

**Contour of Orality in Gikuyu and Angami Naga Culture:
A Comparative Study of Ng̃gĩ wa Thiong'o and Select
Angami Naga Writers.**

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

By

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DECLARATION

I, **Khriebeinuo Keretsü**, hereby declare that the thesis entitled **Contour of Orality in Gikuyu and Angami Naga Culture: A Comparative Study of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Select Angami Naga Writers** is the bonafide record of research work done by me, under the supervision of **Prof. Rosemary Dzüvichü**, Professor, Department of English, Nagaland University during the period 2018-2024, and that the thesis has not been submitted for the award of any previous degree, fellowship, associateship, etc., to any other university or institute. This is being submitted to Nagaland University for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in English**.

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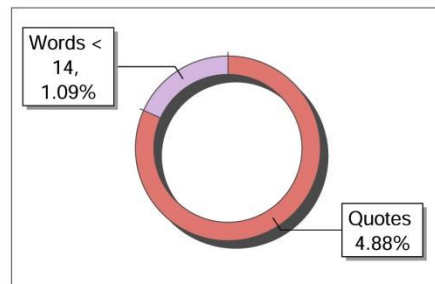
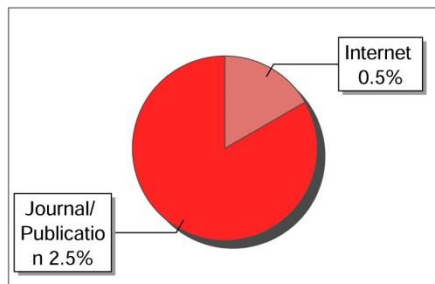
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Abstract

Nagaland and Africa are described as places of immense reservoir of orality, which is still in existent- acting as the vehicle and transmitter of their cultural history and values, social customs, beliefs, folklores, songs, and social practices. True to this statement, the Gikuyu tribe of Kenya and the Angami tribe of Nagaland have vibrant cultures with their oral traditions as proof of their rich cultural heritage. However, these two communities have their identities and history analyzed and written for them by their colonizers, projecting them to the world through the lens of the oppressors as ‘barbaric’, ‘savage’ and such other derogatory terms. The need to portray an unprejudiced and just image of the cultural lives of these societies is an important call for researchers today. Keeping in mind this objective, the thesis is written within the scope of Postcolonialism: with focus on the impact of colonization in the cultural practices of the colonies, exploitation of the people- their culture, their land, their rights, and their resources. The study also touches upon Feminism as a tenet of Postcolonialism in interpreting the position of women of the two tribes. One significant similarity between the Gikuyu and Angami Nagas is their reverence for nature. Though nature was not worshipped, these two communities placed immense importance and respect for nature. The relationship of the people with their environment, their interaction with nature, and their cultural attitude towards their environment is an area of interest for this research because of its wide scope in positively contributing towards global ecological concerns. This aspect of their culture is analyzed under Ecocriticism which includes Ecofeminism and Ecocentrism.

Both the two communities had come under the reign of foreign powers which led them into untold miseries- uprooted and displaced them, committed inhumane atrocities towards these ethnic communities leading to insurgencies. Thus, from being communities which once lived practically isolated from the world and from living peaceful agrarian lives, these two communities underwent drastic changes and became a part of the global community. Their oral tradition is significant moreso because it acts as the link between the past and the present- documenting and transmitting their cultural history, experiences, customs, values, and beliefs from one generation to the next. The thesis not only documents the oral tradition of the two tribes but traces the drastic changes that the people underwent as a result of the invasion of their land by foreign powers, introduction of Western education and Christianity and the impact of it on their indigenous way of life. In addition to tracing their oral tradition

with time, the study makes a comparative study of the select elements in the oral tradition of the two tribes and their experiences.

In order to make a meaningful analysis, the research is guided by the objectives that includes- the studying of the elements (select) and significance of oral tradition in the Angami Naga community, exploring the similarities of oral tradition in the two mentioned tribes, studying the impact of oral tradition in the written literature of the two tribes, and examining the changes in the traditions and assessing oral tradition as a linkage between the past and the present.

The first chapter of the thesis is titled “Introduction” and as the title suggests introduces the tenets of the study. The objectives, the hypothesis, and the methodology of the study are noted at the beginning of the chapter. The important concepts to be used in the study: Comparative literature and oral tradition are introduced. Comparative literature is the correlative study of two or more forms of literatures. It consists of the analysis, understanding, and interpreting a text or tradition or culture by comparing it to another text, tradition or culture. Oral Tradition also used synonymously with orality is significantly more than ‘just talking’. Oral tradition connotes a dynamic and immensely varied oral-aural medium for expanding, accumulating, and transmitting knowledge, art, ideas, beliefs, and history of a particular society. The chapter also gives a brief account of the two tribes- Gikuyu tribe of Kenya and Angami tribe of Nagaland which are to be studied in the following chapters. The Gikuyu people of Kenya are also called the Kikuyu or Agikuyu (in Swahili language as they call themselves). They constitute the majority of the population of central Kenya. Many from the tribe speak Swahili which together with English makes the official languages of Kenya. The Angamis are a major ethnic group native to the state of Nagaland in North east India. They belong to the Tenyimia community which covers seven Naga tribes, namely: Chakhesang, Zeliang, Pochury, Mao, Poumai, Rengma, and Angami. They speak Tenyidie in a number of dialects and English is the official language of Nagaland. The chapter also establishes the critical theories under whose purview the study will be made.

The second chapter is titled “The Angami – Naga Oral Tradition” and it documents the data collected from the personal interviews of the select village elders from all the Angami sub divisions, viz.- Northern, Southern, Western, and Chakhroma. For the interviews, Medoselhou Keretsü from Kohima village, Daniel Kikhi from Viswema village, Lt. Tsilie Sakhrie from Khonoma village, and Kekuohetuo Angami from Urura village were approached

representing the Northern, Southern, Western, and Chakhroma Angami respectively. Their proficiency in the cultural practices of the Angami tribe with special reference to the funeral rites (according to the ancestral belief, *pfutsana*); life after death; belief in the supernatural; dreams, seers, and channelers; festivals; songs; major blessings pronounced by the elders; and the effect of introduction of Christianity and Western education are documented in the second chapter. Traditionally, the AngamiNagas take utmost care to appease the spirits during one's lifetime and meticulously observed the various steps and taboos while preparing for the funeral to avoid sufferings in the afterlife. The second chapter attempts to set down in writing the echoes of the past of the Angamis which are no more in practice with the advent of Christianity and Western education. Their rituals, songs, blessings, festivals, and beliefs are closely connected to their rich work culture and with the changes in the occupations and religion of the people; these folk elements are on the verge of disintegration.

The third chapter of the thesis is titled, "Orality in Select compiled Literature in Tenyidie". This chapter makes a selection of pieces from compiled literature in Tenyidie and are translated into English by the researcher. These selected and translated pieces are then analyzed in detail to support the significance of oral tradition in the Angami Naga culture. The written literature of the AngamiNagas is replete with their oral tradition which is a testament to the fact that the oral tradition is predominant when it comes to transmitting their cultural elements even in this age of written tradition. To truly appreciate the significance of orality and to interpret their cultural practices, some songs which are written and compiled as poems are selected and analyzed. To analyze the institution of marriage, folk poetry like "*AvuNei Hu*" ("Our Mutual Love"), "*A Kesuoii*" ("The Lesser Me"), "*U Livimia*" ("Our Peers") are selected. Headhunting, being related to the idea of masculinity was considered an essential sport to earn respect, status, and admiration. Man who has taken heads made desirable husbands as they are considered man enough to protect their wives and children. They detach themselves from their deed of taking heads and there was no hatred or personal enmity. It was driven by the urge to earn the coveted adornments of warriors and not for cruel intentions. Two of Angami folk poetry, "*Mehouviü*", and "*Therülie Mu*" ("By the End of Monsoon") which are composed on the theme of headhunting are analyzed to understand this practice. It can be remarked that these poems express a great sense of loss for losing their loved ones but expresses no ill-feelings. To analyzed the status and role of women in the Angami society, folk poetry on women and daughters such as "*Yavitsü-ü*", "*Sopfünuo*", "*Khrieü*", "*ThenumiaSü*" ("Young Girls"), "*TerhuomiaTei*" ("Spirits Weather") are

examined. The affinity of women with nature and their natural environment stands out and they also play the primary role of being agriculturalists. Their worth and role in the society is closely associated with nature.

The fourth chapter titled, “Oral Tradition Embedded in the Fictional Narratives of NgũgĩwaThiong’ o” gives a brief account of Ngugi, Kenya’s most renowned writer’s principles who champions his African identity and rejects everything that is to do with colonialism. He renounced his Christian faith and decided to use African language as a means to assert his ethnic identity. The memories of the displacements and oppressions faced by his people under colonial rule are vividly described in his novels. The ‘cultural impoverishment’ that the Africans in general and Kenyans in particular had experienced due to colonialism and the impact of the same on their religious beliefs and practices are major themes in his works. The Gikuyu myths, songs, proverbs, rituals, and legends become significant aspects in Ngugi’s novels as he uses them to support and enhance his themes and philosophies. His fictional narratives are Africanized as they abound in oral tradition of the Gikuyu which are elevated more so by the use of African language, ranging from simple every day tools and common terms to proverbs and songs. The fictional narratives of Ngugi from his select three novels, *A Grain of Wheat*, *The River Between*, and *Petals of Blood* are analyzed to make a critical appreciation of the traditional tribal customs, myths, rituals, songs, rites, and the position of men and women in Gikuyu society.

The fifth chapter of the thesis is titled, “Gikuyu and Angami Naga Tribe: A Comparative Study of Tradition, Change and After”. This chapter makes a comparative analysis of the oral traditions of Gikuyu and Angami culture with reference to the earlier chapters. The two tribes- Gikuyu and Angami are culturally very rich and diverse. Their traditional values and practices are elements of attraction for tourists from all parts of the world. Though these two tribes are unique in their own way, there are many similarities in their cultural values and beliefs. Some select aspects are analyzed in the chapter: both the tribes place immense respect to elders and their decisions; though there are variation in their roles, seers play significant roles in both the communities; land is valued as god gifted by both the tribes and their affinity with nature is almost spiritual; the concept of man and manliness is based on factors like courage, status, integrity, productiveness, their ability to provide for their family, physical agility, and so on; both the societies are patriarchal and the women occupied the subordinate position. Their roles and importance in the society is defined by their roles as mothers and agriculturalists. The chapter also gives a brief account of the impact of

assimilation of the European culture with the native culture as a consequence of the advent of Christianity and Western education.

The sixth chapter of the thesis is the conclusion in which a brief account of the findings and conclusions drawn from the previous chapters is given. The importance of interpreting one's own culture as an insider- within the cultural lens of the culture in concern cannot be overstated. Both the cultures underwent difficult periods in their history as a consequence of colonialism and political turbulence after, which had impacted the healthy existence of their traditions. Along with the advent of western Education and Christianity, the people had developed new identities (postcolonial hybridity) as they underwent cultural assimilation. The disintegration of their cultural practices and belief system together with the subordinate role their native language have in the present times are leading to the collapse of their indigenous way of life. The need to comprehensively document the oral tradition of such cultures is therefore a pressing matter. In addition to the conclusions drawn from the study, some limitations of the study and the scope for future research in relation to the thesis are also noted in this chapter.

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CHAPTER- 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- a. To study the elements and significance of oral tradition in the Angami Naga community.
- b. To explore the similarities of oral tradition in Gikuyu and Angami Naga culture.
- c. To analyse the impact of oral tradition in the written literature of these two communities.
- d. To examine the changes in the traditions and how oral tradition serve as a linkage between the past and the present.

1.2. HYPOTHESIS

- a. In spite of their division by great geographical distance and distinct characteristics peculiar to themselves, Gikuyu tribe of Kenya and Angami tribe of Nagaland share various cultural similarities which can be seen through their oral tradition.
- b. Oral tradition serves as a source of linkage between the past and the present.
- c. After the advent of Christianity and western education in both the communities, the denizens were initially left in a state of identity crisis as a result of assimilation.
- d. In spite of the increasing written tradition, oral tradition is still predominant and the communities still resort to oral tradition to transmit their cultural values.

1.3.METHODOLOGY

The research methods will consist of collecting, interpreting and comparing or contrasting of primary sources through close text reading. To generate appropriate and accurate data for this study, primary data in the form of personal interviews with village elders proficient in Angami- Naga oral tradition will be conducted from all the Angami sub-divisions- Northern, Southern, western and Chakhroma. Translation of Angami folk literature from Tenyidie to English will be made to be used for comparative study with select works of Ngugi.

The findings will be supported with a significant number of secondary sources in the form of critical essays, article, research papers, text and other material on Ngugi wa Thiong'o and the Angami Naga which deal specifically with the subject of oral tradition, native language, and changes in tradition.

To make the interpretations more significant and relevant, the scholar would work within the specific guidelines of Postcolonialism and Ecocriticism and touch upon Feminisms and Ecofeminism as elements of the two cited theories. For the citations, the thesis will follow the style mentioned in the 8th edition of MLA handbook.

1.4.LAYOUT OF THE THESIS

The first chapter of this thesis introduces the concepts of Comparative literature and oral tradition. The chapter also gives a brief account of the two tribes- Gikuyu tribe of Kenya and Angami tribe of Nagaland which are to be studied in the following chapters. The chapter establishes the critical theories under whose purview the study will be made.

The second chapter is titled “The Angami – Naga Oral Tradition” documents the data collected from the personal interviews of the select village elders from all the Angami sub divisions, viz.- Northern, Southern, Western, and Chakhroma. For the interviews, Medoselhou Keretsü from Kohima village, Daniel Kikhi from Viswema village, Late Tsilie Sakhrie from Khonoma village, and Kekuohetuo Angami from Urura village were approached representing the Northern, Southern, Western, and Chakhroma Angami respectively. Their proficiency in the cultural practices of the Angami tribe with special reference to the funeral rites, life after death, belief in the supernatural, festivals, songs, and the effect of introduction of Christianity and Western education are documented in the second chapter.

The third chapter of the thesis is titled, “Orality in Select compiled Literature in Tenyidie”. This chapter select pieces from compiled literature in Tenyidie are translated into English by the researcher. These select translated pieces are then analysed in detail to support the significance of oral tradition in the Angami Naga culture.

The fourth chapter titled, “Oral Tradition Embedded in the Fictional Narratives of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o” gives a brief account of Ngugi, Kenya’s most renowned writer and his principles. The fictional narratives of Ngugi from his select three novels, *A Grain of Wheat*, *The River Between*, and *Petals of Blood* will be analysed to make a critical appreciation of the traditional tribal customs, myths, rituals, songs, rites, and the idea of men and women in Gikuyu society which will be then used for comparative study with the Angami tribe.

The fifth chapter of the thesis is titled, “Gikuyu and Angami Naga Tribe: A Comparative Study of Tradition, Change and After”. This chapter makes a comparative analysis of the oral

traditions of Gikuyu and Angami culture with reference to the earlier chapters. The chapter also give a brief account of the impact of assimilation of the European culture with the native culture as a consequence of the advent of Christianity and Western education.

The sixth chapter of the thesis is the conclusion in which a brief account of the findings and conclusions drawn from the previous chapters is given. Some limitations of the study and the scope for future research in relation to the thesis are also noted in this chapter.

1.5.COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

1.5.(a). CONCEPT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

The Merriam- Webster Dictionary defines comparative literature as, “The study of the interrelationship of the literatures of two or more national cultures usually of different languages and especially of the influences of one upon the other.” Yet today, comparison is made between two or more totally disparate cultures and nations where the cultures in question may or may not have any influence upon each other. According to *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, comparative literature is “the examination and analysis of the relationships and similarities of the literatures of different peoples and nations. ...” (164). This implies that comparative literature requires the comparison of two or more languages and cultures irrespective of their geographical locations and practices. Comparative studies within modern Europe, as Hutchinson puts it, developed “within and between languages and literatures” which when examined within the geopolitical terms of the nineteenth century, can also be considered “competitive literature” because many colonies or states being subsumed within major empires, the literatures and cultures of the states became an ideal arena for comparison for those competing countries. However, comparative literature as a separate discipline developed only in the Nineteenth Century, though “comparison and analysis have been and continue to be the principal tools of literary criticism since Aristotle.” (Ray iii).

Simply put, Comparative literature, as the word suggest, is the correlative study of two or more forms of literatures. It consists of the analysis, understanding, and interpreting a text or tradition or culture by comparing it to another text or tradition or culture. No text or work can exist independent in the world literature. For that will mean insufficient for it to be understood in its entirety. Comparative studies open the door for new interpretations and meaning. Naturally, we compare one text to another text to fully understand the text in

question. Therefore, Ben Hutchinson very aptly writes in *Comparative Literature: a Very Short Introduction* that, “comparative literature is both the most natural and the most constructed of intellectual activities.” (2). There is always a tendency to compare one thing to the other to learn and understand things around us. Naturally, thus, comparative studies are very instinctive. Comparative literature not only helps one to learn more about a new tradition but also initiates one into realizing that one can view one’s tradition in a whole new different perspective. It opens the way to comprehend the manners in which cultures interact in myriad ways, and hence to develop and construe meaning as we compare, making comparative literature the most “constructed of intellectual activities”.

Comparison is an intuitive activity of the human mind. We instinctively make comparisons every day to judge the worth of something in comparison to another. And comparison has been a form of tool for analysing works of art way before comparative literature as an independent discipline was established. Comparison is made between texts and works of art to give meaning, give novel interpretations to existing meanings, or to judge a work of art. From Aristotle’s definition a genius saying that a genius can intuitively find ‘similarity in dissimilars’, (Hutchinson 10) and as Eliot rightly puts comparison and analyses are chief tools of a critic, they have been important tools for criticism in all literary eras. Similarly, in comparative literature, a comparatist establishes novel ways to show connections between two or more texts and cultures. However, comparative literature does not confine itself to the analysis of the similarities between two works or culture. Though many have the notion that only similarities between two or more cultures or texts are studied, it goes beyond similarities. Hutchinson records the assertion made by the Belgian critic Paul de Man that literature in the modern era makes its own “allegories of reading” and that comparative literature develops its own models on interpreting texts and cultures between languages and nations. That interpretation for the time being is categorised into two classifications: one for those that indicates similarities between the two texts or cultures, and the other signifies those that indicates the differences between the texts or cultures in comparison. Therefore, both comparing and contrasting is done in interpreting and analysing the texts or cultures under comparative studies in modern literature.

In fact, postmodernism give more importance to the differences than the similarities. Though parallels between languages, texts and cultures are analysed and interpreted in comparative

studies, the differences in the parallels are given due importance. Darío Villanueva in his article titled “Possibilities and Limits of Comparative Literature Today” compiled in the book, *Companion to Comparative Literature, World Literatures, and Comparative Cultural Studies* writes that:

A basic principle of the new paradigm is that whenever the same or a similar phenomenon appears in two separate literatures or in one literature and in another type of artistic expression, the comparative approach must include a fundamental theoretical element, that is to say, a possible or hypothetical point of departure. (Tötösy and Mukherjee 49)

1.5.(b).SCOPE OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Comparative literature started to acquire intellectual attention mostly in Europe and in the United States in the nineteenth century making it Eurocentric in its approach, which arguably is the greatest flaw of comparative literature. However, in the twentieth century, comparative literature has found its presence again with the increased interest in multiculturalism, multilingual and cross-cultural studies and intertextuality. In *Companion to Comparative Literature, World Literatures, and Comparative Cultural Studies*, Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Louise O. Vasvári writes:

Perhaps against the said shortfalls of comparative literature- i.e., Eurocentrism, the loss of its locus of literary and culture theory, and its insistence on the nation-centric approach- the concept of world literature has gained renewed interest and since the 1980s but in particular since the 1990s, a good number of books and collected volumes have been published with the approach, albeit mostly in English. (6)

Comparative literature does not aim to compare texts and cultures to establish a position of superiority or inferiority between the two, nor does it aim at showing the influence of one text or culture upon the other. It aims to discover and construct new interpretations and links between two or more texts and cultures irrespective of their origin, era, or geographical distance. Comparative literature moves beyond a single nation, mono-lingualism, and mono- culture. The world literature with all its myriad languages, cultures, literatures, themes, myths, and all its differences and unique traits consists of innumerable instances where two or more works of art explore similar ideas, concepts or universal truths irrespective of the eras and cultural backgrounds, most probably with

points of dissimilarities. As such, comparative studies have opened up the sphere for researchers to explore wide range of literatures, cultures and languages.

Professor Bisnhu Charan Dash in the abstract of his paper presented in an international conference titled “Revisiting Comparative Literature: Its Theory and Praxis in the 21st Century” records:

Whereas the French school of comparative literature emphasized the discovery of commonalities and differences, ‘influence and perception’, the American School headed by H.H. Remak and Rene Wellek interrogate the French method and focus on interdisciplinary approach thereby liberating comparative literature from the narrow confines of one particular country or area of study. (3)

According to Wellek, a comparatist should take into account the history, politics, culture, philosophy, belief, etc., for interpretation of texts unlike the Neo-critics belief in the autonomy of texts.

The scope of comparative literature is not limited to the comparison of the texts and culture of one single nation but the comparison of texts and cultures of the world. It is thus global and can be done from any chosen texts in the world literature. It is interdisciplinary in its approach providing comparatists the platform to bring out new meanings by comparing multiple texts and cultures, establish links and juxtapositions, and interpret an existing idea in a totally novel way through comparison. It covers translation studies, cultural studies, Postcolonialism, literary theory, world literature because it draws from all these disciplines and more. (Hutchinson 14). The aim and scope of comparative literature can be summed up in the lines of Bijay Kumar Das quoted from *Comparative Literature* as:

Comparative Literature analyses the similarities and dissimilarities and parallels between two literatures. It further studies themes, modes, conventions and the use of folk tales, myths in two different literatures or even more. (32)

1.5.(c). DEVELOPMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

The term ‘comparative literature’ was first used by Matthew Arnold in 1848 while translating Ampère’s use of ‘*histoire comparative*’. Later in 1886, Hutcheson Macauley Posnett’s *Comparative Literature* became the first work on comparative literature to be written in English which had a tremendous impact in the field and was translated into

different languages which gave more impetus to comparative method and studies. What Posnett did was used the principles of Spencerian evolution while interpreting the progress of literature and hence considered literature as basically a “social phenomenon influenced by environmental factors, amenable to classification, and governed by large processes and general laws rather than the product of individual genius.” (Tötösy and Mukherjee 194). The French scholars follow the term ‘*littérature comparée*’ as used by Villemain in 1829 and many argues that comparative literature deals with the history of international relationships amongst literatures and they try to confine comparative literature within boundaries. While the Germans talk of ‘*vergleichende schichte*’ and critics goes for thematics and is dependent on the unwavering and irrational conviction that one’s own nation, beliefs, customs, and practices are most significant. They are convinced that the traditional stories, beliefs, and customs should be excluded comparative studies. In the words of René Wellek and Austin Warren, neither of the deviating adjectives is informative because comparison is used as a tool for all criticism and sciences but do not delineate the specific methods and stages of literary study sufficiently.

The term comparative literature is hard to define and is inconsistent in its methods and usage. As such, different scholars and critics have used comparative literature through different approaches; this led to the Eurocentric nature of comparative literature in the early parts of its existence because of the dominance of European powers and its obvious diverse cultural contacts. René Wellek, a pioneer and champion of comparative literature contends that comparative literature transcends the boundaries of language, ethics, and politics and aims at studying the different genres of literature from a wider international perspective and outlook. It hints that there is an inherent unity in all the creative literary products and experiences. Comparative literature has developed into a separate discipline encompassing the narrow dictates of nationalism, monolingual and mono-cultural aspects of study and analysis. In his work, *Discrimination: Further Concept of Criticism*, René Wellek has tried to define the evolution of comparative literature in brief as:

. . . the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of relationship between literature on the one hand and the other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the art, philosophy, history, the social science, the science, religion etc. on the other hand.” (18).

Comparative literature in India was slow to develop as a discipline. It was in 1956 that a department of comparative literature was set up in Jadavpur University of Calcutta making it the pioneer university with comparative curriculum. Following suit, many universities in India have introduced departments of comparative literature and many introduced comparative literature in their course for Masters level too. Some instances are: Delhi University has an M.Phil programme in Comparative Indian literature, Madhurai University, instead of a separate English department has an English and Comparative Literature Department, and Nagaland University makes comparative literature an important aspect when it comes to research areas- whether in the M.Phil or Ph.D level. India being a multicultural and multilingual nation promotes double approach to comparative literature- where a scholar can make a comparative study of Indian literature or culture in an international platform or make a comparative study between two or more regional texts or cultures within the nation.

There is not any fixed and clear cut method of approaching comparative studies because it is under constant debates and continuously developing. One thing however is evident- the objectives and aims of comparative literature are given much importance. Also comparative literature does not concern itself only with comparison but with history of literature, literary theories and criticism. It deals with intertextuality and is interdisciplinary. Comparative literature has no definite dividing boundaries with cultural studies and also covers oral literature. In the words of Wellek and Warren, comparative literature first means the study of oral literature, especially ‘folk-tale themes and their migration’ and the study of the oral literature as an ‘integral part of literary scholarship’ as oral literature and written literature continuously interacts. (Wellek and Warren 46,47)

Indian scholars have come to understand the significance of comparative literature as a discipline more because it encompasses narrow concept of provinciality and nationality, providing the opportunity for scholars to promote multiculturalism and celebrate the diverse cultural and lingual characteristic of India both within the nation and internationally. For a work in comparative literature to be considered sound and constructive, the comparatist or scholar should be free of all pre-conceived judgements about a text or culture whether positive or negative and make critical analysis of the cultures or texts in question in a non-prejudiced manner with an open mind. A comparatist should also take into consideration the history, politics, culture, philosophy,

theory, etc., while making comparative studies. And most importantly as Professor Bisnahu Charan Dash puts it, “Illumination, new meaning and Juxtaposition should come out of comparative studies.”

1.6.ORAL TRADITION

1.6.(a). ORAL HISTORY

Rebecca Sharpless in her essay “The History of Oral History” traces the first recorded accounts using personal interviews in collecting information for the purpose. Some instances are- in the fifth century BCE, Herodotus recorded his narrative on the Persian Wars; Thucydides grilled his witnesses with questions in the most comprehensive manner possible about the Peloponnesian war, the Emperor of the Zhou dynasty of China of 1122-256 BCE designated scribes to document the proverbs and expressions of the people for the advantage and assistance of the historians of the court (Charlton et.al. 19). The oral history of the Africans can be traced back to the ‘griots’ who are the record keepers of the people and also verbal artists who tell stories, sing songs of praise, recite poems and educate their audiences with historical accounts and genealogies.

Though oral traditions remain significantly vital in transmitting histories and traditional wisdom, it came under disapproval and scrutiny during the late nineteenth century with its scientific campaign and progress which is characteristic of the era. This preconceived unfavourable attitude towards oral histories continued for over fifty years. Many historians considered history as simply showing what, when and how things really were through scientific approach. Yet historians like Hubert Howe Bancroft were never convinced that oral histories of the people do not hold validity. This was because he found that without the “living memories of the participants in the development of California and the West”, his massive collection of books, articles, documents, maps, etc, were found wanting and incomplete. By early 1860s, Bancroft assigned some people to conduct personal interviews with the different group of people living in the western part of the U.S. and documented their memoirs. This gave birth to the volumes of “Dictations” which consisted of a variety of collection from a “few pages to a full five-volume memoir.” Subsequently Bancroft gave his entire accumulate collection to the University of California at Berkeley. The library of the university bears his name because the very heart of the library consists of the collections entrusted to it by Bancroft. (Charlton et.al. 20)

The value and validity of oral history was revived in the twentieth century. Some instances are: the Federal Writers' Project was born as the democratic desires to depict the multicultural nature of America. Since then, W.T. Couch of the University of Carolina Press resolved to take the Federal Writers' Project to the next level by conducting a programme of wide and extensive personal interviews with over ten thousand ordinary Americans and most of the collected data were given to the Library of Congress. From the collected pieces of interviews, a number of interviews were published in 1939 by Couch titled as *These Are Our Lives* with the intention to portray an unprejudiced and just image of the functioning and design of the society. The historians of the American military comprehensively employed oral history to acquire contemporary narratives of World War II. Many historians travelled around Europe gathering narratives directly from combatants about their recent battlefield experiences. Oral history also aided Women's movement during the women suffrage movement and also played a vital role in gay and lesbian studies that developed in U.S. academy as the main tool for collecting data for the gay and lesbian movement. With the progress in technology like audio and video recording equipment and the later internet and e-mail facilities, the documentation and exchange of accounts of oral histories rapidly increased and improved. By the wake of the twenty-first century, importance was given to the memory of the society and how society gives meaning to a thing by remembering the experiences. Using oral history and narratives in one's writings has continued to grow and develop immensely and publications on oral history and methodology continue to make advancements remarkably.

1.6.(b). ORAL TRADITION- MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE

Oral tradition, used synonymously with Orality, is still the most extensive and prevalent mode of human communications. However, oral tradition is significantly more than 'just talking', because oral tradition connotes a dynamic and immensely varied oral-aural medium for expanding, accumulating, and transmitting knowledge, art, ideas, beliefs, and history of a particular group or society. Oral traditions are messages which take the form of songs, folktales, ballads, proverbs, myths, legends, etc., which are received, preserved, and transmitted orally across generations. Before the invention of writing, oral tradition served as the sole means of communication available for forming and maintaining

societies and their institutions. Orality has been an important method of self-understanding, creative relationships, and establishing equilibrium between body, soul, and environment. Through oral tradition, communities have been able to pass down values, attitudes, knowledge, and modes of practice for generations.

The *Britannica Ready Reference Encyclopedia* defines oral tradition as:

Cultural information passed on from one generation to the next by storytellers. The forms of oral tradition include *POETRY* (often chanted or sung), folktales or *PROVERBS* as well as magical spells, religious instructions, and recollections of the past. Music and rhyme commonly serve as both entertainment and aids to memory. Epic poems concerning the destiny of a society or summarizing its myths often begin as oral tradition and are later written down. In oral cultures, oral tradition is the only means of communicating knowledge. The prevalence of radio, television, and newspapers in Western culture has led to the decline of oral tradition, though it survives among old people and some minority groups as well as among children, whose games, counting rhymes, and songs are transmitted orally from generation to generation. (169, 170)

This is true of all indigenous communities because, in an age when written words and technologies reign supreme, our oral tradition has further hastened to the process of deterioration and finds itself marginalized, also due to the fact that we no longer put as much emphasis to our indigenous culture and practices on one hand, and on the other hand, due to “genuine memory lapse” as Birendranath Datta points out in the Foreword of Temsula Ao’s *The Ao- Naga Oral Tradition*. (xvi) Thus, the task of recreating our tradition is both a challenge and a necessity. In this regard, we can safely argue that, one redeeming hope that we have not altogether abandoned the essence of who we are, even as we evolve with the dynamics of a modern, technological and ‘written’ world around us is, the fact that many writers have made it a point to incorporate their oral tradition in their writings to tell their rich stories and assert their unique identity. The oral tradition is the soul and beginning of every society’s written literature. To ensure the complete understanding of a culture it is absolutely necessary to study the literature of that community. Now it is arguably true for all communities that their written literature is a product of their oral literature because oral literature came before the invention of writing. It is also true for many communities that the great majority of their literature is in its oral

form. Consequently hence, the study of the oral literature of a community is prerequisite for understanding and appreciating the way of life of that community.

1.6.(c). ORALITY AND THE SOCIETY- AFRICA AND NAGALAND

Every society's history was in oral form before the invention of writing. The art of passing down history and way of life of a society from generation to generation has contributed to the preservation and progress of the society. In the African and the Naga society, oral tradition is the principal agency in conveying culture, disseminating traditional knowledge, and history across generations, which shaped and governed the citizens in all aspects of their lives- socially, economically, politically, spiritually, and culturally. Oral tradition is amalgamated to their way of life. For centuries, both the African and the Naga people relied solely upon oral tradition to convey and preserve their religious practices, ethics and values, folktales, legends, customs, indigenous knowledge, their history, and even to make sense of their world and phenomena. Without doubt, one can say that the entirety of their living is shaped by their oral tradition which has successfully lived a rich cultural life way before the colonial powers introduced literacy in their worlds. In the words of Liz Gunner:

In this sense, orality needs to be seen not simply as “the absence of literacy” but as something self-constitutive, *sui generis*. The accepting of this proposition has consequences for an understanding of world culture: namely, it is neither possible nor accurate to take one model that valorizes the written word as the blueprint for how the human race has developed. (Olaniyan and Quason 67).

Nagaland and Africa can be described as places of immense reservoir of orality, which is still in existent- acting as the vehicle and transmitter for progressive community living, social customs, beliefs, and for the preservation, continuation, and regeneration of the society and its social practices and values. The significance of oral tradition in traditional societies, especially in Africa has been recorded by Birendranath Datta in his Foreword to Temsula Ao's book, *The Ao- Naga Oral Tradition* as:

The importance of oral tradition has come to be widely recognised in the context of traditional- oriented communities of the non- Western world, for whom the search for identity in the face of waves of change has become an extremely vital issue. In the newly emerging nationalities in Africa in particular, oral tradition has proved to be not

only of great academic significance but also of immense practical value in the nation-building process. (xiv)

This is an apt observation as we see the significance of their oral tradition in their written literature as it is replete with their cultural practices, beliefs, proverbs, and other folk elements. Antonia C. Kalu records in his introduction to *The Rienner Anthology of African Literature*:

. . . recognizing the social and political import of the oral traditions and colonizers' efforts to denigrate African cultures and traditions, contemporary writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Flora Nwapa, Bessie Head, Ngugi wa Thiong'o , and others began to include proverbs and the roles and functions of local traditions and their customs in their works. (4)

In African society, history of their ancestors and the society they lived in was usually remembered by people and kept alive by word of mouth- their legacies, culture, and traditions were passed down through oral tradition. For centuries, African people depended upon oral tradition to teach the listeners important traditional values and morals pertaining to how to live. It delivers explanations to the mysteries of the universe and the meaning of life on earth. Their beliefs and religious practices, rites and rituals were delivered through oral tradition. African oral narratives are employed to "entertain, inform, and teach" the entire society. These oral forms are inclusive of all areas of life because oral narrative is substantial and central in African peoples' way of life. They are used to "explore the universe, life, death, the value of kindness, courage, love, honesty, the place of justice in society, and other areas that have interested humanity for millennia." (Kalu 4)

The Nagas have a vibrant oral tradition which is in many ways the source of people's literature, social customs, religion, and their collective history. Oral tradition plays a vital role in the lives of the Naga people, their very history, their religion and entire social life is shaped by their oral tradition. In fact, the Naga society is etched with folktales, myths, legends, and proverbs. Folklores and myths occupy a significant position in the cultural lives of its people. Before the coming of Christianity and Western education, the Naga tribes relied solely upon oral tradition to transmit their history, practice, myths, beliefs, and traditional knowledge. Therefore the continuation of the tradition had somehow to be ensured. In order to do this, the institution of the "Morung" or young men's house or male dormitory was established. This bachelor's hall is called *Arju* in Ao and *Kichōki* in Angami language

(Tenyidie). The “Morung” is significant in the community life of the Naga tribes because it is imperative for young males to be acquainted with their tradition, customary laws, warfare, their history, and to train themselves to inherit their indigenous knowledge and age-old customs so that they can transmit it to the younger generation of males to preserve their unique identity and wisdoms. The womenfolk also taught the young girls in the community to learn the crafts and skills of farming, cultivation, weaving, cooking, and all sorts of household activities, social skills, and age-old traditions and wisdom to equip them for effective contribution in the society. Hence female dormitories were established in many communities for the same reason.

Oral tradition of a community covers the totality of the people’s way of life. Oral tradition is not limited to the folk-tales and myths of a society. Oral tradition served as the sole means for education of the members of the community before the advent of writing and still serves as an important aspect of education for the younger generation in both the African and Naga society. This is because these two communities give great merit to oral narratives and performance for the assertion, preservation, and transmission of their culture and traditional way of life. Oral tradition encompasses the political institution in a society- the functioning of the leaders, the law and also maintaining order and justice. Naturally, orality “tends to simplify the structure of leadership in society” and so, due to its social and political function in the society, “oral texts can only be understood and interpreted within their wider political and social contexts.” (Gikandi 417).

Needless to say, it is thus imperative to study the oral literature of a community to understand and appreciate the diverse experiences, rich history, philosophy, and aesthetics of the community. Studying the oral literature is also the need of the hour because many communities have their cultural practices, belief systems, history, folklores, and traditional knowledge on the verge of being misrepresented, and also extinction for many contributing factors such as colonialism, modernism, advent of western education, memory lapse, or lack of interest and awareness on the part of the younger generation. Therefore, researches made on the oral tradition of such communities can positively rebuild the values and traditional heritage of the communities because oral literature serves as the receptacle of our rich and vibrant cultural history and inheritance. That itself is a testimony that oral literature requires and deserves a serious study from researchers globally.

1.7. LITERARY THEORIES

1.7.(a) POSTCOLONIALISM

Postcolonialism is the term given to the study which deals with the impact and consequences of colonialism on cultures and societies. It is the study that gives focus to the effects of imperialism of the European countries on the third world cultures- on the impact of colonization in the cultural practices of the colonies, the authority and exploitation of the imperialists upon the colonies: the people, their culture, their land, their rights, and their resources. Postcolonial studies as a literary activity is concerned with the critical study of the literature, discourse, history, politics, and culture of the third world countries like Africa, Asia, the Caribbean islands, and South America which were under European imperial powers. But postcolonial studies are not confined to the mentioned nations alone. The scope of postcolonial studies encompasses the Third World countries and includes the analyses of the literature, culture, and discourse of countries like Australia, Canada, and New Zealand which have emerged from colonial control before the Third World countries.

The term Postcolonialism has no definite definition and has given rise to many arguments regarding its problematic description. The debates based on the prefix 'post' in the term 'postcolonial' sparked different interpretations among the critics on whether the term should be taken literally or chronologically- whether it should refer to the point in time and year when the people under the colonizers attained their independence or whether the term should be interpreted in a more comprehensive sense alluding to something which challenge, profess, and demonstrate against colonialism, domination, and exploitation. Many ensuing arguments followed the term and the scope of Postcolonialism because it is obscure and inconclusive. Yet, in spite of the debates, many commentators have conceded that the term "raises fewer hackles than do terms which contain words such as 'imperialism' or 'Third World', because it is more potentially all-embracing than are terms such as 'Commonwealth literature', and because it carries with it no fixed ideological baggage as does ORIENTALISM." (Hawthorn 269). Despite the publication of a large number of critical analyses of culture with a variety of approach, viewpoint and differences in theme and idea branding them as postcolonial, all have some common characteristics which are in regard to experiences dealing with alienation, derogation, exploitation, opposition against colonial powers. Thus, the term 'Postcolonialism' pervades a theory in the scientific sense and covers vast disciplines and activities like social justice, feminism, history, politics, culture, ecology, and literature in relation to colonial confrontation between the west and the non-west.

Robert J.C. Young in his invaluable work, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short introduction* sums up the concept of Postcolonialism in very simple language neither limiting it to a particular area of study nor any scientific explanation of it in the sense of a theory but as a “coherently elaborated set of principles”. He writes:

It comprises instead a related set of perspectives, which are juxtaposed against one another, on occasion contradictorily. It involves issues that are often the preoccupation of other disciplines and activities particularly to do with the position of women, of development, of ecology, of social justice, of socialism in its broadest sense. Above all, Postcolonialism seeks to intervene, to force its alternative knowledges into the power structures of the west as well as the non-west. It seeks to change the way people think, the way they behave, to produce a more just and equitable relation between the different peoples of the world. (6, 7)

THE EVOLUTION OF POSTCOLONIALISM

The seed of the beginning of postcolonial criticism is attributed to Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* which was published in French in 1961. The work laid the foundation to postcolonial resistance in the African nation occupied by the imperial powers. Fanon, being a psychiatrist started with the analysis of the psychological impact of “colonial domination and disempowerment (as published in *Black Skin, White Masks*.)” in his work in Algeria (Waugh 346). Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory* puts forward the ideas of Fanon that the foremost step the colonized people can do is to find a way to articulate their identity and rights and reclaim their own history which have been disregarded and reduced to a secondary place by considering it as pre-civilized and thus inferior. “If the first step towards a postcolonial perspective is to reclaim one’s own past, then the second is to begin to erode the colonialist ideology by which that past had been devalued.” (Barry 12)

A prominent benchmark to postcolonial studies was Edward Said’s *Orientalism* published in 1978. Said, a Palestinian-American scholar discussed the issues of the stereotypical discourse of the East as portrayed by the West. The book is considered as the foundation of Postcolonialism which marks the beginning of postcolonial studies in its proper sense. Said’s *Orientalism* is the major breakthrough in determining the characteristics of postcolonial criticism. The work brings to light the ‘Eurocentric universalism’ which takes for granted the pre-eminence and superiority of everything that is “occidental” and considers the East or “oriental” as the ‘other’ who is inferior and exotic. The East were portrayed and considered

as unacknowledged group of people whose actions are determined by raw human emotions rather than individuals who are capable of making conscious personal choices and decisions. Furthermore projects the East with characteristics and aspects of human nature which they themselves do not want to accept or own as inherent human nature.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, an Indian-born U.S.A based critic is one of the most notable personalities in postcolonial studies and whose name emerges at forefront in postcolonial feminism. Gayatri Spivak applies the deconstructive concepts of ‘difference’ as proposed by Jacques Derrida to the Indian colonial context which fractionalize the colonized and the different groups of the oppressed like the tribals’, untouchables, and such others and within all these oppressed groups-women. In her works, the question of the ‘subaltern’ which is a word to refer to a person of inferior status takes the centre stage. In her famous essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988), Spivak sheds light on the contradictory and paradoxical fact that even if the intention of retrieving the voices of the oppressed and silenced group is sympathetic, it will in practice simply project Eurocentric universalism in the process and thus ironically further silence the colonized group. This is because the colonized have their identities and history analyzed and written for them by the privileged. She also exposes the suppression of the women as subalterns to both patriarchy and imperialism.

The field of postcolonial studies is ever evolving and thus hard to assign definitive characteristics and set methodology. Yet, from all the diverse forms of interpretations and methods of postcolonial criticism, several basic features and repetitive concerns that Peter Barry in his *Beginning Theory* establishes will be summed up in the following points:

- The first characteristic of Postcolonialism identified is recognizing the portrayal of the East or the non- Europeans as exotic, inferior, immoral, subaltern, and as the ‘Other’. Thus in their works, postcolonial writers construct and rekindle the image of their own nations as they were in the pre-colonial era and rejects the image of their nations according to the European standards and stereotypes.
- The second concern is with the language. The rejection of what M.H. Abrams call the “master-narrative of Western imperialism” by the ‘other’ or the ‘subaltern’ because the language is considered tarnished by imperialists’ ideals and stereotypes and thus to write in it would mean acceptance and submission into Eurocentric structures.
- This leads us to the term ‘Hybridity’ which was first theorized comprehensively by Homi Bhabha, a prominent postcolonial critic. Hybridity is a significant concept in

postcolonial studies which refers to the integration of cultural elements of the colonizers and the colonized ‘others’ which necessarily is not an amicable blend and which may also lead to unstable and disputable cultural identity. The stress on double identity or hybridity is the third characteristic feature of Postcolonialism.

- The three phases identified by Barry that the postcolonial literatures undergoes are: the ‘Adopt’ stage where the writer starts by fully adopting the European models of writing (mostly fiction) without reservations or doubt or challenging its Eurocentric control and influence assuming that it has ‘universal validity’. The second phase called the ‘Adapt’ phase is where the writer adapt the European model of writing into colonial subject matters and thus owning part of control in the genre. The final phase is called the ‘Adept’ phase where the writers assert a form of cultural autonomy and thus remodel the European models to suit and conform to their own requirements. The final stage is hence free from the control and domination of the so called universal Western form of writing-both in form and matter. These three phases has been used particularly in the African context with African fictionists and the Africanisation of fiction. The fourth characteristic of postcolonial criticism is thus the emphasis on “cross-cultural” interactions.

Another major feature of postcolonial criticism is to make alterations in the literary canon by broadening and enhancing it to accommodate the writers from the non-European nations which is effectively being made in some countries. This has been clearly established by M.H. Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* as:

A major element in the postcolonial agenda is to disestablish Eurocentric norms of literary and artistic values, and to expand the literary *canon* to include colonial and postcolonial writers. In the United States and Britain, there is an increasingly successful movement to include, in the standard academic curricula, the brilliant and innovative novels, poems, and plays by such postcolonial writers in the English language as the Africans Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, the Caribbean islanders V.S. Naipaul and Derek Walcott, and the authors from the Indian subcontinent G.V. Desani and Salman Rushdie. (237)

Since postcolonial criticism do not have a definitive methodology, postcolonial critics use different concepts to interpret and give meaning as the field of postcolonial studies cannot be circumscribed in a single set of scientific and systematic analysis. It is not as simple as

the distinction between black and white and so cannot be examined under just one isolated concept. But generally, postcolonial critics renounce the so-called universalism of the canonical literature and further propose the inclusion of the writers of the colonial and postcolonial literature in the literary canon. They analyze the depiction of the indigenous people and cultures and critiques the representation of the non- Europeans and their cultures as inferior or as the 'other' and stereotyping cultures. They promote cultural differences and diversity and study the portrayal and handling of the diversities in texts. The hybridity of cultures- be it social, political, religious or linguistic is examined through local or oral traditions and through colonial school system. Many critics also positively perceive the concept of otherness, diversity, and marginality because they interpret them in terms of having the capacity to usher in changes.

The major figures associated with the postcolonial theory are Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Salman Rushdie, Jamaica Kincaid, and Buchi Emecheta.

1.7.(b) ECOCRITICISM

Man and his relationship with the environment has been an important subject matter in literary field throughout the literary history of humankind. Literature has been a perfect medium for mirroring humanity and the environment. Be it the letters of the first American pioneering fathers about finding a new land or the plays of Shakespeare or Hardy's portrayal of the Wessex or Romantic Movement or the American transcendentalists or any literary genre, the affinity between man and his environment is evident. In many works of art we find Nature playing an important role as a major theme or in some, acts as a background for setting the mood for the situations. But one thing is evident- nature, society, and literature have been closely associated even before the development of Ecocriticism as a formal theory in the literary world.

Ecocriticism, also often referred to as 'green criticism', is a form of literary criticism which is rooted in the field of ecology, natural history, and environmental studies and concentrates on how human beings interact with nature and the representation of the people toward nature in literature. Ecocriticism may thus be either about a text with nature as its main theme or subject and or analysis of the representation of nature from an environmental point of view in any given text. The ideologies, beliefs, and attitude of a group of people and culture towards their environment are examined and critiques are

made for their actions and consequences towards the environment- whether positive or negative. Though nature, humanity, and literature have been closely associated down the ages, Ecocriticism surprisingly developed very late as a literary theory. Yet, with the pressing global ecological crises, Ecocriticism has been currently recognized as one of the central theories employed by scholars and researchers in studying and analyzing texts to understand and unearth new interpretations to texts, explore human actions and their consequences on the environment, study both explicit and implicit ideologies and attitude of cultures towards nature, and such others. With the interdisciplinary characteristic of Ecocriticism and its diverse methodologies accommodating scholars with different approaches to analyzing texts, the field of Ecocriticism is ever evolving and thus has a wide scope in positively contributing towards global ecological concerns.

DEVELOPMENT OF ECOCRITICISM

The term ‘ecocriticism’ was potentially first used by the U.S. critic William Rueckert, who in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” (1978) documented that ecocriticism involves the use of the concepts of ecology in analysing literature. But literary criticism based on the environmentalists’ perspective was introduced only in the 1980s with Cheryll Glotfelty, a distinctive theorist in ecocriticism recommended to term all “ecologically informed literary criticism as ecocriticism” in 1989. *The American Nature Writing Newsletter* was introduced by Alicia Nitecki in 1989 and made available her essays, book reviews, materials used in the classroom and in connection to writings made on nature and environment. The University of Nevada, Reno initiated the first scholastic sessions and conferences on Literature and the environment, and in 1991, a notable session on the topic, “Ecocriticism: The Greening of Literary Studies” was organized by Harold Fromm, a celebrated figure in the development of Ecocriticism. Cheryll Glotfelty co-edited the book *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* with Harold Fromm in 1996 which became a milestone for ecocriticism. However, “of the radical movements that came to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s, environmentalism has been the slowest to develop a school of criticism in the academic humanities.” And it was only at the beginning of the 1990s that ecocriticism as a literary theory came to be formally recognized as a movement. (Waugh 530)

In 1992, some scholars founded the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) at a meeting of the US Western Literature Association which is

considered today as the key association for ecocritics globally. The ASLE is the association that publishes the notable journal *ISLE- Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* for works with nature- oriented concerns and themes. Initially, ecocriticism was concentrated on American nature writings because its foundation was laid in the US. But the theory was also perpetuated by feminist theory and the study of Romantic literature. In Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray's *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, we find instances of some works which reflects the field of ecocriticism and have significantly impelled the theory we know today. They write:

Ecocritical works from the 1970s and early 1980s that focused on representations of the land, wilderness, and women's relationship to nature, however, ultimately had a greater impact on contemporary ecocriticism than explicitly scientific applications. Influential examples include Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (1975) and *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860* (1984), both of which discuss representations of land in American culture; . . . and Roderick Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1982), which traces the concept of wilderness throughout American intellectual and cultural history. (126)

Ecocriticism do not have a distinctive marked methodology or theoretical perspective. It has only a common idea or reference. Therefore, ecocriticism can be based on diverse concepts:

- **The environmental justice movement-** it is an umbrella term used to refer to the endeavours of the impoverished and vulnerable communities to protect their environment from the adverse effects of the things that would destroy their air, water, and land. It also challenges the apathy of the government and corporations towards the plight of the poor. Thus, ecocritics in order to retort the injustice addresses the "questions of class, race, gender, and colonialism into the Ecocritical evaluation of texts and ideas, challenging versions of environmentalism that seem exclusively preoccupied with preservation of wild nature and ignore the aspirations of the poor." (Waugh 531)
- **Ecocriticism and poststructuralism, postmodernism, Marxism, and Postcolonialism** – Sue Ellen Campbell in her essay "The Land and Language of Desire: Where Deep Ecology and Post-Structuralism Meet" (1989) delineate the

rooted conflict between “ecocritics’ concern with the material effects of the relationship between language and the natural environment and poststructuralist views on how language mediates and even creates all of our experiences” (Murfin and Ray 127). Therefore ecocritics are anxious of the poststructuralist accentuation on nature as a cultural and ideological make up. Yet, one cannot deny the shared concerns of two- the interface of nature, humanity, and technology.

Many ecocritics show their concern on the over- emphasis of the postmodernists in examination and analysis of language and their indifference towards the physical world.

Jonathan Bate, a British critic voices his view against Marxist and New Historicist criticism in regard to ecocriticism because Marxism is considered as a theory in opposition to environmental ideals. Marxism firmly accounts nature to be a hindrance to technological progress. However many eco- socialists contends the claim saying that Marx considered nature as a state of quality of life from which humanity could be isolated and deprived.

Postcolonialism and ecocriticism can be applied to many texts which deal with the questions of the roots of the natives or feeling of being rootless, the displacement, and migratory issues in literary texts and beyond.

- **Green movement or Deep ecology-** Deep Ecology is an extreme form of environmentalism, first perceived and designed by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in his work *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle* in 1989. Deep Ecologists believe and advocates the autonomy of nature and rejects the value judgement of nature based on its value, interest, and worth to human beings. Deep Ecologists promotes a form of spiritual call upon man by making significant alterations in the way we view nature and rigorous changes in our attitude and treatment towards nature- including eating habits. Thus, it is not satisfied by mere “technological and managerial solutions” since they are just another kind of human mastery over nature.
- **Anthropocentrism and ecocentrism-** anthropocentrism is the ideology of fundamentally perceiving nature according to the interests of human beings. It is the ideology that Arne Naess blames for the global environmental crises. It is man-centred approach which keeps humanity at the ‘centre’ of everything and thus regarding non-human things as resources meant for human consumption.

On the contrary, Ecocentrism stands for the ‘attempts’ to place the ecosystem at the centre and not humanity. It attempts as far as possible to make ecosystem or

environment the most important and not subservient to man. Thus, "Landscape in a novel, for example, should not function merely as setting, background, or symbol." (Waugh 537)

- **Ecofeminism-** Ecofeminism as the word suggest is the application of feminist approach to ecocriticism. Ecofeminism explores the affinity between nature and women or the 'feminine' gender and interprets texts in terms of oppression of nature and the female in terms of 'androcentrism' viewpoint and patriarchal culture. According to ecocritics, both nature and women are exploited and oppressed by the cultures constructed by the human 'males' and hence make nature and 'female' vulnerable. Nature is also associated with femininity by calling it 'mother nature' and many ecofeminists contends that the affiliation between the two terms should be seen as a source of empowerment.

Today, the world is confronted with global environmental crises for which the actions of humanity is responsible and is thus bearing the brunt. Environmental degradation that we are facing each day needs much more attention from us. Awareness should be created and solutions should be formulated, but more importantly, we need to change our perspective towards nature and the consequences of our exploitation of nature. For this purpose, environmentalism should be given more importance. And with global environmental crises rapidly increasing threatening the very existence of the world at a formidable rate, returning to our roots during a time when we had reverence for nature is a pressing matter which needs to be explored and promoted. This study aims at exploring and analyzing the relationship and attitude of the Angami Nagas and Gikuyu culture of Africa with nature and the influence of nature in their literature. With the belief that literature has a wide scope in creating awareness, the two cultures will be studied within the concepts of ecocriticism.

BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF ECOCRITICISM IN ANGAMI AND GIKUYU LITERATURE

In the Angami culture, nature is sacrosanct. There is so much awe and reverence for nature. They lived in harmony with nature, learning from nature, and with a deep sense for preservation of nature because they see nature as their source of providence. This can be seen from their belief systems and gennas which are majorly connected to nature and to the whole community in relation to their agricultural lives. Much of their literature mentions nature in one form or the other. In fact, comparisons are made between the aspects of a

person and nature in many folk songs and poetry. Yet with the coming of Christianity, modernity and literacy, the Angami culture has undergone drastic changes. With that, their reverence for nature collapsed overtime until lately when the pressing global environmental crisis reached the region. Today, the Angami cultures, like many other communities in the world, is putting some effort in going back to nature and revive the former ecological glories and respect that their ancestors had for nature.

The Angami oral tradition is etched with myths, folklores, and fables which are often replete with the mysteries of nature. Their rich mountains, streams, fields, and flora and fauna are integral part of their literature. Their oral and written literature is filled with the culture's values- whether conscious or unconscious of environmentalism or ecological awareness. As such, when their revered mother nature and their homeland were desecrated with war, environmentally aware writers like Easterine Kire wrote with "her vision of the past with the current realities." (Chandra and Das 62). But not much is known about the literature from the Angami community that has adopted ecocriticism as its main concern though nature is visibly an important theme. Therefore, the study aims to examine and analyze the Angami literature and interpret them with ecocriticism as a major approach.

Similarly, Africans consider nature as a vital component of their traditional lives. This is reflected in their writings- the landscape, their religion, their spiritual connection with their land, and so on. Their literature also reflects the environmental degradation and land issues with the coming of colonialism. But ecocriticism as a literary theory had little progress with the African literary and cultural critics initially because they considered it as just another "hegemonic discourse from the metropolitan West" (Olaniyan and Quayson 684). And so, though nature was a significant aspect in their literature, many African writers and critics rejected the theory which would give much insight into the global ecological concerns and crisis.

The Kenyan literary field was also slow in accepting ecocriticism though the most prolific writer from Kenya, Ngugi wa Thiong'o made land issues and the spiritual connection of the people of Kenya to their land an important aspect of his works. In the essay "Ecoing the Other(s): The Call of Global Green and Black African Responses" by William Slaymaker which is compiled in *African Literature: an Anthology of Criticism and Theory* edited by Olaniyan and Quayson, we are given insight into the fact that the major concern with Ngugi's writings has to do with "European linguistic and cultural dominance" even though his

writings, especially his influential works, *Decolonising the Mind* and *Moving the Centre* contains a significant amount of his people, the Agikuyu or Gikuyu and their attachment to their land and other nature symbols. He writes:

. . . In these critical studies as well as his novel *Matigari*, Ngũgĩ emphasizes the natural relations of the Agikuyu to their land. Trees and forests are important as symbols of cultural preservation for Ngũgĩ, and forests symbolize haven and security for the Mau Mau. In his more recent statement *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams*, Ngũgĩ reprises these central ideas and arguments about nature. He does not translate his constant concern with the exploitation of East African land and of Agikuyu culture into ecoactivist narratives or environmentalist essays . . . (688)

Whatever major concern the writer may have in his texts, one cannot deny the fact that nature is an indispensable part of his writings- which many will translate in terms of ecocriticism for their ecological themes. This environmental theme also resonates in Angami literature which similarly may not have been made with green studies in mind. Therefore the study will make a comparative study of the environmental themes of these two cultures based of ecocriticism.

1.8. INTRODUCTION OF THE TWO CULTURES: GIKUYU AND ANGAMI

1.8.(a) GIKUYU TRIBE OF KENYA: AN OVERVIEW

The Gikuyu people of Kenya are also called the Kikuyu or Agikuyu (in Swahili language as they call themselves). They constitute the majority of the population of central Kenya. Though many Gikuyu people reside in different parts of Kenya, the vast portion of this cultural group lives on the “high foothills around Mount Kenya” (Collins Dictionary). Gĩkũyũ is their mother tongue and is a division of Bantu language of the Niger-Congo family. Many from the tribe speak Swahili, which together with English makes the official languages of Kenya. It is believed that they are a group of Bantu-speaking community who have over a lengthy process of migration migrated to Central Kenya from Central Africa or Tanzania before the colonial period. From the derivation of the names of their tribe, we see the obvious attachment of the people to their land- the intensity of their connection with nature and the spiritual belief attached to the origin of their land is a major concern in their literature. This will be studied comprehensively in the chapters to come. The derivation of the name of the tribe is recorded as:

The term Kikuyu is derived from the Swahili form of the word Gĩkũyũ. Gĩkũyũ means “large sycamore (mũkũyũ) tree”. Hence Agĩkũyũ in the Kikuyu language translates to “children of the huge sycamore”. The alternative name Nyũmba ya Mũmbi translates to House of the Potter or Creator. Agĩkũyũ can also be shortened form of Mũũgĩ (wise) kũĩ (than) ũyũ (him/her), hence “one who is wise to others”. (Source- Wikipedia)

Traditionally, the Gikuyu people were agriculturalists- their economy depended upon cultivation and animal husbandry. Crops such as millet, peas, beans, sweet potatoes, maize, etc., were grown and animal rearing supplemented their livelihood. They gave much importance to their cattle not only because of their economic values and for sustenance but also because “cattle were necessary for paying bride-price, needed to marry and beget children, and were thus endowed with enormous symbolic significance.” (Quoted from Yvan Droz’s “Gikuyu (Kikuyu) People of Kenya” accessed from www.oxfordbibliographies.com). The Kikuyu inhabited the fertile land around the highlands of Mount Kenya and so it added to the importance of agriculture- which remains the primary and most dominated form of profession. But today, many Kikuyu are also into business and entrepreneurship resulting in migration and settling of many Kikuyu members in the towns and cities throughout the country.

The Gikuyu, before the coming of Christianity during the colonial period worshiped one supreme god called *Ngai* whom they believed to be the creator and also the benefactor. The Gikuyu also addresses their supreme god *Ngai* as *Murungu* or *Mwene-Nyaga*. The Gikuyu tribe has a sense of much pride and attachment to their land because their origin myths claim that *Ngai* took their first ancestors, also named Gikuyu and his wife Mumbi to the mountain *Kirinyaga*, now known as Mount Kenya and told him and his to make their home at Kikuyuland. Their god has directly given their land to their ancestors. This is why they consider their land as a gift from their god and feels a spiritual connection with their land. Kikuyuland is thus, their birthright forever which was promised to their first ancestors by the supreme god. It was believed that Gikuyu and Mumbi had ten daughters out of which nine got married from whom the nine main clans ‘*Mihiriga*’ emerged. The tenth daughter was believed to have been unmarried, although she gave birth to children who formed the ‘*Warigia*’ clan. Though the generations of the ten daughters formed the Gikuyu tribe, the clans emerging from the nine married daughters became more prominent in the Gikuyu family forming the nine major clans of the Gikuyu, the current generation of Gikuyu tribe.

The folklore attached to the ten daughters claim that each daughter had a special gift from Ngai. For instance, Nyambura was believed to be the conveyor between Ngai and the Gikuyu people, so the clan could foresee what was to come and convey them to the people- like a drought or a foreign invasion and war. Thus Mugo wa Kibiro predicted the coming of the railway and the white man which all came true after many years. (Source- KTN News Kenya “Cultural Quest: The Kikuyu”- YouTube)

The Gikuyu has a vibrant culture. Their songs, dances, rites, child naming ritual, and other cultural practices provide immense tourist attraction. Their initiation rites, their magical practices and supernatural elements are topics of wide-spread discussion. Their animistic belief in the spirit of their ancestors, animal sacrifices for their supreme god Ngai, and superstitious beliefs are sources of their indigenous religious system. They had a strong sense of belongingness to their land and the tribe seems to be closely knitted to one another and expanded with intermarriages between the other neighbouring tribes, especially the Maasai. Their cultural life was made very progressive with strong community ties and democratic form of leadership enhanced with much respect to the wisdom and leadership of the elders.

The Gikuyu enjoyed the fertile slopes and high lands around Mount Kenya and the vitality of the tribe can be attributed to their rich natural resources- a blessing from *Ngai*. Because of the prosperity of Kikuyuland which forms some of the best farmlands in East Africa, the British during the colonial rule displaced many Gikuyu from their sacred land to make room for the European settlers. Yvan Droz recorded in his article “Gikuyu (Kikuyu) People of Kenya” that during the period of British control over Kenya (1898- 1963), the British immigrants took control over the cultivated land of the Gikuyu for “European settlements and forest reserves in areas that soon became known as the White Highlands”. Later on, the villages of the Gikuyu were burnt down and were forced to move to colonies prescribed by the imperial power for better control and administration. This displacement from their homeland and dismissive treatment they suffered from the colonial power made the Gikuyu to form a liberation group called the Mau Mau.

The Mau Mau was an organization which invited much debates and questions for its practices and sentiments based on whether the organization stood for nationalism or anti- nationalism. The colonial authorities learnt about the Mau Mau in the late 1940s which they believed was a secret organization made up of African farm labourers working in the European estates of the Rift Valley. In the book, *Perspectives of Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and*

Representation edited by Richard Grinker, Stephen C. Lubkemann, and Christopher Steiner Wiley, the editors have made a comprehensive study of the different interpretations. Many journalists and academic commentators from different countries including Britain along with the colonial administrators in Nairobi and London, white settlers, and missionaries viewed the movement based on its “essentially tribal and religious character” throughout the Emergency period from 1952 to 1960, and continued during the initial years after Kenyan independence after 1963. It was understood by many as a “religious cult” which sought to lead Kenyans “back to the bush and savagery, not forward into progress”. The government recorded that Mau Mau was consciously orchestrated by “cynical and unprincipled leaders” who quest for their own personal “lust for power” who thus turned the Kikuyu into “savage and maniacal killers” (499). It is claimed that during the Emergency, many Gikuyu Christians who refused to take the Mau Mau oath were killed. The Mau Mau’s primitive, regressive, and traditional mind which was further exclusive to their tribal community contributed its characteristic of being anti-nationalistic or the negation of nationalism. The clash of the identity of the Gikuyu community based on the adoption of European culture and changes brought by modernity and education is historic.

However, this interpretation was challenged in the mid-1960s which claim that the Mau Mau was an “essential, if radical, component of African nationalism in Kenya.” J.M. Kariuki, a politician who spent years in detention and Waruhiu Itote also known as “General China” when he commanded in the guerrilla forces in the forests of Mount Kenya insisted that the “Mau Mau was a modern, rational, and nationalist political movement, not tribalist reaction, and that the fighters of the Land and Freedom Army had fought a glorious struggle for national liberation” (Grinker et.al. 500). John Nottingham, a maverick colonial official rejected the European Mau Mau interpretation by conducting several interviews with African political personalities and extensive documentary analysis. He along with Carl Rosberg, a political scientist from the University of California at Berkeley claims that the outbreak of open violence in Kenya was predominantly the blunders made by the European powers in dealing with the indigenous people. They further argued that the inability of the Gikuyu to effectively “adapt to a modern institutional setting” was because the European political leaders failed to “recognize the need for significant social and political reform.” (Grinker et.al. 500). Therefore, to claim that the Mau Mau is a “savage religious cult” and promotes “atavistic tribalism” is rooted in European ethnocentrism. The Mau Mau originated from the Kikuyu tribe and had characteristics particular to Gikuyu cultural constructs and practices but

they are not acknowledged openly due to the Mau Mau oath. This oath limited the dissemination and extension of the movement to non- Gikuyu tribes which many consider the reason why it is called an anti- nationalistic movement. However, the colonial policy in successfully segregating the people and monitoring their activities contributed to the failure of the Mau Mau to spread and mobilize in other tribes. The question of identity, cultural values, indigenous practices and beliefs came in crisis with the advent of European rule. The Mau Mau uprising cannot be ignored thus in the study of their culture, history, nor their present state.

1.8.(b)PREVIEW OF THE ANGAMI NAGAS

The Angami Nagas constitute a major Naga tribe and reside principally in the district of Kohima, Nagaland state. The Angami Nagas has been one of the most prominent tribes of the Naga Hills- now Nagaland, famously feared for their head-hunting practices, yet appreciated for their cultural values like bravery, nobility, hospitality, honesty, craftsmanship, and such others amongst their neighbouring tribes and kingdoms. They lived relatively isolated from the world except from a few kingdoms like Assam with whom they had trade relations. For this reason, a comprehensive written record of the Angamis is scarce. Regarding this drawback, Visier Sanyu in his book, *A History of Nagas and Nagaland: Dynamics of Oral Tradition in Village Formation* writes that the “only authoritative work exclusively focusing on them has been left by J.H. Hutton, who served as an administrator in Naga Hills from 1917-1935.” (3). Though the book is of great significance to readers in introducing the Angami tribe, it is also not without limitations in the form of “certain inadequacies” in its inability to give a complete account of many cultural elements which are of paramount importance. These limitations can be owed to the fact that Hutton belonged to another culture representing his government during a difficult period and so the language and cultural barrier in addition to his official duties contributed to the drawbacks. However, one can also claim that the Angami Nagas are endowed with a really diverse cultural way of life which will be nearly impossible to exhaustively account for them within a short period, not to mention with the disadvantage of language and cultural barriers.

Similar to virtually all indigenous communities, the Angami Nagas were primarily agriculturalists and were proudly self-reliant. They practice both Jhum (shifting) cultivation and terrace field cultivation for centuries. Today, the practice of jhum cultivation has remarkably diminished for many contributing factors, out of which the environmental

detrimental effect is an important one. Terrace field cultivation is still one of the main professions followed by the Angamis. The landscape and the presence of numerous springs and small rivers assure successful terrace farming in the region. The majestic terrace fields of Khonoma village on the sloping hills are perfect examples of the glorious practice of the Angamis. Animal husbandry and cattle rearing also form an important support to the economy of the community. Apart from farming and animal husbandry, the Angamis were celebrated for their industrious nature- their expertise in weaving of clothes, basket-making, carpentry, and black-smithy was well-known.

The process of migration serves as an important source of history to the people by providing insight into their origin and essential cultural phenomena of the tribes. Owing to the fact that there was no written account of the origin and migration of the Angami Nagas during the process, the exact location or time line cannot be determined. Yet there are many theories regarding the origin and migration of the Angami Nagas to their present location. Hutton in his book, *The Angami Nagas* wrote:

The history of how the Naga tribes came precisely to occupy their present position has, of course, passed into the dim obscurity of vague traditions. But enough of them remain to give some indication of the course which the migration took. . . The Angamis, too, spring from ancestors who emerged from the bowels of the earth, but that too not in Angami country, but in some land to the south. And all the weight of tradition points to migration from the south, except in the case of Kacha Naga. (6)

In spite of the absence of exact records, oral tradition of the community in addition with the historical accounts of different countries helped in breaking down this immensely difficult question. Today, it is widely accepted that the Nagas migrated from China through the Paktai section and settled on the way to the Naga Hills. It is believed that the migration took place in different waves and during the process some of the tribes broke away and settled down on the route along the Patkai mountain range. The Angami Nagas also believed that they have branched out from Khezhakenoma along with some other Naga tribes like Sema, Lotha, Rengma, and Chakhesang. Vikielie Sorhie, in his book *Tenyimia Kelhou Bode* which can be loosely translated in English as *The Life Origin of Tenyimia* (Tenyimia comprises seven Naga tribes- Angami, Chakhesang, Zeliangrong, Pochury, Rengma, Poumai, and Mao who speaks the common language, Tenyidie) narrates that based on the orally transmitted stories, the origin of the Tenyimia community can be traced back towards North because they speak

of a place called “Whedzüra” (*correct spelling should be “Whejüra”- where jü means without) which means a place with no canopy where the sky does not cover the place. The place is thus unbearably cold and windy, making everyone creased up due to constant crinkling. It was further said that the place experience daylight for six months and darkness for six months. They also speak of the Chinese, especially their innovative inventions, particularly of wooden vehicles for transporting their goods. From this, it is evident that they know about the North way before any contact with foreigners who could enlighten them about the people in the North or any known contact with the mentioned societies. Sorhie further asserts the evidence that the Nagas belong to the Mongolian race that migrated from China before the Christian era.

The Angami Nagas followed a democratic form of leadership in the village giving complete respect to the elders and their wisdoms. The elders in the village take it upon themselves to maintain law and order in the village. One significant observation made from the lives of the Angamis was that every person fully engaged themselves in fields, household chores, cattle rearing, weaving, and other social activities as a way of their community living that there were hardly any crimes committed except for some petty thefts and land encroachment issues. The entire sundry in the village are tied together in their religious rites, observation of various *gennas*, and festivals which are all in turn dictated by their animistic beliefs. The *Kemovo* or the high priest directs all ceremonies and fixes the dates for *gennas*, etc. by careful observation the sun and the moon. The elder in the village or *Phichüu* in the village plays a significant role.

The Angami Nagas believed in the existence of a god called *Terhuopfü* who is a provident god. The god is given a feminine attribute yet does not give it any form, except that it is in spirit form. They also believed that *Terhuopfü* could be angered if proper observations are not made. Therefore, they thank the spirits for their harvest, health, etc., but also for simple things like when they gather herbs from the forest, they thank the spirits called “*terhuomia*”. They believe in the existence of different types of spirits and supernatural elements. They also believe in life after death- and claim that when a person dies, he or she will have to cross a river to get to the spirit land called *Kezei rü* which can be literally translated as “Dark River”. This is remarkable in its similarity with Greek mythology where it is believed that they must cross the river Styx after death. The rituals performed after death was very elaborate and meaningful and purposeful.

When the British colonial power first came into contact with the Angami Nagas, it faced much hostility and resistance from the indigenous people even though the British power assured that they would not interfere in the internal affairs of the people. The much superior British force sent its first expedition in December 1838 against the Angamis and the second expedition in January 1840. The famous Battle of Khonoma, the last Angami village to surrender to the British power was fought in 1879. Though the Khonoma warriors were adamant in sending back the 'White Man' to his country and put up a fierce fight but against the reinforced British troop of 2000 men with superior weapons and artillery, the last Angami village lost against the invaders. Thus the Angami Nagas were famously known for their resilient nature, bravery, and pride for their homeland. They refused to live under any foreign rule and did not make it easy for the British to control over their land even if they meant a non- intervention policy, which for them meant to forfeit their independence and rights. As a consequence, the British force had to take over forty years to ultimately bring the ever resilient Angamis into submission.

With the coming of the British colonial power in the Angami region, the cultural lives of the people underwent a drastic transformation. After the colonization of the Naga Hills, the American Baptist missionaries made their way to the uncharted land. It is said that it was the American missionaries who made a strong impact in the lives of the Angamis because it was the introduction of Christianity that brought modernity into the lives of the Angamis. The missionaries not only preached the gospel, but they included enormous social services which benefitted the people. And thus, though the conversion was due to the fact that the Angamis being conservative and resistant to change, the people eventually embraced the changes and opened up to education and Christianity and finally modernity. However, being deeply rooted in their traditional lives which were religiously perpetuated by their oral tradition, their new faith mingled with their old belief, practices, and superstitious nature. The traces of which are still evident today.

Chapter II: The Angami- Naga Oral Tradition

“Tei- Kijü A pfu A pfü, terhuo A pesü kenyü!”

“Sky is my father, Earth is my mother, forbid the spirits to torment me!”

2.1.Introduction to Chapter II

The Angamis are a major ethnic group native to the state of Nagaland in North East India. They are listed as a schedule tribe in the fifth schedule of the Indian constitution. The Angami Nagas belong to the Tenyimia community. The Tenyimia community covers seven Naga tribes, namely: Chekhesang, Zeliang, Pochury, Mao, Poumai, Rengma, and Angami. Even though Tenyimia means a larger collective group of tribes, the Angamis usually call themselves Tenyimia and speaks Tenyidie in a number of dialects. The Tenyidie of the Angamis vary in tone, accent, even words and expression depending on village or region, however, each dialect is commonly understood and the varying Tenyidie of each village or area is identifiable and communicable amongst the people in all areas.

Like any other oral societies, oral narration in the Angami society, without a doubt was pre-eminently the source and reservoir of the diverse chronicles of history, indigenous wisdom, and principles which dictate, preserve, protect, and sustain the lives of the entire community in all aspects. It also served as the sole means to disseminate the customs, the legacy, and heritage of the community to the next generation.

Oral tradition is an umbrella term for a myriad oral-aural means of communication covering folk songs and dances, folklores, ballads, chants, proverbs, fables, myths, cultural values, legends, indigenous wisdom, and so on, which makes it impossible to cover the entire field of orality of a particular community in a single dissertation. Therefore, the chapter is limited to few aspects of the oral tradition of the Angami tribe of Nagaland.

The following sub-topics are recorded as narrated by the interviewees from Kohima Village, Khonoma, Viswema, and Urrea Village.

2.2.Practices following death and funeral rites:

The Angamis believe in life after death and the existence of a spiritual world beyond their temporal existence. Therefore, utmost care was taken to appease the spirits and to prepare for the afterlife. Thus, the process of Death for the Angami Nagas was an arduous journey

linking it with a series of omens. In case of an incident of death at home, the family members and neighbors of the person in his or her death bed promptly completes all sorts of activities regarding the preparation of food, whether cooking or brewing of wine to be able to declare them 'clean' and fit for consumption. If they are unable to complete them before the last breath of the dying person, all the food in question should be consumed on the day of the burial of the deceased and the leftovers should be gifted to the *Livau* (the man who performs the burial rites). This includes things like brewing of wine, preparation of yeast, cooking of fermented soya-beans, pounding of grains to rice, and such others. This is because they believe that if they consume the food and drinks after the burial of the deceased, it will cause huskiness of the voice due to sore throat and also cause physical weakness whereby they will be unable to go wherever others go and thus failure to achieve what others can achieve.

After the man completely relaxes after death, he is bathed and put on the death bed. He is washed with *Tsünyü*, a dried root of a tree used as soap by the Angamis to wash their hair. Though it can be reused, it is taboo for others to reuse the *Tsünyü* after it is used to bathe the death. One or two body cloth is used to cover the death bed but it is usually not counted or ritually limited to any particular number. The well-off families provide a good body cloth as pillow for the departed but many do not give good or news ones as pillows. However, the custom of covering the body with body clothes is observed carefully as it was and still is a matter of pride and respect. It is considered a shame for people who have earned names to give less than ten body clothes. Interestingly however, it is a taboo to cover the departed with more than ten body clothes because it was believed that a close family member or a near and dear one would quickly follow his death to carry the body clothes and so even the richest families do not give more than ten clothes to cover the departed. It is taboo to cover the death body with a single body cloth even for young children. Thus, if a family cannot afford two body cloths for the departed, then the cloth is torn into two and the body is covered with both the halves to give the appearance that it is covered with two clothes.

After tending to those details, his *Süshie* is prepared. *Süshie* means a basket of rice (brown grains). The basket used here is very particular. It should be a *Zharha*, which is a basket woven by carefully counting the number of peeled bamboo skin to make a definite size for measuring the amount of grains of rice a person is given for a person's labour or service. The *Zharha* is the standard of measurement for payment. It is taboo to have husk or rice hulls in the *Süshie*. Therefore, extra care is taken in winnowing the rice grains. The *Süshie* is then kept under the bed of the departed just beneath the head. Now it is attentively observed by the

womenfolk because it was believed that a person will follow the departed within five days (*Zhangoudo*: *Zhangou* means Friday, the fifth day, hence five days. Five days is significant in the ritualistic world of the Angamis). If he or she removes even a single grain of rice from the hull and eats it. And it is not uncommon to have a very near one of the departed to attempt to commit the act, especially between husband and wife or in the funeral of a beloved child.

It is taboo to put the body cloth inside-out while covering the departed. It is also forbidden to bury the dead body without removing his or her earrings and necklaces. After all these are carefully observed, it is taboo to go back and lift up the head of the departed. It is only at the time of the burial that the *Livau* would enter the room, lift up his head and proclaim “*Co, themo-u pielie rei vite!*” which loosely translates into “hark now, the body can be carried!”. It was believed that anyone who lifts the head of the departed on his death bed after observing the above rituals and before the proclamation of the *Livau*, become infertile and his wife would suffer miscarriages even if they are able to conceive and thus remain childless. Hence it is considered a remarkable taboo which becomes one of the gravest taboos. The gravest forms of taboos in Tenyidie are termed as “*kenyü thor, Kenyüpfhüo*” (the superlative term of taboo).

The *Livau* thus plays the most crucial role during a funeral. He is the only one who can perform the rituals which were considered as dirty or dangerous for other persons. Since he is to perform all the “hard” jobs at the funeral which could anger the spirits or have grave taboos that entail the action, the *Livau* was carefully chosen. He was an older man and someone who had no wife and no younger dependent children. Someone who can take the risks, has no family obligations, and can commit his life entirely for such purpose. He was someone who could mediate between the spirits and man. This is why he could cultivate lands that are considered unclean (owned by spirits) which others cannot.

The Angamis believed that once a person dies, he or she will cross into the spiritual world called *Terhuora* in Tenyidie. To enter into *Terhuora*, one has to cross the river called *Kezeirü*, which literally translates into the dark river. It is the river of bleakness and desolation which was believed to be guarded by *Meciemo*. It was of the belief that *Meciemo*’s head was full of monstrous lice and in order to secure a passage from *Kezeirü* to the spiritual world, one must peck on one of its huge appalling lice which even the best warriors felt terrified of. A wood chipping (from collected firewood) was therefore cleverly placed in his hand right before burying him so that when *Meciemo* ask one of his enormous lice to be

pecked upon, he could break the chip of wood behind Meciemo resonating the sound of a popping insect and claim that he has pecked on a louse (“*co puo tsürhei puo meduwate ho!*”). After this formidable ordeal, he was allowed passage and the spirits would from then on lead the way to the new world.

During the burial, the *Süshie* was spilled into the grave by the *Livau*. This act was done by the *Livau* at all times as it was forbidden for anyone else for fear of being unable to earn a living. This was also another gravest form of taboo (“*kenyü thor, Kenyüpfhüo*”).

2.3.Deaths that are looked upon with antipathy:

Some types of deaths are viewed upon as abominations in the cultural practice of the Angamis. Deaths that occur from drowning, killed by Tiger, victims of headhunting and war, death from a fall, fire victims, and *Lhaprie* which is the name given to the incident of a woman dying in childbirth especially in attempt at delivering a baby or due to the failure of expelling the placenta after birth. People who are ill-fated with such deaths which are considered as appalling are not allowed to be buried within the village. They are buried outside the village gate. This is done so that the anathema of the horrible death will not dirty the village for fear of the other members of the village suffering similar deaths. No matter where one may be, as soon as one gets the news that a person from one’s village has suffered a death of abomination, it becomes a taboo to work in the fields. So it automatically becomes *penie*, i.e., a no- working day. The proclamation of *penie* is not made by the *phichü-u* (the elder) like the observation of any other genna but it was common knowledge to observe the law for fear of experiencing the same fate in one’s family which they believed may happen as a sort of self-incurred punishment. In case of natural deaths, only the clan members, close ones, friends and khel members mourn and come to the funeral house but in case of a *Sesuo* i.e., abomination deaths, the entire village members observe a no- working day.

Lhaprie is considered the most abhorrent form of death in Angami culture. In case of a woman dying at childbirth, it becomes a grave taboo to carry out her body from the main door. A wall or some planks are removed from the back side of the house to take the body out. This is to convey to the spirits that they have cut off all ties with the dead and to avoid anyone suffering the same fate which they fear that some might incur by using the same door from where the body was taken out. It is a grave taboo to re-enter the house from this opening for fear of returning the cursed fate into the house. The opening is then permanently sealed

and is a taboo to ever open this particular wall again for making a doorway. Easterine Iralu writes in *Folk Elements in Achebe: A Comparative Study of Ibo Culture and Tenyimia Culture*:

At such deaths it is taboo for her husband to touch the body. The other taboos prohibit: (a) mourning (b) funeral meet provision (c) covering the body with garments (d) taking the body out through the main entrance...The body may not be lowered gently into the grave but it is dropped roughly into the earth. The body is wrapped in a paddy drying mat and rolled out of the house. The grave will not have the customary blocks of stone on the lowest layer and the grave stones will not be erected upon the grave. (64)

The end of the lunar cycle is regarded as very ominous in the Angami community. Therefore, if a person dies at the end of the lunar cycle with no moon visible, everything is made ready and the body is left outside since it was considered a massive taboo to bury a dead body at the end of the lunar cycle because it was believed that the family will become *Kika* which means the entire family will die leaving no one to inherit their family home. Though one may add that *khrijü* (*khrijü* means moonless) deaths are not abomination deaths, it comes under the purview due to the fact that the usual burial rites cannot be performed on a *khrijü*. For fear of such misfortune, the body is buried the next day, that is, the first day of the new moon. It is worth mentioning that after the body is brought outside the house it becomes a taboo to make *thekrü*, the act of mourning by chanting expression of grief.

In the process of performing *thekrü*, expressions are made in extreme remorse. Listening to the mourners doing *thekrü* evokes sympathy in all the people and brings tears to those who come to pay their last respect to the departed and to console the bereaved family. The most common expression of grief made during *thekrü* are: “*Hei! Avu sii, hai zo di kekho kethotatuo le? , A ro thorlie- ketho mo nhie mu!, N thuo A se bacü zo Luo!, mia rei hai di kekhotaya me?- A we rüinou mote ho!*”. These expressions can be translated in English as: “Oh! Woe is us, are we going separate ways hence?, I feel extreme sorrow- this is not real!, you must be deluding me!, Is this how people go their separate ways? There is just anguish from my end!”. However during the deaths which are regarded as abominations like: death from drowning, persons killed by tigers, people killed during war or headhunting, etc., while performing *thekrü*, it is taboo to make expressions which would identify the deceased with the living

such as “woe is us” (“*Avu sü*”). Instead of that “woe is you- you have suffered much!” (*No sü- no kemezhié ho!*) is used.

When a person dies by drowning from a place far from the village and people had to go and carry the body to the site of the burial, the body is carried with his back to one’s back as it is taboo to carry the body with his chest on the back. This is to show to the spirits that they have severed all ties with the victim. This is done for the fear of letting any other of one’s relative suffer the same misfortune or unfortunate death. The body may be taken back to the village for observing rituals but never buried within the village. If the body cannot be taken, even a lock of the person’s hair is taken back, laid down on the death bed provided covered in body cloth in place of the body and then taken outside the village gate (*Kharu*) to be buried. If in case a person’s body was buried in the forests after dying an abominable death and his or her bones are to be exhumed to be buried at the intended burial site, the day also becomes a *penie*.

When an infant of just one or two days passes away, no burial rites can be performed on the baby because the baby would have not received a name yet. In such cases, the baby is not buried outside in the open but buried within the house. Such deaths are called *Nuokrase* in Tenyidie.

If a man and a woman was separated and comes together at the death or funeral of one of their children and decides to live together again, it is taboo to be remarried on the same day of the funeral. They leave for their respective houses for the night and come back the next day to live together. This is done to avoid infertility in future.

2.4. Belief in the supernatural:

The ancestral belief or religion of the Angami tribe consists of a supreme god, the creator of all things called *Ukepenuopfü*, giving the attribute of a female through its name (*pfü*) but generally recognized and considered a male supreme god. The Angami belief system did not involve the worship of nature in any form (though they reverently recognize the importance of nature in their lives) or spirits of any kind except the supreme god. However, the Angami culture is dictated by values that revolve around appeasing god and the spirits or *terhuomia*. This aspect of the culture contributes to the fact that the society is controlled by a number of principles, morals, and just unbiased rules resulting in a fair, peaceful, and closely knitted

community. The fear of angering the spirits by not observing the proper rituals and sacrifices is a value that commonly unites the entire members of the Angami society.

There are many kinds of spirits in the Angami ancestral belief- some of which are good while some malevolent. The various spirits acknowledged are:

2.4.1. Terhuo rhuolo or the witless spirits:

a. Kesüdei and Vitsho-

Keshüdei and Vitsho are considered to be dimwit demons that bear no malice towards anyone in particular but are known to have harmed people who blocked their paths. The Angami's believed that Kesüdei is the biggest demon (in size). He is a territorial demon and does not like anyone crossing his path. He is the demon of the Eastern side of Kohima village, now P. Khel and D. Khel of Kohima village and according to the sayings; he is the controller and the overseer of other smaller demons who existed in that area. Kesüdei's staunch enemy was Vitsho. He belongs to the South-West region of the village, today's Sanuorü (Secretariat road) and Don Bosco School area. Vitsho is also believed to be almost equally huge as Kesüdei. Eye witnesses say that quite often these two demons encounter each other at P.Khel junction and end up with fights. Most occupants of the area said that as a result of their fights, their houses would shake and rattle. The thugs and punches turns bloody but it is also said that none is seen defeating the other. Many have claimed to have seen these two demons and everyone who saw them said that they are as enormous as mountains.

b. Rutshe-

Rutshe, another witless demon is a merciless being. He does not look for victims to kill but the unfortunate people who cross his path are always killed with a block of wood called (*sei midu*) similar to the ones shaped like a cricket bat used by the Angami people to hit objects like bamboo into the earth while constructing a fence or to hit the machete or dao to split a bamboo from the middle. He attacks his victims on the head with the *thuthu-midu*. His victims never survive to tell their terrifying encounter and so their deaths become sudden and unexpected deaths who dies without the complaint of any ailment. Once an old hunched-back lady saw him kill a man and she escaped to narrate the horrific tale. It is said that the sound made from the killing device hitting the head of his victims are echoed over an entire watershed and then the sound is followed by the tragic news of another victim of Rutshe.

c. Meciemo-

A huge hideous spirit that guards the passage to the other world at the river called *Kezeirü*. He is not known to have done malice to anyone but is known for his appalling looks and more so for his dreadful lice which the dead are expected to peck upon to gain passage to the spiritual realm. He is known for being very adamant in his decisions which no one can forego unless his will is done.

d. Telepfhü:

This type of spirits are different from the first type for the fact that they do not kill their victims but rather lure them away and keep them hidden from human sight for a number of days. They are mischievous and have the power to confuse and entice their victims by speaking the dialect of the locality fluently. They move in small groups of two or three. When the missing person is reported, the entire community organizes search parties and continues the search rigorously until they are found or returned at the whim of the spirits. The victims of *Telepfü* recounts that they never experience hunger even though they are not fed during the days of their so called captivity. They also relate that they could hear and see the search parties but are prevented by the spirits to respond and that even if the search parties come very close to their hideout and they feel that they could be seen, they are never found unless the spirits will it so. When they are found, they are given food and bathed after which the elders would come and make proclamations to threaten the spirits. Two or three clansmen would keep them company for the night. Though no harm is done to their victims, they are feared and thus precautions are taken to evade them. The spirits are said to be afraid of mustard seeds lest they blind them when thrown on them. Since they are known to entice their victims by calling their names and pretending to be people they know, people often say the thing that they fear to scare them off. Therefore in Angami ancestral practice, when someone call you, especially to fetch water at dawn, one always respond by saying that you will get the mustard seeds first. If it were really a human, they respond back by saying that they have it with them but if the caller goes quiet after your response about the mustard seed, then one can know that it was the spirit.

e. Kamvülhouphreimia:

The *kamvülhouphreimia* are a host of fearsome spirits and are considered to be unique in its nature. They are said to have originated from a group of celebrants at a feast hosted by Kamvülhou. Hence they are named *Kamvülhouphreimia*, which can be translated in English as ‘the guests of Kamvülhou’. It is believed that some warriors attacked the

guests of Kamvülhou on that fateful night while they were feasting and killed a number of men whose spirits turned into a host of formidable spectres. These kinds of spirits move together and are notoriously known for their visits to feasts and celebrations who then kill and drink the blood of their victims. This is because of the reason that the entire body of the victims of such spirits are covered in pores. Though they looked like real people and thus difficult to identify when they sit amongst the guests, they are said to be eerily extremely cold when touched. They also do not speak to others and can drink the rice brew at an alarming speed. It is believed that when one of such spirits is killed, two of its kind emerges. Therefore, even if they are identified at a feast, people avoid confrontation but leave the feasts in turns to avoid suspicion from the spirits. Unfortunately, the celebrants who are too drunk to understand the subtle hints and leave the feasts before the suspicion of the spirits are aroused or the rice brew is over gets killed. The host of spirits wear the red body cloth (*Pfhe ra*) most commonly worn by the *Dobashis* of today. Their movement is comparable to that of a breeze because they move in swift, smooth, and very coordinated movement and looks like they sit and stand together like a wave or breeze when seen from afar. People fear to take their name because it is believed that they can hear people speak about them through the wind and comes looking for them. Therefore it is a taboo in the Angami folk belief to take their name or speak about them in any manner when at the fields.

f. Ruomia:

It is believed that some spirits make certain gigantic stones or fields their permanent abode. Such spirits are called ketsie Ruomia (*ketsie*-stone) or lie Ruomia (*lie*-field). One such example is a large rounded erected stone (*Tsiepou*) on the way to Chedema village. All passers-by would pluck the leaves of any plant or tree leaves (always in pairs- two tree leaves or leaves of any plant with its tip intact) and place it on the stone to appease the spirits to avoid any kind of harm. If such precautions are not taken, the spirits would torment the passer by with fever or illness.

In case a field known to be claimed by spirits is needed to be cultivated, a sacrificial chicken is released in that field to appease the spirits to avoid any unfortunate and unnatural death in the family as a consequence of cultivating that field. It is claimed that many families have experienced such ill-fated deaths called *Liemewe* in Tenyidie (people who dies after cultivating the land) because it is believed that they have obstructed the path of the spirits.

g. Chami:

Cha means road and *mi* means aura. Though not known to have harmed or injured anyone, they are known to have intimidated and confuse people by making noise or sounds like human speech though not audible enough on roads where there are no human activities nearby at that particular time whether day or night.

h. Temi:

Known to be really spiteful, Temi can petrify people by throwing stones or pushing the tips of even large trees and bamboos down to the ground or make terrible noises and can follow people to a great distance. It can make one feel that it's passing you by with a great speed and warmth then run off to a considerable distance and come back. It is not known to have killed anyone.

i. Semaphrie:

Semaphrie is said to be a huge and strong yet witless spirit in the Angami folktales. Legend goes that when Selhoulie Kire, a brave warrior from Kohima Village was returning home with his wife after a hard day's work in their terrace field at Haholietsa, it was already dark. That particular evening, they were later than usual as that day was considered the most appropriate day for transplanting the paddies for the best and optimum yield. As they slowly made their way home in complete darkness, a huge figure suddenly appeared before them and blocked their path. The figure could only be a supernatural apparition as it was much bigger and heftier than a human being. The strange apparition demanded to know Selhoulie's name and Selhoulie replied 'I am Selhoulie'. Selhoulie then drew his spear and bravely shouted "Who are you?" the apparition replied "I am Semaphrie". Selhoulie threatened the apparition saying, "either you clear my way or I cast my spear on you". The moment Selhoulie uttered these words, Semaphrie raised his foot which seemed to go higher than the hills and disappeared towards the northern side like a harsh terrible wind. And Selhoulie went home safely with his beloved wife. After this incident, Selhoulie's gallantry and bravery was much talked about and revered in the Angami region. He came to be known as the man who defied and defeated a spirit.

j. Geisüo:

Geisüo is said to be a formidable spirit, gigantic and said to have killed everyone who was unfortunate enough to cross path. He was killed by Yakhrie, a man belonging to Kohima village (Rhiempfümia- L'Khel Middle) at Geisünyü now Bible College area. It is narrated that Yakhrie was late one evening to return to his house from his jhum field near

Meriema and Kohima border. He was late because he had to shoo away the birds trying to eat away his grains before nesting and his field was almost ready for harvest. All his neighbours warned him of the dangers of lingering after dark while crossing his field but he kept on chasing the host of hungry birds. After the birds receded, he left his field. On the way, he heard Geisüo approaching, trees that got in his way were rooted out, smashed and trampled upon. Yakhrie hid himself behind a large tree (*Mecho bo*), spat on his palms to get a better grip on his spear ready to cast it in case of an encounter. Fortunately or unfortunately, Geisüo came right upon him and Yakhrie as quick as can be cast his spear on the formidable spirit and said, “*Co A rie ho*” (there I am first) thus killing him. Yakhrie ran home without even wasting any time to catch his breath because he knew of impending danger. He called his clan members and neighbours, killed a gilt (*Thero krii*) and they perform *terhü mewhi* (*terhü*- war and *mewhi* means sound made by many people together made after ululating or making war cry) the entire night to ward off the spirits that may come for vengeance. Sure enough the spirits came bringing with them strange chill and eerie sounds but the people persisted in continuing the *terhü mewhi* which prevented the spirits from harming Yakhrie. In his dreams, Yakhrie saw many huge persons bearing the haircut of the Sumi tribe (Mezha tsühu) who proclaimed, “You were first or else I would have taught you a lesson”. (“*N bu rieliete moro nme vashütuo mu ru!*”).

2.4.2. Unnamed Spirits:

In many instances gigantic trees, huge stones, thick forests or some specific fields are claimed by unnamed spirits. When human beings come near them or try to disturb their so-called habitats, they are known to have scared or harmed people. Some unnamed spirits who are less powerful than the above mentioned spirits are known to harm or discompose and bring distress to young children and infants. In case of such spiritual encounters of children and infants, the parents throw small dirt particles in a container filled with water and suggest names of the places from which they suspect their children have encounter the spirits or demons. When the specific place is correctly named, the soil particles produce certain sound. The parents will then say “*siliete*” (understood) and throw a burning charcoal into the same water and declare, “*co puo pesükebamia thewate ho! Penyüwate ho!*” (there, the spirits tormenting him are burned! We have overpowered him!) to claim spiritual triumph over the spirits.

In case a man comes home and gets mysteriously ill, a seer is solicited for the cause. Many instances are recounted of spirits hypnotising the spirit of the man at certain places. According to the severity of the circumstances, a perfect cock, metal, ornaments or eggs are offered as per the advice of the seer and taken to the mentioned place in exchange of the human spirit. For this purpose, two men are assigned to call back the spirit after dark- one carries the sacrificial gift, the other a machete (according to the Northern Angamis) or a spear (according to the Western Angamis). They would call the person by name twice and release the gift saying, “*co themia ruopfü ma kezie se tsurshü ho*” (we have brought gifts more precious than the human spirit). This is said in belief that the spirits would be tricked into believing that the sacrificial gifts are in fact more valuable. After offering the gift, they are forbidden to look back. They would return home with the man bearing the machete or spear behind the man who bore the gift. After reaching home they would address the people awaiting them inside the house saying, “*co puo zevorshüwate ho!*” (There, we have brought him home) and the people inside would reply, “*O, vor u kinu ba di u khutie, zu pie cü khrie di batalie!*” (very well, come in, eat and drink and remain in your house) in order to acknowledge his return. It is claimed that after the successful observation of all the mentioned rituals, the man gets perfectly well as his stranded spirit returns to his body.

2.4.3. Human friendly supernatural beings:

a. Chükhieo:

In the Angami Naga belief, Chükhieo is the custodian of all the wildlife. No sacrifice is made for him but he is held in high regard especially by hunters. He is the one who keeps wildlife in discipline and controls them. It is believed that he looks like a huge man, always wears a *keshunyho* (covering woven from a certain plant to protect one from rain) and bears a spear as walking stick. It is said that whenever a man encounters Chükhieo, he can ask for a wild beast (*Chükhieo, chü puo A tsüiyi.*). He never talks or replies but always grant man his requests. Therefore even if the man is not carrying a gun or spear, he will find a game which is tamed like a broken horn or leg, or a beast caught in a pit, etc.

b. Miawenuo:

She is given the name Miawenuo because of the way she looks. It is said that she looks adorable and delightful. She is not tall, is full-figured and her flowing hair reaches up to her ankle. A distinct feature is the reversal her foot. Her toes and heels are positioned in complete reversal of that of a normal human being which is why people look for her in

the opposite direction when her footprints are spotted. She is never seen by anyone in a sitting position. She is always seen either standing or walking. She is known to be very generous in blessing people who find her and ask for boons. Her gentle nature is shown to man by allowing people to get hold of her by staying very still when found. It is also noteworthy that she grants the wishes of the people in a mysterious way. She gives cattle to those who ask for paddy and paddy to those who ask for cattle and if a childless woman asks for a child, she gives cow instead. In those days, the only things that matter most to people are human life and food and thus reflected in their wishes.

2.4.4. Terhuoümia:

They are heard of only in folklore. They can be compared to fairies or angels who are attributed with immense beauty and are harmless. Out of many Terhuoümia, a man caught the most beautiful one and made her his wife by hiding her wings. They appear in the folklore along with Tietheriü, a spirit with pointed beak with which she stitch clothes.

2.4.5. Human spirits:

It is also believed and still a very common phenomenon that the spirits of the people who died of violent and unnatural deaths come back as ghosts and haunt people.

2.5.Dreams, seers, sorcerers, and channelers:

The Angami Nagas gave and still give a lot of importance to dreams. They put significant consideration into their dreams before head-hunting, hunting, war, marriage proposal, marriage, search for a new place for cultivation (even if the land is fertile and weather favourable, it depends on dreams to either cultivate or not), and such other events. They even consider their dreams as intimations of the events in the near future. Some instances in the Angami folklores can be Mehoviü's dream of feasting at Morüsa's house before their proposed marriage or of an old man dreaming of Sopfünuo telling him why she (in the form of the stone) refused to budge even after being pulled by many strong men. Another instance from a near past event is about a woman named Viratuoü who ritually surveyed a field for cultivation and in her dreams that night a woman gave her a basket full of paddy grains but while she was transferring the grains into her own basket, to her disappointment she found a bunch of hay in between the grains. However since she was given a basket full of grains, she cultivated the surveyed field anyway. That year, her paddy grains promised great harvest but just before harvesting, a wild boar destroyed the middle portion of her field. Then only she understood the extent of the significance of her dreams. The Angami Nagas still put much consideration to their dreams. For instance, the cutting of hair or removal of tooth or teeth in

their dreams are considered bad omens while collecting snails (escargots) may mean getting money. The only difference is, before Christianity, bad dreams would initiate a visit to a seer for dream interpretation and a means to avoid any untoward situation while after Christianity it would mean sharing with others and praying for protection. Dreams and its value and influence on the cultural practice in Angami Naga society are immense. One such instance can be the story of the woman who buried her two year old toddler in a shawl belonging to an adult by folding it in halves since she do not possess cotton nor could afford to buy the raw materials to weave her child's body cloth. After the burial, for many days her neighbours started having dreams of the child suffering in the afterlife for shame saying that she cannot wear her body cloth in the presence of others ("*U pfhenei se mia donu volie suolie*"). The women in her neighbourhood asked the mother the meaning and the nature of the shawl with which the child was buried but the mother could not reveal the truth. One day the mother while working in her field heard a distressful cry nearby which sounded much like her own child's. As she yearned for her child and to see her even once, she wished it to be her child and went looking for it. She found a large moth caught in the webs and struggling. That night she dreamt that the large moth was her child and was in distress in the afterlife due to the fact that her body cloth was too big for her to wear it anywhere. This story is told and retold for generations to avoid anyone burying their young ones swaddled in adult shawls as it causes suffering in the afterlife. Till today, it is a taboo to burry young ones in shawls other than in accordance to their specific age group.

Seers are people who have supernatural insight and thus can see visions of the future while a sorcerer or sorceress (sorcerer- can be used for both genders) though used in fiction as evil characters, the word implies a person possessing great skill and command over supernatural powers whether they use their powers for good or evil. In the indigenous Angami society, however, a person seemed to possess both qualities and was considered immensely essential. Often seers were solicited for important events but most importantly, they were solicited during sudden ailments, illness or bad omens. They act as medicine man or person and prescribe and administer various rituals or sacrifices, or cure the ailing persons themselves through various means. They also perform *thuophi* (with ash from fire place and a plant called *tseshünyüü*) to forecast fortunes or luck in hunting, war, sudden illness, or other important enterprises. Majority of seers among the Angami tribe were women but it was men who usually perform *thuophi*. Rhalieü, a woman from Meriema village was one of the most well-known seers whose supernatural acts are still viewed upon with awe. A woman seer

from Viswema village named Zathosele pointed at the present St. Joseph University area and said that the area was filled with little white chicks (“*Co, thevü nuu kecünno krapou-pou di tshute ho!*”). She then interpreted that something good will come in that area. Many years after the vision, a college was set up to impart education filled with young enthusiastic learners fulfilling the prophecy.

Kerhupfümia or Tierhupfümia were neither seers nor sorcerers but they were said to have possessed supernatural gift or curse which caused affliction or harm to others when they speak or point at things or people. One such instance is the story of two maidens from Viswema village who were really beautiful and well-built but had no suitors. They were worried for their futures as they were alienated and all their age mates were married. They asked their father of a reason why they had no suitors. Their father told them to hang a new body cloth and point at it and praise it saying that it was very beautiful (“*Pfhe hau zivi thor*”). They did as being told and found out that the body cloth ripped into shreds.

Channelers known as *Themoupfhi* in Tenyidie are also known as the bridge between the human and the spiritual world (*Terhuo pe*). They become the medium or portal of the spiritual world when they allow spirits of the dead to contact people. They speak and act exactly like the dead who are trying to communicate with their loved ones. The dialect, accent, tone and quality of the voice perfectly resemble with that of the dead. One feature of *Themoupfhi* is that all the spirits of the dead come complaining of the extreme hot weather of *Terhuora* and ask for water or rice brew. One instance of *Themoupfhi* can be an old woman from Khonoma village who spoke exactly like an old man - a Naga Nationalist patriot who died and expressed his anger towards the *Thevomia* clan for nurturing and promoting village guards instead of joining the Naga army during insurgency. A woman named Teziehole from Viswema village was a well-known Channeler. Neisale from Zhierümia clan went to a funeral and became a Channeler to the person who died and told people of the reasons why he died. A woman from Chakhesang community who married into the Angami tribe was a famous Channeler in Kohima village. She not only act as medium between the two worlds but was better known for her supernatural gifts as a medicine person who rendered great service to the people. Everyone called her *Atsa Monuo*. One time she became a medium for a fierce and angry spirit called Ketsochiü, who died from Kohima village from a splinter during an air raid in the Second World War. He died alone, standing and his body was never buried. His spirit vented out his pain and extreme misery in experiencing such a pitiful death, saying

he was from a good family and did not deserve such a death. His family members were summoned and from the event, they learnt about the cause of his death.

2.6.Blessings:

Blessings from elders are integral part of every ritual and celebration in the Angami tribe. All blessings, irrespective of the occasion are in relation to wealth in terms of grain, cattle, and children, and in terms of good health. Each blessing is pronounced with immense emphasis, the language being very poetic and profound. The language used is not the everyday language. Every component of the blessing is compared to the most essential, greatest and hardest elements in nature known to them.

a. Blessing of the elder in a feast organised by someone for the entire village (Chümentsiekehrü nu phichüu ja):

It should be noted that though the title is in singular form called *Phichüu* (the elder), there were always two elderly who held the title because it was feared that if a single person held the title, he would die early. Therefore it is *kenyü* (taboo) to make one single person *Phichüu*. A blessing is always pronounced by one and the other would declare his confirmation by saying that he is in complete agreement with the blessing bestowed (*A rei puo ja ki süsü ho!*). The blessing is recorded below:

Woh hacie...

Kesuo lie kemvü lanu

No lutsanu pfhe... kevi lieserü...

N tie n zu dzekeba ha...

Cü pepupelou tuolie...

Cü huliekello ituolie.

Woh... N zudi thukeba ha...

Krie pepupeloutuolie...

Krie puorü penyituolie...

Krie dzübe-rüzie kethie chütuolie...

Thieliekello ituolie...

Woh... N thu nyiekemela...

N thu mei kerütschu...

Woh... N thu geipie...

Kijü vase-valikezhü ha...

Woh... N chükhrie pepupelou...

Oh... khrie rüpu kedu itulie...

Duliekelho ituolie...

Woh... khrie ketsiethega kedu ituolie!

Woh... may it...

Beseeching only good things

The food served in the best plantain leaves from the virgin forest...

The brew that touches your mouth be...

May your food never run out...

May there be food aplenty.

Woh... your brewery...

May your drinks never dry...

May they be a water source in river...

Like hoeing lakes and springs...

May they be arduous and unobtainable...

Woh... your cattles' smart ears ...

Your cows' tails be long...

Woh... and when you slay it...

May it have huge impact on the earth it befalls...

Thy meat be more than sufficient...

Thy meat as strong as mushroom mound...

Difficult to dig in...

Woh... as strong as the sand stones!

The blessing starts with the reason of the ritual. It states that the aim of the ritualistic feast is to invoke blessing of the entire village to inhibit any harm into the lives of the ones organizing the feast. They bless their rice and rice beer that is being dished out at home in the best plantain leaves collected from the virgin forests with abundance and to

be sustaining. They exaggerate the blessing of the sustainability of the grains to be unfinishable. They bless the rice-brew that is prepared at their home to be in abundance-to run as deep as still water and be as hard as digging a lake, impossible to finish. They bless the cattle (cow) with good features- long and smart ears and long tail (to chase away insects and flies) and with monumental size that when they spear it down, they will hit the ground with huge impact. They even bless the meat to be very sustaining that the cutting of the meat for food will be as hard as digging a mound, as hard as cutting through the hardest stones, and as hard as cutting a tree trunk.

b. House-warming:

After the completion of a house, the house is blessed by the *Phichüu* (the two elected elders) before living in it. To receive the blessing, both the husband and the wife would wear new body clothes. For the feast they distribute a plate of meat (25-30 pieces of standard size meat) and rice brew from a jug made from hard gourd called *vahie* (may store about 3 and a half to 4 litres) to each well-wisher's household and receive gifts from them. The blessing is pronounced thus:

Nie ki kesa chükelie haunu lhoukelie zenu kekruo-ketheu chüliecie. Kechü-kenyü burei nie va kenyü. Nie tsiatho-tsiachü bu keviu chülie. Nie lha kre puo bu mia lha kre kenie deliecie. Nie cü-nie rei bu kekruo-ketheu chülie.

May this home of yours bring wealth in many folds. May you never see sickness. May your seeds and sowing be the best. May your crops head be twice as big as your neighbours. May your livestock multiply in abundance.

The blessing revolves around fertility, good health, good harvest, and healthy livestock. They bless their home with children (fertility), forbids any kind of ailment and sicknesses. Bless their seeds and every sowing process; wish that one seed head of rice will be twice as good as others, and finally bless upon their livestock with fertility and abundance.

c. Blessing pronounced during tax collection (*thekhruo shükecü ja*):

In the olden days when agriculture was the main source of livelihood for the Angami Nagas, this tax is considered crucial for good harvest as the tax payers are blessed by the tax collectors. It is collected twice or thrice a year by two elderly persons. Every household who has good rice-beer offer the tax collectors to taste from their cup. The taxes are then given to the *Phichüu*. The taxes are collected in the form of rice, millets, green gram, legumes, chillies, corn, and such others which are cultivated by

the Angamis. Though rice is given as the main tax, a small amount of each crop or grain can be given for the sake of giving to invoke blessing upon their works. Extensive collection is made twice a year and collected on a day of *penie* (ritually work forbidden day) so everyone can pay their tax. It is forbidden to work on the day of tax collection for fear of injuring oneself from spade or machete. Tax is collected the entire day as it becomes a taboo to collect tax after sundown or after the cows return home. The blessing element of the blessing is enunciated with great care:

Woh N tsia - N nyie se tsu kijü kedeikeshü ha...
 puo bu shübe vühie, shütho vü N tsütuoлие!
 Woh khuzunuo kesuo burei puo methe-meciwa lholie!
 Woh N mhatho si ha pfhü se vor N ki se-üno tuolie!
 N cü- n rei bu kekhruo-ketheu chütuoлие!
 Kenha- kera bu n va molie!

Woh... may your seeds that you throw on earth...
 Bearnot husks, only good crops!
 Woh... they be untouched by pests!
 Woh... your harvest brought home overflow!
 May your cattle and pets multiply and flourish!
 May you be free from all sickness!

They bless all their seeds that are thrown to the ground to bear good grains forbidding their seeds to bear chaff or just the covering without kernels, forbid rodents, bats, and birds to even take a bite of their crops, bless their harvest brought home to overflow with no enough place to store (superfluity), wish their livestock to be plentiful, and finally forbids sickness and different ailments to befall in the family.

d. Blessings for newborns for good fortune (*Ruotho ja*):

Upon the birth of a baby, the *Livau* is called to perform a ritual for the good fortune of the baby. For this purpose, the parents carefully select a healthy chicken which is now identifiable as a pullet for girl child and cockerel for boy child (not a chick nor a hen or a rooster). The chicken should be perfect to be called '*thevü kemesa*' or clean in order to be used in rituals- it should have both legs intact, good eyesight, good wings that do not touch each other, and so on. The mother wears a shawl which is carefully arranged as dictated by society as it is taboo to wear it upside down or inside out for this ritual. The mother then holds the baby and runs the child's hand over the

chicken's back twice and hands it over to the *Livau*. He then firmly runs his hands over the chicken to ensure no feather falls off during ritual. The chicken is taken outside to clean its legs and beak with water and the *Livau* wets his hands and clean the feathers and declare it clean. Finally, the chicken is brought back inside, let the mother hold the baby and run the child's hand over the chicken's back twice to initiate the ritual. The blessing is pronounced by the *Livau* as:

Woh themia tie kesuo
N kecü-kebeya rei...
Woh nnia-nmeimia N kecü-kebeya rei...
Woh dzümhi-dzürü puo khapfü zhü rei...
N vü thakepra haha bu
Kepa phrei kepa rhuowatuo!
N bu mia me-mia tie pfü sa motelie!
Kenha-kera kebe kenyü chüsa motelie!

Woh...though man is spiteful
 Speaking ill of you...
 Woh... though your aunts and uncles speak ill of you...
 Woh...though there may be blockade in your irrigation canal...
 May this rooster that bears a spur...
 Unbind all the ills!
 May you be free from all spiteful tongues!
 I forbid all the hinders!

The *Livau* wish the child to be free from malicious tongues even from aunts and uncles. He blesses the child's future to be successful and wish that the child's works will be rid of any hindrances even in the form of blockade in his irrigation water canals in the fields because in the traditional Angami belief, such hindrances leads the person to have difficulty in breathing and grasp for breaths. The purpose of the purified sacrificial chicken is to break away and remove all such malicious waging tongues and hindrances with its spur. He blesses the child to be free from spiteful tongues and any illness caused by such spitefulness.

2.7. Songs:

ü is the twenty first letter in Tenyidie alphabetical order. The letter itself stands for poem or song, intonation in songs, and singing. The Angami tribe has a rich variety of songs which are categorized according to the occasions in which they are sung. As such the songs sung in the woods may not be sung in the village and during festivals because the songs sung in the woods are more of romantic in nature and the others of well composed poetry, of a great warrior etc., or a song sung for a specific work may not be sung for the other. The Angami tribe of Nagaland has a diverse vocabulary and it is difficult to find the equivalent word in English, therefore, the beauty and significance of many words will be lost during translation. Each word in a song holds immense significance and reflects the animistic or indigenous culture of the tribe but it is impossible to find a single word in another language which holds the same meaning, weightage, and beauty. Hence, it is not possible to neither translate the songs word-for-word nor translate it in a way which will retain the perfect meaning.

1. Chanu ü:

The word *cha* means road so Chanu ü can be loosely translated as songs which are sung on the way home from the fields. These songs are sung by courting lovers and friends to convey messages and to cheer one's heart. A line from such a song can be taken as an example to understand the nature of Chanu ü, "*Tsütsakhemia hie neiü ngu ro puo bu ta hie tha A pfhelie luo!*" which means, "People in yonder, if you see my beloved tell her not to go forth but wait for me!"

2. Tsanu ü:

Tsanuü are sung by young people in the forests while collecting herbs and edible insects, etc., together. Courting lovers can convey their feelings and reply to such feelings through Tsanu ü. A very popular line from Tsanu ü can be quoted here, "*Kijü chazou luu zivi ba rei, A neiüpfü ki meyie krei molie!*" which can be translated as, "Though the highland over there is appealing, my beloved is far more fascinating!"

3. Thebanu ü:

These songs are sung by men while wooing or courting their lady love. Such songs are called Thebanu ü because they are sung while sitting and spending time at a woman's house (*theba* means seat or chair). The feelings are expressed through song and not in normal conversation. A line from one such song can be taken to illustrate the nature of these types of songs. "*Tsiezhü nie he nie neimia souchü leryie mu hie*

melie hie sievü!” which can be roughly translated as, “I come in the stead of your loved one tonight yet do not rebuff me my love!”

4. Thupfhe ü:

These songs can be called cowherd’s songs. Such songs are composed of paltry and insignificant things like description of their cattle while the herder looks after the cows. The herder expresses his or her love for the cattle through the song. For instance, a line from the song from a herder goes, “*Doteinuo pfhe whuo rüsoshü khriezhülie.*” This is about a cow whose herder has named her *Doteinuo* for the fact that her thigh is black in colour. And since the herder has great love for his or her cow, he or she doesn’t want to rush and push the cow repeatedly.

5. Weü-oh:

These types of songs are sung when in groups sung in three parts and in turns (each group have three parts). They are usually sung on the way home from the fields where one group challenges the other group and the other group sings in reply. They are also sung by girls and women during gatherings. For instance, a typical opening of a weü-oh on the way home can start like this, “*Theademia hu, keyo sierlie!*” (The first group summons to contest by singing that everyone is equally capable and challenges the other group to compose a song from the tune) and the reply from the group will be, “*Suonie suo preita!*” (No one is intimidated by the other).

6. Kehu:

Kehu is a category of song which consists of chants without lyrics with episodes of ululating yells. They are usually performed by men during festivals and stone or wood- pulling events or carrying wood poles for house construction to cheer and motivate each other. There are different types of kehu but in hutho, womenfolk are also included.

7. Songs accompanying different works:

The Angami tribe have a variety of work songs to accompany different types of works which match their working rhythms hence cheering them up and motivating them to set a pace. Traditionally, the Angamis assign a specific song for specific work and since they practise a rich work culture, their work songs are myriad.

a. *Lie zhie:*

While cutting weeds and grass from the field, the Angami Nagas sing a responsive song often with self-composed lyrics on the spot.

b. *Tekhou hie* and *lie phie pfhe:*

This type of song is sung accompanying tilling and ploughing of fields for both jhum and terrace cultivation. Such songs are called *we-whuo*. The song is sung in two parts with the same tone but in different pitch (high and low). Any lyrics from either poetry or proverbs can be integrated with the tune and sung while ploughing.

c. *Seikepfü / seipiepfhe*:

The song accompanying the task of carrying wood by a group of people is called *seikepfü/seipiepfhe*. The song starts with the chanting of ‘*ho-ho*’ in parts where the men continues with the chant and the womenfolk sings to accompany the tune of the chant ‘*ho-ho*’.

d. *Dichü/Dizhü pfhe*:

These songs are sung while weeding and pruning the crops in the jhum fields.

e. *Khouse pfhe*:

The work song that is sung during transplantation of paddy in the terrace fields is called *Khouse pfhe*. A line from such a song can be taken as an example where the workers at task sing about how the landowners (of the field) would not put grounded black millet which is a delicacy into their snack for luncheon if they do not work briskly. (“*Tekhou kese thu meza moro kenyie pie se nie muo hei mo shie!*”)

f. *Ciethu pfhe*:

This type of song accompanies the pounding of grains. Since the pounding of grains requires the holding of the pestle (made of a long wooden paddle) in an upright position, the song also talks about the technique and having rice porridge while at task of pounding rice but feeling inadequate, dissatisfied, and incomplete and hence had a spoon of hot rice (*Pedu mie-o lhako thukholie ya. Kecü thu di tadzü rüyo krie, rinou mo di tiele ka valie!*”). Pounding of grains is almost always done by the womenfolk and thus the song is sung by women.

g. *Tshaze pfhe*:

The art of spinning raw cotton into thread is called *tshaze* in Tenyidie. Hence the song accompanying the work of spinning raw cotton to turn it into thread is called *Tshaze pfhe*. The song is in perfect synchrony with the action of spinning of the *tshaze sei* (a wooden distaff with a spindle attached at its end designed to spin raw cotton into thread) and body movement involved in it.

8. Lullabies:

The Angami Nagas sing to their children lullabies especially by carrying them on their backs while putting them to sleep or to distract them from crying. The song is called ‘*nuokepfü pfhe*’ in Tenyidie. The most common one is “*O-lo-lo Sielhou/ N nuo pfü parü/ Secümia kikha/ mehoshü nu ru/ meho puo dzüzei.*” Which talks about a person named Sielhou to carry out his child and look at the ranges of Secüma village but he was afraid to do so.

9. Rhymes:

The two most common rhymes for children are:

- i. “*Khrü krie /Themvü krie /tetsurü, Bahurü kitie/ lukiha /hakiha/pfhe kesa chüdzie/ pfhe ketei chü dzie,/va khruolie ho he-ĩ*” which is asking the entire shape of the moon (here the waxing crescent moon) with its shadow to fall into earth at Bahurü’s compound (he was a man who had an enormous compound) so that people from here and there could gather to receive the goodness of the celestial thing. The rhyme further says that the people would over-pack even the huge compound wearing new shawls and their best black shawls (black shawls because they are very valuable as it was difficult and expensive to dye threads into black).
- ii. “*teirü vorzhie, teirü vorzhie. Chanu dzü kepra, kesuo-kenyüko vala vala kri*”. The rhyme is simply talking about the arrival of rainy days which generate storm water runoff and even springs on the roads leading to the breakout of all sorts of ailments and diseases.

2.8. Festivals:

In the animistic Angami cultural practice, there are seven major festivals spreading over the entire year governed by the agricultural calendar. The festivals are:

1. Terhünyi:

According to the ancestral Angami belief (*pfutsana or tsana*), Terhünyi is arguably the most significant festival next to Sekrenyi as all important tasks are done during this festival including different undertakings for title takers. The festival is observed to give thanks to the creator, *Kepenuopfü* for the harvest of the year- rice, soya beans, grams, millets, and so on. The festival is observed in the month of November (mid) or December for about seven to thirteen days depending on the village but usually it lasts for ten days.

On the first day of the festival, before the sun rises, the ritual purification of the house is done by each family called *kizhie* in Tenyidie. The blessing for *kizhie* is pronounced: “*Teirü teikhrie bu rei ki hau hetsho- hedawa kenyü. Ki hau nu kelhoumia bu kechükenyü chü mo, vi shürho mu u ca- u va u ketshu-kelhuo chü di lhoucie!*” which can be translated as, “Forbid the winds and rains to demolish or wreck this house. The dwellers of this house be kept away from diseases but be granted a life of good health and abundance of food!” To perform *Kizhie*, a plantain leaf is folded to hold rice brew and carefully inserted into a skinned bamboo used as a rope which is tied around the main pole of the house. The prepared *zumho* (rice water which is used in place of real rice brew during rituals to appease the spirits) is then poured into the *theü* (the folded plantain leaf) twice even if it overflows. The house is then cleaned to complete the ritual. After the completion of *kizhie*, people visit the graves of their loved ones for *mekhru zhie* where the *zumho* used for the *kizhie* is used for ritually inviting the souls of their loved ones to partake in the festival. Similar to *kizhie*, the *zumho* is poured into the *theü* (made of two pieces of plantain leaf, one placed on top of the other) twice and the soul of the loved one is invited to be a part of the festival. This is done to show that they are remembered. The ritual of *mekhru zhie* is done only during Terhünyi. If a couple is planning to host feast of merit, they were forbidden to perform *mekhru zhie*, so, a close relative may perform the ritual on their behalf. For this, the wife can ritually give two grains of rice to the relative so that they can add those grains into their pot to prepare the *zumho*. This is to show that their rice grains were also used for their loved ones. All these were done before the break of the dawn.

After the sun rises, the men of the family prepare the meat (pork and beef) for the feast. The innards may be cooked separately to be taken along with the rice brew and in order to show goodwill, rice brew and cooked meat are packed and delivered to paternal aunts and maternal uncles.

During this festival, the well-to-do people may prepare the Feasts of Merit and title takers may add additional fetes to their legacy. The first and second level of title taking is *Sha* followed by *Zha*. The activities undertaken during the festival in regard to this are: “herding buffaloes, dragging stones for monoliths, erecting monoliths and hoeing lakes” (Iralu 89). The families of those title takers who have passed away perform *kesia meruo* which is the ritual of preparing for feast for the dead. Such activities involving the community for Feast of Merit by the title takers are usually

undertaken on the second to fifth day of the festival which concludes with *kesia meruo* on the sixth day.

The tasks of chopping and pulling of trees for *Kharu sei* (i.e., large one piece log to construct village gate), *sei tse* (similar to log drum to brew rice beer), and *yakou* (single piece of log to carve a bed) are done during this festival as it is also the peak season for tree felling. These activities are done from the sixth to ninth day of the festival.

The festival is observed with great care involving the entire community which is why for four days before the festival begins, the youth, whether male or female go into the woods and forests to collect fire wood and edible herbs (called *sei rie ga da*). On these four days, no field work is done. Everyone prepares for the festival. On the last day, that is the fourth day of *sei rie ga da*, though not forbidden, people feel anxious to move out and about after sunset because the next day is the day for weeding the graves and the festival also meant a feast for the spirits and thus it was believed that the spirits of the dead would be already on their way to partake in the feast.

2. Sekrenyi:

Sekrenyi is the biggest festival among the Angamis in the present time. Sekrenyi is celebrated in the month of February for ten days. But today, the festival is celebrated on 25th February every year especially with the intention to preserve and promote the cultural practises by organising competition in singing the different types of songs, wearing of traditional attire correctly, playing indigenous games, etc.,. The important cuisines and different delicacies are prepared and an elaborate feast ensues. Though the rituals of Sekrenyi are not in practice anymore, the significance of the festival in the tribe is still immense. Sekrenyi, the second festival according to the Angami tribe is also known as Phousanyi, the festival of purification. Originally, the word Sekrenyi is derived from the Tenyidie word '*Sekhre*' means cut back time on death because during the festival, the people implore *Kepenuopfü* to cut back their time of death and extend their life for another year by saying, "*A bu rhei vo thecie sekhre tsoü ha no!*" which can be translated as, "Grant me to live till next year's *sekhre*!" This appeal is chanted before killing the sacrificial rooster or hen.

For Sekrenyi, the young people or the unmarried men and maidens prepare for the ten day festival by collecting edible herbs and collecting fire woods in the forests for three days before the *Kizhie* (sanctification of the house). Each family make preparations to wear their best during the festival. The complete traditional attires are

worn. The fathers after preparing for their own weapons make arrangements for their young son or sons like: weave their shield, chisel wooden spears, make mugs out of bamboo, and carve a wooden plate to be used during the festival. These are prepared for the boys of six or seven to as young as four years. For the girl child, her ornaments and body clothes are carefully prepared.

Similar to Terhünyi, the first day of Sekrenyi is also the day for ritually cleansing one's house. Then the preparation for the following rituals begin with preparation of the festival meat, traditional fineries, selection of the rooster for men and hen for women for the ritual of killing them for divination to see one's luck or fortune in the near future, and the male members clean the selected village ponds to be used the next day for the ritual cleansing of themselves. After this, no one especially the womenfolk are not allowed to fetch water from the cleansed water source.

The second day of the festival is the day of sanctification for which all the men and boys go to the said village pond before dawn to use the water while it is still resting, i.e., undisturbed water called *dzüse va* in Tenyidie for the ritualistic bath. Every man carries a wooden mug to scoop out water from the pond and ritually clean themselves by adhering strictly in this order: the man would first dip his right hand in the mug and wash or mark his forehead twice, twice his heart (left chest), his right arm, left arm, right knee, left knee, after which he would mark his weapon-either gun or spear, and finally his shawls which are folded together one upon the other and placed upon his shoulder (*pfhese*) which is considered his best attire. Then he would pluck two leaves of a plant called *zohe* which is a very tenacious plant and scoop out another mug and dipping the two leafs in the mug would mark all the important joints of the boy to bless the boy with the tenacity of the plant. Finally, the child will be asked to hold his shawl well spread in his arms careful that the detailed woven part is held in his right hands and the part that goes inside is held in his left hands. Then his father will hold his hands and shake the shawl and declare, "*kenha-ker kesou, vi shürho rhü, kesuo-kerhu pete tate ho!*" which means that with the shaking off of the shawl, all diseases and sickness have been shaken off, all unclean and bad things are done away with. After the careful observation of all these, they would fetch water and return home.

After returning home, the sacrificial chicken- rooster for men and hen for women are killed for forecasting their future. An elder will then study the manner in which the rooster or hen's legs are crossed in death to see if the person will have good fortune or

not. “If its right leg is crossed over the left, it is taken as a good omen and indicative of success in any enterprise the participant may undertake.” (kire 66). Not only are the legs examined but also the rectum of the dead bird. This process of deciphering the manner of the legs and rectum of the sacrificial bird to foretell the fortune of a person is called *geizhie* in Tenyidie.

The celebration of the rest of the festival includes each age group sitting together and singing songs and inter-village friendships may be built or renewed by inviting each other and feasting together. On visiting other friendly villages for feasting, a man may put on as much as eight shawls to show one’s prestige and also respect for the hosts by wearing their best fineries.

3. Ngonyi:

The Tenyidie word ‘*ngo*’ means apathetic or nonchalant. Therefore, the festival as the name suggest, is a disenchanted and cold one. It is held in the month of April and since there is no other major work, people spend their time carrying firewood especially from the fields which are prepared for shifting cultivation. For the purpose of this festival no killing of pigs and cows take place. Unlike other festivals, during Ngonyi, if a family prepares for a meal with meat, it is enough. The festival is observed for two days in Kohima, about six days in Viswema but for about fourteen days in Khonoma village. Right after this festival, the sowing of seeds take place.

4. Kerunyi:

This festival is also called Thekranyi in Khonoma village. This festival is celebrated to mark the agricultural activity of paddy transplantation. It is celebrated in the month of May for two days. Kerunyi is observed to bless the important agricultural activity so that even a few paddy plants will cover a large area of the land prepared for their transplantation. On the first day of the festival, the *Tsiakrau* (the priest) would put on his hat and raincoat (made from a type of long grass) and go to a nearby field with an aide. His companion would carry his spear and shield while he would ceremoniously transplant a few paddy plants (about four to five paddy plants) to ritually initiate the season of transplantation (*se khrii*). He would make sure that he does not miss a single plant at each planting act. He would invoke a blessing saying, “*kijü rüzie a su pepoupelutuolie!*” which means that a small number of paddy plants will be in abundance to fill the entire field prepared productively. This is done in the belief everyone’s paddy plants to be transplanted will not fall short but will be in abundance. On the second day of the festival, the ritual sanctification of the house (*Kizhie*) is

observed. Following this, the people who have their field prepared for transplantation can start their works. The festival is observed very early in the season to enable everyone to transplant their paddy in the peak season because the perfect time for transplantation differs for each farmer depending on the availability of water in the form of irrigation water canals, rain, and springs in the fields.

5. Chadanyi:

The word '*cha*' means road and '*da*' means cutting or clearing. Therefore Chadanyi means the festival of clearing the field paths- from the village to the fields. This is observed in the month of August or at the onset of September depending on different villages. In Kohima, it is observed for two days, five days in Khonoma, and for fifteen days in Viswema. The festival is also called Tshünyi in Khonoma as it marks the harvest of millet. The festival is celebrated at the end of the works in the terrace field for the year with the blessing of a fruitful harvest that while carrying the harvest home, the people would crush and grate the weeded grass and plants from the cleared paths under their feet (totally exterminate the weeds with the weight of the harvested grains).

6. Khoupfhünyi:

This festival is celebrated in the month of September or October before the rice grain harvest season. This is the time where many of the people are almost short on the main staple food i.e., rice and are surviving on millet because most people can cultivate rice to last only for a year at the most. Therefore, this festival is based on the value of kindness and show good will towards others by preparing meals and sharing with neighbours and relatives. It originated from the generosity of a woman called Theüü who packed cooked meals and gave out to her neighbours and relatives who were finding it difficult to have decent meals of rice before the harvest season. This good will continued and everyone started following her kind gesture with the belief that if we are kind towards others, we are blessed in two folds from Kepenuopfü. Eventually this festival turned into a festival for children where people pack cooked meat on leaves and distribute it to the children in the neighbourhood.

7. Vatenyi or Kevakete:

Kevakete is more like a ritualistic acknowledgement or thanksgiving to Kepenuopfü for the good yielding or harvest. This is observed in the month of November after the harvest is brought home from the fields. It is also a ceremony undertaken by the mother or woman of the house to entreat Kepenuopfü to bless their harvested rice to

last the entire year till the next harvest. On that day, it is taboo for the woman of the house to eat rice until sundown therefore, she abstain herself from eating rice and eat boiled gram, sweet potato, and such others as it is also taboo to roast them in the fire. She can also have frogs or crab because those animals can go without food. The next day, the women wait for sunrise and as soon as the sunrise, they put the tip of their shawl into each grain basket (*tshü*) and collect the grains which get affixed to the shawl. Then they husk them with their nails and put them into the pot where the rice is cooked to signify that they are having newly harvested rice which has been blessed with abundance and sustainability. If this festival is not observed by a family, it was believed that the harvest of the particular household will not last for the year.

2.9. The Angami Nagas and their tumultuous history:

The Angami Nagas knew no war like the Battle of Khonoma and the Battle of Kohima. They had previously fought wars but they were confined to inter-village wars and small fights with their neighbouring kingdoms. With the coming of British administration in the Angami region, the people experienced two very intense wars that starved, displaced and left scars on their simple agrarian lives. In addition to these wars, the Nagas in general underwent a process of betrayal, aggravation, and grueling political turmoil after the Nagas were left at the mercy of the foreign Indian government when the British rule came to an end against the mass wishes of the proud Nagas which was made known to the Indian Government on many occasions even before the declaration of Indian Independence as early as 1929.

The Battle of Khonoma was fought in 1879 between the British troops and Khonoma village, the last Angami area to come under British administration. On 14th October 1879, when Damant arrived at khonoma village gate, he was killed by Khonoma warriors. This led to more Angami villages joining the Khonoma warriors to fight the invaders. In retaliation, the Britishers under Colonel Johnstone was called in from Manipur who came with two thousand police, infantry, and Manipuri levies which resulted in a temporary defeat of the Angami warriors who retreated to their own villages. Another attack on Khonoma was orchestrated by the British troops this time with more planning and aggression. On the second day of the war, to the surprise of the British troops, the village was abandoned as the warriors strategically retreated to the mountain stronghold called Tsiekha and continued a war which the British troops could not defeat. After four months of unfaltering fight, a treaty was initiated and for the sake

of the displaced women and children the warriors agreed. On 27th March 1880, the war officially ended through a ‘traditional treaty’ between the British and Khonoma in Mezora at Thopi *Kitiezha* (Thopi’s compound). As recounted orally by Tsilie Sakhrie, the treaty can be called a traditional treaty because it was made ritually with the British Colonel holding a black cat at the tail and Pelhou Dolie, representing Khonoma holding the cat at its head. The cat was then cut in halves and each half was taken by the respective group. It was narrated that after the treaty, the British government ruthlessly burnt down the entire village and reconstruction of the village was denied displacing the villagers. Eventually they returned to their village and rebuilt their desecrated homeland. Their village is today India’s first green village attracting tourists from all corners of the world and championing in promoting nature conservation.

The Battle of Kohima was fought between the Allied forces and the Japanese Imperial Army from 4th of April to 22nd June 1944 at Kohima, which was then a small outpost of the British.. The reason for the Japanese invasion was to cut off the Kohima-Imphal road thus preventing the British troops from recapturing Burma. They wanted to close the Burma Road which was vital in transporting supplies to China. This mission was coded U-Go. For the first time, the Angami Nagas experienced modern warfare first hand. Many innocent lives were lost and villages pillaged and burnt. The impact of the war was so hard on the innocent people who had no business with the war that they had to abandon their fiercely cherished villages and seek refuge in the wild forests to escape the air raids and the wide destruction caused by the modern artilleries. The Japanese invaded Kohima through the Southern Angami villages and met no resistance there as they were told by the Indian troops accompanying them that they were there only to set them free from the foreign rule of the British and that they would return back once their mission is completed. However, later in the war, the Japanese Army grew desperate as they were running really scarce on their ration which led them to extort food from the villagers who themselves were struggling to meet their end during such a devastating war. They also forced the people to carry their loads and gather food for them which drove them to turn against the Imperial Army and work for the British in overthrowing the Japanese invasion from the Angami soil. The famous ‘Battle of the Tennis –Court’ was the deciding battle which was one of the most savage battles as hand to hand combat was fought between the two parties amidst exploding mortar shells, grenades, and sniper shots which lasted for about two weeks. For the Angami Nagas, the Second World War,

which otherwise would be of no business and no consequence to them experienced unspeakable sufferings to the extent of abandoning their entire village as the war threatened their very existence. This is called “*Nagamia Rüta Kerieu*” by the Angamis which literally means the “The First Run off of the Nagas”.

Once the news about the end of British occupation of India and Naga Hills started surfacing in the 1920s, the politically conscious Nagas formed the Naga Club to champion the Naga way of life and protect the Nagas from any other foreign rule. In 1929, they submitted the famous memorandum to the Simon Commission penning down their wish to be free to determine their own future. The previously existing the Naga Hills District Tribal Council (NHDTTC) changed its name to Naga National Council (NNC) in 1946 which became the organization to be recognized as the parent body to fight for Naga independence. A.Z. Phizo joined the NNC in 1946 after his return from Burma and became one of the most persistent Naga leaders for Independence. He is known as the Father of the Naga Nationalism. Letters were written to the British Indian Government in early 1947 for an ‘interim government’ and asked to be left alone to decide for their future. Delegations of Nagas were also sent to Delhi to meet Mahatma Gandhi who was against any oppression and suppression and further add that he would come to Kohima and be the first to be shot before any Naga was killed if the Indian Government sends troops to Naga Hills. All these fell on deaf ears. Disheartened by the lack of any positive outcome, the Nagas declared their independence on 14th August 1947, one day before the Indians received their independence from the British Raj. The NNC under the leadership of A.Z. Phizo launched extensive political movements across the Naga Hills. The famous plebiscite was called in 1951 where 99 per cent Nagas supported independence. Even then was their wishes overlooked which led to non-cooperation movements.

One of the most difficult periods the entire Naga community faced was between 1950s and 1960s where the Indian Army along with the village guards (Nagas who sided with the Indians and aided their cause in suppressing any uprising and retaliation plans made by Naga patriots) aggressively carried out their offensive operations in the villages. The indigenous people suffered untold miseries as there were rampant arrests, killings, burning of villages and granaries, torture and rape in its worst brutality. This led to another mass exodus of the people from their homes into the wilderness to escape the atrocities committed by the much more powerful non-native army. This is called

'Nagamia Rüta kenieu' or the second run off of the Nagas. The Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN) was formed to claim the sovereignty of the Naga people which the Indian Government refers to as the Underground Nagas.

There were some moderate minded members among the political freedom fighters who went forward with the Indian Government to make agreements for statehood resulting in the 6- Point Agreement and then the Shillong Accord in 1975. This led to the breaking up of the NNC and formation of National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). This breaking up of the NNC into discordant groups is another significant setback in Nagas political history as the factional killings marked another new violent phase in its history even after the signing of cease fire with the Indian Government. The Naga freedom struggle is still in the process where many talks and negotiations are made between the two government representatives to chalk out a solution which both could agree upon. Many Naga organizations apart from the Naga political groups have worked and are still working for the formulation of a peaceful solution to the issue.

2.10. **Impact of Christianity and western education in Angami society:**

Christianity and Western Education were brought to the Angami Nagas through the American missionaries and not through the British because even though the Angamis came under the British administration, they did not interfere in their way of life. It was the American missionaries who brought both Christianity and western education to the Angami Nagas that gave birth to modernism. But even in this present century, the Angamis are still caught between the traditional and the modern. Culturally, the Angami Nagas were reserved by nature in addition to being deeply rooted in their cultural practices which made the adoption of western education and Christianity slow at the beginning. The first Angami converts faced much ostracism from their people as the entire culture or lifestyle of the tribe is controlled by the belief of their ancestors. Agriculture being the main occupation of the people is strictly governed by the rituals of the Angami ancestral cultural beliefs. Every activity is firmly dictated by the teachings of their forefathers and so to quickly accept a new religion was not easy as it means a drastic change in their entire lifestyle. The first converts' feared excommunication from their fellow villagers. There were oral testimonies of beatings, trails when they do not observe the proper rituals especially before the agricultural activities for fear of angering the spirits which may result in a poor harvest or pest infestation of their crops, threat for

excommunication for not observing the rituals for festivals and other daily activities and events. At Viswema, the discrimination of the first Christian converts was confined to women because adolescent girls and young women were given the permission to grow their hair only after performing a ritual claiming them to be married women. After converting into Christians, they could not grow their hair unless they get married for real. One of the first converts from the village claimed that he converted to Christianity to prevent the premature death of his sick children. The first Christian convert from Vismema was Viriho Kikhi, who converted to be healed from malaria. Oral testimonies affirmed that the Christian belief in 'everyone is a sinner' was first unacceptable to the Angamis because their self confidence in their purity resulting from the consistency in their observance of the rituals.

However, gradually, the people accepted the new religion because of its affinity with their belief system of belief in a creator, one God who controls everything and because of the promise for cures from ailments like malaria. According to oral testimonies, the beliefs relating to life after death during the pre-Christian era was grim and bleak which all feared but with the introduction of Christian teachings, people were educated on the Christian belief of a happy life after death in Heaven, a concept which was happily welcomed by the people. Though they accepted a new religion and was educated in all fields to a certain extent, they underwent a state of identity crisis in the process of this cultural assimilation. Some more orthodox members became very hostile to all the changes in their society and opposed greatly to this cultural assimilation which they viewed as a threat to their very own indigenous practices and tribal identity.

Today, the entire Angami tribe proudly call themselves Christians. Interestingly, the Angamis have their own version of Christianity- a combination of the Biblical Christian principles and nativized version of Christianity. As their culture is deeply ingrained in their everyday language, activities, and beliefs, they are unable to do away with their old religion (*nanyü*) completely. For instance, the word *Kenyü* (which means taboo or forbidden) is still used almost every day which makes a thing totally binding to everyone and also said before speaking any premonition in the belief that the word will ease or lighten the gravity of the meaning of the spoken words. The practise of calling out names of the young ones followed by "*vo rielie*" (go before us) when they go to new places and fields is still prevalent in order to prevent the event of losing their souls in that place, burying of placenta in their own homes for the belief that the soul of the departed always

visit the place where their placenta is buried, it is still a taboo to get married during moonless days because according to the olden belief, no major event including agricultural is done during moonless days.

2.11. **The state of oral tradition today:**

It is without doubt oral tradition has been significantly affected by the introduction of written documents in all oral societies. In addition to this, with the advancement and developments, the people started to settle in towns and urban areas thus extending the horizon of the villages. Inter-tribal marriages have become very common which often becomes a threat to tribal languages as English and Nagamese replaces their languages to serve as link languages. In such cases, the children miss out a lot on the cultural heritage due to language barrier. Today the schools are playing major role in inculcating in children the value of their own language and tradition. However, this was not the case early on. The children were neither encouraged to speak their tribal language nor express their cultural values as the sole focus of education was on reading and writing English alphabets. This resulted in the loss of interest in their traditional culture. However, through the oral testimonies collected, the main reason for the lack of extensive propagation of their culture through the oral tradition is the lack of interest in the present generation to listen to the elders. They blame this lack of interest in sitting and listening to their addiction to technology, especially mobile phones, computers and easy access to internet and myriad and infinite entertainment.

It goes without saying that people forget stories and songs or any other orally transmitted records when they are not repeated often. This is true for the present generation. They are losing the essence of their culture because of the lack of enthusiastic listeners amongst the young generation. Consciously or unconsciously the youth of today still share the folktales and legacies and fetes of the warriors of the bygone years during gatherings, camping, and family holidays. However many details are forgotten and altered also owing to the insufficiency of telling and retelling. Yet, the present generation has also realized the importance of preserving and promoting their rich cultural heritage and efforts have been made to revive the art of storytelling, relearn cultural songs and dances, promote traditional arts of weaving, black smithy, and such others. Angami festivals like Sekrenyi are celebrated each year to preserve their cultural heritage even though the rituals are not in practice anymore. One of the most recent activities which aimed at conserving and spreading the importance of preserving the traditional folktales transmitted orally for generations was the

‘Nagaland Online Folktale Storytelling Competition’ - first of its kind organized and managed by the ‘Naga Manu production’ from 5th July to 9th August 2021. It was also opined that though the present world is a world of written tradition and some written sources on Angami culture are also available, when it comes to clarifying doubts or writing a project on culture, the people still rely on oral transmission of their tradition by asking the elderly. Therefore contemplating on the present circumstances, it can be argued that oral tradition is still predominant when it comes to transmitting their cultural values though the concern for documenting their rich heritage in written form for the future generations is a pressing matter.

CHAPTER III

ORALITY IN SELECT COMPILED LITERATURE IN TENYIDIE.

3.1. Introduction to the Chapter

The Tenyimia culture which includes the Angami Naga had survived and thrived solely through orality for centuries. The importance of orality has not diminished even in this technological contemporary times though it is without argument that due significance is not given today to the age-old traditions which can only be acquired orally (not put down in written form) for the lack of earnest interest on the part of the present group of generations. It is true of all oral societies that even after the introduction and later, the dominance of written tradition, their oral tradition play a monumental role in transmitting knowledge and wisdom pertaining to their cultural practices and values. In fact, their written literatures are often found to be replete with their oral literature. In accord with the statement, the oral tradition of the Angami Nagas is an integral and indispensable part of their written literature.

To justify the statement that orality occupies a major state in the written literature of the Angami Nagas, one can analyze especially their poetry or songs. This is because of the fact that songs occupy an absolute essential place in their day-to-day cultural lives. Songs of varied meanings- from everyday practices to legendary love stories and fetes of extraordinary individuals are sung by the community to keep alive the history and identity of the community. Here, songs and poetry are very closely knitted because in Tenyidie, the word 'Ü' is used to signify songs and songs are composed in poetry with nine syllables in each line to form the tune or melody of the song which is called *lige* in Tenyidie and follows the sequence or pattern of notes- *so hi mo zo so no di yo lie* (the Do- Re-Mi of the English counterpart) The select compiled poems were songs in the written form or composed to be sung. Therefore each poem can be sung by following the given musical scale.

It should also be noted that word by word translation of the select pieces cannot be made due to the depth and intensity of the meaning each word holds. It is almost impossible to find a single word in English which can hold equivalent meaning and depth of many words. Moreover, the cultural implications of each word are immense which regrettably threatens to lose its meaning and intensity during translation.

3.2. Folk poetry on Marriage:

Marriage in the Angami Naga culture is considered an honourable event in one's life as well as in the society. Marriage is solemnly respected so much so that married people are considered the "blessed ones". Marriage during the pre-Christian era in the Angami culture was strictly arranged by parents and relatives. The bride is chosen by the groom's family and a proposal is made to her parents. As such, love marriages were considered preposterous. Any person who gets married at one's own will without observing the proper rituals, arrangements and without the blessings of the parents and relatives is considered not only a disgrace to the family but also as a misfortune (ill-fated) for both families involved. It can be noted that hardly any love marriage take place for fear of ritual rite violation.

With the societal system being a patriarchal one, all important decisions are taken by the male head of the family. Therefore, the decision of the male head of the family of both the sides is final and binding when it comes to marriages too. However, it can be pointed out that the groom-to-be has at least the advantage of being informed of his intending marriage before the preparation of the marriage. In most cases, the groom-to-be is asked if he would favour the woman in question. Women, however, do not get the privilege of choosing one's husband. In fact, during the pre-Christian era, marriages take place at night so in almost all marriages, the woman is informed only on the morning of her wedding day because on that day she would not go to the field but stay at home and prepare for her things for the wedding. Since being respectful and obeying the wishes of one's parents and elders are very important values in the Angami culture, they would get married whether they like it or not and thus there are instances of many individuals who get married to fulfill the wishes of their parents but end up separating from their spouses after a year or two or even few years. There are also instances where a divorcée or divorcé marries their former lover or beloved. However, not all arranged marriages end up in separation or misery. Most marriages were successful and filled with love, respect, happiness and prosperity in terms of children, cattle, and grain.

The family of the man will look for certain qualities in the woman they are interested in, such as high moral standards, good health, diligence and hard-working nature. A proposal is sent to the parents of the woman after considering such virtues. The proposal is taken into consideration by enquiring about the intending man's disposition and his property.

The point of interest in folk poetry about marriages points mainly towards the helplessness of two people in love if their parents do not favour the union. They get married to their

respective spouses chosen by their parents but still pines for each other. Another theme in folk poetry regarding marriage is about women who are married off to another village pines to return home and friends (peers) but parents do not approve of them returning home. Some poems are selected to analyze the theme of marriage which tells the sad side of arranged unhappy marriages according to the traditional Angami customs.

It is worth mentioning that even today in the Angami community; the importance of sending wedding emissaries to the intending woman with marriage proposal from the groom-to-be is still evident. However, the marriages of today are much influenced by the western world as most marriages are arranged between two lovers or at least allowed to get to know each other before marriage to develop affection or liking between the two. Women today are given equal privilege in accepting or rejecting a marriage proposal as that of a man. The weddings are also a combination of Christian customs and the traditional Angami Naga customs. For instance, after the marriage proposal from the man's emissaries, the dreams from the woman's family play a crucial role. Bad dreams often result up in rejection of the marriage proposal. Wedding dates are selected carefully avoiding moonless days. In addition to that, an interesting detail while fixing the wedding date is the avoidance of the month of February even today by many Angami Christians because the month February is called *Kezei* in Tenyidie which means 'dark' i.e., the dark month. February month is called *Kezeiu khrü* because it is the time when the sky is dark and gloomy and the atmosphere becomes hazy that it gets difficult to see the horizon. They fear that marriages that take place in this month end up in misfortunes and grief. Even after becoming Christians, many Angamis still hesitate to fix wedding dates in the month of February which is called *Kezeiu khrü* in Tenyidie.

3.2.1. Avu Nei Hu

Avu nei hu kerî nyücau,
 U kinumia mo zo u die rhe
 Molie idi so kesipfü rha.
 A tsü derei no ha khapie se
 Mia kethaü chü ro a ro sievü.
 U ramianie Khruonyi nyi-o nyi,
 Hie pie wepfü kenienuo ki vo,
 Kezha nhie we sieunuo lerü
 Kehie shüphrei hie zü pie kelhou.

Nie nuo za ü suo chü di sievü,
 A thuo a nou vikemo üse:
 Zevokhrienuo tholie ü izo.

Cüzie meluo keviu depie,
 Hie pieünuo vo khashü dinu,
 Nie kethau ketso üliro.
 A vie ü hie kenienueo lhikhrü
 Kevieuwaluo a nei kerüü

Our Mutual Love

Our mutual love longing for marriage;
 In vain; my family disagree strongly
 Marriage with a lady from yonder.
 Yet to let you
 Be someone else's wife; I covet my beloved.

Our villagers celebrating Khruonyi,
 I brought my child to visit my parents;
 My beloved came by,
 Unbinding my child off my back
 Cradling my child playfully, asked,
 What have you name your child?
 And I replied; with my lesser insignificant self
 I call her Zevokhrienuo.

Taking off his prided necklace, choosing the best bead,
 Donning it on my child's neck, he said,
 If your husband ever ask about it,
 Do not say tis from me, tell him it is from your parents.
 Do hide it, the one I love tenfold more.

Compiled by: Shürhozelie
 Translated by: Khriebeinuo Keretsü

This poem reveals the pain of unfulfilled love of a man and a woman who were committed and desirous of a marriage. The poem is famous more so for revealing the feelings of both the man and the woman who were forced to separate. The first verse has been spoken by the man who explains that though they were committed in love and intended to get married they had to separate due to the fact that his family did not favour their union. A woman from another village was brought to him as a wife by his family. But he expresses his anguish and regret over the idea that his beloved will become another man's wife. In the second verse, we find the woman visiting her parents' home with her child during the first festival of the year also called Terhünyi, the festival of thanksgiving for the Angamis where people show goodness towards each other. The two lovers crossed each other's path again at her parents place. It can be assumed that he came bearing food as gift to her parents as was the spirit of the festival according to the Angami Nagas. The man ask the name of her baby and she replied that she with her inadequate nature have named her Zevokhrienuo as to suggest that she did not want to take her baby to another family or place. However it should be made clear that the child she bore was with her husband and not with her lover. She made this self-depreciating remark because it was implied that she was not proposed by the man's family because they found her lacking and not good enough for him. He gave the best bead (the middle one) from his carnelian necklace that he was wearing to her child and tells her to hide the fact that it was from him and calls her his lover whom he loves ten-times fold more than any other. The regrets for not having married and have children together but being married to different people and bearing a child from another man when they have strong love for each other makes the poem very painful as it captures the emotions of many who suffered from this strict traditional form of arranged marriage disregarding the feelings and wishes of the two people involved.

3.2.2. A Kesuoü

A kesuoü sie vo thenupfü,
 Sou chülie mu liemou a se nu
 Ketsu nhie we teinuo kesisie,
 Mehü thesü loziko pfhe he;
 Zo vor mu zo sie a khou vü.
 Tsiezhü sie vo a kethau tso,
 Kemo chalie hara tuo thienyü
 Nha mezü rho cha meluo nu kha,

Zo zhütuo mu hatsa tsurüluo;
 Kezha ki we jü lhou'rü huvuo-o.

The Lesser Me

The lesser me; when blossomed to be a woman,
 In the fields lonesome,
 Turned into a cold-breezy day.
 Echoes the tunes of my comrades,
 When that reached me, I beat my bosom.
 Yearning for some message-bearer
 To take message to my husband, I won't be home tonight.
 Plucking tender plants, laying then on the path,
 Marking direction, 'do come this way'.
 Those were the days, when life's carefree
 Being my parents' child.

Compiled by: Shürhozelie

Translated by: Khriebeinu Keretsü

This poem talks about the yearning of one's life as a daughter before becoming a wife. Typical of Angami traditional practice, the woman is married off to start a new life most probably to a man she doesn't know or approves of. The title of the poem suggests how she views herself as a regretful individual separated from her dear comrades. She represents all women who are married off irrespective of their wishes and who yearn for their old selves as daughters and carefree maidens. She yearns for the time when she would pluck buds and lay it on the road as message to her friends which way she went and which path they should take. The act of plucking bud as direction for comrades was a common practice amongst the Angamis and the mention of such a simple everyday act shows how much she misses even the simplest of things one does as a maiden.

3.2.3. U Livimia

U livimia sortü-nuo lievü,
 Vü hutuoü zo sie kerütso,
 Nie zunuo pa nie phisolo whi,
 Pfü tsutuoü dzüvi ba leru;

Hie neiünuo nyhütaü purü,
 Zeu avu lo charü chüse,
 Tsü whishü yha a zeu avu,
 Whishü nyü rei bou mezieyalie:
 Nou di rükra bou mezhie ya di?

Hie neiünuo nhyüketa sie sü,
 Kerütso tsu suo rüya chü nyi?
 Hie pfhe shücha hie kiahehie pie,
 Hie neiünuo ki kekho duü,

Sie votuoü puo nhyüsü kekro,
 Pfhürhu gei shü kra zo hie rüchü.
 Nie we thie tsu u livimia ze,
 Tuo mo mo di hie ki puyoyi.

Hie rei thie tsu u livimai ze,
 Yu mo tuo di larü nyü caü;
 Thenumianie sievo rüna nu,
 Dzüzei mo di kidi tuolie shi?

Nha rho kikhrie kharü shü vaya,
 Misu zhieshü puo phou kenyü krei-
 Kelie lanu dzüzei moya shie.
 Mia dichümia lhou sie mia ruokuo,
 Mia neimia lie mia neimia kinyi,
 Kesuo chü mo mia kinu mhanyi-
 Keliemia we phou keyhomia tuo.

Our Peers

Our peers prepared to work at Sorü's field,
 All gets groomed lavishly in best costumes,
 With your armlet and calf binding strings,
 Ready and anticipating to leave.

The news of my beloved's marriage reaches me,
 Comrade hold our yarn stick,
 Bind my pigtail my comrade,
 I wish I could yet my arm weakens:
 What thoughts weakens your arm thus?

If my beloved is married,
 Whom should I gladden with such adornments?
 Tied my shawl on my waist holding my yellow-horn cup,
 The morning I went up to my beloved.

Preparing to be married was shaking her wedding-flask,
 Putting it on the rack talked to me in tears.
 Are you going with our peers today,
 To the fields oh do tell.

I do want to join our peers today,
 Spend the day in gaiety and return;
 How can a woman go to a village,
 And remain without feeling such pensive sadness?

Fresh-buds inserted on the pillar and closed door,
 Pitch a hearth tripod to ritually declare her life free from misfortune.
 This is the reason why they are not overcome by melancholy.
 There are some who are more fortunate,
 Marrying their lover and married to their beloved,
 Sustaining no adversity thriving in wealth,
 Such people will be regarded exceedingly favoured.

Compiled by: M. Meguo-o

Translated by: Khriebeinu Keretsü

This poem is interesting more so for the fact that it has recorded the feelings and pain of the man who had to experience the loss of a beloved through arranged marriage. The poem is composed in a conversational mode with majority of the lines narrated by the lover. The

helplessness of both the lovers in the arranged marriage is reflected in the lines where the lover on hearing the news of his beloved's impending marriage leaves every festive preparation behind and visits her one last time but not with the intention of dissuading her but just to check on her. The woman also cries on seeing her lover but mechanically shakes her wedding-flask with water and puts it on the drying rack while asking him of the day's activity which she would also have joined if not for her wedding. This shows their helplessness on the situation. Though both hearts were breaking, the wishes of the elders or parents are upheld at all cost. In fact, the wretchedness and glumness of the lover is seen where his friend asked him to tie his pigtail with tread but he became so glum from the news that he felt weak, physically even that he could not lift up his hand to do as requested.

Yet the most poignant point which makes this poem so memorable is the question asked by the lover. He asked how women can remain ever so in a marriage without feeling dejected. Though the poet gave a reason as to why they could, by stating that it was because of the ritual observed for them by placing or inserting a fresh unspoilt bud on the pillar of the house, closing the door and building a new hearth tripod in their name for good fortune. However, the poet is not unaware of the strength of a woman. Even if it is not explicitly stated, we see that the poet is in awe of the strength and the stoicism of a woman who can forbear the pain of losing a lover and marrying another without so much so a complaint. This is proven from the rhetorical question that the lover states. He wondered how a woman can endure to leave everything behind and remain in a marriage without feeling miserable because he for one felt that his spirit is so down he could not imagine his day at Sorü's field with his friends though it was to be filled with laughter when she is getting married.

3.3. Folk Poetry on Headhunting

The practice of head hunting in the Angami Naga culture is related to the idea of manliness or manhood. The pride and prestige of a man depended mainly on his success in war and taking heads. Men who were able to take heads were respected, feared, and admired. Moreover, unmarried men who have taken heads were desired as prospective husbands and son-in-laws. This was practiced to an extent that headhunting became a necessity for marriage. Hutton in his book, *The Angami Nagas* wrote:

It is agreed by all Angamis, as well as by other Nagas, that head-taking was essential to marriage in so far that a buck who had taken no head, and could not wear the warrior's dress at festivals, not only found it exceedingly difficult to get any girl with

pretensions to good looks or to self- respect to marry him, but was held up to ridicule by all the girls of his clan. (165)

The idea behind this, according to Easterine Iralu is that the men needed to prove or show that they could protect their wives (Iralu 53).

During a time of war and village enmity, the villages with warriors who have much success in taking heads were feared and thus experienced lesser raids. The prestige gained by men by taking heads lead to frequent raids in enemy villages and the practice of avenging contributed to the endless cycle of head hunting. This is the reason why men were expected to protect one's family and village leaving the burden of cultivating their fields to the womenfolk. This is the reason why women carried their child tied with a cloth in front and carried their *kho* (woven basket) on their backs while the men walked to and from the fields empty handed except for their spear in their hands and machete on their waist belt (*zhie sa*) designed to carry machete. From a feminist point of view, one can argue that it is quite unfair and a form of suppression, however, during head-hunting era, men were exempted from many such things which could lighten the burdens of women for the sake of protection from surprise raids and attacks.

The practice of taking heads as trophies might also have contributed to the branding of the tribe as "savages" by Hutton in his book *The Angami Nagas* where he related head-hunting with "the idea sacrifice" and added that "killing of a human being is conducive to the prosperity of the community or of the crops." (159). However, from the interviews, it was found that head-hunting was solely done for prestige and reputation- to be able to wear warrior's attire. First and foremost is the desire to earn the right to put on feathers in the head which is a mark of manliness and courage. *Ramei* which can be literally translated as bird's tail/ feather is the prized Hornbill feather. *Ramei* as an ornament is significant as it marked the highest form of valour and honour for men in the Angami Naga society during head-hunting era. It differentiates a warrior who has taken heads from someone who has not. If a man was able to take one head, he was entitled to put on three feathers and six for two heads and so on. Each feather has its own purport- the first feather signifies personal glory or victory; the second signifies the victim's image; and the third, victim's shadow. In case a warrior has many kills and the feathers can no longer fit in his head, he would make a head gear with straw and pierce the feathers and one may also pierce the feathers in straw and tie it to his body cloth.

In addition to *ramei*, there are other adornments for warriors which are made from the hair of their victims. The reputation of men successful in taking many heads preceded them in all neighbouring villages. It is believed that such warriors are followed by an aura which eludes fear in others. Therefore, on encountering with such a warrior, the enemy troop would retreat without a fight. When enemies run away for fear of such a warrior, he is entitled to wear the *thaciü* which is a necklace made from one's victims' hair. Another symbol of adornment for warriors is a head gear called *petsou kiaw* which literally means the horn of adversary. This is made by cutting a sponge gourd (*luffa aegytiaca*) in the form of horns of buffalo and pasted with one's victims' hair. Usually head-hunting troops are made up of four to ten warriors. One warrior is assigned to guard the rear of the group to provide protection from pursuing enemy warrior troop. This warrior should be on alert at all times and should be adept in combat and warfare. He should be brave and vigorous. When a warrior is successful in protecting his troop from pursuing enemy troop during a head-hunting encounter, he is entitled to put on the *thamei* (*tha*-hair, *mei*- tail) which is a tail made from his victims' hair like that of the tail of cattle's to signify his success in his afore mentioned assignment.

Head-hunting, as brutish and violent as it may sound, was an integral part of their tradition. It was however, not without its set of principles. One very striking feature of the Angami Naga tradition is their sense of discipline in following their set of rules laid down by their ancestors through oral tradition. It also shows how closely they are attuned to their culture and how religiously they keep alive their cultural practices which are passed on for generations through the means of oral tradition. Even for things such as war and head-hunting, the Angamis followed strict rules of moral conducts. Some instances of such moral codes followed by the Angami Nagas for war and head-hunting will be cited below. The traditional Angami Naga culture, being agrarians by profession made agriculture their priority. Therefore, it was generally agreed, accepted, and firmly adhered to the rule that no war or head-hunting takes place during the cultivation period. The season was called *metsü-therü* in Tenyidie and stands for the months of monsoon where most agricultural activities take place. In short, it signifies the rainy season in their calendar. The days were carefully counted for cultivation. In fact, the people struggled to meet the deadline to finish their field work before the commencement of the head-hunting season which took place during the dry season. It was forbidden to break this time frame for war and head-hunting. People who were unable to finish their field work at the stipulated time often became victims of head-hunters as they were caught unaware engrossed in their field activities. It was also reported that many were killed immediately the next few day of the end of the stipulated time for cultivation. This time

frame assigned for terrace field cultivation was never broken and was strictly complied with by all because it is their cultural belief that the future generations of the defaulters would suffer different misfortunes in its highest forms.

The second moral code followed by the Angamis during head-taking process to be discussed here is the announcement of war from the warrior after a successful head-taking, be it in the enemy village, or in enemy territory in the fields. After taking the head of an enemy clan, a warrior cannot simply sneak away. In order to earn *ramei*, the warrior who has taken head or heads had to proclaim very loudly, “*Thie terhü ho, terhü ketho ho!*” which can be simply translated as, “Today is war, real war!” this declaration of war is called *terhü rükhruo* in Tenyidie. Though one can argue that head-hunting is not fair as people can kill and hunt for another human being like any other game where many times, a warrior would sneak up behind unwitting victims, kill them and take their heads or sometimes chase after helpless victims like women and children. This declaration can be considered as a moral code which would vindicate any question of cowardice because the declaration of war against the enemy while in their territory in addition to being in a small troop or alone take enormous courage. This is done to provide fair opportunity to the victim’s family or clan to take revenge by chasing after the offender or offenders. In case a person took a head but did not make the declaration of war, he is forbidden to put on the coveted *ramei* as he did not earn them honourably. This reiterates the goal behind head-hunting, i.e., solely to earn the coveted adornments of warriors and not for cruel intentions. (Medoselhou 14 Sept. 2022). A chain of events take place after a successful head-taking as the offender or offenders will now become the pursued as enemy troops who have heard the war call will pursue him or them in order to avenge the kill. Therefore as discussed earlier, the warrior assigned to take the rearmost position often gets killed while the warrior who is successful in guarding his troop thus earns the *thamei* for being vigilant and courageous, and also for his physical agility.

One distinct feature in Angami Naga tradition regarding head-hunting is that they do not decorate their houses with the heads. The reason for this is humility. Ironic and complicated as it may sound, they take great pride in putting on the hornbill feathers and other adornments earned from head-hunting but do not boast of their feat by showing off the heads for fear of their creator. In fact, after observing the ritual which follow a successful head-hunting, the head or heads are returned to their relatives when they come seeking for ritual and burial. There are some instances where the relatives of the victim would come during the middle of the ritual, even then the head will be returned. It is forbidden (*Kenyü*) to humiliate the relatives of the victim. They are treated with dignity when they come for the head. It is forbidden to kill them. However, they are sent off

with a declaration of blessing to oneself, “O, *hasie haki kra cha vor rei khashütuo we!*” which means, “very well, in future if you come seeking for more than this, I will give you.” This is to bless oneself with success in future feats. In cases where the clansmen or villagers of the victim could not identify the head-takers, the head would remain unclaimed. In such instances, some elders would take the head and bury it near the *kiputsie*. *Kiputsie* is the stone which is erected on occasion of forming a new village. This stone is the most significant stone in a village because it was erected with the belief that it would shoulder every misfortune which the villagers cannot withstand.

The Angamis detach themselves from their deed of taking heads. They do not take heads for ill-intention. They practice head-hunting as they chase for an image of manliness in the form of warrior attires. As horrific as it may sound to the people of today, head-hunting had one humane aspect to it if one could use the term humane to describe it. It was forbidden to sever the head of one’s victim while they are conscious. Most people bleed to dead before their killer reach them when they are speared down. However, if a warrior is able to reach his victim while he is still conscious, he would say, “*Co, A mo ho. A ngou thuo N tha khripie zhüwate ho. No kemezhié ho!*” which means, “You see, it is not I but my spear which had fallen you. I feel sorry for your suffering!” This shows that there is no feeling of hatred or personal enmity. This feeling can be reinforced from the folk poetry on head-hunting. We find no expression of hatred towards the perpetrator or hatred towards the deed. There is expression only for the regret and remorse for losing a loved one and a great sense of loss.

3.3.1. Mehoviü

Mehoviü ze ketsu metsei,
 Lu Kedeizou Morüsa kinu;
 Khutie pie cü u hiezu pie krie.
 Tuo üyie mu mha kevi nhie ru,
 Mehoviü Morüsa unie,
 Keri mo di sokenuo die chü
 Tuo ü zo di lhou’rülue tele.

Mehoviü

Mehoviü’s recurring dream.
 Yon at Kidizou inside Morüsa’s house,

Feasting and drinking.
 Could have passed it as great fortune,
 Ah! Mehoviü and Morüsa, the pair,
 Not marriage but the topic of neighbouring villages.
 What an unfortunate short life.

Compiled by : Shürhozelie

Translated by : Khriebeinu Keretsü

The poem is very short and does not hold much meaning without understanding the legend on which it was based and composed. This poem tells a tragic story of two people tied together by fate, but never meant to be together, their story is however destined to be told and mourned for generations to come. Morüsa was a man from Kidima village. He was famed for his good looks, physical agility, his wealth, and for his reputation as a great warrior. Equally famed for her good looks and moral values was Mehoviü, a young maiden from another village. Morüsa's relatives were pressing him to get married and settle down, however at that time they could not find an ideal match for him from their own village. When the fame of Mehoviü reached them, they sent an emissary to her house with a marriage proposal. Their marriage was thought to be predestined as Mehoviü even before the marriage proposal had recurring dreams in which she saw herself having rice and drinking rice brew at Morüsa's house. Everyone thought her dreams meant an illustrious marriage as both of them were an ideal match of beauty, wealth and moral values.

Ironically, as the day of the marriage dawns, Morüsa in order to impress his bride-to-be, decided to go head hunting, so that when she arrives at night, his courtyard would be filled and overflowing with his friends part-taking the ritualistic feast called *rüprîe* which follows successful head hunting. Morüsa set out on his hunt but on that fateful day, he did not encounter any soul. Everything seemed strangely quiet that particular day. Yet, determined to impress his bride, he finally wandered into a village. There in the village, he saw a solitary figure of young beautiful maiden pounding rice at her doorstep. Morüsa spied on her and hesitated, because he thought that it would be a pity to kill such a beautiful maiden. Finally in sheer desperation, Morüsa struck her dead, beheads her and returned home with his prize killing- her head.

Morüsa prepared the ritualistic feast called *rüprîe* and his house was packed with his friends to welcome his bride-to-be but she never came. When she did not arrive, he came to the conclusion that he was betrayed by a woman. His friends left when they could not wait any

longer. Later on, on enquiring he got the dreadful news that he had killed his own intended wife.

The true meaning of Mehoviü's recurrent dream is now finally revealed, they thought that her dream foretells an illustrious marriage with Morüsa, however in reality, the dream foretells of a dark and sinister tragedy in which Morüsa would unwittingly kill his own intended bride- a tragic tale which would be told and mourned for generations to come.

From this poem, we come to understand some of the motives for the practice of headhunting in the indigenous Angami Naga culture such as pride, honour and prestige.

3.3.2. Therülie Mu

Therülie mu tsu nie yuo geinu,
 So pie keda thu rüsou keba,
 Nie geituoümia rünyie kesu,
 Zozhü derei nie we si mie ru,
 Hie pfhe chülie ta seisha gei pfü,
 Hie pfhe kesou 'ra kewhuo pfhe chü,,
 Kelhozhü rei nie we si mie ru,
 Sieu thie zha jü rünou zhü ho.

By the End of Monsoon

On a delightful clearing by the end of Monsoon,
 Cradling and playing with the younger child,
 Aiming their weapon at you to strike,
 Yet you remain oblivious,
 Grabbed my shawl ran up the wooden loft,
 Waving my shawl making sounds of chasing birds,
 Attempting to draw attention but you remain ever so oblivious.
 Today I am full of remorse my love.

Compiled by: M. Meguo-o

Translated by: Khriebeinu Keretsü

This poem though very short, has beautifully captured the pain and regret of a woman who lost her husband to head-hunting. She became the sad witness of her husband's death. The fact that she became aware of the dreadful event which was about to take place and tried to

prevent it makes it more poignant. Her helplessness in the situation is seen when she could not shout warnings to her husband for fear for her first child's and her own life. Thus she did what she could. She tried to grab his attention by making sounds that one makes to shoo away birds. Yet he remained unaware and was thus killed. The poem tells of her regret and remorse in losing her husband but do not express any resentment towards the warriors nor the deed itself. It might be because head-hunting was a way of life during such a time and that it became as natural to them as can be that they have accepted such unfortunate fate without indignation.

This song or poem is believed to be about a woman from Phesama village but cannot be proven or backed up by testimonies from both sides since the dwindling of the process of story - telling amongst the present generations. But it is said that the poignancy of the song moved the guests from Dapfhütsumia khel from Kohima village during a feast hosted by Phesama Village. Thus, the song was borrowed from Phesama village but gained more popularity in Kohima village.

3.4. Folk Poetry on Women and Daughters

The Angami Naga society being a patriarchal one has man as the head of the family and society. All important decisions in connection to the community were made by the elders called *Phichüu* in Tenyidie. As mentioned in earlier chapters, *Phichüu* literally means the elder; however, two old wise men would occupy the position because of the fear of misfortunes brought on by the immensity of the position and role. All major issues were discussed by the male population from the *dahou* (raised sitting place made from stones) *thehou*, the communal sitting place and women have no part in decision making. Even at home, all major decisions were taken by the father or husband who is the head of the family. They played the subordinate role in the society. Equal rights were not given to them and their values were measured from their diligence and industriousness in household chores and field work. As Kire has rightly mentioned in her book, *Walking the Roadless Road*, "No self-respecting Angami man would want to be seen doing what are considered 'womanly' duties like fetching water, washing clothes, cooking, etc." (68) In addition to doing the bigger share of household chores, the bulk of the field work was also done by the womenfolk because very often the men would be occupied with the warfare and hunting activities. The primary role of the husband is to protect and provide.

Women and daughters obviously occupy a lower position in the pre-Christian Angami society. In fact, many deeds which would have outraged the society if it were committed by women were overlooked by society when they are committed by the society. Society allowed men to have extra-marital affairs. To put it more bluntly, they were somehow celebrated for their sexual prowess while women would be subjected to lifelong stigma as an immoral woman. To support the extent of irrationality in the dealing of men and women who had illicit love affairs, some lines will be quoted from Zetsuvi's book, *The Angami Nagas Under Colonial Rule*:

Keshünei (Kilt) of the male was originally decorated with three lines of white cowries, but that of a man who could have illicit affair with the sister of his wife or another woman was decorated with four lines of cowries as an honour to his male prowess. Whereas, if a married woman was found to commit infidelity, she was made to undergo physical punishment even to the extent that the tip of her nose could be chopped off. (21, 22)

Another aspect in the Angami society which discriminates women and daughters is in the traditional laws that dictate inheritance. Daughters do not inherit ancestral properties whether the house or fields. If a man is unable to produce a son, his ancestral properties would go to his brothers and their sons. If a woman has no brother and her father dies, their immovable properties would automatically become someone else's. So, she and her mother would practically be living in the house of her paternal uncle and cultivating her paternal uncle's fields until she gets married.

When we analyze folk poetry, we find an impressive amount of them composed on the theme of marriage. And the greater number of such poetry talks about arranged marriages and separation of dear lovers. Though many researchers had stated in their papers that Angami women had the freedom to agree to or say no to a marriage proposal, it was not the case for women during the pre-Christian or pre-colonial era. Getting the freedom of choice for one's spouse may have been a right of women for two or three generations from the present day only. As mentioned earlier, Angami women were informed of their marriage only on the morning of their wedding day. Yes, it is true that the most common form of marriages today are love-arranged marriages and we can safely say that majority of marriages are arranged between two lovers or at least allowed to get to know each other and wait for their consent before finalizing their marriage. Presently, daughters are given the same education and thus

women have evidently achieved a state of independence in all fields. They have thus understood their right to choose their spouse, say no to a marriage proposal or choose to stay unmarried without social stigma.

One area where the Angami women had immense freedom even during the pre-colonial period was in re-marriages. They had the right to remarry. They could leave their husbands if they did not suit or in cases when men become abusive and had extra-marital affairs or if their husband dies. There are many families today whose parents have a number of half-sisters and half-brothers resulting from their grandparents remarrying. A woman could marry the man her parents chose for her for year or so and return home to marry her lover or another man. They did not suffer the fate of unfortunate widows of their counterpart women from mainland India who had to undergo *Sati* or condemned to live a life of misery without comfort and rights.

Within the family, women as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers played an important role as weavers during the pre-colonial and pre-modern education era in the Angami society. Without a woman in the house, the men were left wanting in so many things. A man may be very wealthy in terms of grains, land, and cattle but he will find himself bereft of many simple things which another man would take for granted if he had a sister. To cite a small example, a man from D' Khel Kohima village lived alone and had no sister so he had no one to weave him his kilt and shawls. Therefore, a family took advantage of his condition and offered him a used basic black kilt without cowries called *Thepfunei* in exchange for a good plot of land. The incident is more pitiful when we understand what a *thepfu nei* is as it will shed light to the extent of his desperation. A *thepfu nei* is a kilt which was once a kilt decorated with cowries. When such a decorated loin cloth is worn out, the cowries are removed to be used in a new loin cloth while the one is kept for rough and ready use. This account is still used as an example to remind men that sisters play a very important role in a family.

Culturally, the degree of prominence of one's traditional attire cannot be understated. The attires of each tribe and culture differentiate it from the other. Even within the tribe, each shawl, body cloth, loin cloth or necklace has its own specific uses. Today, most Angami women have no knowledge on weaving or to piece together the beads of their necklace. Presently, many have difficulty in correctly putting on their full traditional attire without the

help of some older persons. Modern clothes, especially western ones have replaced our own cultural attires. In a seminar for women of the upper L'khel Kohima village on 8th October, 2022, Neihunuo Sorhie, a twice national awardee for handloom in her speech said that their own cultural attires are mainly made by and bought from artisans belonging to different tribes. She added that today, the age-old heritage of weaving and handloom is on the verge of dying if it is not revived by teaching the girls and also encouraged the women who knows the art, to keep on weaving as much as possible to keep alive their cultural identity. It is true for the Angami Nagas that after formal western education, the art of weaving has been given a secondary status thus the question that arise is whether the loss of art of weaving also contributing to the degeneration of one's culture?

In Angami culture, before the coming of Christianity, the woman of the house was indispensable in performing rituals. The woman of the house would make *Zumho* for every ritual and festival that would require it. *Zumho* is a form of replica of rice brew in Angami culture. It is not real rice brew but very simply made with rice soaked in water which is then pounded and mixed with two or three grains of yeast. This was made in place of real rice brew and used in rituals pertaining to sanctification of house and grave (*ki zhie, mekhru zhie*). If there is no woman in a house, a woman very close to the family will be called there and she will prepare *zumho* for the ritual. The woman should be a close relative called *zha pengou senyümia* which literally means people from the same clan who are forbidden to work for five days after the death of one of the members to observe a mourning period. Men are forbidden to prepare the *zumho* for fear of developing traits which were considered feminine. They also believed that men could lack moral courage if they prepared brew for the spirits.

Women in the Angami culture could be studied under the purview of Ecofeminism. The term Ecofeminism was coined by Francois d' Eaubonne in 1974 and aims to study the cultural, spiritual and social aspects which deal with the relationship of the oppression of women and destruction of nature. Sherry B. Ortner in her essay, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" (1974) analyzed the idea of subordination of women in different cultures. In her essay, she found that "the underlining idea" is "woman is closer to nature." (Waugh 538) which is very applicable in the Angami society. Ecofeminism brings in the question of gender in the Ecocritical evaluation of works in the form of texts and ideas. As the name suggests, Ecofeminism is combination of the terms Ecocriticism and Feminism and ever since, the movement has evolved into many branches covering concepts of culture, materialism, gender

oppression, spiritualism, and so on giving it a novel interdisciplinary approach. However, here, it will be applied as cultural Ecofeminism and analyse the relationship between nature and the Angami women in their cultural world.

Culturally, the Angami society has immense respect for nature and their belief in the spirits which controls them. Yet, the women in the Angami community seem to be more attuned to nature. When folk poetry on women is studied, one finds the affinity between nature and women impressive. Their everyday activity revolved around their natural world. Their fields, the love and appreciation for wild flowers, knowledge on vegetation, awe and fear in angering the spirits, respect for their spiritual connection with their environment, belief in meek observance in rituals for good harvest, and respect for the laws of nature is seen in their stories. Traditionally, women were also married off to men who had good fields with good water source nearer to the village. This was because of the fact that they would be the ones toiling the fields and braving the hardships of taming wild nature to provide for her family. Therefore, in a way, environment becomes an important aspect in determining her future course as a wife.

A woman is also selected as the harvest initiator called *liedepfü*. She plays a very crucial role during harvest by ritually initiating and blessing the harvest. It is forbidden to start harvesting before the ritualistic harvesting by the *liedepfü*. The woman of the house would also perform the rituals of the *kevakete* festival to bless the newly harvested grains and crops with sustainability and to do away with pests that could destroy their granary. Her role is crucial in this thanksgiving festival as discussed in the previous chapter. We see that a woman's role becomes most significant in a festival solely dedicated to harvest or nature.

3.4.1. Yavitsü-ü

A paü ze thephezü lie cie,
Mhachü nyü rei a nuo meruo pfhü,
Puo dzie nu shü a dzü pie keyie,
Sodinu-u tuo kevi rüna?

Pfuchazou-o tuo kevi rüna,
Ba üyie mu a pieü penhyü,
Mia razou shü puo bu mia ze lhou-

Tuoü idi a ra di caü,

Mia ra zho si mia liezuo cha tsu,
 Hu kemonu puo kejü purü,
 Nie sü dipfö zuluopfö merhe,
 Nie pfhe shüpa vo bapfö dinu,
 Tha pfö rükhre Dzüvala mere
 Zo lerüluo Yavitsü-ü no.

Yavitsü-ü

I cultivated land at *thepezü*¹ with my youngest child,
 Finding things to keep my child happy and occupied though works aplenty,
 Giving things for her to hold, lifting my baby keeping her in view as I dig along,
 From which village are you who propose her?

It's *Pfuchama*², a good place to stay,
 Claimed to be a good place, wedded my child,
 To that village to let her live amongst them,
 I gracefully agreed my child to go,

Getting acquainted with their lifestyle and their paths to the fields,
 News of her death reaches me even before she fully learn,
 Fill your flask to the brim with bubbles of the brew overflowing,
 Pull up your shawl over your shoulder,
 Cheerfully in your grown hair, towards *Dzüvala*³
 Do come dear Yavitsü-ü.

Compiled by: M. Meguo-o

Translated by: Khriebeinuo Keretsü

This poem is composed in memory of a woman named Yavitsü-ü. The speaker here is her mother. The speaker grieves the death of Yavitsü-ü who passed away not long after her marriage to a man from Pfuchama² which is one of the Angami villages belonging to the Southern Angami category and shares boundary with Kohima village. Yavitsü-ü's mother reminisces on the childhood of her daughter when she took her to the field as she cultivated a

plot of land at an area called thepezü¹ in Kohima village. The intensity of the mother's love is shown in the lines where she says that she spent her days in the field trying to give as much attention and time she could to her growing child unwilling to leave her out of sight though she had so much to do. The Angamis during such times work in fields like a race to complete their works within stipulated time for many reasons like maximum yielding, weather, head-hunting, gennas, etc.,. Yavitsü-ü was married off to a man from Pfuchama village and her mother thought it was a good decision because it was a good place to stay. Land is an important factor taken into consideration while marriage is discussed.

Unfortunately Yavitsü-ü passes away before long. Her mother, in order to show that Yavitsü-ü passed away not long after her marriage uses the example of her inability to fully learn the village paths to the fields and everyday habits of her new village. This shows that women's lives are closely connected to the laws and norms dictated by the society and her role as a diligent cultivator as though her life's meaning is found on those things alone.

It was another custom of the Angami culture prior to Christianity to have girls shaved their heads as a symbol of being young and symbolic of their maidenhood status. Growing of hair signifies their marital status and also of adulthood. Therefore, in many poems where married women are talked of, we often find mention of their hair. Similarly, in this poem, we find the speaker wishing her daughter to come to Dzüvala³ which is a well-known valley in Kohima village with terrace fields known for its good water source. She not only wished to see her there but to see her with long hair and cheerfully carrying her flask filled with good brew which signifies a long marriage and a wealthy happy marriage respectively.

3.4.2. Sopfünuo

Khriedi nu we nie khrie jüvuo-o

Hie kesuoü liekelie zenu;

Kevimia rei nie khrie chü kesu

Pezeipeso mia die pfü lerü

Tacie idi hie ketse derei;

Avu pienie shükho kemerü,

Zoshü suo di pa kemvü üse;

Hie ü nie va kekhrieu tuoi.

Azuo idi nouva cha thezie,

Keba ha rei mha kesuoluo die.

Themia lhou-o khrülhou ha tuoi,

Va puo jü rei va puo lhou la'rü,
 Zoya mai mu suonie u rheichie
 Mia die kesuo rünyüzoyanyi.
 Hie we sidi teiluo nu sie ta,
 Hie pie wepfü kepenuo phe pfhü
 Tsokemo nu terhuothie hie thu.
 Hie pieunuo sie volie si mo,
 Thekre mezü zou cü hie rüwhi;
 Kelho zhü di hie metha rei ho.
 Sei mevi rei rietatolo ru,
 Ketsie mevi virazha nu zh3;
 Khriesarüü tsu kele vaphio,
 Zozhüya shie thenu deitsoü.

Sopfünuo

Erstwhile you had no wooer
 Only after marrying this inferior being;
 Even fine women compete to be your paramour
 Bringing home their atrocious words by the dead of the night,
 Command me to leave yet;
 To estrange and deprived our children of both parents,
 My heart denies but my refusal to leave;
 Is misrepresented as my yearning to be with you.
 Entreating one's mother for food,
 Is surely a dreadful thing to you.
 Unlike the life of moon, a man's life,
 Once dead do not rise anew,
 Who would spend a lifetime
 In enduring such verbal abuse.
 Thus I set out at midnight,
 Carrying close my child I leave for my birth place
 Ere I could make it, was hit by *terhuothie*¹.
 My infant knew not to press on;
 Plucked fresh sprouts and ate, moved around me;

Then my child wilted along with me.
 To transform to wood would mean perishing,
 We lay at virazha² as stones ;
 To address the young while on their way to the fields,
 Ever to remain *thenu deitsoit*³.

Compiled by: Shürhozelie

Translated by: Khriebeinuo Keretsü

Sopfünüo was a woman from Rüsoma village whose marriage was arranged with a man from another village. The poem records the events of her separation from her husband and her death. She said that he had no other lover and that no one seemed to have favoured him romantically for first few years of marriage but that their marriage went sour after having two children together when her husband started having affairs and would come by dead of the night and throw abusive words at her and send her away. The poem throws light on the oppression of women through domestic abuse- though not physical; she was put through verbal abuse for a long time before she decided to leave him. We are also given a hint that the children were also oppressed as the man may have directed his anger towards his children from the lines where she says, “Entreating one’s mother for food, / Is surely a dreadful thing to you.” These lines hint that her husband had been angry when the children called their mother for food. The poem also stated why she did not leave him at the beginning. She did not want to separate her children and make them grow up as children of a single parent. This is true of many unhappy marriages. Women tend to sacrifice their happiness for the future of their children.

Sopfünüo took the imagery of nature to describe man’s life and gave the reason why she finally decided to leave. She said that unlike the cycle of a moon’s life which dies and then rise again as new moon, a person would live only once so why endure such the verbal abuse her whole life. She left by the dead of the night with her younger child secured in front, carrying her basket on her back holding a torch made from dried wormwood branches and holding a walking stick of bamboo. The sheer strength and perseverance of a woman so desperate to escape from her abuser that she had to take a journey in the dead of the night in a dangerous path to another village makes the poem painfully memorable. She was unfortunately struck by *terhuothie*¹, an unknown supernatural spike which was believed to kill people when pierced by one. Her child also died by her side as the baby was too young to

leave alone. Legend has it that the baby crawled around and fed on fresh tender shoots and coming back to nurse from the dead mother but was unfortunately pierced by a rib of the mother as her body started to decompose. Nature and even the supernatural seem to have taken pity on their plight because she and her child were transformed into stones as they lay at virazha² (vi-good razha- valley) which is an imaginary name given to the site where the transformed forms of Sopfünüo and her child lay. The stones remain even today at Rüsoma village which is a tourist attraction site today. They finally made it back to her village. The poem ends in a happy note by stating that they now remain at virazha to greet the young people as they leave for their fields and calling Sopfünüo “*thenu deitsoü*”³ which means ‘the perfect lady’.

3.4.3.Khrieü

Khrüpra metsei vü te nie geizie,
 Rüso ba di ‘tsoke’rü nhie we
 Hie pie’ ciethie thenhyü moluolie,
 Zo ba mo di zo sie mia pfhekho
 Nie puo nie zuo rachü nie penhyü,
 Kezeira shü sojürü kevo.
 Metsülie mu dzü di nie cha kha
 Bayielie mu chüterhü rie prei;
 ‘verü mo mu suo tuo mo nhiemu,
 Tuo di khunhie ‘veke’ rü nhie we,
 Ki kenyü ü kharü shü vaya
 Kitiera tha nie jülei the tshie,
 Kiluora shü va rüso kezhü;
 N the lerü’ n phou kenyü krei;
 Tolo tenyü Khrieü lerüluo.
 Zu lu merhe nie puonuo hie li,
 Kho chükeshü pfülie lho dinu,
 Mhichü rüzhü pfü nie zuo zhü gei;
 Kezhü duü nie nienuo lerü,
 Thepfu re jü thenu puo rübei,
 Pa’züpfü puo nei puo mede;
 Kemo puo sü suorüsuo chünyü.

A nie die we chü rünouvuo-o
 A puo die we chü rünou mo shü;
 A zuo nou suo a puo noune chü.

Khrieü

By the advent of every new month a chicken is sacrificed for your good fortune
 Continued uninterrupted till the day a proposal received
 My child will not be sent off in marriage this year;
 Should have been your reply, instead resolved to wed me,
 Married off by the wishes of your father and mother,
 To a desolate and distant unknown.
 By Monsoon the flood blocks your way
 By dry season the fear of head-hunting;
 Unable to travel here, wondering if she is well,
 The day she finally came,
 Ritually cleansing the house thus kept the door ajar
 Standing in the front yard threw your walking stick,
 On the porch your cane fall and bounces,
 Now that your cane entered your person be alienated,
 That cannot be, do come in Khrieü.
 Served well-brewed rice beer to your father,
 Could not bring yourself to carry your basket prepared,
 Lying on your mother's bed thus tears streaming down your cheeks;
 On that day your paternal uncle arrives,
 You have no son and she being the only girl,
 If your youngest and most beloved so resent;
 Why send her against her wishes.
 My uncle's words soothe my heart,
 My father's words grief my heart;
 My mother's heartache seems like my father's contentment.

Compiled by: Shürhozelie

Translated by: Khriebeinuo Keretsü

This poem records the sad fate of a woman named Khrieü who was married off to a distant land against her wishes. She wanted to come back but could not do so during rainy season as she could not cross the rivers which were overflowing and in dry season because of fear of head-hunters. She took all risk and visited her parents one day but her parents hesitated to let her in by keeping the door ajar as a sign of performing rituals for their house which forbids having visitors. But her story claims that they might be feigning the observance of house ritual to let Khrieü return to her marital home.

The decision of the father in a house was final and binding. And though Khrieü was their only child, he refused to let her stay even if it was against her will and happiness. She tried to keep him happy during her stay by attending to him which is shown by the example of serving him good rice brew. Khrieü's desperate pleas to stay fell on deaf ears. The day she left, she lay weeping on her mother's bed yet her father took no pity. Her paternal uncle also came in that day and tried to reason with her father but he was adamant. Thus, the helplessness of women was explained in the last line that states that though her mother was also heartbroken, her father seemed to be unaffected. In fact, Khrieü felt that her father was content that she left even if it means the heartache of her mother.

The poem does not fully capture the fate of Khrieü. The story of Khrieü is recorded in the same compiled work *Üca-53* which can be translated as 53 songs. Though the poem suggests that she left her parents' house feeling dejected as her father insisted but her story says otherwise. She carried her basket and left the morning her father insisted but on her way, she ate her lunch under a big rock and returned home. This continued for a while until one day she was swept away by the river. And legends has it that she would enter the river called "Pfhiüdzü" every day and ask the river to take her away but it never happened. One night in her dreams the river told her that she could not be taken because her rituals are really strong. This was because she would pluck a shoot and put it upon a rock before entering the river. Therefore, the day she died, she entered the river without placing a plant on a rock and declared, "Pfhiüdzü, if you are really mighty, take me!" That day, she was swept away by the river. Khrieü died and never returned but her parents thought that she went back to her husband and was steadily settled while her husband thought that she returned to her parents. It was after a long time that they learnt she passed away.

Khrieü's story throws light into many cultural elements that prevailed in pre-Christian Angami society. We are informed on the sacrifice of chicken to tell the fortune of a person and that Angamis believed in plucking and placing plants on things in nature that they feel should be respected to stay safe as a means to appease the spirits. Though the main theme is on arranged marriage and how daughters feel helpless against the decisions taken by their fathers. Another interesting element is the closeness of nature and man. Khrieü preferred to die than return to her marital house. Thus she summoned the river to swallow her everyday but the river did nothing. It was from her dream that she got the reason as to why she was unharmed by the river. Finally, she was claimed by the river as willed by Khrieü herself. We can say that the life of an Angami was very closely connected to nature and the supernatural.

3.4.4. Thenumia Sü

Thenumia sü tsiedoki rübei;
 Phichülie ro sie vo mia hou nu;
 Latsa u yie latsa mia phou chü,
 Tatolo mu u nuo ruo hieluo.

Young Girls

Days of young girls are short lived;
 They grow up to belong to some other community;
 Part our relative part belong to someone else,
 That's their fate thus scold them not.

Compiled by: Cultural Promotion Society

Translated by: Khriebeinuo Keretsü

This is a really simple song which is usually sung by young girls. Though brief and simple, it reminds us of the brevity of life as a daughter. She will grow up with the blink of an eye and be married off and then she will belong to another community. The relationship of parents and daughter will become secondary comparing to her life as a wife and daughter-in-law to that community. Therefore the poet instructs parents not to be unkind to their daughters.

3.4.5. Terhuomia Tei

Terhuomia tei rükrie pezei rü;

A nei-üpfü lhaphie soulie dinu,
 Khunhie zha rei zekeyie thienyü;
 Luvo tsanu kevimia dziese,
 Gajo simo larlie thienyü.

Spirits Weather

Spirits let the sky turn dark and bring unseasonal rain;
 Upon my beloved's sun dried grain that,
 She might sleep some more at least for a day;
 Yonder as a partner to a better person,
 May you return for lack of knowledge on edible herbs.

Compiled by: Cultural Promotion Society

Translated by: Khriebeinuo Keretsü

This poem is memorable for the good wishes and bad ones that a man has for his beloved. Though the wishes are mundane ones, they are the things that fill up the life of a woman. He wished that the spirits would bring unseasonal rain so that his beloved would be allowed some more time to sleep and relax for at least a day. And that she would be sent away by her in-laws and return to their village for not being able to differentiate between herbs and wild plants. This should not be taken literally but as a metaphor to show her inability to manage the house according to the standards of a perfect housewife. Here, the man wishes that she would pretend to not know anything so that her in-laws would grow tired of her and send her away to her birth place because he could not bear to see her married to another man and that he could marry her if she returns. These wishes show how connected the life of a woman and nature is.

3.5. Conclusion to Chapter III

The range of topics that Angami folk poetry covers is myriad and inexhaustible. However, only few themes are discussed in this chapter to show the significance of oral tradition in the Angami culture and their literature and also that oral tradition serves as a source of linkage between the past and the present. It can be said that many important aspects of Angami culture that was believed to have kept them safe like sacrificing chicken to foretell the future or plucking plants and leaving it on objects in nature that could have harmed them or their spirits are heard only in stories or sung in songs. Many would have no knowledge on their

past rituals and practices if not for stories and songs (poetry). The fact that women had their heads shaved before marriage would be news to many in the present generation. Though many proudly say that their forefathers were warriors and head-hunters have little knowledge on head-hunting. This is so because our stories change over time as nothing is constant. Culture is ever evolving and through our experiences over time, we adapt to and adopt new things and evolve our culture.

In the Angami community, there are many factors that impacted their culture and oral tradition and pushed it to the way it is today. Today the stories of their pre-Christian and pre-colonial ancestors are told and retold as myths and folklores and their predecessors who experienced the Second World War and insurgency as legends. Many songs and tales are written on war heroes and the sufferings that people underwent under such political turmoil. Many songs and tales are on pioneering Christians and so on. Heroes and warriors and their legends are put down in words lest they would be forgotten. Thus, we can say that the written literature of the Angami Nagas is replete with their oral tradition and that their oral tradition has successfully served as a linking between their past and their present. It is through their songs, stories, and age-old traditional wisdom that is told, retold, and taught that their culture still thrives. Their oral tradition still serves as an important source to transmit their cultural values.

Chapter IV

Oral Tradition Embedded in the Fictional Narratives of Ngũgĩ waThiong'o

Kagutui ka Mucii gatihakagwo Ageni:

The oilskin of the house is not for rubbing into the skin of stranger.

4.1. Background of Ngugi and his Ideologies

Ngugi, Kenya's most renowned writer was born at Kamarithu, Limuru near Nairobi in Kenya in 1938. Ngugi's earlier plays, short stories and articles were published under the name James Ngugi. Until March 1970, he was known by his Christian name; however he changed his name to simply Ngugi waThiong'o which means Ngugi, son of Thiong'o when he renounced his Christian faith as he tied Christianity to colonialism. He decided to let go of his first name i.e., James after his talk to the Fifth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in 1970. After his talk, an angry old man reminded him that despite his blasphemous speech he was a Christian and that the proof was his name. Thus Ngugi realized and decided that his name was an inconsistency in his conviction and that it had to go. Such is Ngugi's attitude towards culture, religion, and politics. He was educated at a missionary school, went to Makerere University College, Kampala in Uganda where he was offered a degree in English Literature and then entered Leeds University UK to pursue graduate work. After his return to Africa, he was appointed Special Lecturer in the Department of English at the University College of Nairobi. It was here that he along with two others proposed to abolish the English Department and to establish the Department of African Literature which led to his resignation.

The play titled "*NgaahikaNdeenda*", which translated into English means; "I Will Marry When I Want" landed Ngugi in prison. It was not the English version but the Gĩkũyũ version that caused the stir. Therefore, Ngugi decided to use language as a means to assert his African identity and became a strong advocate for decolonization after his one year detention between 1977-78 by the Kenyan government and started writing in Gĩkũyũ which are then translated to English. In the Introduction to Ngugi's novel, *A Grain of Wheat*, Abdulrazak Gurnah writes, "His critical and political writing (and the two have overlapped from the beginning) has focused ever more sharply on issues of culture and language." (ix) Ngugi's painful

memories of the displacements and oppressions faced mostly by the rural communities are seen in his novels. The Mau Mau rebellion and the betrayal of the Africans by their own brothers who joined the home guard as part of the colonial security force, the rich Africans who benefitted from the Colonial government and the corrupted elite groups who further misled the Africans after their independence are interwoven in his novels with the rich culture of the Africans which are threatened to a degenerated state by a foreign culture and religion. From Ngugi's writings, one will find his motives as both political and social.

Ngugi in his essay "Church, Culture and Politics" from his collection of essays titled, *Homecoming* (1972) stated that though he cannot escape Christianity as it is everywhere around him, he rejects it because he felt that Christianity was an ally of colonialism as it was the religion of the colonialists. It also meant the rejection of the African culture and roots that made them African. He writes:

It meant rejection of these values and rituals that held us together; it meant adopting what, in effect, was a debased European middle-class mode of living and behaviour. The European missionary had attacked the primitive rights of our people, had condemned the beautiful African dances, the images of our Gods, recoiling from their suggestion of satanic sensuality. The African convert did the same, often with even greater zeal, for he had to prove how Christian he was through this rejection of his past and roots. (32)

The 'cultural impoverishment' that the Africans in general and Kenyans in particular had experienced due to colonialism and their religion has been therefore a major theme in his fiction. The African myths, songs, proverbs, rituals, and legends become significant aspects in his novels as he uses them to support and enhance his themes and philosophical ideas. To Ngugi, the church is the main agent in draining the Africans of their cultural because it is the religion of the imperialists who uses their religion and alliance to the ruling class to exploit the masses. Instead of following their basic doctrine of love and equality, the church in Africa became an "integral part of that social force-colonialism" which radiated only hatred and inequality. This was the main source which led to the alienation of the people from their indigenous culture. (Killam 8)

In the Introduction to *The Rienner Anthology of African Literature*, Anthonia C. Kalu, the editor writes that the "oral tradition is the backbone of African arts and letters. It is a living tradition that spans ancient and contemporary periods and all aspects of African life." (2).

The oral narratives of the African people includes all topics and covers the entirety and the fullness of the African way of life. She further adds that since the oral narratives were initially translated by Europeans (anthropologists, missionaries, travellers, and colonists) into European languages who considered the African culture to be “quaint, primitive, and esoteric” and “presenting them as not capable (or worthy) of being understood by non-Africans, especially Europeans” (3), this idea of inferiority continue to influence the view about African cultures and traditions and is reflected in the views of the contemporary Africans. As a result, the rich traditions and wealth of knowledge is not fully appreciated nor utilized even by the present generation Africans. Kalu further writes:

However, recognizing the social and political import of the oral traditions and colonizers’ efforts to denigrate African cultures and traditions, contemporary writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Flora Nwapa, Bessie Head, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, and others began to include proverbs and the roles and functions of local traditions and customs in their works. . . they were able to introduce African narrative techniques and themes into written and contemporary African literature, especially the short story and the novel. (4).

Ngugi’s novels, *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), and *Petals of Blood* (1977) will be analyzed in this chapter to examine the fictional narratives employed by Ngugi which are embedded with the traditional tribal customs, myths, rituals, and songs of the Gikuyu or Kikuyu. The significance of oral tradition in the select works will give evidence to the efforts of Ngugi in giving his writings an impetus towards decolonizing by helping in building the themes and towards the social and political cause of the novels. Ngugi’s select novels serves as sources of introduction to the cultural heritage of the Kikuyu people for new readers as they encourage readers to look into and appreciate the people’s way of life from an insider’s viewpoint. This is very important because most often, cultures are shown to the world by outsiders in a distorted version interpreted under the lens of colonialism. Therefore, such works that have cultural oral elements from an insider are to be valued and considered more accurate because they write from their own cultural experience of their own traditional customs and beliefs.

Ngugi wa Thiongo is more radical than his contemporary African writer Chinua Achebe, the well-known writer who incorporates much of his Ibo culture in his fictional writings. Achebe believes that it is time for “Africans to tell their own stories” because many literary works

have resulted during their contact with the Europeans which unfortunately present Africans in a negative light. Ngugi moves a step further than that by adding political conscience to his writings in addition to throwing light on the exploitation of the peasants who are closest to their African culture by the group of better-off Africans themselves who continued to exploit the weaker ones as those of the colonial powers. Ngugi now primarily writes in Gikuyu, the language of the Akikuyu or Kikuyu or Gikuyu people to assert his cultural identity as he believes that African languages should be promoted and have a place in the literary world. Moreover, Ngugi in an interview with Nanda Dyssou said that he became a “language warrior” and that he wants to “join all those others who are fighting for marginalized languages”.

4.2. Oral Tradition in Ngugi’s *The River Between*

Ngugi’s *The River Between* (1965) was initially titled as *The Black Messiah* and it was his second novel to be published though it was written before his first published novel, *Weep Not Child*. As the title of the novel suggests, the novel revolves around the two ridges namely Makuyu and Kameno which are separated by Honia River. The two ridges Makuyu and Kameno are not only separated by the river but by the unbridgeable differences in their beliefs and practices. The novel’s main theme is the conflict that the two ridges undergoes though belonging to the same tribe, their differences arises from the fact that Kameno held close to their traditional beliefs and practices while Makuyu ridge became the hub for contemporary European way of life through Christianity. The clansmen rejected each other’s way of life and teachings and the efforts in uniting them or finding a medium through western education fails.

4.2.1. Myths in *The River Between*

In *An Introduction to the Writings of Ngugi*, G.D. Killam writes that *The River Between* “represents the first phase of Ngugi’s artistic recreation of the cultural history of his people”. The hostility between the two ridges though belonging to the same clan are separated physically by the by the River Honia and ideologically by their beliefs is reinforced by the myth of origin of the Gikuyu or kikuyu community from Gikuyu and his wife Mumbi. This Creation Myth is found in each of Ngugi’s novels to emphasize the fact that the land belongs to the tribes and not to any foreign power as their land is gifted to them and their children by their god Murungu. Therefore their land is their birth right. Their attachment to their land and

the displacement and resettlement of the people enforced by the Colonial power is a major source of oppression and resentment. The myth is found in *The River Between* right from the beginning when Ngugi reminded us of the time when Murungu, their great god said to Gikuyu and Mumbi, the father and mother of the Kenyan nation: “This land I give to you, O man and woman. It is yours to rule and till, you and your posterity.” (TRW 2). This myth reiterates that there is a spiritual connection between the Kenyans and their land and the act of dispossessing their lands given to them by their god meant the worst form of oppression because it simply meant alienating them from their very identity and life. In the novel, Chege showed his son Waiyaki the place where their great god Murungu took their first parents Gikuyu and Mumbi and blessed them with the lands which they and “their children and the children of the children” (TRW 18) would live and cultivate and prosper. He explained how they had nine daughters who bore more children and how they spread to the whole vastness of the country just as promised. This myth reinforces their religious connection to their lands and makes it more poignant when the colonial power drives them out from their own lands or turns them into their slaves in their own lands thus dispossessing them of their birth right and alienating them from their cultural belief. In the novel, we find that the main reason which made Kinuthia so powerful is- he pointing out the fact that they are enslaved by the foreigners in their own land as they are forced to work and pay tax to the foreign government because Siriana was “forcing many people to move from places they had lived in ages, while others had to live on the same land, working for their new masters.” (TRB 60). This alienation from their own lands becomes one of the main reasons for the tribe to rebel against the colonial power.

Another myth that is mentioned in the novel is the about the position of women according to the culture of the Gikuyu. In the novel, Chege explains to his son Waiyaki that long ago it was the women who ruled the Gikuyu land and rule the men. However, they were really cruel and unsympathetic to the men and so the men united and overthrew their rule while they were all pregnant and weak. Chege further explains that women were weak and so their goats ran away. Now “Waiyaki understood why his mother owned nothing.” (TRW 15). In the book, *Gĩkũyũ Oral Literature* by Wanjikũ Mũkabi Kabira and Karega wa Mũtahi, we find that this is the myth that explains the origin of a patriarchal society. The purpose of this myth is to “justify the past and perpetuate the status quo as in the myth that explains the patrilineal nature of the Agĩkũyũ society.” (6)

4.2.2. Seers and Magicians in *The River Between*

The novel also mentions the presence of seers and magicians which was crucial in the cultural history of the Gikuyu tribe. In this novel, the promise of the fertile Kenyan land which was promised to the people through Gikuyu and Mumbi by their Creator god Murungu is marred by the arrival of the British power which was foreseen and forewarned by their great seer, Mugo wa Kibiro. He prophesied: “There shall come a people with clothes like butterflies.” These were the white men writes Ngugi. (2) The novel reveals that the prophecy came true as not only the presence but the influence of the white people over the indigenous people was extensive and affected the entire population. Mugo wa Kibiro’s prophecy was disregarded. Chege, the father of the protagonist, Waiyaki also warned his people of the coming of the white people. But like Mugo wa Kibiro, the famous Gikuyu seer who came before him and to whom great things were revealed by their God Ngai yet was ignored when he prophesied of the coming of some strange white people to their land, Chege’s vision of the invasion of Gikuyuland by white men was ignored. He warned the people of the ridges what happened in Muranga, Nyeri and Kiambu but they doubted him because he had never left the ridges. The taking over of their lands by the white people who do not know their language and ways of the land seemed improbable. However, Chege has seen the lights beyond though he never left the ridges and knew that his people were “fools” for not believing in the invasion of their lands by the white man. In the novel, Ngugi about Chege’s gift in the following sentences:

Many stories ran around him. Some people said that he had the gift of magic. Others said that he was a seer and Murungu often spoke to him. And so they said that he could see visions of the future like Mugo wa Kibiro, who had long time back prophesied the invasion of the Gikuyu country by the white man. (7)

In the Introduction to the novel, *The River Between*, Uzodinma Iweala writes:

Chege is privy to secrets of the tribe- the prophecy that the white man will come like butterflies, that the tribe will produce a savior to deal with him, and that this savior come from his own lineage, a prominent bloodline that includes the seer Mugo wa Kibiro. (xiv)

Right from the beginning of the novel, we are prepared for a story which will be filled with kikuyu folk elements- a mythological sort of hero, a black saviour born from the bloodline of the great seer Mugo wa Kibiro, rites and rituals of the tribe, proverbs and the ways of the land which will be infiltrated by the white man's beliefs and thus an ensuing struggle to strike a balance and maintain one's cultural identity. An instance of the supernatural element is the mention of the great witch Kamiri who was born at Kamenno. His skills in witchcraft had amazed and baffled even the white people. Yet, he was also corrupted by the white man with their gifts and smiles. Such examples show how the very culture of the indigenous people would come under the threat of extinction from the influence of a foreign religion and culture. The people were then forced to make moral choices and the novel explores the motives of the people from the different sections and factions.

4.2.3. Sacrifices to God in *The River Between*

Another Gikuyu traditional element found in the fictional narrative is the practice of collecting and offering sacrifice to Murungu under the sacred tree. This act, as Ngugi records in the novel "was a prelude to many such rites" as they get ready for the initiation ceremonies (29). In addition to offering sacrifices for such ceremonies, sacrifices are made to Murungu under the sacred tree to make peace with their god and to avoid and avert untoward and ill-fated situations. For instance, in the novel, when Muthoni would not heal from her wounds, Chege, the wise man of the tribe who knows the ways of the tribe said that, "A black ram without blemish under the Mugumo tree- simple sacrifice. And all would have ended well." (47). This instance in the novel shows the strong belief of the tribe in their indigenous wisdom. The novel also shed light on the fact that according to the Gikuyu traditions, blood is shed to appease angry spirits. This instance is found where Waiyaki stood near Honia river watching Nyambura kneel down and pray. He found the spot sacred similar to the sacred grove that his father took him and revealed the ancient prophecy. The place where Nyambura knelt and prayed was sacred too because she seemed to feel it too and more so because it was the place where he sat during his circumcision. "It was the place where he had shed blood, red blood, as if it were needed to propitiate angry spirits." (TRB 101)

4.2.4. Proverbs in *The River Between*

One form of oral tradition found in the novel is proverbs. However, they are used prudently and sparingly unlike Achebe who employs proverbs in abundance in his novels to support his themes and all the while aiding in making his narrative unique and Africanized. Proverbs are

called *Thimo* in Gikuyu and in their society; they are commonly used in conversations especially among the adults. In *Gikũyũ Oral Literature*, the authors construe the meaning of proverbs as:

Proverbs can be defined as metaphorical statements that summarise a cultural context, event, a happening or an experience. Proverbs are used to warn, advise, inform, clarify etc. (37)

Proverbs can be used in different contexts as it can be used to tell a moral, advice or rebuke or even to discredit someone and bring upon shame. It can be used to put forth a warning and even resolve discords and differences but a proverb will lack meaning or will lose its effect if it is not used in the right situation and within the correct cultural context. Likewise, in the novel, though scarce, we find Ngugi using proverbs for different purposes which serves as catalysts in development of the themes and also of the plot. The importance and appeal of using proverbs in conversations within the community is summarized in the novel through Kabonyi- the arch rival of waiyaki. From the battle of words between these two characters, we see the confidence of Kabonyi as “He could speak in proverbs and riddles, and nothing could appeal more to the elders, who still appreciated a subtle proverb and witty riddles.” (92)

The proverb, “*kagutui ka mucii gatihakagwa Agenii*; the oilskin of the house is not for rubbing into the skin of strangers” (TRB 3) can be found right at the beginning of the novel which Ngugi uses to give the readers insight into the security of the ridges from any outside influence and their adherence to their traditional way of life where their culture- which is the “heart and soul of the land” is unaffected by the forces of the outside world during the pre-colonial period. In the novel, Ngugi writes: “They kept the tribes’ magic and rituals, pure and intact.” (3). The things that happened- even disagreements and discords were kept within the ridges and no secrets were divulged to any outsider. This proverb also serves as a forewarning to the readers on the consequences the indigenous people would suffer by accepting the whites amongst them allowing them access to their secrets and discords which they used to their advantage and widen their disunity and thus penetrated further into their affairs and finally colonized them.

4.2.5. Songs in *The River Between*

Songs occupy a very prominent position in African oral tradition and Ngugi uses diversified types to serve his purpose and to enhance the emotions of the circumstances in the novel. There are songs that the Christians in Makuyu ridge sing which are about their new faith that they adopted. The song that the Christians sang after Joshua's passionate sermon in the church when Waiyaki attended is sang in Gikuyu language which is about the good news or the gospel. The song made Waiyaki uncomfortable and made him feel a sort of "insatiable longing for something beyond him, something that would contain the whole of himself." (TRB 85). The song though very brief moves Waiyaki to the core. The song serves to invoke in him feelings which words could not.

Similarly, on the day of gathering of parents from all over the ridges which was organised by Waiyaki, the children sang songs on how they want to learn and need to learn in the schools because their "Land is gone/ Cattle and sheep are not there" furthermore they sing of the time for "the shield and spear of learning" (90) because "The war of shields and spears/ Is now ended/ What is left?/ The battle of wits,/ The battle of the mind." (91). These songs, though very simple, stirred the hearts of the crowd. The songs encapsulate the state of affairs developing during the turbulent times in the colonial period in Kenya where education is the need of the hour to fight against imperialism. The songs remind the natives on how their lands which hold spiritual value are stolen from them and that their dependence on the land for rearing cattle and farming should be ultimately replaced with the white man's education to fight the 'battle of wits' which have replaced the 'war of shields and spears'. The songs inflamed the hearts of the listeners and moved many of them to tears by reminding them that their lands are gradually encroached by them and that the white people have infiltrated the ways of the tribe, dividing and corrupting them. The songs made them emotional though they were not sure whether they were "mourning for a dead glory" and "sorrowing over a tribe's destruction" or "hailing the changes that had yet to come" (91). Either way, they knew change had to come and thus from every corner of the gathering, they cried out a song with one accord. The song is recorded in the novel by Ngugi as:

Gikuyu naa Mumbi
 Gikuyu naa Mumbi
 Left a land virgin and fertile
 O, come all- (91)

The song ends abruptly without a definite conclusion but the fact that it does so also throws light on the obscurity of the purpose and effectiveness of the adoption of white man's education against colonialism through the hero, Waiyaki. Though Ngugi did not make it clear in the novel how Waiyaki could use education as a weapon against colonialism and bring unity, we see the need for western education to equip themselves for the unavoidable changes that will come to their once untouched land. This song however shows that they have all agreed that their rights are encroached and that a time for change has come. Ironically, as we understand the history of Kenya through Ngugi's fiction and also their actual historical events, the educated Kenyans were the ones who exploited their own people of their wealth and rights especially after they attained their independence.

4.2.6. Circumcision Rites in *The River Between*

The most significant oral tradition found in the novel is perhaps the circumcision rites of the tribe. It marks the main conflict and brings about the climax in the novel. G.D. Killam in his book, *An Introduction to the Writings of Ngugi* very aptly writes that this novel does not get into detail the context in which the differences of the two clans occur, or the social structure or how the religious and political organization of the tribe develops. And though there are "many references to the spiritual basis of the tribe in such phrases as 'being beautiful in the tribe', 'the secrets of the tribe', 'the secret of the hills', 'the ancient wisdom of the land'" (35), Ngugi does not clearly and realistically develop the central problem that the book attempts to explore. Killam further adds that the circumcision rite is the "sole exception" as we can grasp a "clear perception of the purpose the rite serves and the emotions it releases." (35)

The circumcision rites practiced by the tribe to initiate boys and girls into men and women of the tribe becomes the most controversial one for both the ridges after which a bigger rift came between the two. In Makuyu, Joshua, the over-zealous Christian leader becomes more vehement against the traditions of the tribe especially because his daughter Muthoni participates in the circumcision ceremony against his wishes and dies from it. While in Kameno, Kabonyi, the once associate of Joshua becomes the leader after Chege's death and forms the secret society, Kiama, which aims at preserving the traditional culture of the tribe and to rid the country 'of the influence of the white man'. In the novel, Ngugi uses the protagonist Waiyaki to vividly describe the initiation and circumcision rites. The songs and dances that accompany their coming of age are described graphically. Though the songs are not recorded by Ngugi, the content of the songs are mentioned.

Circumcision is crucial for the Kikuyu way of life as it initiates a man and woman to adulthood- to the social and political life in Kikuyu society. For a man, it means he is ready to lead and serve his community and become a respectable warrior while for a woman, it means she is pure and perfect to be a wife and a mother. Circumcision is vital to the Gikuyu because they are considered as responsible and respectable members of the society only after their passage. For a man, the second birth and circumcision would allow him to “prove his courage, his manly spirit” and he will know “all the ways of the land from Agu and Agu, long ago.” (TRW 11) And for a woman, it will mean “to be a real girl, a real woman, knowing all the ways of the hills and ridges.” (TRW 25). Muthoni’s explanation of the rite’s meaning to a woman illuminates Waiyaki and the readers of the significance of the rite of passage. She says: “I want to be a woman made beautiful in the tribe: a husband for my bed; children to play around the hearth. . . . Yes- I want to be a woman made beautiful in the manner of the tribe. . . .” (43) This shows that she feels incomplete without being initiated and though she is a Christian convert, she felt it necessary to be a part of the rite to be a real woman. In fact, circumcision of women also assures bride price. In the novel, Chege questions: “Who had ever heard of a girl that was not circumcised? Who would ever pay cows and goats for such a girl?” (37) Moreover, one could “readily trust a man than a *kihii*, an uncircumcised boy.” (38)

The events leading to the circumcision is recorded by Ngugi in the novel. Before the actual circumcision rite, the second birth is performed. Ngugi writes that after the rite of the second birth one would be “ready for the biggest of all rituals, circumcision”. For this rite, a large amount of beer is brewed and elders come to take part in the rite. A goat is slaughtered early in the morning so that everyone who comes could feast. Even the spirits of the dead and the living was invoked to join the ritual. The ceremony is not complicated and did not take very long. This Gikuyu rite is narrated by Ngugi through Waiyaki’s second birth:

His mother sat near the fireplace in her hut as if in labor. Waiyaki sat between her thighs. A thin cord taken from slaughtered goat and tied to his mother represented the umbilical cord. A woman, old enough to be a midwife, came and cut the cord. The child began to cry. And the woman who had come to wait for the birth of a child, shouted with joy. (12)

Waiyaki’s head is shorn of hair and he followed his mother like a little child. She then went to Honia river and dipped him into the water and he came out clean. Following his second

birth, Waiyaki felt he was maturing. Even his father Chege considered him matured enough to reveal the hidden things of the hills as after a few weeks after his second birth, he took him to the hills where Waiyaki never went before to show him the sacred grove and enlighten him on the ways of the hills.

After his second birth, Waiyaki and his peers or age-set prepares for their initiation. Circumcision, being the “central rite in the Gikuyu way of life” (37) is much more complicated than the rite of the second birth. Sacrifices were made along with the preparations for the upcoming circumcision. Initiation songs were sung for a many days and the community participated in the gatherings where the young sang and danced to the rhythm of the beating of drums and jingles. The candidates for the ritual went from house to house singing and dancing the ritual songs. Then on the eve of the initiation day, the biggest of all dances took place where everyone, the young and old became one and sang “about anything and talk of the hidden parts of men and women without feeling that you had violated the otherwise strong social code that governed people’s relationships...”. To accompany their singing, the men “shrieked and shouted and jumped into the air” as they went in circle while the women stripped to their waist swayed their hips and contorted their bodies in all sorts of provocative ways while always maintaining the rhythm. (40)

The actual initiation or the cutting for the male initiates took place by the river and were cut by the “surgeon” and they were made to recover in the hospital which was a small shed a little distance from the village. Though the initiates were under pain for some few days, they were cheered and comforted and there was no casualty. The details on the actual initiation of the women initiates are not given in the novel. One interesting aspect in the novel is that there is no life lost from the male initiates’ though they experienced much pain for a few days. However, Muthoni dies from the ordeal after many days of suffering. Ironically it must be Muthoni who dies because she is the daughter of Joshua, the sternest man preaching against circumcision and everything else that is related to the tribe. Her death brought about by Muthoni’s defiance against her father and trying to become a real woman of the tribe resulted in a further rift between the two ridges as for the Christians, Muthoni’s death “forever confirmed the barbarity of Gikuyu customs” (53) while for the tribe “This new faith had contaminated the hills and Murungu was angry.” (56)

For many medical and health issues, the initiation of girls into womanhood through circumcision comes under much criticism under the colonial rule and more so today as a

means of repression and subjugation of women. Female circumcision is also known as female genital mutilation (FGM) as it does not involve just mere cutting of a foreskin but the mutilation of the female genitals by removal of part or all of the female genitalia and is used in many societies as a means to ensure the purity of a woman till marriage. This also means the control of the sexuality of women. This is a painful process for women which continue throughout their entire lives. They are scarred for life, especially during sexual acts and childbirth which at times becomes life threatening. In fact, there is a high risk of dying from infection from the circumcision itself.

The British missionaries who were working in central Kenya during 1929 and 1930s with the help of the colonial power tried to eradicate female circumcision which gave rise to the famous ‘female circumcision controversy’ as it was met with much resistance from the male community as they felt that it is an infringement of their cultural practices. An article titled “Justifying tradition: why some Kenyan men favour FGM” which appeared in *The New Humanitarian* on 8th March 2005 gives a brilliant account on FGM- the efforts on the part of the first president of independent Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta to ban FGM which failed miserably in the parliament recorded in his work, “Facing Mount Kenya” that no “proper” Gikuyu would imagine marrying an uncircumcised girl. This article gives a detailed record on how the FGM still exist in the ethnic communities even though it has been banned through the efforts of the then President of Kenya, Daniel Arap Moi in 2001. The age of female circumcision usually ranges from 12 and 15 years but reports show that the girls in ethnic communities are now circumcised at a much younger age to avoid prosecution and resistance from the girl child undergoing circumcision.

Ngugi is a strong proponent of the cultural purity, the culture which he so much respects and endorses. This characteristic of the writer can be seen through many of his characters in the novel who during a time of cultural disintegration and identity crisis tried to hold on to their culture as a means of security and assertion of identity even though they themselves underwent times of confusion and questioning their loyalty to the purity of the culture. Having said that, we should also be aware that Ngugi is against the unbending and unquestioning fanatical observance of both religion and tribal customs as portrayed by the characters like Joshua and Kabonyi respectively in the novel, *The River Between*. As rightly stated by Confidence Gbolo Sanka et.al in their paper “The Importance of Oral Tradition in Ngugi wa Thiongo’s writings: A Critical Analysis of *The River Between* and *Petals of Blood*”, this support for cultural identity and promotion of cultural purity does not mean that

Ngugi advocates blind and unyielding adherence to “a culture that is static and archaic, a culture that will be of disservice to Kenyans and put them in servitude as Kabonyi’s Kiama or the Kamuene Cultural Organisation seeks to do.” (13)

4.3. Oral Tradition in Ngugi’s *A Grain of Wheat*.

A Grain of Wheat which was published in 1967 chronicles the Kenyan people’s famous Mau Mau war of independence from the British power. The novel recounts the drastic life events of the characters as they relive the experiences of the war they had for the four days leading up to the day of Kenyan independence which was declared on twelve December 1963. But the main events of the novel is derived from the events which mostly took place during the Emergency in the 1950s. In the novel, Ngugi has created a village called Thabai which symbolises the entire Kenyan country. Ngugi’s interest in the novel lies in the psychological workings of his characters leading to the moral choices they made against the social circumstances of the Mau Mau war. However, this is an effect of colonialism which Ngugi writes against. Ngugi thus uses many Swahili words in the novel to assert the African identity. However, G.D. Killam in his book, *An Introduction to the Writings of Ngugi* rightfully says that:

A Grain of Wheat is not a political novel in the fullest sense. The political theme is balance against the exploration of human fallibility the novel offers. Ngugi’s humanism, revealed by his care for his people and his understanding of what prompts them to action, dominates the novel. (72)

4.3.1. Religious Implications of their Land in *A Grain of Wheat*

One vital theme of the novel is the cultural clash that ensues as a result of direct contact and conflict between two disparate cultures- the Gikuyu and that of the Western one in terms of both religious and social spheres. As a result we are once again initiated into the belief of creation in the Gikuyu land through Mumbi and Gikuyu, the mother and father of the Gikuyu people. Their land- the source of their entire livelihood was given to them through their ancestors from their god. The conflict between their cultural values and beliefs runs deep in the novel. At the beginning of the novel, we see that the Mau Mau Movement began as a result of the coming of the white missionaries to the Gikuyu country holding their Bible which later they realized that more “red strangers” had arrived who were holding swords rather than the Bible. The foreigners then became the oppressors and acquired land forcefully

and made the indigenes their slaves. During the course of the colonial rule, the indigenous people were treated as slaves in their own lands and forced into labour and made to endure untold sufferings and injustice. In the words of Mugo,

They took us to the roads and to the quarries even those who had never done anything. They called us criminals. But not because we had stolen anything or killed anyone. We had only asked for the thing that belongs to us from the time of Agu and Agu.(64)

The importance of land as a means of belongingness is seen from Gikonyo's character as his secret mission and wish was to acquire some wealth and buy land to settle his mother because though they were easily accepted in Thabai, they were immigrants in the ridge and did not own ancestral land over there. Thus he felt it really important to own a plot of land to truly belong.

4.3.2. Seers in *A Grain of Wheat*

Common to many oral cultural communities, the Gikuyu people had seers who would hold immense respect from his people and foretell future events and warn their people of any dangers. Here in the novel, there is a mention of such a seer, however, in the novel, the people did not take heed of their seer when he said, "there shall come a people with clothes like the butterflies." (AGoW 10). Thus they gave the stranger a place to put up a temporary shelter and he also built another building and called it the House of God. Later on, the few converted "trod on sacred places" to demonstrate that no harm could come to them as they are protected by the hands of their new God. Another mention of the prediction made by the Gikuyu seer, Mugo wa Kibiro in the novel is of the railway and the train which is called the "iron snake" in the book. When the iron snake which was foreseen by the seer made its first appearance, the people deserted Thabai for an entire week and returned only after their warrior spies who were armed with spears and simis, brought news that it was harmless. (70). This iron snake then started "wriggling towards Nairobi for a thorough exploitation of the hinterland." (12)

4.3.3. Position of Women in *A Grain of Wheat*

On the position of women, we find from the novel that they occupy a subservient position in the Gikuyu society. However, from "deep down their history", we learn that it was not always the case. In fact, the earlier part of their history through oral means claim that they were once

ruled by the women. The women ruled over the Agikuyu land and the men only served the whims and needs of the women. The men owned nothing and they felt that it was a hard time. Therefore they conspire and plotted against the women and impregnated all the women at the same time as they returned from war longing for love and relaxation. Then when all the women got pregnant, the men took over and met with only little resistance. Ngugi in the novel gives a detailed account on how years later after the take-over of power by men, a woman ruler came to power and how the rule of the last woman ruler ended in Agikuyu land. The story goes that she was a beautiful woman and that at dances she would sway her round hips alluringly and flash her milk-white teeth which would arouse men- both young and old. She would then chose youthful warriors and create jealousy amongst the others. Yet, more and more men paid her homage longing to glimpse at her thighs. Such adoration stimulated her into overstepping every social dictate and she danced naked in the moonlight. For a moment, the men seemed enraptured by the “power of a woman’s naked body”. However, after this fateful incident, her throne was taken away from her. Moreover, after this, a woman in their country never walked or danced naked in public again. We can argue that she lost her right and authority to the throne after she lost her power of control over the fantasy, desires, and perhaps a glimpse of hope for her sexual favours amongst the menfolk. The only thing that kept them from grabbing her throne was her illusiveness and her ability to influence their favours through her sexual magnetism. In short, their story is no different from the modern objectification of women and where they seem to lose their worth and control over their lives if the men decides so no matter her former authority and control.

4.3.4. Role of Men and Women in *A Grain of Wheat*

The distinctive role of men and women amongst the Gikuyu is implicitly found in the novel and from the bits and pieces; we can understand that though the colonial era has brought a lot of changes in their lives, their traditional social structures and customs were deeply ingrained in their everyday lives which is highlighted by Ngugi in the novel. For instance, when Gikonyo started his business as a trader giving up his hack-work as a carpenter and bought maize at wholesale price and let his wife Mumbi and his mother Wangari sell them at retail price along with the market women, the men at first ridiculed him for “brushing sides with women’s skirts”. Though this did not last very long and the men started to respect him once he changed his fortune and became successful. His change in fortune also became a household moral story for women to tell their children and how his mother and wife did not have to rub skirts with other women in the market because he is not “afraid to make his hands

dirty.” (AGoW 58). We also understand that the women play an important role in bringing up their children as would best benefit the society and according to their culture morally by telling stories at home. In the novel, we also learn that they grew up listening to stories. For instance, Mumbi had “fed on stories in which Gikuyu women braved the terrors of the forest to save people, of beautiful girls given to the gods as sacrifice before the rains.” (75)

Women were also responsible for household work. Wangari, in order to spend time with her son comes to his workshop and would rummage through the wood shavings in hope to collect some pieces for the fire and would ask if Gikonyo would need the pieces and he would reply that they cost money and that “a woman will never understand” (73) which implies that they are incapable of thinking economic wise unlike a man and that their knowledge is confined to household chores. This is reinforced when Gikonyo tells his mother to “Go and cook. These things are beyond women” when she kept distracting him by picking up his carpentry tools and examining them as though they are mysterious objects. Though he feels no anger towards his mother when she distract him nor she feels bad when he laughingly admonishes her but we are given hints on the distinct roles of men and women.

On one hand, a Gikuyu man is respected for his bravery, hard-working nature and wealth – in terms of agricultural produce and land. For instance, Mumbi’s father, Mbugua was a popular elder in the ridge and his home included three huts and two granaries filled with crops after harvest. Ngugi writes in the novel:

Mbugua had earned his standing in the village through his own achievements as a warrior and a farmer. His name alone, so it is said, sent fear quivering among the enemy tribes. Those were the days before the whiteman ended tribal wars to bring in world wars. But Mbugua’s reputation survived the peace. His word, in disputes brought to the council of elders for settlement, always carried weight. (74)

On the other hand, there are men like Gikonyo’s father, Waruhiu who beat and abandon their wives. His hard- working nature got him the attention of many women and when he got new brides, he grumbled that “the thighs of his first wife did not yield warmth any more” (71) and started beating her to drive her away. However, when she remained, he commanded her to leave his home, abandoning his first wife and son to wander the earth or die because they had nothing. Yet Wangari was a strong woman and hurled a silent challenge to her husband saying that, “But there is no home with a boy-child where the head of a he-goat shall not be cooked.” (72) This means that she will find a home for her son and sacrifices and rituals will

be made in his name and that he will not be abandoned but accepted anywhere. Therefore, we find that her strength and confidence is found from her child- because he is a male child. It is ironical that her problems started with her husband- a man and her strength is her son- a male child.

The role of women eventually changed as they underwent an extraordinary period. In the novel, Ngugi tells of a woman named Wambui, who, during the Emergency bravely carried “secrets from the villages to the forest and back to the villages and towns” and she also knew the underground movements” (19). Once she carried a pistol “tied to her thighs near the groin” to be delivered at Naivasha. She was dressed in such a way that conveys that she was senile and when her turn came to be searched by the Gikuyu police, she “twisted her lips, moaned; and saliva tossed out of the corners of her mouth and flowed down her chin.” (19). She was sympathised by the police thinking she was mad but not exempted. However, when he reached towards the area where she hid the pistol, she screamed and scolded him for having no shame as a Gikuyu man who would take a look at his mother. Then she threatened to show him her nakedness and he lets her go. Thus, she wittily escaped harsh punishment and imprisonment. Her bravery and wit is celebrated in Gikuyu.

Another incident recorded towards the end of the novel shows the significance of the role of women in the fight for rights when faced with threats from the external force upon their society. The role of the women in their fight for freedom cannot be overlooked. Right before Uhuru, Wambui, whose belief was that only women’s intervention could persuade Mugo to participate in Uhuru organized an “impromptu gathering” because women had to act. Ngugi writes; “She believed in the power of women to influence events, especially where men had failed to act, or seemed indecisive.” (175). In order to justify this, a memorable event has been recalled where during the workers’ strike in 1950 which was organized to immobilize the country and make it strenuous for the Whiteman to rule over them. Yet, when some men hesitated and refused to come out on strike, Wambui took the microphone from the speakers and challenged them saying that the women had brought their *Mithuru* (long skirts) and *Miengu* (leather skirts/ aprons) so that such men could come and “give up their trousers to the women” (175). Ngugi writes that the men tried to laugh it off along with the crowd to mask their discomposure but the next day all men took part in the strike. Thus Ngugi acknowledges the importance of the role of women in bringing about societal changes when external forces threaten the rights and existence of their community.

The Gikuyu tribe followed (follows) the patrilineal system of social structure and thus it is the men who own and control all the major means of production and economically significant resources. Priscah Ng'Endo Munyui in her project titled "Changing Roles of the Gikuyu Women and their Implications for the Family" writes:

Land was inherited equally among sons; men and boys acquire exclusive rights to the productive and reproductive services of their wives through payment of bride wealth. Women usually obtained access to land and other critical subsistence resources through men, and primarily through marriage. (7)

The study found that today there is an increase in economic empowerment in the status of women which has altered the traditional roles and also the Agikuyu family structure. This has been possible through education, western medicine, religion, and dual- income earning families. Today, many women have access to credit through Kenya Women Trust fund (KWTF) which is a non-profit making organization with its main objective to support and promote the direct participation of economically active women who are already involved in business to achieve sustainable financial and non- financial services. It also provides training for women entrepreneurs in business management and record keeping. Traditionally, Gikuyu women had their small self-help groups whose main role was to ridicule mothers with unhealthy babies and shower praises on those with healthy babies. This communal self-help group was to boost the confidence and encourage more Gikuyu women to take care of their husbands and homesteads according to the ascribed roles. However, with the change in times and women empowerment, these groups have transformed from being an organization promoting traditional social values to providing women with financial aid to start and maintain sustainable businesses. These groups also called *itate* have enabled women to furnish their houses, equip their kitchens and even improve on their businesses. This means that the women have enough to sustain their families with or without the help of their husbands. It was also found that in the present times, many women are by de-facto the head of the family and control their household and homestead due to migration or simply because they are the bread-winners of their family. Migration is very common today and men move away to urban areas for work leaving the women to stay back and play their roles with much more independence in all sectors- production, reproduction and communal.

4.3.5. Songs in *A Grain of Wheat*

Many songs are recorded in the novel, songs of varying topics and situations and the significance of these songs cannot be overemphasized. Some songs will be analysed to understand the importance of songs in the day-to-day lives of the Gikuyu people.

The first song we find in the novel is a song, an invocation of the blessings of Ngai or Mwenanyaga (a bright one- a name for God) by the freedom fighters when they were hiding in the forest before they undergo expeditions against the colonial power. This is sung by Lieutenant Koina before the Uhuru when they visited Mugo. The song goes:

Mwenanyaga we pray that you may protect our hideouts.

Mwenanyaga we pray that you may hold a soft cloud over us.

Mwenanyaga we pray that you may defend us behind and in front from our enemies.

Mwenanyaga we pray that you may give us courage in our hearts.

Thai thathaiya Ngai, Thaaai.

The song continued and now the song shifts from invoking god's blessings to the assertion of their loyalty and purpose of their sacrifice and sufferings.

We shall never rest

Without land,

Without Freedom true

Kenya is a country of black people. (21)

These songs show their indigenous religious belief in Ngai and as detailed in the novel, they sing these songs by standing up and facing Mount Kenya which is their sacred place, the place where Ngai blessed them with their country- their land for all generations. These songs convey their attachment to their land- a birth-right given to them by their god and their fight for their freedom which has been taken away by a foreign government. The subjugation of the native people by the imperialist power by taking away their very identity can be painfully felt through the song. Though very simple, these songs evoke a sense of uneasiness in all the

ones present and moved the listeners. For them, songs can convey much more emotions than just plain conversation.

Though Ngugi did not give many songs life, there is mention of songs, dances and guitar at every gathering of the youth. Gikonyo is skilled in playing the instrument and when Mumbi sang to his tune, he felt like he could almost touch the solid twilight calm while Mumbi felt the workshop (Gikonyo's), Thabai, earth, heaven, and even felt their unity. She felt raw and earthly feelings which are then elevated to a kind of spiritual feeling. She felt that she "rode on strange waves: alone defying the wind and the rain; alone fighting hunger and thirst in the desert..." (77)

Chapter thirteen begins with a song which the children of Gikuyu have been singing for generations. The song talks of the significance of rain and blessings from their god Murungu, who as Ngugi explains in the novel never slept but let his tears fall too their land from Agu and Agu which means that their country has been theirs since the time of their ancestors. The song goes:

Ngai has given Gikuyu a beautiful country,
 Never without food or water or grazing fields.
 It is good so Gikuyu should praise Ngai all the time,
 For he has ever been generous to them.

The song emphasizes on the gift of their land from their god Ngai. It also shows how they give importance to elements in nature like rain which many take for granted. The gratefulness they have for the bountiful blessings they receive from their god is summarized in these few lines. This shows the simple spiritual connection of the Kikuyu people to their land and the natural elements that they are favoured by their god. Moreover, though not explicitly cited in the novel, we understand that they regard the rainy day as a sort of good omen and relate the return of the legendary African figure Kenyatta from England to Gikuyu country and to Gatundu from Maralal on rainy days. Therefore, even though they were taking shelter on the narrow verandahs now as the rain has interrupted their daily activities and business, Ngugi reminds us that "falling water was a blessing" to the Kikuyu people both for their fields and as a means of intimation for their freedom.

There are more songs and chorus recorded here and there in the novel. We find mention of Christian hymns and short chorus on Gikuyu and Mumbi, their ancestors. We also find songs on topical issues. For instance, during the rule of the colonial power, the people while doing forced labour on the trenches sing of the time where Mugo, the once village hero saved a pregnant woman from being flogged in the trenches. The song about this incident gave them strength and hope for salvation and it also became a village anthem at one time. Therefore, it only seemed right that the song would be sung that particular day as they would get Uhuru at night. A woman started the song and others just started to sing along spontaneously which show their natural liking and affinity with songs. Singing for them was as relevant and instinctual as everyday conversation yet express their emotions and sentiments more effectively. The song goes:

And he jumped into the trench,
 The words he told the soldier pierced my heart like a spear;
 You will not beat the woman, he said,
 You will not beat a pregnant woman, he told the soldier.

Work stood still in the trench
 The earth too was silent,
 When they took him away

Tears, red as blood, trickled down my face. (174)

This song registers in very simple language the pain, sufferings and injustice the natives had to go through from the hands of a foreign power in their own native country. Though the song highlights just one form of inhuman treatment meted out to the indigenes, it is representative of the untold injustice and sufferings they experienced as direct consequence of colonialism. The enslavement of the Gikuyu people in their own land cannot be overemphasized and the song can be considered as paradigmatic of the experiences of the Kenyan people during that colonial era.

4.3.6. Story-telling in *A Grain of Wheat*

The importance of telling stories and usage of Gikuyu proverbs as means of enlightening the young and teaching them the ways of their community living is another interesting aspect found in the novel. This is because Gikuyu country resorted to oral tradition to pass on their culture, age-old wisdom, legacy and such cultural values from one generation to the other to keep alive their folk culture and continue their presence as a community and nation. Thus, it is only fair that Ngugi mentions the habit of telling stories and singing songs during gatherings and include witty proverbs and sayings in the novel to help us readers understand and appreciate their communal way of life. Such folk elements in the novel give beauty to the novel and interestingly show that in Gikuyu land every individual needs to be a productive part of the community.

In the novel, it is brought to light that during the gatherings of the youth belonging to a rika (belonging to one age group) or friends having a get together in a family house of one of their friends, storytelling and singing form an integral part of the social gatherings. Whether consciously or unconsciously done, storytelling aids Mumbi is said to be “fed on stories in which Gikuyu women braved the terrors of the forest to save people, of beautiful girls given to the gods as sacrifice before the rains.” (75). Karanja was admired by Kariuki, Mumbi’s father for his courage, wisdom and resourcefulness because he had a unique way of telling his stories and events. Thus he became a hero for his skill and aura in storytelling. Kihika, Mumbi’s brother and the freedom fighter who became a war hero and a symbol of inspiration for the Mau Mau was known for his love for listening to stories and Warui, a notable village elder loves to recount stories and as Ngugi writes, “needed only a listener”. Thus Warui would tell Kihika stories of their people before the Second World War on how their land was taken from them, how they were made to fight a war which was not theirs against Hitler. Warui also related the heroic deeds of the warriors like Waiyaki who laid down their lives to free their country from the Whiteman and heard stories from soldiers who had returned from Burma, Egypt, Palestine and India and about Mahatma Gandhi who was leading the Indians against the British rule in India. All these stories influenced Kihika’s political interest and love for his country. Furthermore, Warui accounts various political events which had impacted their society and how the mission schools prohibited circumcision which Ngugi writes, “in order to eat, like insects, both the roots and stem of the Gikuyu society.” (81) These instances show us that storytelling forms an indispensable role when it comes to keeping alive one’s identity, legacy and history.

Stories are also employed as means of imparting cultural values amongst the Gikuyu people. Elders and parents often use stories with morals to teach important cultural values amongst the young to preserve and perpetuate their folk culture and to promote healthy social living. One example of this is found in the novel where Karanja's mother, Wairimu tells Karanja a story to inculcate in him the importance of the Gikuyu work culture and teach him a lesson on the fate of being a lazy son because she had so many expectations from him and look up to him as the man who would take care of her as she gets old but Karanja never lifted a *jembe* (digging tool for gardening) nor a *panga* (a tool for cutting plants) nor went to the *shamba* (a small piece of land for cultivation). She narrated the story of Njoki, a poor woman who had only one son and could only survive if they worked hard. Yet, her son never helped her. He would only iron his clothes and polish his shoes and brought home friends in the evening and asked for food. Njoki was sad but was kind and generous and always gave them food and told them stories. This made him proud and thus the routine continued till one day he brought home three great friends from a distant village, hoping and asking for a feast from his mother. She welcomed them, set up a welcoming table, went back to the kitchen and brought out well-polished shoes on their plates and served them. She then told them that she did not go to the *shamba* that day as she had spent the whole day polishing the shoes and thus the shoes were the only thing that she could offer. This humiliated the son to the core and he learnt his lesson. The next morning he took a *panga* and a *jembe* and left for the *shamba* and did not leave until sunset. After Wairimu narrated the story to Karanja, he understood that the story was meant as a cautionary tale for his negligence towards his responsibilities and thus he promised to accompany her to the *shamba* the following day.

4.3.7. Community Living in *A Grain of Wheat*

The Gikuyu people also believed in and practiced a close community living and many of their proverbs and sayings are meant to instruct the listener or listeners of the importance of this cultural identity gained from being a responsible part of the closely knit society. This is why Wairimu was felt strongly against Karanja becoming a home guard and a chief and was vocal about it and thus said a proverb, "Don't go against the people. A man who ignores the voice of his own people comes to no good end." (AGoW 222) in order to bring Karanja to his senses. In the novel, we also find Mugo also in quest of an identity within the community as he is considered a lost child because he has no living relations except his aunt whom he despises. Being a Gikuyu, he cannot remain withdrawn and distant from his fellow Gikuyu men. To add to his misery, when Waitherero died of age and over-drinking, her daughters

came, deliberately ignored and disregarded Mugo and buried her without questions or tears and left. This is the reason why he oddly missed his aunt because he yearned for a relation to feel belonged. To this Ngugi writes:

Whom could he now call a relation? He wanted somebody, anybody, who would use the claims of kinship to do him ill or good. Either one or the other as long as he was not left alone, an outsider. He turned to the soil. He would labour, sweat, and through success and wealth, force society to recognize him. (8).

We are made to understand from Mugo's desolate feelings and desperate attempts to feel a part of the community that relationships and kinship are crucial in developing a sense of identity. Thus Mugo is in a pursuit of social recognition and acceptance. This is the same reason why Wairimu refused to abandon Karanja though she was against Karanja's actions and "ashamed of his activities" because according to Gikuyu culture voiced by Wairimu, "a child from your womb is never thrown away." (222). In Ngugi's narrative technique, we find that he is a strong proponent for the survival of African cultural heritage in this era where due to contact with the western world faces identity crisis and disintegration. In Lèfara Silue's research article titled, "Reading Acculturation in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*" Lèfara writes,

In Ngugi's work, cross-cultural dialogue between Africa and Europe is turned into cultural imperialism because Europeans refuse to recognize African culture and tradition. The white man uses colonial institutions like the church and the school to promote colonial ideology. This situation brings about a cultural clash. Throughout his novel Ngugi questions the survival of African tradition in the new globalized society. He then invites Africans to rehabilitate or reconsider African novel so that it can meet the demands of globalization. Beyond Ngugi's writing technique, the reader sees the image of an advocator of Gikuyu tradition. (14374)

4.4. Oral Tradition in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood*.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petal of Blood* was first published in 1977 and is set in Kenya in a rural setting- in a village called Ilmorog which quickly develops into a town called New Ilmorog not long after the Kenyan independence. The plot revolves around four main characters- Munira, Abdulla, Wanja, and Karega whose lives are connected and brought together by their common history and a crime where all of them become prime suspects. The novel is divided

into four parts- they are titled 'Walking'; 'Towards Bethlehem'; 'To Be Born'; and 'Again . . . La Luta Continua!' respectively. The plot is gradually revealed by using a technique of fragmented chronology made up of accounts given by the characters which is very apt in this detective or suspense story. He goes backward to the ancient period in Kenya Africa and when the Europeans started exploiting Kenyans and forward in time the present to reveal the stories of the characters and understand their lives and experiences.

Ngugi himself believes in a nation where the economy is free from any foreign control and is also free from the monopoly of any imperialistic class. He believes that the Kenyan national economy which is demonstrated in their national culture should be allowed to grow freely without the domination of any external rule and that the wealth that belongs to Kenya and is generated by Kenyan in Kenya should be used to provide the best living conditions to the people. However, for Ngugi, some had been disloyal to the independence movement and thus betrayed their own kind which has ironically led to further alienation of the land from the workers and peasants for whom the war has been fought. Land is the very source of livelihood for the peasants and the betrayal of the common people by a small group of Kenyan middle class in alliance with the outside force is one main motivating factor for Ngugi to write as he believe that a writer should champion the hopes and dreams of the common majority of the people and be 'agents of change'. Thus, the novel in its own unique way tells the story of the changes and injustice that the native Kenyan people experienced through the accounts of the characters, their motives and psychological make-up.

In *An Introduction to the Writings of Ngugi*, G.D. Killam summarizes the themes of the novel brilliantly. He observes that in the novel, *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi has deepened and widened the themes that he has dealt with in his previous novels. He also observes the purpose of Ngugi in writing the novel. He writes:

Themes related to education, both formal and informal; religion, both Christian and customary; the alienation of the land viewed from the historical point of view and as a process which continues in the present; the struggle for independence and the price paid to achieve it. And to these themes he has added artistic representation of the betrayal of the independence movement and its authors, the nature and cost of modernity as this coincides with the emergence of a Kenyan middle-class, and of the need for the creation of a cultural liberation struggle fostered by the peasants and workers. (96).

4.4.1. Use of myths in *Petals of Blood*

The importance of land and the attachment of the Gikuyu people to their ancestral land cannot be overemphasized and Ngugi through his writings incorporate the reverence that the Gikuyu people have for their land as their wealth and the very source of their livelihood. The earth, soil, rain, wind, and sun play primary roles in their everyday lives as they were all essentially agriculturalists and herders. Their lives basically depended on good soil, sun and rain. Thus, naturally, in the novel, we find rain a very important element symbolising life and prosperity. Ngugi uses a famous Gikuyu myth- the myth of creation in the novel to strengthen the theme of the importance of land for the Gikuyu: thereby, the inhuman act of dispossessing and alienating them from their beloved land through colonialism. Ngugi superbly document the myth in the novel as:

The older folk told stories of how Rain, Sun and Wind went a wooing Earth, sister of Moon and it was Rain who carried the day and that was why Earth grew a sudden belly after being touched by Rain. . . .(234)

In this Gikuyu myth, Earth is regarded as the beautiful sister of Moon. She was wooed by Rain, Sun, and Wind but it was Rain who prevailed in the courtship and when the rain drops fell on Earth, she became pregnant. It is believed that rain drops are the sperms of Rain that is why Earth always swells after a downpour. It is also believed that rain drops contain the sperm of God and that man originated from the womb of mother Earth after the first torrent of rain. The beauty and the import of rain touching the soil and producing good harvest for the Gikuyu people is paramount and this need for fertile land and rain to fall on it so as to sustain life is an important concern for the people of Ilmorog in the novel. The concept of mother earth for the people and their affinity towards their land is thus reiterated through the myth.

4.4.2. Songs and Dances in *Petals of Blood*.

Songs and dances occupy a distinct position in the oral tradition of the Gikuyu people. Their stories and celebrations are incomplete without their songs and dances. Their vibrant culture is much richer and fuller for their diverse songs and dances. Being an integral part of their traditional lives, the novel would have been incomplete without some songs and dances. Ngugi, therefore incorporates songs of various topics and issues and also describes the dances

during circumcision in the novel to give a glimpse of the Gikuyu world to the readers. The community lives of the people can be seen through the songs and dances.

In the *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi uses songs liberally not only to add to the beauty of the plot but also to paint a clear picture of the Gikuyu people- their daily existence, their vibrant traditional life, their history, their stories, and their experiences. All the songs cannot be analyzed here in the chapter but some are selected to elaborate on the experiences of the people.

A lullaby has been recorded by Ngugi at the beginning of the novel which brings nostalgic feelings to Munira and the readers. The song along with the description of the rustic lives of the people in Ilmorog appeals to the reader and hits the cord of a childhood of the bygone era where life was slow and simple- with parents leaving their children in the care of older children and working the fields. Though the children looked dirty with flies swarming their sore eyes and mucus-blocked noses in their tattered calico clothes, Munira was moved by the care the children had for each other. The scene portrays a crying baby strapped on the back of a child while another one “pat-pat the crying baby to the rhythm with a rocking lullaby”. The lullaby goes:

Do not cry, our little one.

. . .

If you stop crying, child of our mother,

She will soon come home from the fields

And bring you gitete- calabash of milk. (29).

The song takes the readers back to an era of simplicity. The actions of the children in addition to the lyrics of the lullaby picture a life of close and strong community ties. Munira, an outsider of Ilmorog felt a feeling of familiarity in the lullaby- of children singing lullabies in his father’s pyrethrum fields before the Mau Mau uprising.

The importance of work and wealth is a major concern in the novel and Ngugi uses a song taught by Munira to his students to illustrate the fact that cows, goats, crops, money and land are all wealth in a rural setting like Ilmorog. The “dignity in labour” song is sung fervently by the children which is a simple song that was inspired by the hard work of the people of

Ilmorog and their dedication to their works- either as agriculturalists or as herders. The song goes:

Cows are wealth

Work is health

Goats are Wealth

...

God Bringer of rains! (25).

However, it is ironical that as the novel progresses, one would realize that in a corrupted world where there is no love and concern for one's own people, the rich exploits the poor and can ruthlessly uproot them from their land they so love and deprive them of their rights and dignity. Thus, we are ushered into a world where hard work does not lead to wealth. Rain, cow, goats and crops did not bring wealth. It is the selfish and corrupted people who triumphs by manipulating and cheating the poor and uneducated into rootlessness. Ngugi's major political and social concern for the independent Kenyans is revealed through this satirical song.

There are songs which talks about the political struggles of the Gikuyu people. Not only political but religious and cultural deprivation of the indigenous people from the hands of the church and its missions are discussed in the songs. The indigenous people who accepted the white man's religion and culture were living better off but it meant the rejection of the Gikuyu customs, beliefs, and everything to do with their tradition. Ngugi is a champion of the African culture and its preservation and this is seen in his writings. A song in the novel stands out for its portrayal of this spiritual and cultural plight of people. Ngugi writes:

They say that there's famine,

But they don't say there's famine

Only for those who would not eat the bread of Jesus.

... (163).

This song becomes a powerful tool in the hands of Ngugi as he mocks the ideology of the Christian missions back then in Kenya under colonialism where the corrupt clergy and many

early converts exploits the poor in the name religion- their hypocrisy and double standard lives are exposed by Ngugi through the song and characters like Ezekiel Waweru and Rev. Jerrod in the novel.

There are many songs of political issue from the songs sung about war heroes who sacrificed their lives for the people by taking up arms against the Colonial power when they first invaded their safe haven. A powerful song about resistance against colonialism and fight for the injustice committed against the black people and for their land sung by the freedom fighters is found in the novel. The song talks about the arrest of the legendary Jomo Kenyatta and the subsequent oath taken by the warriors to fight for their people called the Batuni oaths (warrior's oath) in the earlier times. The song goes:

When Jomo of the black people was arrested in the night. . .

And I vowed, tongue on a burning spear, . . .

I will never betray this piece of earth to foreigners. (163)

Ngugi in his writings exposes the shortcomings in his society- the selfishness of some people “through ignorance, bribery, torture, or promises of wealth and individual safety, had sold themselves as Home Guards- spear-bearers for the Foreigners” (PoB 169) and had thus betrayed their own blood and kin which resulted in the total devastation of their rights and culture. In order to highlight the sense of acute let-down by Gikuyu's own people and to show the feeling of defiance when the warriors gather to fight for her independence, Ngugi brilliantly incorporates the emotions of the people against such treacherous actions through songs.

And you traitors to your people, . . .

For Kenya is black people's country. (171)

A similar song is documented again in part three of the novel (page number 302) which is longer and stronger in its message to the black traitors. Likewise, there are a number of songs with political issues expressing the emotions of the people against corruption, selfishness, injustice, and so on. Ngugi uses songs not only to describe the experiences of the people- the injustice, the pain, the betrayal but also capture the emotions of the people under the circumstances.

There are songs in Gikuyu language of the past and of the times Ndemi tamed the forests and claimed the wealth of the earth and there are also contemporary songs in Gikuyu which are translated by Ngugi, and Christian hymns. There are songs on the developmental works that started in Ilmorog and on Wanja and her fete in ushering in recognition and progress to Ilmorog. However the songs and dances during the circumcision rites are the most elaborate ones which open the window to the Gikuyu cultural heritage. These songs and dances will be analyzed in the next sub topic.

4.4.3. Circumcision Ceremony in *Petals of Blood*

Circumcision, as discussed in the earlier passages was a very important practice in the Gikuyu culture where both the young male and female members of the society are initiated into adulthood. Circumcision was the absolute necessity to be accepted into their culture as responsible members of the society. To be counted in the society, the young look forward to the circumcision. In *Petals of Blood*, however, instead of the circumcision rites, the songs and dances which preceded the actual circumcision are described in detail. The eros-opera which precedes the circumcision rites is encapsulated in the novel providing a clear depiction of the Gikuyu's famous circumcision ceremony. The celebration is documented from pages 246 to 250. Njuguna and Nyakinyua took the leading roles and gave a dramatic performance in the opera of eros. All the people of the community took part in the ceremony-young and old, men and women as they formed a circle and moved around in circle, moving their feet in perfect rhythm and lifting a little dust as they moved. The celebration also attracted people from the nearby and far ridges.

Readers are also allowed a glimpse of the exhibition of physical agility among the men. General dances were also performed and mock fights were also part of the dance. The words of the songs, the rhythm and the body movements had to be in synchrony and it delighted the gathering. Ngugi beautifully presented the songs where the characters put on an act of being a bride, a potential suitor, a son, mother and so on. Some songs have sexual undertones and sometimes straight up sexual remarks. In regard to the subject matter of the songs and dances, Ngugi writes: "she (Nyakinyua) threw erotic abuse, compliments, or straight celebratory words with ease." (246). And that she could compose the lyrics referring to anybody or any event without effecting the tune and rhythm. The dance songs also have refrains where the gathering could take part in the chorus and the songs built up to become

battle of words- “erotic war of words and gestures and tones suggestive of many meanings and situations.” (248).

After throwing words of abuse at each other, Nyakinyua then sang of the recent past of her people and how they underwent two years of failing rains, and of the exodus and poverty of the town and asked who had eaten up the wealth of the land. She also sang of the droughts of the centuries, the two-mouthed Marimus, of colonialism and the struggles of the newly circumcised youth, the meaning of blood shed at circumcision and such others. The night ended with the women applauding Nyakinyua’s presentation of their history with four ululations.

4.4.4. Women in *Petals of Blood*

Being a patriarchal society, the women in the Gikuyu tribe play a subordinate role to men. The women have fewer opportunities in life in general. In the novel, we see the women closer to nature and their land than the men. For instance, we find old Mariamu, a paid worker in Ezekieli’s farm was “inseparable” from the land, and her piousness came from her total absorption in her work. The women in Ilmorog were much attached to their *shambas* too. Even when they were not cultivating, they were singing a sacred song to the fields and the flowers and crops seemed to understand these sacred songs. Nyakinyua was one with her land and when her land was to be taken away from her- she tried to gather the people to fight for their rights and their land but they did not know who to fight with or how to fight. She thus died in her sleep before the bank could sell her land because she could not bear to be buried in someone else’s land and was worried what her man would say when she get to the other side.

In the novel, those who did not work in their land earned their living by selling themselves as they did not have much option in their corrupted world. Though women refused to be “relegated to the kitchen and the bedroom, demanding equal places in men’s former citadel of power and privilege” (30), they have failed and even after schooling, their future is unclear because as Wanjia puts it, girls knew that no matter how hard they work in their studies, the road led them to the kitchen and the bedroom (44). The fate of women did not improve with independence or education. Wanjia bluntly puts it that if one is born a girl, instead of it being a cause of joy, she is “doomed to either marrying someone or else being a whore.” (348). The attitude of men towards women is regressive. Except for characters like Abdulla, the general view of women and their actions are thus quite negative. Karega’s experience as a

counting clerk in the Theng'eta Breweries was not pleasant and he accounted the attitude of the workers towards women as thus:

Men too seemed to think they were better off than women workers because they got a little bit more pay and preference in certain jobs. They seemed to think that women deserved low pay and heavy work: women's real job, they argued amidst noise and laughter, was to lie on their backs and open their legs to man's passage to the kingdoms of pleasure. (361)

The passage is self-explanatory proving that women had to face discriminations in their work place too basing on their gender. Not only were they paid lesser than men and preference was given to men while hiring for certain jobs. In addition to all these, they were sexualised openly. Therefore, no matter their occupation, whether agriculturalists or career women, they were considered weak and their 'real place' was thought of as the kitchen and the bedroom. And thus, though Wanja tried to live a respectable life by leaving her profession as a barmaid and prostitute by setting up her own shop and business, she had to go back to being a "whore" because the system and corrupted men would not let her. She tried many times to start over but failed. She was not accepted by her father when she went back to her home because she was unclean. Many women had to suffer similar fates under the corrupted patriarchal society.

4.4.5. Story telling in *Petals of Blood*

Story telling is an important technique used by Ngugi in the novel to connect the different parts of the story. To tie up the plot and to give insight into the past of the characters, storytelling served to be a perfect tool in the hands of the author. Through the stories told by the characters, the readers are carried back to the bygone era of the Gikuyu people or to the times of colonial resistance and so on. We see the art of storytelling as an important agent of continuity of traditions and it is also worth mentioning that the stories of the people shift with the changes in their experiences and their immediate environment and situations. For instance, Munira tried to bond with his children by telling them stories of the past: how one-eyed Marimu haunted Ilmorog in the past, stories of funny old women shitting mountains, and about ill-tempered cripples who would curse but his wife disapproves and he had to read from the Bible instead. The negative attitude of Munira's pious wife towards these stories of their cultural past is a consequence of the Christian hypocrisy that many converted Christians

had during that time. She considered such tales of the past as blasphemous and it is a perfect example how people are led to a period of cultural impoverishment.

The importance of storytelling in Gikuyu culture cannot be overstated. The elders imparting to the young the cultural wisdom, their history, values, and traditions was the common scene at any gathering. In the novel Ngugi writes: “Sitting round the family tree in the front yard the aged would sip honey beer and tell the children, with voices taut with prideful authority and nostalgia. . . ” (145). Keeping in view this cultural practice, there are characters like Nyakinyua who acts as reservoirs of the cultural history of the people enriching the lives of the listeners, especially the younger generation who are to become the future of Gikuyu country. She told the travelling group stories as they kept on their journey to the city. “keeping up their spirits with stories of the past”, Nyakinyua was an avid storyteller and can keep her audience enraptured. As Ngugi describes, “she talked as if she had been everywhere, as if she actually participated in the war against the Germans, as if the rhythm of the historic rise and fall of Ilmorog flowed in her veins.” (149). During the circumcision ceremony on the eve of their initiation, she again sings the stories of their past-near and far past and moved every listener.

We also have Abdulla who would narrate stories of his experiences as a warrior in the Mau Mau rebellion against the colonial power. There are stories of Ndemi, their famous ancestor who tamed the forest and cursed his children to never abandon their land and shed their blood to defend it (253). There are stories of Jomo Kenyatta, Dedan Kimathi, Ole Maasai, the legendary figures in Kenyan fight for independence. Thus, we see the dynamics and matter of the stories changes with the changes in time and experience but one thing remain and that is the story of a culture- stories keep the culture and social experiences alive.

Ngugi uses African proverbs, myths, legends, and such others and artistically represent the Kenyan society to the readers: we are offered a glimpse into pre-colonial Gikuyu society, during Mau Mau resistance against colonialism, the changes the society underwent through Christianity and education under the missions, and the corruption that crept into the Kenyan society in the years following independence.

Confidence Gbolo Sanka et al., rightly observes in their paper “The Importance of Oral tradition in Ngugi wa Thiongo’s Writings: A Critical Analysis of *The River Between* and *Petals of Blood*” that though national culture is one of Ngugi’s main concerns in his writings

but that is by no means the “strict adherence to a culture that is static, archaic, a culture that will be of disservice to Kenyans . . .” (13).

4.5. Concluding remarks

From the frequent use of Gikuyu cultural elements- names, Swahili proverbs, songs, language and indigenous values and practices, Ngugi is protecting and promoting the Gikuyu cultural heritage. Ngugi dedicates his writings to the defence of African culture which underwent so much change from the colonial rule as well as misrepresentations from non- African writers. Therefore, in Ngugi’s writings, we can expect the oral tradition of the African society, Kikuyu culture in particular standing out to the readers. The fictional narratives of Ngugi abounds in folk elements of the Gikuyu tribe- their belief system, their everyday lives, their songs and dances, their cultural practices, and such others. His fictions may have varied themes but one common trait is the defence of “Africanity” through the use of a narrative that is replete with indigenous elements. In his book, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Ngugi aptly writes:

As a writer who believes in the utilization of African ideas, African philosophy and African folklore and imagery to the fullest extent possible, I am of the opinion the only way to use them effectively is to translate them almost literally from the African language native to the writer into whatever European language he is using as medium of expression. I have endeavoured in my words to keep as close as possible to the vernacular expressions. For, from a word, a group of words, a sentence and even a name in any African language, one can glean the social norms, attitudes and values of a people. [...] I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new African surroundings (8).

Chapter- V

Gikuyu and Angami Naga Tribe

A Comparative Study of Tradition, Change and After.

“To understand the present . . . you must understand the past. To know where you are, you must know where you came from, don’t you think?”

- Ngugi wa Thiong’o in *Petals of Blood*.

5.1. Introduction to chapter V

The Gikuyu and Angami Naga tribe are culturally very rich and diverse. Their traditional values and indigenous wisdom cannot be undermined despite the advent of modern technology and information. Today, it is the sad reality of many oral societies that their interaction with the colonial powers together with the increase in advanced information, technology, and artificial intelligence are threatening to reduce their vibrant culture into mere misinformation and stories of the past. This is one of the most pressing issues pertaining to oral societies in the present times and the need to preserve their culture and thereby asserting their unique identities is very important as it is a fact that the probability of losing their culture is a ticking bomb which is in danger of going extinct. This is also true for the Gikuyu tribe of Kenya Africa and Angami Naga tribe of Nagaland. Both these societies at one point in history came in contact with the colonial powers and with that were introduced to a foreign culture which imposed and also influenced their culture on them. This became the catalyst to cultural assimilation and gradually with the introduction of western education and Christianity these two tribes underwent drastic changes in their lives both socially and in their religious beliefs.

These two tribes- Gikuyu tribe of Kenya Africa and Angami Naga tribe of Nagaland India will be taken for a comparative study, considering their cultural practices, values, and folk living; their ancestral beliefs and practices; and also give a brief account of the cultural assimilation in these two native cultures when they were introduced to western Education and Christianity and make a comparative study of it. Here, the native language plays a major role in understanding and appreciating the native culture and its distinct characteristics and beauty and thus it is only through the words of mouth that will guarantee a complete preservation

and dissemination of their stories, songs, values, beliefs, wisdoms, etc., which in other words is their oral tradition to the next generation but also provide the platform to fully appreciate the culture of the natives. This is because of the fact that though many cultural elements are being recorded in the written form to preserve the culture and which without a doubt is the first step towards preservation and propagation, those texts are mostly in English and the essence of the cultural elements are lost in translation. Moreover, due to the decline in the practice of cultural propagation through the words of mouth because of many contributing factors, there is an urgent need to save these cultures before the folk elements are lost in time and only a distorted and fragmented form is shared to the next generation. Regrettably, this will be the case of many oral cultures if research and records are not made by the intellectuals and scholars in this generation.

5.2. Position of Elders in Gikuyu and Angami Naga Tribe

In both the tribes, immense importance and respect is given to elders. Their words and wisdom are sought and followed religiously in various matters- from matters of this world to matters regarding the spiritual world and the appeasement of the spirits.

Both the communities, before their contact with the outside world were governed by Elders. They were the expounders of their traditional values and practices. All the major decisions and laws of the land were made and upheld by them. Their cultural customs and social conduct are governed and promoted by them. Their counsel is sought in case of disputes and their decisions are made according to the customary law of the land and their decisions are binding to all. Even today, the amount of respect these tribes have for the elders in their culture cannot be undermined. The respect for elders can be seen in their daily lives and most often comes naturally as such qualities are deeply ingrained in their cultures. The elders are respected by the virtue of their age but more so because of their knowledge and wisdom of the tribe and their vast experiences. One instance of respect for elders in both the tribes in their daily lives can be seen in the way that they allow the elders to speak first in meetings and gatherings while the youth listen and if they were given the chance and platform to speak, they do so very respectfully and mindful of their choice of words owing to the fact that there are elders in attendance. The elders in Angami villages are called *Rinapeyu* which means village elders or simply called *peyumia* where '*peyu*' means wisdom and '*mia*' means men so it means men of wisdom. This implies that the elders are respected more so because of their wisdom in the ways of life gained through age, experience and by being good

listeners when they were young. There are many instances of showing respect to elders in the Angami tribe in their daily lives and for this study few examples can be taken from Khriesaneisa Rutsa's book, *Tsiepfumia Zhoue* which can be translated in English as "The Moral Values of the Ancestors". He recorded that it is important to stand up and receive anything given to them by elders and considered ill-bred if a person does not greet an elder first. In social gatherings and at all feasts in the community, it is also considered good to serve elders food first because it is believed that a person will suffer from ill-health if one eats before the elders present. In the Angami tribe, in any gathering where elders are also present, the younger ones do not speak hastily but slowly making only insightful observation. This also akin to the Kikuyu counterpart which is seen in all major meetings held in the three novels. The characters are seen nervous and anxious in addressing the elders. Karega in *Petals of Blood* trembled before his speech because he has never addressed a gathering of elders before that and he could not think of any appropriate proverb or riddle or story to make his point. This sense of reverence extends to one's parents too. For instance, in Ngugi's *The River Between*, we see Waiyaki's reverence and a sense of fear for his father mostly because of his father's knowledge in the ways of the tribe and he wondered "if the other boys could boast of such a father." (9). He was always slightly ill at ease near his father and listens attentively to his father's every word and when his father, Chege tells him that he would take him to the sacred grove, Waiyaki wondered all the hidden knowledge his father's 'aging body' held and was excited to learn the ways of the tribe and "felt important and very big" (14).

Both the tribes give utmost importance to the decisions made by elders of the tribe. In case of any dispute within the tribe and with other tribes, the decisions taken by the elders after deliberating on the issue is taken as final and binding to all. All major decisions of the tribes are made collectively by the elders in accordance to their cultural patterns, customary laws, and beliefs. This democratic structure of society is found in both the tribes where the counsel of the elders is held in high regard and their decisions are law within the tribe. In all matters of the tribe, the elders would take the lead and advise the people on the course of action. This can be seen in the three novels of Ngugi selected for this study. In all crises which arise, the elders would ponder on the matter and give their opinions. One such illustration can be taken from *Petals of Blood* where the elders decided to kill Abdulla's donkey to save Ilmorog from drought. During a time when the whole community came under the threat of starvation with the change of Ilmorog from once 'so green and hopeful' to a dried and cracked up land full of

sun and dust and sand, the elders decided to have the donkey killed because it was an outsider like its owner and was eating away the little grass that they have when their goats were starving. And as Nyakinyua explains, the elders want the donkey killed by beating it and letting it loose in the plains to carry the plague facing Ilmorog away. As an explanation to the decision, Karega states:

The elders are acting in the light of their knowledge. They believe that you can influence nature by sacrifice and loading all our sins on Abdulla's donkey. Why- I even heard Njuguna say that the sacrifice will also bribe God to shut his eyes to the Americans' attempts to walk in God's secret places. . . (PoB 135).

So the concept of respect for elders in both the tribes is very similar and deeply ingrained in their life which is inculcated from a very young age.

5.3. Seers

In the Angami Naga tribe, the seers as discussed in chapter II have the capacity to foretell the future and also have the gift to communicate with the supernatural and prescribe necessary solution to different problems the community faces. In the indigenous Angami society, the seers played a very important role as the mediators between the spiritual world and the human world. In the case of any sudden illness or event which they could not comprehend, the seers were solicited as they can understand the causes and give solutions by prescribing a ritual or even administering various medicines to cure the ailing person. They are the medicine man of the community in that matter. In any matter which goes beyond the understanding of the common people, the advice of the seers are sought to find a solution and to avoid any unfavourable consequence of incautious actions which can anger the spirits. They can also forecast the fortune of the people (*thuophi*) before taking important undertakings and also in case of sudden illness. A famous instance can be taken from one of the wonders performed by Rhalietü, a well-known seer from Meriema Village where the people solicited her advice as to what to do with the stone that broke when they tried to pull it. According to the traditional Angami practice, it is forbidden to abandon a stone after its careful selection and after performing all the rituals to use it to mark an important event or location or to mark the achievement of a man in title taking and such others. Therefore when the stone cracked, they left it in its place and sought her help. She used an egg to glue the stone back together so that they can use it. Astonishingly, they could continue to pull the stone and put it up. The stone still stands today at Meriema village bearing its cracked marks

joined together by an egg. This wonderful Angami tale has been made into a drama by Doordarshan Kohima titled “Rhalieü” documenting brilliantly the details and events that led to her performing the miraculous act.

Another popular instance from the Angami tales where the knowledge of a seer was sought is found in the legend of *Puliebadze*. This story is found in many compiled Tenyidie textbooks prescribed for Tenyidie students in different standards. Here the book titled *Tenyimia Dzeyie* which can be translated as *Tenyimia Recounted Tales* by Rüzhükhrie Sekhose has been referred. Though Puliebadze literally means Pulie’s seat which was erected by Pulie’s father when Pulie died as his father believed that he his son has found rest in that mountain top as he could hear his son respond to him calling his name on that mountain while mourning during his funeral. Today, Puliebadze refers the whole mountain range covering an area of 9.23 square kilometer standing at an altitude of 2,296 metre. It is a wildlife sanctuary known for its scenic landscape and diverse flora and fauna which attracts both local and global tourists who are keen in hiking and trekking. It is located at Jotsoma under Kohima district. According to the famous legend, when the hard work and the very livelihood of Pulie and his wife came under threat in the form of an unknown beast destroying their paddy field in the covers of night, Pulie decided to ambush the unknown with his spear and machete that were sharpened to the point that it could cut the blades of grass when thrown into the bed of grass (Zutshu). On that fateful night, sure enough, the serpent slithered into his paddy field moving the crops that were almost ready for harvest. When Pulie speared the serpent, it slithered away into the dark with Pulie’s spear lodged on its back though severely injured. When Pulie got home, he narrated his experience with his wife and fell very ill which only worsened as the dawn break and his wife knew that something was not right. Thus, when she paid a visit to the seer, she was told that Pulie killed a demon snake (Tinhyü rapfhe) which had greater spirit than Pulie and as a result, there was little chance that he would survive. The seer then told her that they would find the demon snake towards *Sopfünuo Tsiekhie* where they found a huge dead snake with Pulie’s spear on its back which prevented it from fully entering its burrow (Sekhose 48-49).

Though there are many tales on seers and their marvelous tales and acts among the Angami tribe, these two instances are selected to support the fact that the seers were solicited for various reasons and they were able to provide answers to things and events that were beyond the comprehension of humans and also provide solutions in situations that required supernatural intervention. They also acted as the medicine men because in many cases, they

also provided herbal medicines and also made certain rituals to cure the ailing person. However, according to the Angami customs, the seers do not take decisions in village administration nor study the solar and lunar calendar to announce dates for agricultural and other activities. The roles of maintaining law and order are taken up by the village elders; announcements and blessings are pronounced by *Phichiüu* and declarations of agricultural activities are made by *Tsiakrau* and *Liedepfüi*. Thus their roles do not overlap with those of the elders and initiators of agricultural activities and as such though they are respected and their counsels sought in matters regarding events beyond human understanding, they do not control the daily lives of the people nor have influence in the decision making of the village.

In the Kikuyu tribe, the seers occupy an important position in the society. Their counsel is sought in all matters and is regarded as the prophet or shaman who can foretell future events because of their ability to communicate with their ancestors and God. They perform rituals and were as Müküyũ puts it, “held at a much higher level in society than regular medicine-man who were everywhere in every ridge”. Prophesying is perhaps the foremost important role that they play in Gikuyu culture. From all selected novels of Ngugi, we find that the seer has prophesied of the coming of the white man whether the people believed and accepted or not because of its wide improbability. To support this claim, a chapter from the book *Revealing Prophets: Prophecy in Eastern African History* edited by David M. Anderson and Douglas H. Johnson titled “What is the World Going to Come to?: Prophecy and Colonialism in Central Kenya” by Charles Ambler can be cited. Ambler writes:

Many of the same elements appear in the numerous traditions of seers in the neighbouring Bantu-speaking, agricultural societies of the central Kenya highlands. The oral records of Kikuyuland describe seers who predicted the arrival from the big water of strangers the colour of small white frogs. In some cases they would have fire in their mouths, wear clothes like butterfly wings and carry sticks that spit fire. They would bring with them an iron snake that belched fire, and later they would fly like butterflies. (222).

This prophecy has been reinforced in Ngugi’s novels selected for this study. In *The River Between*, Mugo wa Kibiro, “the great Gikuyu seer of old” was born in Makuyu who “prophesied the invasion of the Gikuyu country by the white man” (7). Ngugi further adds that Chege, Mugo’s father was also a seer and that “Murungu often talk spoke to him” (7).

Then again in *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi writes of a Gikuyu seer who said, “there shall come a people with clothes like the butterflies.” (10).

However, apart from prophesying, seers play major role in the society. In *Petals of Blood*, we learn that Mwathi wa Mugo was “the spiritual power over both Ilmorog ridge and Ilmorog plains, somehow, invisibly, regulating their lives.” (21). It was the seer who gave them counsel on the best day for planting their seeds and also on the best day for moving to the herdsmen. It was the seer who gave them protection from the power of evil and envious eyes, thus, Muturi can beat and bend his iron with bellows and hammer for making knives and spears only at Mwathi wa Mugo’s place. He was the one who could bless their honey beer with his saliva. In times of trouble, the people would seek the advice of the seer for solution because it was believed that he was spoken to by Murungu. Hence, when the people of Ilmorog came under a terrible drought, the elders went to the seer to solicit his counsel to avoid the drought and death. Ngugi writes, “The elders went to see Mwathi wa Mugo: he said that the donkey must be taken across the plains although a sacrifice of a goat will still be necessary. (133).

The role of the seer is diverse in Gikuyu tradition where he had influence over their lives in many ways. A seer in Gikuyu country could foresee the future and was believed to be spoken to by their god, he was respected for his gift of magic (*The River Between* 7), advice on their agricultural activities and take active role in village administration. In Angami Naga tradition, the seer could also foretell the future, understand things beyond human understanding as they were believed to have contact with the supernatural, act as medicine men, and can make or advice rites and rituals to cure sudden ailments but they do not take part in maintaining order in the village nor advice the people on their agricultural activities. The seer, as Ngugi puts it in *Petals of Blood*, is “the stick and the shade that God uses to defend our land.” (137). Thus, he is the instrument of God.

5.4. The Value of Land and Attitude towards Nature

For the Angami Nagas, their connection with their land is spirited- full of energy, dedication and enthusiasm. They are very protective of their land and villages and it is said that it is because of this that they were able to rebuild their villages earnestly even after two total run-offs- first with the invasion of the Japanese during the First World War and secondly during the coming of the Indians as they call it. Even though they were compelled to leave their villages and seek shelter in the forests, even though their homes were burnt down to ashes

and suffered untold miseries, they returned and rebuilt their villages several times refusing to be refugees in foreign land and refused to accept defeat because of their connection to their land. Their sense of belongingness to their land and property is to a remarkable degree. This is maintained even presently through village administration and polity as has been since time immemorial. Typically, the Angami Nagas build their villages on the top of the hills to protect themselves from attacks from their enemies. As K.S. Zetsuvi puts it in his book, *The Angami Nagas under Colonial Rule*, “Every village was invariably built on the high ridge of a hill which could not be easily scaled or approached from any side by enemies. Besides, elaborate and effective fortifications were made to protect the villagers from the enemy.” (27). Moreover, each village belonging to the Angami Nagas were self-reliant- with their own water source; enough land for cultivation- both jhum and terrace field; forests; land for grazing their cattle; and large area for sustaining their entire population. Thus, because of their nature of deriving their very livelihood from the land, they have fierce protectiveness towards their land.

The Angami people believe that God has given them better land, resources, and weather than any other race or people in the world. Easterine Kire refers to Nagaland as “*Kelhoukevira*” in her poem with the same title which literally translates to “the land where life is good”. Their songs- ancient or modern, describes their love for their land. The value that their land holds is deeply ingrained in their taboo or forbidden system i.e., *Kenyü* in Tenyidie. It is said in Tenyidie, “*U kijü sü u phizhü, süla u kijü zeciüwa kenyü*” which can be translated as, “our land is our foot, it is thus forbidden to sell one’s land.” This means that one’s land is as important as one’s foot. Without our feet, we cannot stand. Hence, in order to thrive, it is a taboo to sell one’s land. Another important proverb or saying which illustrates the importance of preserving one’s land is “*Teiciepuo unuonuo ze themuo morei mha kevi chacü mota zorei u kijü zeciüwa kenyü*” which literally translates to, “Even if you are unable to provide meat or good things for your children for a year, it is taboo to sell and squander your land.” This proverb shows the immense value of land and the need to preserve one’s land. Thus it is compared to one of the most important things in life- that is providing good things for our children. Yet, land is so important that even if one cannot provide the good things on the table for one’s children for a year, even then, it is more important to hold on to their land.

In the indigenous Angami Naga practice, the act of showing respect to nature and their environment is directly related to their belief system. Formerly, the Angamis being agrarian by profession give tremendous respect for nature and the natural elements. Thus reckless

attitude towards nature was unheard of as they were bound by their taboo system. They have immense fear of angering the spirits and though there were not worshippers of nature, they believed that there were some supernatural entities or beings beyond human that would bless or punish them basing on their attitude and actions towards their natural environment. This is why they say, “*terhuomia pezie mu!*” (Thanks to the spirits!) when they collect resources from the forest even when no one is around. It is said, “*Sei morei kerie rei witoulie mo di biedepie ba kenyii.*” This can be translated as, “It is taboo to leave a tree or bamboo in a bent form without fully felling it”. This is because of their belief that whoever is careless in his actions by leaving bended tress or even bamboos without felling it and giving it a chance to re-sprout and regenerate into new ones will suffer consequences. This is forbidden in Angami culture as it is feared that one will suffer from broken back if one leaves tress bended without felling it. It is interesting to note that this taboo is aimed at preserving nature and respecting their immediate environment to allow it to regrow and replenish because it is nature that sustains them and allow them to be self-dependent. The Angami Nagas also have bamboo shoot as one of their favourite delicacies and so it is common for people to collect bamboo shoots from bamboo groves. However, in order to ensure that the bamboo grove is not destroyed, it is forbidden or a taboo to collect all the bamboo shoots that have sprung up in a single bamboo grove. Such taboos are binding to all in the community and ingrained in the belief system from childhood that a positive attitude towards nature with the goal of preserving and using the natural resources judiciously comes with it as a result.

Similar to the Angami Naga culture, the Gikuyu tribe of Kenya also has so much respect and love for their land. For the Gikuyu people, their land Gikuyuland has been given to them by their God, Ngai or Murungu. Their attachment to their land is directly related to their creation myth or their myth of origin from Gikuyu and his wife Mumbi. This Creation Myth reinforces the fact that their land is gifted to them and their children by their god Murungu and thus their land is their birth right. This myth is found in all the selected novels made for this study. The myth is recorded in *The River Between* right from the beginning to prepare the readers on theme of displacement and resentment. Ngugi writes of the time when Murungu, their great god said to Gikuyu and Mumbi, the father and mother of the Kenyan nation: “This land I give to you, O man and woman. It is yours to rule and till, you and your posterity.” (TRW 2). This myth is repeated by Ngugi in all the novels to support the fact that there is a spiritual connection between the Kenyans and their land and the injustice done to the natives

especially by taking away their lands- which is their main source of livelihood and which is given to them by their god meant for them the worst form of oppression.

The bountiful Gikuyu country is very near and dear to their hearts as they believe that their God has blessed them with a life-sustaining wonderful country. This fact can be supported with a song the Gikuyu children sing as recorded by Ngugi in *A Grain of Wheat*. Ngugi writes:

Murungu on high never slept; he always let his tears fall to this, our land, from Agu and Agu. As we, the children, used to sing:

Ngai has given Gikuyu a beautiful country,

Never without food or water or grazing fields.

It is good so Gikuyu praise Ngai all the time,

For he has ever been generous to them. (AGoW 173).

Ngugi has made this love for their land very intimate in his writings- equating the love and affinity with their land as love between a man and a woman. For instance, in *A Grain of Wheat*, he writes, “The air was soft and fresh, and an intimate warmth oozed from the pregnant earth to our hearts.” (201). In *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi records the Gikuyu myth of the origin of man- how

“Rain, Sun and Wins went a-wooing Earth, sister of Moon, and it was Rain who carried the day, and that was why Earth grew a swollen belly after being touched by Rain. Others said no, the raindrops were really the sperms of God and that even human beings sprang from the womb on mother earth soon after the original passionate downpour, torrential waters of the beginning. (234).

This technique of romanticizing nature further propels the value of land and their country for the Gikuyu people. There are many instances where Ngugi beautifully paints the agrarian lives of the Gikuyu tribe in the selected novels but one description that stands out is found in *Petals of Blood* where Ngugi presents a precise yet powerful sketch of the landscape of Limuru summing up the abundance and beauty of each season of an entire year. He writes:

This land; these ridges, these valleys nearly always green through the year made Limuru a scion of God’s favourite country: long rains in March, April and May;

biting icy cold showers in misty June and July; windy sunshine on green peas and beans in August and September; a dazzling sun in harvest- tide in October and November and red plums and luscious pears ripening in December, January and February under a brilliantly clear blue sky. (105).

As discussed in the earlier chapter, their religious sentiment towards their land has been violated when the colonial power stole their land and made them slaves in their own land. Their land was their wealth- their land and their cattle was their most prized valuables. Without their land they could not cultivate nor graze their cattle- thus driving the natives from their land is the main source of oppression. Ngugi brilliantly wrote in his novel, *Petals of Blood* that while the native was “grazing cattle, dreaming of warriorship, of making the soil yield to the power of his hands”, the alien- the red stranger came with “the Bible, the coin, the gun: Holy Trinity” and took away their wealth. The injustice which compelled many young Kenyan men to fight for freedom and eventually into their premature deaths can be directly linked to their lands and their rights over it. In *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi through Kihika as his mouthpiece explains to Wambuku, his love interest that it is not politics to think about the rebelling against the whiteman who has occupied their land. Kihika ask if a man can be called a man if he lets “another take away his land and freedom” and if he is living “a slave life”. He further adds, “This soil belongs to Kenyan people. Nobody has the right to sell or buy it. It is our mother and we her children are all equal before her. She is our common inheritance.” (96). The above statement is similar to the Angami Nagas who believe that their land is their birth-right- inherited from their ancestors which are not to be sold. Even today, ancestral properties are inherited by the nearest kin and forbidden to be sold.

The Gikuyu people of Kenya have immense respect for nature. They understand that in order to survive, they need the favour of nature. Their sustenance depended on nature and its bountiful resources and thus they offer sacrifices to nature to appease it especially in times of drought or famine and such other natural phenomenon beyond their comprehension and help. In support of this statement, we can take the example of a narrative from the *Petals of Blood* where the readers are thrown light into Munira’s roots: Waweru, Munira’s father before becoming a Christian (Ezekieli), would dance *muthunguci*, *ndumo*, *mumboro*(types of Kikuyu folksong/ dances) in celebration in the evening or “he would pray and sacrifice to propitiate nature. Yes: the native was still afraid of nature.” (106). In the same novel, it is also

found that when the drought came, the elders sought the diviner's counsel and decided to offer a sacrifice to nature.

Similar to the Angami Nagas, the Gikuyu people have a very preserving attitude towards nature. In an article titled, "Revisiting the roots of Gĩkũyũ culture through the sacred Mũgumo tree" by Matthew M. Karangi, we are made to understand that the Mũgumo tree (*Ficus natalensis*/ *Ficus thonningii*) is not just a tree under which the sacrifices are made but by examining the sacred tree and the rituals associated with it, justifies the natives claim on the land, the political power, their religious hegemony and their identity. Their relationship with the sacred tree "reveals a holistic approach to the Gĩkũyũ towards the environment" as it is this reverence and significance of the sacred tree that teaches them the importance of taking care of their trees and land and family because they believe that when the "environment is destroyed, plundered or mismanaged their quality of life is undermined." (117). They refer to the sacred tree as *Mũtĩ wa Ngai* which means the Tree of God as it is the place where their God receives their gifts and sacrifices and attends to the needs of the people especially in times of crises and natural calamities. In Ngugi's *The River Between*, we find that the elders of Kimeno collecting and giving sacrifice to Murungu under the sacred tree after some rich seasons (29). It is also the talk of the elders that a simple sacrifice in the form of a black ram without blemish under the Mugumo tree would have help avoid the death of Muthoni after her circumcision (47). One very positive picture that Ngugi paints about their attitude towards nature is found in *Petals of Blood* where they enjoy the act of harvesting and women urges the young to take care that nothing is wasted. He beautifully portrays the scene of an ideal day in the field during a good harvest which excites old and young equally and the roles that each plays in harvesting and how nature blesses them and becomes "playful with their hopes and desires and expectations". He writes:

There was something about harvesting, whether it was maize or beans or peas, which always released a youthful spirit in everyone. Children ran about the fields to the voices of women raised to various pitches of despairing admonition about the trails of waste. . . . (242)

Another similarity between the Angami tribe of Nagaland and Gikuyu tribe of Kenya in their affinity with their land and soil is the burying of the placenta and umbilical cord in their land after birth of a child. For the Gikuyu people, the umbilical cord and placenta symbolises the child's attachment to the mother and thus they are to be carefully managed. They bury the

placenta and the umbilical cord in an uncultivated field and then covered with grain and grass which symbolizes fertility. Moreover, the uncultivated field also symbolises fertility, strength, and freshness which can be equated to a silent plea that the mother should remain fertile and strong for future births. (Jens Finke). For the Angami Nagas, the umbilical cord and the placenta are symbols of a pure connection with the mother and nature. Hence, it cannot be subjected to anything impure- it will be an abomination to dispose them without care- to be sniffed and touched or worse yet eaten by animals. It is therefore buried carefully somewhere in the corner of their *kiluo* which is their outer most room and the best part of their house. It was believed that when a person dies, he or she returns once to the place where his or her placenta is buried. This shows the connection of a person to his land. (Personal interviews).

This positive attitude of the tribes in question- Angami Naga of Nagaland and Gikuyu tribe of Kenya towards their environment and nature stand out in their cultural practices in all aspects of their lives- economic, social, and religious. The immense reverence they have for nature as all sustaining and thus respecting its resources as bountiful blessings and thus, have the mentality and consciousness to love and preserve it is significant. This makes it possible to study their traditional values within the framework of ecocentrism to a certain degree because their culture can be called ‘environmentally oriented’ as their accountability to their environment is a central part of their culture. (Waugh 537).

5.5. The concept of Man and Manliness

Both the Angami Nagas and the Gikuyu tribe of Kenya have built the concept of man and manliness on many factors which are connected to things like: courage, status, integrity, productiveness, their ability to provide for the family, and such others. Common to many indigenous societies, these indigenous societies have constructed their idea of being a man from being able to protect their women and children from enemies, ability to control and raise children according to the customs of the tribe, who are not idle, who do not indulge in anti-social elements but who can be relied on in decision making according to their traditional laws, and many such related factors. Being patriarchal societies, the men had to prove their manliness through these things to be called real men and they take care of their social, economic, religious, and political duties as head of their family.

The Angami Nagas followed a very structured social system with distinctive roles for men and women. Keeping up with a well-structured patriarchal society, the male child in a family is raised to attain all the qualities of men very early on. Therefore, when a male child attains the age of two or when he becomes a toddler and very commonly when he gets a new sibling, he is ritually initiated into manhood during the *Sekrenyi* festival. In the traditional Angami practice, a male child is allowed to be very attached to his mother till up to two years or before he gets a new sibling. After which, he will be taken along to part-take in all the rituals of *Sekrenyi* and then he is counted as a male member in the society. Thorough preparations are made for his first *Sekrenyi*: 1. First of all, his mother would weave him a new shawl, 2. His mother will put together the beads in thread and make him earrings and necklace. It is indispensable to make him a *tacü* which is a colourful choker necklace to avoid any harm from the spirits by not knowing him. (the choker will signify that his parents have claimed him. That he has people who claim him as their own). 3. His father will make him a wooden spear and a shield from bamboo skin. 4. His father will make him a new cup (*hiepou*), a new plate (*khau*), spoon (*kecie*), spoon for his cup (*likhi*). 5. New separate utensils for both rice and broth are prepared called *Sekre ki*. This is because it is forbidden for him to use utensils already pre-owned and co-used with women. 6. The cockerel for sacrifice in his name and a much matured rooster (for good feathers) are chosen for him on the day of the ritual cleansing of the house (*Kizie*). It is forbidden to use a crowing rooster for his *geizhie* (*geizhie* means the sacrifice of a bird to see one's fortune). 7. On the day of the *kizie*, a new water hole is dug for him which is a very small one only to be used for the ritual. This is because it is forbidden to use water that is already touched and fetched by women to bless and ritually initiate the child. Then the water hole is covered with bamboo (*Khoprei*) to prevent anyone from touching the water. 8. Two *zohe* plants are then transplanted near the waterhole to be used during the ritual. It is to be noted that there are two types of *zohe* plants which are *zohe-hepfuu* (male *zohe*) and *zohe henu* (female *zohe*). Here, the *zohe-hepfuu* is used as it has more sturdy leaves and thus very enduring. 9. The child will then be separated from his mother's bed and share a bed with his father starting from the night of the *Kizie*.

On the day of the main rituals for *Sekrenyi*, i.e., *Sekre* day, the father will take his son to the new water hole before dawn and wait for the initiation of the ritual (*dzüseva*- ritually using resting water) by a *sha phruo* which means a man who has earned a title by organizing a village feast. The father will then scoop out water from the water hole with his left hand dip his right hand on the water and mark his forehead and heart twice each which is to bless him

with bravery. Then he will dip two leaves of the *zohe* plant and mark his right elbow with the water, break the leaves and pronounce the blessing, “A nuo bu puosei-puoru ha zohe kekhrii ze khrii, zohe keyho ze yhotuolie!” which can be translated as “May the bones and sinews of my son be as tough as the *zohe* and as agile as the *zohe*!”. This action and blessing is repeated on his left elbow, his right knees and then his left knee. Then water is scoop out from his right hand and then used to mark his spear, his shield and his shawl. After this, the boy will then turn towards the fields, hold up his shawl keeping in mind that the designs are held towards his right, wave his shawl and pronounce thus, “*Sara sasou, vishürhorhü, kenhakera pete tate ho!*” this is a declaration to chase evil proclaiming that all his illness has disappeared and that he is now bursting with health. He will then partake in all the other rituals.

The matured rooster (*viidzui theru*) selected for him is killed and the feathers are used to decorate his spear and shield. Three different types of feathers are obtained from the rooster- the long flowing feathers on its tail (*meichiko*) are used to decorate the top of his shield, the side feathers of the tail (*geko*) used to cover his shield to make it a semblance of real shield of a warrior made from bore’s hair or hide of a bore, the flowing feathers from its neck (*kreiko*) are used to decorate his spear. During the day, the father will take his son to visit the important community places in the village. He will also visit title takers and elders to listen to them and receive blessings.

After his initiation during *Sekrenyi*, the boy is forbidden to suckle on his mother again. In order to initiate him into manhood, hunter and a warrior life, there are many more details that the child is made to follow and introduced into. It is important for him to taste bigger games like wild boar and not on smaller games like deer, monkey, squirrel, and such others. In case big games are not found, he will be taken to the house of a man who has hunted and cooked big games and ritually smear the boy’s lips from the pot from which the big game was cooked and declare, “*co chüchüchünuo cü thenouse ru, chüdi chü cüwate ho!*” which can be literally translated as “since it is not satisfactory and adequate to eat small games, he has eaten the meat of a big game!”. When it comes to birds, he will be made to eat the meat of the weaver bird (*nyievünuo*) before any other because it was believed that weaver birds are the oldest amongst the birds in the Tenyimia country. After the completion of all these, he is counted as a male member in the society. (Personal interviews).

He is educated both at home and in the community house the ways to be a man and to live up to the customs and values of the community. Easterine Iralu in her book, *Folk Elements in*

Achebe: A Comparative Study of Ibo Culture and Tenyimia Culture recorded that “initiation into manhood begins for Tenyimia boys when they reach the ages of 14-15 in a ceremony known as *geizie*, where a cock bird is slaughtered, one for each male-child.” (49). However, from the personal interviews conducted with persons who have actually practiced *Tsana* (religion of the ancestors) when they were younger, *geizhie* was practiced every Sekrenyi and it did not mean the initiation into manhood but a ritual done to foretell the near future of each individual by observing the crossing of the legs, if it has defecated, and the cloaca upto its large intestine at its death and interpreting the meaning of the events. Every member of the family- male or female had their own *geizhie*. For the *geizhie* of the female members, a young chicken is used while for young men a cockerel and for older men a rooster. The male child will start to learn the ways of the community from a very young age or as a toddler. A boy will then take part in age-group (*pele*) activities at around 10-11 years and will be educated in all the areas to be real men both at home and from the community house or the men’s hall called *thehou* and the male dormitory (*kichüki*). All the boys and young men of the community are taught about their legends, the heroic deeds of their ancestors, songs and warfare, duties, and responsibilities from the Morung (*thehou* and *kichüki*) and they are taught and trained in all the life skills required by men in their community. Thus, it is from the Morung that a generation of ‘men’ was built based on their tradition. On *thehu* or *Kichüki*, Charles Chasie gives a clear insight into its functions and importance of it in the Angami culture and writes that it is the place where the preparation of a boy for life began when a boy reaches the age of four to five years. Thus, a boy is trained to become respectable and responsible member of the society and play his distinctive role as man in the family, clan, khel and village (*The Road to Kohima*, 25).

For the Angami Nagas, physical agility is prized in men. Therefore, sports are encouraged. The most popular sport is wrestling (*kene*) which showcases the men to show and prove their strength, stamina, dexterity, and quick thinking ability. A man is valued more if he is a good hunter and can bring in good and big game. A man or warrior who has earned his name and feather through head-hunting shows his bravery and manliness. Though the Angami Nagas did not keep more than one wife, a man’s sexual prowess was applauded in a very peculiar way. In his book, *The Angami Nagas Under Colonial Rule*, K.S. Zetsuvi records:

The more mistresses he kept, the higher his status. Keshünei (kilt) of the malewos originally decorated with three lines of the white cowries, but that of a married man

who could have illicit affair with the sister of his wife or another woman was decorated with four lines of cowries as an honour to his male prowess. (21).

The Gikuyu people of Kenya also had similar views on being a man. The concept of manliness revolves around their wealth-in terms of land and goats. In Gikuyu culture, a man is held in high regards for his bravery, industrious nature, wealth and his knowledge in the ways of the tribe. For instance, in *A Grain of Wheat*, Mumbi's father, Mbugua is a popular elder in the ridge and his home included three huts and two granaries filled with crops after harvest. Ngugi further adds that "Mbugua had earned his standing in the village through his own achievements as a warrior and a farmer. His name alone, so it is said, sent fear quivering among the enemy tribes." We also learn that not only qualities like bravery and hardworking nature makes a man but so also is a man who is true to his words and knows the ways of the tribe. In the same novel, we find that Mbugua's words, "in disputes brought to the council of elders for settlement, always carried weight". (74).

This shows that Mbugua is an all- round man who has earned himself a respected place in the village for his own industriousness – that he is able to provide for his family as the head of the family. Not only that but he is a reputed warrior who can protect his women and children from the enemies all the while living up to the customs of the tribe. To support this, we can use the instance of being able to speak in proverbs and riddles of the tribe. In *The River Between*, Ngugi uses the character Kabonyi, the arch enemy of Waiyaki to prove this. Kabonyi won over his audience, the elders because he knew that "nothing could appeal more to the elders, who still appreciated a subtle proverb and witty riddles." (92).

However, in the indigenous Gikuyu culture, the decisive factor that made one a man is the participation in the circumcision rite. This was their passage into manhood. Ngugi explains in *The River Between* that "Circumcision was the central rite in the Gikuyu way of life" (37). And that an uncircumcised boy was not taken seriously. The weight of being a man depended on whether one was circumcised or not. Therefore Ngugi writes: "you could more readily trust a man than a *kihii*, an uncircumcised boy." (TRB 38). A man undergoes circumcision to "prove his courage, his manly spirit." (TRB 11). A young man becomes a true member of the society and also his *riika* (age-group) only after his initiation into manhood through circumcision where he proves his courage and his loyalty to the customs of his community. It is after circumcision that a "boy becomes a warrior" and the "initiates circumcised at the same time formed an age-set *riika*". This is why a man who was not initiated into manhood

through circumcision did not feel rooted in the tribe nor was he considered a male member in the community.

Gikuyu men could have many wives as long as they can pay for them in terms of goats and cattle. A rich man could keep as many wives as he pleases as long as he could pay for her price. A Gikuyu man “could marry as many wives as he could afford” by paying the bride wealth called *ruracio* to her family (National Museums of Kenya). It was also the responsibility of the man to build separate huts for his wives and provide for them. This shows that having many wives was also a symbol of wealth and status for men. In a *Grain of Wheat*, Karanja’s mother was the third wife among his father’s four wives. Ngugi writes, “She was the third of the four wives that Karanja’s father had acquired by paying so much bride price in goats and cattle.” (220).

The traditional concept of man and manliness in both the tribes are very similar. The women had no say in the matters relating to politics and were dependent on the men economically. The men were the decision makers. In both the tribes, the ‘elders’ implies older men who had earned a name for themselves for their vast knowledge in their customs and laws, as warriors, for their statuses and wealth, their integrity, and such others. Qualities such as Courage, integrity, industriousness, physical agility, knowledge in the culture and practice, wealth and status, commands of language, and such leadership qualities made them respectable men in their societies.

5.6. Position of Women

The Angami Nagas and the Gikuyu tribe of Kenya follow a patriarchal form of society. The social organization is also based on the patrilineal descent thus the men are the heads of the family and kinship and women occupy a secondary role within the society. In the Angami tribe, the sons inherit the father’s ancestral properties and in cases of absence of sons, the nearest male kin member inherits the properties. Similarly, in the Gikuyu tribe, the women owned nothing. In the traditional practice of both the tribes, the properties, rights, and wealth were transferred to the male members of the family. The women were dependent on the male heads of their families- their father or husband, depending on their marital status. In the Angami Naga tribe, a girl would use her father’s surname till she gets married and later use her husband’s surname while in the Gikuyu tribe, a unique pattern of naming their children is followed. In order to keep the family names alive, the first son is named after the paternal

grandfather, the second son after the maternal grandfather. The first daughter is named after the paternal grandmother and the second daughter after the maternal grandmother. Similarly, the subsequent children are then named after the siblings of the grandmother and grandfather of both the mother and the father in turns (Finke). This shows that in Gikuyu customs, the families of both the mother and the father are kept alive through the names of the children, giving equal importance to the maternal side of the family which cannot be said for the Angami Naga tribe. However, it can also be noted that in the Gikuyu society, many takes the name of their fathers as in Mugo wa Kibiro (the famous Gikuyu seer) and for the matter of fact, Ngugi wa Thiong'o which says Ngugi, son of Thiong'o. Thus the patriarchal set up is also supported through their adoption of the names of their fathers.

It is true when Zetsuvi in his book, *The Angami Nagas under Colonial Rule* stated that "It is not easy to give a clear picture of the status of women in the Angami society without a proper understanding of the social, economic, and religious life of the people." (20). Following a strict patriarchal and patrilineal social set up, they were not given the right to inherit ancestral property to keep the ancestral possessions within the clan even in the absence of a son. They were also given a subordinate role and position in the society- limiting their lives to domestic chores and in agricultural activities. In fact, they were given the bulk of the field work as the men were mostly engaged in earning names for themselves as warriors and in protecting the village from enemies.

The traditional Angami women, as discussed in chapter II, had no say in their marriages. When K.S Zetsuvi wrote in his book, *The Angami Nagas under Colonial Rule*, that "a girl exercises immense freedom in selecting her future husband", he must be referring to the later part of the century. The folk poetry analysed in the earlier chapter supports the fact that they were married off to totally new villages and to strangers if their parents' wishes so. However, in the present times, Angami women enjoy the freedom to choose their husbands and the wish to remarry in case of being widowed. Even in the traditional practice, "the pitiful plight of widowhood prevalent elsewhere do not have a place among the Angamis as the custom allows her the right to remarry." (Zetsuvi 22). One very discriminatory and hypocritical contradictory standard in relation to gender was on infidelity. If married women were accused of infidelity, they would not only bear the social stigma of being an immoral woman in the society and frowned upon but also be put under physical punishment of chopping of the tip of the nose to bear the mark forever. Ironically, for men, they were rewarded with an extra line

of white cowries on his *keshüinei* (kilt) to signify his sexual prowess. This showed the subordinate position of women in the indigenous Angami society.

Though men took the important roles in the Angami villages as elders, priest, and head of the family, the women also played important roles in certain religious rituals. A woman was chosen to be the *Liedepfü* who is the harvest initiator. Without her ritually initiating harvest, no person in the village could harvest their crops in their fields. During the *Kevakete* festival, the mother of the family or the woman of the family performs the rituals to entreat *Kepenuopfü* to bless their harvest to last till their next harvest. This ritual cannot be done by a man. These roles were strictly assigned to women and can be studied and explained within the context of Ecofeminism- however, not in the context where male and culture dominate over female and nature respectively but in the idea that the “identification of women with nature” is seen as a “source of strength” (Waugh 538). The girls and women were confined to domestic and agricultural chores- from their girlhood to adulthood they were taught to be good at housekeeping, be industrious in fieldwork, learn how to make threads from raw cotton or other materials, weave, and such others while being respectful especially to their fathers, brothers, husbands and men in general. However, as mentioned, their roles in the rituals were in connection with their agricultural aspects and one can say that Angami women had a close affinity with nature and their environment. They were considered less important than men and in many areas not given equal rights and freedom yet women were indispensable in their roles ritually which could not be performed by men no matter their control and authority. Thus, one can argue that women derived their strength and importance from their affinity with nature and their environment in many ways.

An instance of the affinity of Gikuyu women with the environment and nature is found in *The River Between* where Ngugi gives a picturesque presentation of the women in their *shambas* where they spent much of their time and invest their time, energy, and emotions in cultivating their lands. He writes:

At such times women would be seen in their *shambas* cultivating; no, not cultivating, but talking in a secret language with the crops and the soil. Women sang gay songs. The children too. And the plants and all the tress around, swaying a little as if they were surrendering themselves to the touch of the wind seemed to understand the joy of the mothers. You could tell by the bright faces of the women that they were happy. (77).

In the traditional Gikuyu society, women were subordinate to men. They were acquired by their husbands by paying bride price to their fathers. Their roles were limited to the household chores and their fields. As discussed in the earlier chapter, the women were tied to domestic chores and were expected to prepare and serve food to their family and visitors. To substantiate this point, we can take the example of Gikonyo in *A Grain of Wheat*, where he tells his mother to “go and cook” as matters relating to wood and carpentry tools are beyond the comprehension of women. Again in the same novel, we are told the story of Njoki, a poor but a generous woman by Wairimu. According to the story, Njoki put up food on her table everyday through her hard work in her *shamba* and her son took advantage of her generosity and brought in a crowd of young men and women for food every evening. Njoki was praised for her generosity and hard work. A woman’s worth is directly related to her generosity at home and her diligence and industrious nature. In *Petals of Blood*, the worth of women to men for marriage is seen from the debate of the tillers and the herdsmen at Abdulla’s shop. They claim that both cattle and land were important because “a person paid goats for a girl, true: but he looked for the one who was not afraid of work.” (22). Thus the value of a woman rested on her industrious nature.

The traditional Gikuyu tribe followed a patrilineal social structure and so men owned and controlled the properties. The women lived under the control of their fathers and later their husbands as they were thought to be weak. In Ngugi’s *The River Between*, when Chege took his son Waiyaki to the sacred grove, Chege gave their cultural explanation to this when the antelope leapt away on seeing them (men) through the Gikuyu myth that women once ruled the Agikuyu society but since they were cruel and unsympathetic towards men, the men made them all pregnant at the same time and overthrew them. Chege further explains that everything belonged to the women once but since they could not handle and control their properties they lost their authority. He said,

‘Before this, women owned everything. The animal you saw was their goat. But because the women could not manage them, the goats ran away. They knew women to be weak. So why should they fear them?’ It was then Waiyaki understood why his mother owned nothing. (TRB 15).

In *Gikũyũ Oral Literature* by Wanjikũ Mũkabi Kabira and Karega wa Mũtahi, we are made to understand that myths and legends fulfill various function in the society. Here, in this case, the myth “serve to justify the past and perpetuate the status quo. They further write about the

myth of the woman ruler (Wangū wa Makeri) who danced naked in a public place which was discussed in the previous chapter. They very aptly write:

This story has been used to deny women leadership within the Agĩkũyũ society. As time goes, the story becomes even more mythical and the truth or untruth of what historically happened becomes irrelevant. Its function, which is to block women's ascendance to power becomes primary. (7).

In the traditional Angami culture, unmarried girls do not grow their hair as a sign of innocence. Only when she was arranged to be married was she allowed to grow her hair. The act of growing one's hair cannot be called initiation into womanhood in the same sense and degree as Gikuyu culture where girls underwent circumcision to be initiated into womanhood. For the Angamis, a girl grows her hair to signify her marital status as a wife- as no more being young and being a child of her parents but as the wife of someone. While, a Gikuyu girl undergoes circumcision to prove her loyalty to the customs of the tribe- to be called a true woman of the tribe and to become a desirable wife for someone. Though the two tribes had different patterns of cultural practices where the girls in the Angami community had their hair shorn off their heads before marriage as a sign of innocence and purity while the girls in the Gikuyu community had to undergo circumcision to be initiated into womanhood to prove their purity to their husbands, we can say that both the tribes had their own ways to control and maintain the purity of the girls and women for their husbands made by a whole set of rules- social and religious and maintained through social stigma and reputation.

In both the societies, girls were trained to be good in household chores and take care of their husbands and respect them. Both societies being patriarchal had all ownership and authority on the men. Unfortunately, domestic abuse on women exists in both the tribes. There are many instances where women had to seek for divorce or run away from her home due to abuse- whether physical or mental or both. K.S Zetsuvi wrote in his book, *The Angami Nagas under Colonial Rule* that in the Angami tribe, divorce is "quite easy and common" and there are many reasons which can lead to divorce. Some of the grounds that Zetsuvi records based on which divorces were sought are: adultery, if a woman does not bear her husband a male heir, being extremely poor, laziness, extravagance and excessive indulgence in drinking. He adds, "If the husband ill-treats his wife by way of physical abuse or mental torture to the extent that she can no longer bear it". This shows that domestic abuse was also a common

cause of divorce. For instance, in the poem “Sopfünüo” which was analysed in chapter III of this thesis, we see the verbal abuse of the Sopfünüo by her husband as he comes home after drinking and listening complaints of his wife from his mistresses. He chases her out of her house every night but for the sake of her children she remained till she could no longer bear his abuse. Similarly, in *A Grain of Wheat*, we see Gikonyo’s father, Waruhiu beating his first wife (Wangari) and chasing her away along with their son. Later in the same novel, we find Wanjiku, Mumbi’s mother reprimanding Mumbi when she left her home and went back to her parents because a Gikuyu parent “did not encourage a daughter to disobey her man.” (176). She said:

The women of today surprise me. They cannot take a slap, soft as a feather, or the slightest breath, from a man. In our time, a woman could take blow and blow from her husband without a thought of running back to her parents. (176).

This shows that from the beginning, women were considered weak and lived under the control of some socially constructed rules that made men the authority and women their subordinates even to the extent of enduring physical abuse or domestic abuse as part of a woman’s duty and loyalty towards their husbands. In both the tribes, we see that traditionally, women were taught to live under men- their fathers and later, their husbands. Their most important roles were to take care of their household, work on their fields and provide children- especially male heirs to their husbands. Today, however, women in both the tribes enjoy much freedom in all aspects of life. They exercise immense independence economically and can own their own land bought from their own money or given as gifts by their parents. One cannot say that they have equal rights because their traditional influences on their societies are still bearing and evident. Yet, due to globalization, modern education and other such factors, women in these two tribes have made tremendous progress in all fields and are opened and exposed to opportunities and freedom that their ancestors never had.

5.7. Contact with the Colonial Powers

A. Angami Nagas

The Angami Naga tribe came into contact with the British power, then under the East India Company in January 1832 when Captains Jenkins and Pemberton decided to cross the Naga territories from Manipur to their Nowgong headquarters in Assam along with a group of 700

soldiers and 800 coolies. In respect to this unwelcomed expedition, Charles Chasie writes in his book, *The Naga Memorandum to the Simon commission, 1929*, that “The British intrusion was resented particularly by the Angami and the party was attacked all the way to the plains.” (4). After this, bitter fighting and bloody encounters between the Angami Nagas and the British would become a constant occurrence as the Angami Nagas would retaliate the British intrusion and killing of their kinsmen with raids in the tea gardens in Assam while the British would send retributive expeditions to “tame” the Nagas.

At the beginning of the relationship between the two under the supervision of the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir George Campbell, the control of the Naga tribes by the British was only a political matter as they left the Naga tribes to their own affairs as long as they recognised the British authority and paid house tax. However, as the attacks on the tea gardens in Assam continued especially by the khonoma and Mezoma villages belonging to the Angami tribe and with the changes of policies with transferred charges, the British India Government ordered a forward Policy in 1877 as recommended by the Chief Commissioner of Assam in 1876. As a result, the headquarters of the British Political Officer was shifted to Kohima and G. H. Damant became the first Political Officer to be stationed at Kohima and this resulted in the famous Khonoma battle, the last battle between the Angamis and the British. Damant took his party to Khonoma from Kohima ignoring the advice of his interpreter from Jotsoma and was shot dead at Khonoma village gate along with some of his military escort and domestic servants on 14th October 1879. This led to punitive expeditions from the British with its forces and troops from places like Wokha, Shillong, Manipur and nearby allies on Khonoma and its allied villages (Mezoma, Jotsoma, Secüma, Piphema, Tsiepama, Chedema, Viswema, Jakhama, Pfüchama, and Tsütuonuomia khel of Kohima village).

The chain of events following the control of the Angami people by the British was profoundly life changing for this hill people. They were introduced to the Second World War where the Battle of Kohima (1944) was fought between an entire Japanese division and British troops. This battle is one of the fiercest battles of the Second World War and was voted “Britain’s Greatest Battle” by the British National Army Museum. Often called “the forgotten war”, the impact of the war on the indigenous people who had otherwise no means with the war was for a very long time overlooked. The contribution of the Naga ethnic people in fighting alongside the British-Indian troops in addition to providing myriad assistance to the British became a deciding factor in the British winning the battle over a force more than

ten times its number. Easterine Kire wrote in the Introduction to *The Road to Kohima: The Naga Experience in the 2nd World War*, co-authored by Charles Chasie and Harry Fecitt that “The Civilian Nagas fought as ‘scouts and spies, guiding the British and gathering intelligence for them; they became stretcher-bearers, trench diggers etc.” (10).

The Angami Nagas fiercely resisted the British occupation yet sided with the British during the Second World War against the Japanese mainly because the starving Japanese troops forcibly took away the grains and live stocks of the villagers and in some cases feeding their horses the standing paddy crops of the people right from the fields. When the entire population of the villagers depended on the grains and crops they could cultivate barely enough for themselves for an entire year, the raiding and cruelty of the starving Japanese troop became unbearable. Moreover, the British were able to establish good relations with many Angami Nagas and they distributed their ration and provided protection which gained the trust of the people during the war.

However, the fact that the British left the Nagas in the hands of the Indians despite the clear expression to the British of their wishes to be an independent nation especially in their memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1929, left them felt betrayed by their comrades in war. We find this sense of betrayal and disappointment expressed by the Nagas in written documents when writers write about the Battle of Kohima or the relationship of the British and the Nagas in general or the Angamis in particular whether in English or Tenyidie and even after all these years. For instance, in Charles Chasie and Harry Fecitt’s book, *The Road to Kohima: The Naga Experience in the 2nd World War*, Chasie (author of the first part of the book) writes of this ‘deep hurt’ felt by all Nagas when their ‘British friends’ departed from India in 1947 leaving them in the hands of the new Indian Government shattering the wish of the Nagas to be left outside India. Just because the British refused to speak on their behalf, the Naga country was led to arguably the darkest times in their history where their world would descend into an endless political turmoil of Guerrillas and atrocities from the newly formed Indian Government to subdue the resistance of the ethnic people into submission. This nightmarish reality of the people shook the entire population where they had to abandon their homes and everything they own and flee to their fields and hide from the much superior invading army to save themselves. This is called “*Nagamia riita kenie-u*” in Tenyidie which is the Second run-off of the Nagas. Insurgency became an everyday affair for many decades where thousands and thousands of Naga sons and daughters laid down their lives for a free

nation. Sadly, the fight is on up to the present time as the Indian Government and the Naga people are still negotiating and yet to reach an agreement to really usher in peace in Nagaland.

B. Gikuyu Kenya

East African coast, being located at an advantageous point for setting up trading ports for Arab and Persian merchants long before its invasion and conquest by Europeans and at the beginning of the 18th Century, the Europeans sought to have the sole ownership of the area. However, it was only in 1895 that the dream was achieved and it was finally dominated by the British and declared Kenya as The Protectorate of British East Africa and from 1920, it was known as the Kenya Colony. Initially, the British Government took over the colony from the British East African Company as they intended to use it as a portal to Uganda, Buganda, and Bunyoro to exploit minerals in these places. The natives were subjected to untold miseries as the British administration tried to subdue the colony: their land which they so much value as a direct gift from their supreme God was forcibly taken away from them, forced labour was introduced and were subjected to pay hut tax which led them to work for someone else who would pay wages in order to pay the tax forcing them into becoming subjects of the settlers. Thus, ironically, the natives became the subjects of the white settlers.

The BBC news which appeared on 7th April 2011 titled “Mau Mau Uprising: Bloody History of Kenya Conflict” in the UK reaffirmed that the Kikuyu had been “increasingly economically marginalised as years of white settler expansion ate away at their land holdings” thus it is natural that the Mau Mau fighters were mainly consisted of the Kikuyu people, the major ethnic group of Kenya. The Mau Mau uprising is considered the main factor that led to Kenyan Independence from British colonial rule in 1963. The Mau Mau Uprising (1952-1960) is also known as the Mau Mau Rebellion, the Kenya Emergency, and the Mau Mau Revolt and it took place between the British forces and the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA) also called the Mau Mau. Though majority of the KLFA was made up of the Gikuyu people, it also comprised people from Meru; Embu; and units of Kamba and Maasai who took up arms against the British settlers in Kenya.

In the article titled “The Colonisation of Kenya” written by the editorial team on 26th June, 2020 and published in the *Black History Month* newsletter (B: M 2024), a detailed account of the colonisation by the British is made giving insight into the atrocities committed against the

natives and the rise of the Mau Mau resistance against the British rule. The main cause of bitterness between the natives and the settlers was the taking away of the good fertile lands of the natives by the settlers (White Highlands) and reserving them for the Europeans and making the natives as low-wage labourers in the plantations of the settlers and ill-treating them and flogging them at petty offences. The introduction of hut tax forced many into low-wage labourers in the farms of the settlers. In fact, a land bill was passed by the British government which allowed the British settlers 999 year of leases on the Kenyan land which guaranteed the monopoly of the land by the British.

The Mau Mau were the military section of the organisation formerly called the Kenya African Study Union (KASU) which aimed for political representation and freedom in Kenya. KASU later changed its name to Kenya African Union (KAU) in 1946. However, with the failure of the organisation to successfully bring in reforms and redress the injustice and dissatisfaction of the natives from the colonial power, the authority and leadership of the KAU shifted from disgruntled veteran soldiers who fought for the British in the Second World War in Ceylon, Burma, and Somalia to younger and more dynamic militant personalities among the native Kenyan. It was somewhere around 1943 that the traditional practice of oathing was radicalised which was even extended to women and children which originated from the Olenguruone Settlement residents. It was reported by the mid-1950s, 90% of the Gikuyu, Embu, and Meru took the traditional oath. The attacks on the loyalists to the British colonial power were well planned and executed in an organised fashion under the cover of darkness and used primarily guerrilla attacks as they lacked heavy weaponry.

In the article titled “The Colonisation of Kenya” published in the *Black History Month* newsletter (B: M 2024), the British reaction on the Mau Mau as a ‘savage cult’ and labelling it as an agent to take back the Gikuyu people to its old dark pre-colonial state is described in detail, showing the misconception of the colonial powers of the natives: their culture, their resistance against colonialism, and their response to the injustice and oppression from the hands of the settlers. They write:

The British and international view was that the Mau Mau was a savage, violent, and depraved cult, an expression of unrestrained emotion rather than reason. Mau Mau was “perverted tribalism” that sought to take the Kikuyu people back to “the bad old days” before British rule.

One very interesting point noted by Charles Chasie in his book, *The Naga Memorandum to the Simon Commission, 1929*, is the differences of opinions on one single event from the view points of the colonizers and the indigenous people who were ruled and subjugated in their own lands by external powers. His statement on this situation is very apt and universal. He simply writes:

What may remain irreconcilable is that while the British had termed the killing of G H Damant as “murder”, the Nagas, on the other hand were convinced they had only killed a stranger and an enemy who had come in force to attack and invade them. This was war to them and the result was to be expected. Indeed, all the Naga attacks on the British tea gardens, in Naga eyes, were their seeking revenge for the violation of their territory by the British in the first place and the Naga lives lost at their hands. (11).

This is true for the colonized people who fought for the defence of his motherland and refuses to give into the colonial powers. The love of the indigenous people for their land and their refusal to give up their rights were met with harsh actions meant to discipline and break the ‘savage’ people into conformity with the western culture and when the people resisted, their resistance were viewed as unlicensed and unwarranted. This led to the rise of many militancy movements- like Mau Mau guerrilla activity in Kenya and the Naga Nationalists movements in Nagaland.

5.8. The pervasive and far- reaching changes

In the Introduction to Charles Chasie and Harry Fecitt’s *The Road to Kohima: The Naga Experience in the 2nd World War*, Easterine Kire sums up the Naga history, conditions, and experiences in very simple yet powerful language, giving a clear idea of the Naga story masterfully for all readers. Here in the introduction, she wrote about the changes that came into the lives of the simple-minded and straight forward Naga people which are akin to the experiences that the Gikuyu people of Kenya faced after their contact with the colonial power. She writes:

The course of Naga life underwent a sea-change after the war, not just in terms of the political turmoil of later years, but their contact with the modern world had ensured that a return to the Naga village-world as they knew it before the war would not be possible. (11).

This is true for both the cultures in question in this study. The lives of the indigenous people after their contact with the British colonial power and war underwent immense changes in all aspects of their lives- political, social, cultural, and religious. In fact it will not be an exaggeration if one says that the changes that the people of these two tribes experienced were unprecedented, far-reaching and pervasive- which revolutionised each member of the society- young and old. Both the cultures were introduced to the modern world and they had to undergo drastic changes which led to the loss of the cultural practices: endangering their language, cultural values, indigenous knowledge, and such others.

With the coming of the British, the Angami Nagas were introduced into the economy of money which eventually replaced their agricultural economy as they could earn money by becoming labourers in road building or running errands or employed by the British in different capacities. The Angami Nagas also agreed to pay house tax to the British after the Battle of Khonoma, marking the formal acceptance of British rule over them. Yet, there are no reports of forced labour or slavery among the Angami Nagas by the British and the Angami people voluntarily took up different jobs with the British authorities. While in the Gikuyu tribe, with the passing of the hut tax, the natives were forced into working in the farms and plantations of the white settlers to get money to pay the tax. In fact, if they were unable to pay the hut tax, they were punished by forcing them into cheap labour at the plantations and farms of the white settlers who occupied the good fertile lands. The indigenous people were forced to move into new settlements allotted by the settlers where the lands were not very favourable for agricultural activities thus lending the natives more dependent and poorer while the White settlers gain more cheap labours and control over the people.

Ngugi in his novel, *Petals of Blood* gives a very clear idea on how the process of land acquisition began and how the loyalists of the colonial power became richer and ultimately ad ironically became the agents of colonialism, resulting in the subjugation of their own people. Ngugi writes that “with a mixture of tinkling coins and trickery of the pen and the law” (108), the rich natives who acquired wealth by being loyal to the imperialists and by “bringing more souls to Christ” bought the lands bit by bit of the native people who did not want become workers in the European settlers’ farms as it was the only way to secure money to pay tax to the authorities. Many had no more lands to sell and the rich churchmen and landowners became the vehicle of imperialism over their own blood while many were as Ngugi writes,

“pacified to eternal sleep or to slave-labour camps” (PoB 108). Thus, the closely knitted society was divided into classes leading to the successful control of the lands and even human resources.

Though there are differences in their approach towards the Angamis and the Gikuyu people by the British, the changes that these people underwent cannot be overstated. The people of these tribes were introduced to Christianity and modern Western education with the coming of the British. However, the experiences of the two tribes were different and thus their sentiments towards the British. While the British occupied Nagaland in the early on, the internal affairs of the Nagas were left to themselves and thus their religious beliefs were not forced upon the natives. It was the American missionaries who brought Christianity and modern education to the Nagas during the British occupancy of the Naga Hills. From the indigenous method of educating their youth from the morungs to modern western education and from their ancestral belief system (*Tsa na*) to Christianity, the Angami Nagas underwent a complete change and these changes have taken its foothold under the British rule by 1919.

In this matter, Ramun in his book, *The World of the Nagas* writes, “The British did not interfere with the traditions, customs and village administration. No economic development, improvement of communications or even elementary education were attempted.” (16). This is with the exception of prevention of head hunting by the British. Rev. Keviyiekielie Linyü in his book, *Christian Movements in Nagaland* gives a detailed account of the coming of Christianity to the various tribes in Nagaland. He enumerates that the “circumstances that led the American Baptist Missionaries to the Nagas were rather accidental and not intentional.” (58). Their initial intention was to work among the Shan people of Northern Burma, now Myanmar and China and not North India. However, circumstances led them to come into contact with the Nagas through Assam and thus, they ended up starting schools, churches and enduring friendship with the Nagas. The Angamis were thus introduced into Christianity and Western Education by the American missionaries who facilitated them into the outside world by learning the native language themselves and then giving them their alphabets, translated the Bible into their language and introduced them into the comforts of the modern world. There was neither political motive nor coercion. Christianity and Western education spread amongst the Angamis rather very slowly as they were reluctant to accept foreign elements and ideas. In the words of F.S. Downs, “The Angamis are known for their resistance to

change, be it political or religious. They clung to their old ways with a tenacity remarkable even for Nagas.” (*The Mighty Works* 114). This makes it clear that they were not forced into Christianity but by individual will and decision.

However, the Gikuyu people were introduced into Christianity and Western education by the British. Ngugi in his novels makes it clear that the Colonialists have introduced Christian missionary schools, churches and hospitals amongst the Gikuyu tribe and used them to undermine the traditional practices of the natives as inferior and barbaric in many ways. The Gikuyu conversion experience and western education are tainted with the tumultuous colonial experience unlike the independence of the political struggle of the Angami Nagas with the introduction of western education and Christianity. In *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi writes,

The missionary had traversed the seas, the forests, armed with the desire for profit that was his faith and light and the gun that was his protection. He carried the Bible; the soldier carried the gun; the administrator and the settler carried the coin. Christianity, Commerce, Civilization: the Bible, the Coin, the Gun: Holy Trinity. (106).

Ngugi in this quote brilliantly sums up how colonialism came about in Gikuyu Kenya: how the British came first as evangelists to save the souls of the unbelievers

The conversion and western education was rooted in politics as they were given education in the mission schools especially in the native reserves where they were resettled and from here were they converted. Jens Finke writes in his multimedia encyclopaedia titled *Traditional Music and Cultures of Kenya* that the conversions first took place not so much through faith but as an economic necessity. The British started employing the educated natives as clerks, office workers, adjuncts, police, and other works as the Gikuyu were the ideal candidates for they are known for their hard working nature leading to mass enrolment in the mission schools and thus a tremendous increase in the establishment of schools, churches and mission posts in the 1920s and 1930s.

The Christian missionaries made up of the Protestant Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland came into conflict with the Kikuyu over the issue of female circumcision in 1929. The CMS were convinced that Christianity should also be concerned with ‘cultural transference’ and not just conversion. In order to do away with the ‘evil’ of female circumcision, the Christian converts were made to sign or thumb print a document denouncing female circumcision to be real Christians. This was seen as a direct

attack on their cultural practices and traditions and so they boycotted the mission schools and churches and started Gikuyu owned schools and churches free from government and mission control. The political struggle for independence from the British and the subsequent Mau Mau uprising which led to the declaration of State of Emergency in 1952 resulted in the closure of these schools as they were charged with subversion. The government later offered to reopen the schools on the condition that they would function strictly under the government or the missions. However, the schools which followed the ideology of maintaining the cultural traditions, identity and beliefs and also Christianity in its purest form defiantly remained closed.

Today, Christianity is the predominant religion practised in Gikuyu Kenya estimated to be around 85.5 % of the total population followed by Islam and traditional religions. In 2012, UNICEF estimated the literacy rate of the Kenyan youth at 83.2%. Similarly, 98.22% of the Angami Naga tribe follows Christianity. The introduction of Christianity and Western education in these two cultures marked a significant chapter in their history as it brought drastic changes in their society in all aspects: social, cultural, political, economic, and spiritual. These two cultures underwent complete social alteration impacting their everyday lives and their outlook as they were initiated into a new world of modernization. From deeply rooted in their traditional belief system which controlled their very social existence, they were ushered into the global world. However, these changes also brought with it a sense of identity crisis amongst the people as they went through cultural diffusion, accumulation, adoption and assimilation.

Whatever the circumstances and experiences, one thing that the Angami Nagas and the Gikuyu people have in common is the presence of their cultural elements even in their practice of Christianity as their folk culture is deeply ingrained in their lives. Their traditional festivals are practiced presently without the rites and rituals according to their ancestral beliefs. This sense of cultural identity even after the acceptance of Christianity and western education is represented beautifully by Muthoni in *The River Between* when she wanted to be circumcised and be initiated into womanhood in the ways of the tribe though she had embraced the ‘white man’s faith’ (25). The entire novel is a representation of this identity conflict and crisis. Another instance can be taken from *A Grain of Wheat* where the entire village on the eve of their *Uhuru* gathered in the streets and sang and dance. “They mixed Christmas hymns with songs and dances only performed during initiation rites when boys and

girls are circumcised into responsibility as men and women.” (200). Thus, in their celebrations too, we see the assimilation of the two cultures- Western and the indigenous.

The changes that these two cultures underwent are immense and drastic. The stories that their ancestors passed on for generations were replaced with the tumultuous experiences their parents had in the last few decades. Their songs and tales of their rich cultural past were replaced with the tales of wars and sufferings. With time, their bygone folk tales of their heroes and warriors and history became more and more distant and myth-like. It is also very unfortunate that many cultural practices have collapsed, their stories lost as the oral traditions faced myriad challenges in the modern world, and their language came under threat of disintegration when given the secondary importance under western educational system for many decades. Their traditional religious system which controlled the entire sundry of these two tribes making them a closely knitted society was transformed into an individualised society with Christianity and western ideology.

Some instances of the changes in the stories that the people of different generations listen and talk about can be seen in *Petals of Blood* where Munira told stories to his two children “how Iilmorog was once haunted by one-eyed Marimu; funny old women shitting mountains; morose cripples with streams of curses from their foul mouths. . .” (19) until his wife stopped him and he read to them from the Bible instead. Later on, we also see Nyakinyua, the respected old woman who knew the secrets of the land and held immense wisdom sang in the circumcision ceremony- of all the droughts of the centuries, the journey of her people in the mythical lands of two- mouthed Marimus (two-mouthed Ogres) and struggling humans. She sang of the coming of colonialism and the fierce struggle that the circumcised youth fought against it and so on. In a *Grain of Wheat*, the major discussions between the youth are of the stories and sacrifices of the freedom fighters and of Uhuru. While, in *The River Between*, the main concern and songs are of education and the meaning of power and wealth. The narratives of the people are thus affected by the coming of colonialism and the changes resulted from it.

Today, these two cultures have no doubt transcend into progressive societies with high literacy rates and personal freedom where they have access to all career avenues and economic independence, the cultural loss that they underwent as a result of colonialism and cultural assimilation is immense. This has been felt by many intellectuals in both these tribes and thus efforts and researches are encouraged to preserve the vibrant cultural heritage of

their tribes to divert disintegration. In a fast changing world of virtual living and artificial intelligence, human and cultural values are at risk of complete ruin. In addition to all the factors leading to cultural loss, oral tradition being the vehicle of cultural preservation and propagation faces tremendous challenge; therefore, the folk elements of these cultures which are majorly found only in their oral traditions should be documented in written forms and digitally lest they are forgotten and become extinct eventually.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

This study has taken as its sources both the oral and written literature of the Angami Nagas and the documented oral traditions of the Gikuyu tribe of Kenya majorly from the select novels of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and secondary sources from articles and books written on Ngugi's fictions. It is a fact for both the tribes that their first portrayal and introduction to the world are done by foreign statesmen and anthropologists- where they were both pictured as barbaric and savage, and sensationalized their cultural practices like head-hunting in the Angami Nagas and circumcision in the Gikuyu tribe. The Western culture was taken as a measure or centre for the interpretation of the indigenous culture and branded with degrading terms. Thus, the need for decentering the centre that was assigned to them is felt by the intellectuals today and hence, recentering the centre and making the indigenous culture the centre by documenting their culture and stories as it is from an insider's point of view has taken the leap. For this reason, many writers have made their cultural elements a major part of their writings. In the world of fiction in English, for instance, we find Chinua Achebe a major proponent of Ibo culture, Ngugi wa Thiong'o a champion of Gikuyu culture and Easterine Kire a major advocate of the Angami culture.

Chinua Achebe in his famous message (found at the front page of Penguin books on African writers) through Penguin African Writers Series to the upcoming writers to write about Africa- her stories and culture as insiders because in their years of contact with the Europeans, many have not acknowledged the diverse cultures and languages of Africa and have thus tried to "simplify it, generalize it, stereotype its people". As a consequence, Africa has been presented to the world in a negative light by outsiders through their literature. Hence, Achebe challenges the African writers of today to write their own stories and language to assert her rightful place in the world of literature. This is true for all cultures which have been marginalized and misrepresented by people not belonging to that cultural group. The authority to define and dictate one's culture should be taken by the denizens of the culture in concern. The importance of interpreting one's own culture as an insider- in their own perspective cannot be overstated. The study therefore makes an attempt to document some elements of the oral tradition of the Angami Naga tribe and Gikuyu tribe from the perspective of the insiders. These two tribes are unique in their own beautiful way- their rich

cultural practices, traditional wisdom, love for witty proverbs, cultural values, songs, history, and folktales, are inspiringly vibrant and dynamic. Yet in spite of their uniqueness and their division by great geographical distance, these tribes share cultural similarities, values, and experiences that transcend beyond the geographical.

Both the cultures underwent difficult history of colonialism and political turbulence that had impacted the healthy existence of their traditions. In fact, many of their folk elements were forgotten and lost during these periods. They developed new identities which can be called a postcolonial hybrid identity as they underwent cultural assimilation- their old traditional belief system and traditional means of education were replaced with Christianity and formal Western education bringing about a total change in their societies and ushering them into the global community and modernity. One thing that was constant in all these changes was change and with all these new experiences, identity crisis became a new major issue as the world that they once knew disintegrated. This has made the recreation of their traditions not just a challenge but also a pressing necessity.

This collapse in cultural practices together with the colonial effects in these two tribes resulted in postcolonial hybrid identities. These problems are prevalent in the postcolonial world and have led to the development of many complexities and beyond the geographical. Therefore, the need for revisionism where one would interpret one's own culture as an insider thereby change their attitude towards their culture is a dire necessity in the present world. In short, the communities which have lost their folk cultures during the colonial rule should look at themselves from their own cultural lens, revisit their cultural practices, and document them before the total disintegration of their cultures which is eminent in this fast changing world. This would only save their cultures from prejudice, misinterpretation, misrepresentation, and from being forgotten.

This thesis has made an attempt to study some aspects of the oral traditions of the two cultures in question and also made a comparative analysis of some selective elements that stand out in this study. There are many more to analyze and compare beyond the select texts and novels. Yet, even within the text, many traditional elements could not be analyzed in detail like the taking of bride price, meetings restricted to men and the concept of *theshou* for the Angami Nagas, the pouring of wine or rice beer on the ground- as a sign of respect and consideration for their ancestors in the Gikuyu tribe (found in AGoW pp 20) or the involving

of spirits of the dead in joining the ritual (found in TRB pp 12) which are very similar to the Angami ritual of *Zu mho sü* and *mekhru zie*, and such others.

One similarity in values found in the two tribes is the reverence they have for nature. The respect they have for their environment is worth mentioning and various natural phenomena leave them in awe and reevaluating their lives and actions in general. For instance, natural phenomena like famine are seen as God's way of communicating with them for the lapse in their part and responsibilities. These two tribes had in their cultural belief system a very rich environmentalist aesthetic. Their natural surroundings of rich flora and fauna, streams, fields, and their priceless God gifted land are integral part of their oral and written literature. The desecration of their natural environment by invaders and their cultural belief in preserving their resources as providence of their God was a main concern and a major cause for rebelling against such foreign powers. The positive attitude of these two tribes towards their environment, the concerns they have in judicious use of their resources, and cultural belief in conserving and preserving nature, the affinity of these people with their natural resources-land, water, forests, and wildlife has been rooted deeply into their cultural lives. These are fortified by their folklores and folksongs. Though today, modernisation, globalization, and changes in occupations greatly affected their lifestyle and influenced their attitude, Education and experiences have empowered the people to realize the importance to embrace their old cultural values and reclaim their rights in protecting their environment. Efforts have been made by the people to ensure sustainable development and also in advocating the revival of the age-old practices to ensure the mutual coexistence of the people with their natural environment. Such positive cultural approach towards nature can definitely contribute constructively towards the major ecological concerns of the present world.

Even though the study is limited to the folk elements found in Ngugi's select novels for the Gikuyu culture, the findings show an overwhelmingly significant amount of cultural practices of the Gikuyu tribe, thereby expanding the scope of the study. The expression of concern for the loss of Gikuyu culture and language in the novels are evident and worth further research. Similarly, the need for a comprehensive documentation of the Angami oral tradition is felt as the evidence of cultural loss and disintegration is witnessed by the present generation due to multiple factors.

In the data collected during the interviews for this thesis, the occurrence of cultural overlapping is found in many instances. This reinforces the fact that in oral tradition we find

the occurrences of variations of the same folklore and other cultural beliefs and elements. This, for many, is arguably the most significant limitation of oral tradition. Yet, this phenomenon is bound to happen as oral tradition existed in memory and practice and transmitted orally from one generation to the next rather than a definite written record. Thus, the different versions of the same folk element can be documented.

Another pressing concern for ethnic communities is the death of their native languages. Though ‘language death’ is a natural occurrence which has been the case of many cultures, today, the ethnic groups faces a rapid decline in the usage of their native languages and thus is leading to ‘linguicide’ observes Dr. Savio Meyase, a phonologist and phonetician and a Newton International Fellow (The British Academy) who is presently based at the University of York as a postdoctoral researcher. In his words, “Linguicide is a ‘sudden’ and untimely demise of the usage of a language” and that the people are now witnesses of linguicide in their own homeland as English has been preferred over the native languages in schools and in business and official communications and thereby the manner and amount of native language usage has undergone dramatic changes. In his exclusive interview with *The Morung Express* on 20th February 2024, a day before the International Mother Language Day, Meyase expressed his concerns on the “crisis of imminent extinction” of the native languages of Nagaland. He accurately made these informed observations citing various practices and policies which have contributed to the active decline of the native languages in Nagaland. This is true for Tenyidie, the language of the Angami Naga tribe (along with the other Tenyimia tribes), as the language faces the threat of extinction in the next hundred years or the next generation if strong and quick precautionary measures are not taken to preserve and document the language in the system.

A very similar scenario can be seen in post-colonial Africa with the African native languages in general. In the scholarly article titled “Language Endangerment and Language Maintenance: can Endangered Language of Kenya Be Electronically Preserved?”, the authors, Eric W. Wamalwa and Stephen B.J. Olouch, have accounted the indigenous language crisis in Kenya extensively. They observed that the Kenyan native languages are facing the crisis of language endangerment because of many factors including the emphasis on English as the medium of instruction “from primary level to university” in all the subjects with the exception of French, Kiswahili and German, where these languages as subjects are taught in the particular language in question. (262). In addition to this, the Kenyan people have Kiswahili and their national and co-official language along with English. Thus the other

native languages in Kenya are not promoted nor protected and their usage is limited to communications within the small ethnic groups. They assert that though the Kenyan people put a lot of importance to their ethnic languages “because they carry the people’s culture and oral history”, due to factors like migration, urbanization, inter-marriages, formal education and such others, their ethnic languages are facing endangerment. (262).

Today, the two tribes- Angami Nagas and Gikuyu tribe of Kenya have access to the same educational opportunities, technology, job avenues, and such others. Their worlds and stories are now opened to the world and they are in a place where their values are recognized and appreciated by the outside world. Their rich cultural elements and practices attract people from all around the world. Though many of their indigenous knowledge and folk elements have found their way into written literature and with the advancement in technology, efforts are also made to conserve and promote their culture through media. Yet, it is safe to say that those are just the tip of the iceberg and their vibrant cultures are still at risk of disintegration as major portion of their cultural elements are still ultimately dependent on orality to be disseminated. That being the case, one can argue that oral tradition is predominantly the mode that these tribes use to transmit their cultural heritage from one generation to the next even in this age of written tradition and technology. This is in fact one of the main reasons why such ethnic people are experiencing cultural degeneration. Hence the need to document extensively one’s culture through technology in digital form to enrich the future generations and keep alive one’s cultural heritage.

The influence of the world cultures, the impact of technology and social media, and a rapid changing competitive world have huge impact on the indigenous cultures which are already hastening towards its deterioration for many contributing factors. These together with decreased emphasis on the propagation and conservation of one’s culture and degeneration of memory (for lack of telling and retelling), many indigenous cultures which depended on oral tradition to pass down their history, stories, songs, tales, values, knowledge, and such others have been negatively and immensely affected. Nagaland and Africa are places of rich cultural heritage and diversity with orality as the main transmitter and vehicle for their cultural practices and values. Their written literature is also replete with elements of their vibrant oral tradition; however, it is evident that the two nations are losing their indigenous practices as a product of many factors including colonization, modernization, western education, cultural assimilation, religion, and less emphasis on indigenous languages.

As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, the oral tradition of a culture encompass the totality of the way of life of that group of people which include their political, economic, social and religious aspects. Naturally thus, oral traditions of a community should be approached with in a positive and objective way to fully comprehend and appreciate the uniqueness of that community. In this age and time of a generation of “Digital Natives” and “internet generation”, the threat of cultural suicide where the people let their cultures die out due to contributing reasons like memory lapse, neglect of native language, acceptance of foreign language and world culture, unvalued cultural knowledge and values, cultural illiteracy and so on, the researches made on the oral tradition of indigenous societies can truly contribute in rebuilding and reviving the values and cultural heritage of those communities.

Limitations of the study:

- Elements in Gikuyu culture are taken from the ones mentioned in Ngugi’s fictional narratives from the select novels only.
- Many elements of the oral traditions of both the cultures could not be analyzed in one single thesis.
- Language barrier is another major limitation in this study.
- The gravity, beauty, and essence of many cultural elements of the two tribes are often lost in translation.

Scope of future research:

- There are many elements in the oral traditions of the two cultures that can be researched individually or for comparative studies.
- The songs of each tribe can be documented comprehensively with musical scores as the lyrics alone do not do justice to the beauty of the cultures.
- The religious belief systems of the two tribes are impressively systematic and cover the entire cultural lives of the people. A comprehensive research can be made on the religious belief and rituals of the two tribes to preserve the rich cultural heritage of the tribes.

- The traditional lifestyle and cultural elements of the two tribes can be documented without prejudice and misrepresentations by researchers belonging to the two tribes through their cultural lens.
- Efforts can be made by future researchers to chronicle the oral tradition of the two vibrant tribes in digital form as per the need of the times.

In conclusion, we can argue that since the two tribes have experienced drastic changes and thus their identities have acquired a state of postcolonial hybridity, the need for revitalization for both the culture and language is the need for the hour. And since, language is the “carrier of culture”, and both the tribes have their languages as endangered languages among the world languages, their culture is also on the verge of extinction. This is because, without the native language, the culture cannot survive in isolation. Every intellectual should thus, voice one’s concern and work for the preservation and documentation of their native culture digitally in this world of technology and artificial intelligence lest we lose our unique identity and become mere general global citizens without a distinct cultural heritage.



Figure- 1

Mr. Medoselhou Keretsü is a 75 year old man from Kohima Village. He is a social activist who is deeply involved in organisations working for social welfare. He was the former Speaker of Naga Hoho, former Vice- Chairman and Chairman Kohima Village, Convenor of Naga Club Centenary Celebration, and the present General Secretary of Senior Citizens' Association Nagaland (SCAN).



Figure- 2

Late Mr. Tsilie Sakhrie was an enthusiastic Nature Conservationist from Khonoma village. He was born on 15th March 1943 and was 77 years old when last interviewed for this thesis.. He was a member in Nature Conservation Committee for twenty years. He was a member in Angami Public Organisation (APO) and a member in State Wildlife Advisory Board (SWAB). He had presented papers on Nature conservation on both National and International workshop around fifteen countries.



Figure-3

Mr. Daniel Kikhi is an 84 year old man from Viswema village. His grandfather was the first Christian convert from Viswema village. He was the former Village Council Chairman from 1993 to 2003. He is the longest serving village chairman from Viswema as he served his village as the chairman till peace came to the village.



Figure- 4

Mr. Kekuohetuo Angami was born in 1958 during a time of political upheaval and joined the NNC Federal in 1975. He retired as Brigadier in NNC Federal in the year 2004. He is a former village chairman of Urura Village Dimapur and currently is the Pastor of Angami Christian Revival Church Urura Village.



Figure- 5

This is the famous Sopfünuo *tsie* (stone) at Rüsoma village. The bigger one is believed to be Sopfünuo and the smaller one, her child. The legend of Sopfünuo is found in the second chapter of this thesis.



Figure- 6

This is the stone that Rhalieü, the famous Angami seer joined with eggs. This legendary monolith is conserved jointly by the Department of Art and Culture, Nagaland and the Shüya clan of Meriema village.



Figure- 7

Photo courtesy- google image

This is an image of the Angami Nagas during Sekrenyi festival. Here, an Angami maiden in her festive finest is seen serving rice brew to an Angami man and in the background, we see a typical scene of Sekrenyi feast with Angami men and women in their finest traditional attires.



Figure- 8

Photo courtesy- Google image

This is an image of the Gikuyu people in their traditional attires dancing during a ritual observed during pre-circumcision celebration.



Figure- 9

This is the map of the Central Region of Kenya showing the Gikuyu Holy Mountain, Mount Kenya and the nearby regions inhabited mainly by the Gikuyu people.

Glossary

- **Whedzüra / Whejüra** – A place with no canopy, where the sky does not cover the place
- **Kemovo** – High priest
- **Phichüu** – Elder
- **Terhuopfü** – Spirits (feminine)
- **Terhuomia** – Spirits
- **Kezei rü** – Dark river (in Angami belief Kezei rü is the river that they cross over after death)
- **Livau** – The man who performs the burial rites
- **Tsünyü** – Root of a tree used as soap
- **Süshie** – Basket of rice- grain
- **Zharha** – A measuring basket made from peeled bamboo skin to pay for a person's labour/ service
- **Zhangou** – Friday
- **Kenyü** – Taboo or forbidden
- **Kenyü thor, kenyü pfhüo** – Superlative term of Taboo/ forbidden.
- **Terhuora** – Spiritual world
- **Meciemo** – Guardian of Kezei rü
- **Lhaprie** – Woman dying in childbirth especially in attempt at delivering a baby or due to failure of expelling the placenta after birth
- **Penie** – Genna or no-work day. Ritually forbidden day
- **Kika** – Death of an entire family leaving no inheritor/heir
- **Khrüjü** – Moonless
- **Thekrü** – the act of mourning by chanting expression of grief
- **Kharu** – Village gate
- **Nuokrase** – Death of an infant of one or two days
- **Ukepenuopfü** – Creator God
- **Pfhe ra** – A red body cloth/ red shawl
- **Ketsie** – Stone
- **Lie** - Field
- **Tsiepou** – Large rounded erected stone
- **Liemewe** – people who dies after cultivating a land claimed by spirits

- **Terhü** – war
- **Mewhi** – A sound made by a large group of people in unison after ululating or war cry (the sound ‘whi’)
- **Siliete** – Understood
- **Keshunyho** – A covering woven from a certain plant to protect from rain
- **Thuophi** – To forecast fortunes or luck
- **Themoupfhi** – Channelers
- **Ü** – The twenty first letter in Tenyidie alphabet. The letter also stand for poem or song or intonation in songs and singing
- **Cha** – Road
- **Theba** – Chair or seat
- **Yakou** – single piece of log to carve a bed
- **Kezei** – Dark. Also, the month of February
- **Ramei** – a birds tail/feather used as an ornament signifying the highest form of valour and honour for men in the Angami society
- **Thacü** – A necklace made from one’s victim hair
- **Petsou kia** – A warrior head gear
- **Thamei** – A tail worn by a warrior made from his victims’ hair
- **Kiputsie** – The stone erected on occasion of forming a new village
- **Dahou** – An open raised sitting place made of stone usually used for meetings and gatherings in a village
- **Rünapeyu** – Elders in an Angami village

Abbreviations Used:

Since the three select novels of Ngugi used in the thesis are repeated multiple times especially while making direct quotations, the abbreviations mentioned below are used to make it more convenient.

A Grain of Wheat - AGoW

The River Between - TRB

Petals of Blood - PoB

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