated manner. Numerous rituals were performed at different occasions such as marriage, funerals, new member in the family or even head hunting rituals etc. Some rituals were performed by an individual and sometimes it demands the whole community to perform the rituals especially relating to agricultural activities. Rituals were mainly performed to appease their Gods and spirits. Death rituals are done for sympathy and compassion mainly. Graham Harvey in his book *Animism Respecting the Living world* explains that death is the beginning of a new life. Invoking is a sense of gratitude to nature because from the animistic point of view, the elements of nature gets arrested in the body. Therefore, at the time of death, the body

ceases to exist and the soul is once again freed and reunited with the elements of nature because of the belief that the mortal remains is assumed to be unfit to accommodate the soul any longer. As the body gradually decomposes, the flesh returns back to soil (earth) , the air gets released and turns into air (air) , the fluid dries off (water) and these are indications of elements of nature relating to animistic approach.

Chapter Four studies the major festivals celebrated by the Angamis. It is difficult to set particular dates for these festivals as the Angamis in the ancient times follow the Angami lunar calendar which differs from the systematic existing calendars. *Sekrenyi* festival and *Terhüinyi* are considered to be the two major festivals that lasts for days. *Sekrenyi* is commonly known as the festival of purification and *Terhüinyi*, the festival of sacrifice to God for blessing them with good yield. The other festivals like *Nyonyi*, *Kerunyi*, *Chadanyi*, *Khoupfhüinyi*, *Vatenyi*, *Tel Khukhu* and *Khriethonyi* are other festivals that are celebrated in intervals throughout the year annually. In the present times, *Sekrenyi* festival is still celebrated by the whole Angami community on 25<sup>th</sup> February every year. Though other festivals are no longer celebrated except *Tel Khukhu* festival in parts of Southern Angami villages. The analysis of the ceremonial rituals performed during festivals also provides a deeper understanding into the lives of Angamis in the animist era.

Feast of merit is not exactly a festival but a time of celebration hosted by the privileged section of society who hosts feast for the whole village. Such events were initiated mainly for two reasons ; Metaphorically, to please God and in the worldly physical sense, to earn higher status and prestige in the society, the significance of these two runs in parallel.

Chapter Five highlights the transition of the Nagas and Angamis from an era filled with superstitions and obligations to an era where they stepped out from such confined spaces. Morung played an integral part in imparting education in the Angami social system but after the arrival of Christianity, such institutions no longer existed as it was considered inefficient to offer decent education to the people. The shift in social and religious aspects are also discussed.

One major challenge faced during the fieldwork of this research work was the insufficiency of written text and documented works. Most of the findings of this thesis are from field works and interviews. Another challenge was trying to identify the authenticity of each narrated story. Most of the narrations varied from one another even if it belonged to the same region. Almost the whole Angami population are now Christian converts and therefore trying to bridge the gaps with the older generation was another problem as the elderly people who might have experienced the pre-Christian era are too old and the recollection of memory appeared in fragments and sometimes fabricated. Last but not the least, through this research work, an attempt was put to document the past oral history and narratives into written form for future reference.

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## List of the names of interviewee with dates :

- Mr. Thejao Sekhose

Interviewed on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2021, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021, 15<sup>th</sup> September 2022 and 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023

- Lt. Mrs Khrielenuo

Interviewed on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2022

- Mr. Meguo-o Mechülho

Interviewed on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2022 and 4<sup>th</sup> March 2023

- Mr. Medo-o Keretsü (Head Gaonbura, Kohima Village)

Interviewed on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and 15<sup>th</sup> September 2022

- Mr. Medoselhou Keretsü

Interviewed on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2023, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023

- Mr. Nguluolie Kesiezie (Goanbura, Kohima Village)

Interviewed on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023

- Mrs. Kikrukhrie-ü Sote

Interviewed on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2020

- Mr. Vimhodi Mekro

Interviewed on 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2023

- Mr. Vilezol Toso

Interviewed on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2023

- Mr. Viyovol

Interviewed on 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2023

- Mr. Vizosal

Interviewed on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2023

- Lt. Mr. Zasivizo

Interviewed on 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2021