

Naga Myths of Origin and Historical Reconstruction

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This paper is about social formations, differentiations, worldviews and institutions of social solidarity among the Nagas, as inferred from their oral traditions.¹ The present attempt at historical reconstruction involves a study of the development and use of their symbolic system squarely set within their own subsistence. The Nagas encountered the British colonial power in the first part of the 19th century. Subsequently, within the changing paradigms of anthropological thoughts, they emerged as 'ahistorical people,' as reflected in the writings of administrators-cum-anthropologists and missionaries.² They were depicted as timeless and ahistorical people because the cultural level that they had attained at the time of their contact with the Westerners satisfied the colonialist's idea of what 'ahistory' should be. The reality, however, was that the Nagas did not lack history; they simply lacked those things Europeans and their successors believed they needed to give the former, *i.e.*, a proper history. For long the paradigm of constructing histories based on written sources virtually denied oral tradition its rightful place in historical methodology. That trajectory not only became an instrument of the literates' domination of pre-literate societies at different levels, but also distorted the latter's history.

Till only a few decades ago, history writers were not sure of reconstruction of an authentic history based on oral

tradition. However, historians like Jan Vansina³ among others have by now shown that oral tradition is a dependable source and that it is history in its own right. They have also shown that the custodians of traditions are both informants and historians at the same time. Oral tradition is a means by which people transmit cultural knowledge. Culture is generally transmitted from generation to generation through stories, myths, and reenactments of rituals and ceremonies. A common form of oral tradition is narrating 'the' story. Storytelling is an art passed down from one generation to another. One of the main purposes of these stories is to reflect upon 'traditional' values of the past in order to make sense of the moral changes of the present. A significant part of the oral tradition comprises origin myths. Classical cultural evolutionists maintained that such components of 'primitive ideas' should be identified with mythological thought.⁴ Bronislaw Malinowski and Franz Boas, however, argued that preliterate cultures need not be classified in such a demeaning way.⁵ Malinowski suggested that myth, like religion, fulfils a universal human need for unraveling the unexplainable phenomena. A myth is a mode of thought essential for supplementing the scientific way of thinking. Eventually, as science advances, the role of myth gets restricted to validating or legitimizing cultural beliefs and practices, rather than explaining the natural phenomena. Myth is closely related to religious faith and is still an indispensable part of modern civilized life itself. Boas, unlike Malinowski, maintained that myths have an explanatory function. In his view myths are taken seriously because they deal with the most fundamental aspects of 'native' life, such as their beliefs as to the nature and origin of their world. Claude Levi-Strauss,⁶ particularly noted for his structural analysis of mythology, considered myth as both historically specific, since it is almost always set in some timeframe 'long ago,' and ahistorical, because the narrative is 'timeless'. Levi-Strauss brushed aside the individuality of the text of myths in favour of looking at patterns, systems and structures contained therein. He emphasized the idea that structures are universal, hence they are timeless. This paradigm fitted in neatly with what the 'traditional' people believed: that the events described in their myths took place at the dawn of creation. They viewed the

world as a unified creation whose characteristic patterns did not vary through time. In other words, mythic thought does not recognize a continuing process of change over time. Their real time is projected into mythic time, and the world's recurring patterns — changes in the seasons, changing genealogies of clans, and birth and death — are all considered part of a grand plan laid out at the time of creation itself.

The case of the Nagas may now be examined. All Naga groups have their own versions of origin myth, but the general ideas behind the stories are similar. Their myths of origin are construed to be essentially charters for social institutions and actions, besides legitimizing 'traditional' customs and belief systems. In a broad sense, their rituals and beliefs are symbolic statements about fission and fusion of social units, maintaining social order and solidarity. Mythic perception, no doubt, then, has guided their life pattern. So much so that the basic structure of social life was, before the Christian proselytization, determined by 'sacred' constraints. In fact, till today the social units of their clans are still traced back to a mythical guise in terms of rituals connected with man-land relations, economic activities, clan rights and social relationships. These are manifested through narratives contained in stories and ballads, which are primary texts of Naga social structure and processes. Thus the origin myth has assumed a composite form of a shared history, which invariably constitutes the finished product of peoples' consciousness. The diverse Naga segments have also developed mechanisms to check distortions in their kind of historical narratives and constructions. These oral narratives are recounted over and over by ritually sanctioned functionaries during ceremonies, festivals and gatherings of all sorts. Thus collective memory 'maintains' the accurateness of these narratives. They insist that any deviation or incorrectness would invoke the wrath of creation itself. To make the recounting of the narrative effective, the Nagas use common symbols of authority, such as the decorated spear, the kind that is not normally used in war. These spears are still manufactured at the Khiamniungan village Woi, and the Chang village Longla. The spears are decorated with the hair of rams found in the snowy mountains of Saramati in the Yimchungru, Pochury and Makwari lands. Only councillors and chiefs can wield these

ceremonial spears during ritualized festivities or assemblies to narrate their history or spell out customary laws. The butt of the spear must jab the ceremonial ground after making each statement and every word must be accurately rendered in measured tone and seriousness.

Shared Symbols and Social Implications

Over a broad time-span, the Nagas had established a region-wide barter system where an elaborate 'traditional' channel of communications and standardized demand existed. This socio-economic structure catered to the requirements of a specific cultural belt that eventually crystallized into a composite Naga culture. Their practice of headhunting acted as a stimulus to its growth. The Naga cosmology could accommodate headhunting and the co-related feasts of merit, as a way of life.⁷ This way of life was a prerequisite for individuals to move up the social scale and an essential 'motor' for polity formation. It is clear that trading politics was a part — if not an extension — of head-hunting practice itself among the Nagas and was necessitated by the need for procuring prestige goods (*e.g.*, brass gongs, ivory armlets, various ornaments of considerable value, like crystal ear-rings, bracelets of heavy brass, necklaces of beads of precious and semi-precious stones and of silver). Such articles were essential for flaunting their statuses, which in turn perpetuated socio-economic inequalities and shifting political alliances. Trans-polity trade was stimulated by these basic social needs. The trans-Himalayan trade was as essential as that of Burma and was dispersed inside Naga areas through either the Konyak-Wancho-Nocte or Angami traders. These segments acted as intermediaries between Nagas living in the interior and traders from either Burma or Tibet. They prevented the former from having direct trading relations with the latter. Such an arrangement in effect created a sort of institutionalized regime — a notion of socio-cultural affinity. An intricate series of collective symbols, myths of origin and material articulations got involved to develop this specific socio-cultural belt and entity.

Such collective symbols of the Nagas comprise the *mithun* (*Bos frontalis*), buffalo, hornbill, pig, dog, cock and lesser

creatures of the earth and sky, each of which is accorded its 'rightful' place in the symbolic structure in descending order of importance. They are symbols of considerable ritual significance. By Naga standards, the goat represents the lowliest of relationships that can be contracted. A goat is 'impure', since it is associated with noisy mating habits and because of its smell. It is considered quite unbecoming of a Naga to routinely bestow such symbols on social relations. An oral narrative of Khonoma's Sanyu lineage refers to receipt of goats as bride price from the Kacharis. For this reason the Sanyu lineage is yet to get rid of this stigma and is the butt of jokes in Khonoma.⁸ To cite another instance, till today, Ninu village pays a tribute of two goats to Namsang, which practice reflects abject subservience of the former to the latter. It was Namsang that brought about a reconciliation of sorts between Ninu and the British forces after Ninu was worsted in a battle.⁹ To illustrate this point further, the great annual festival of *Hooka* of the Khamniungans, which festival they claim to have been holding since the days of their forefathers, is marked by sacrifice of *mithuns*, cows, pigs and dance for days on end. After six days of festivities involving reaffirmation of traditional friendship between men of equal means (or 'big men'), a declaration of ritual kinship ensues by exchanging portions of the *mithun* and other sacrificed animals in an appropriate order in accordance with the status obtained or contracted. This ritual kinship is maintained at the trans-village and inter-tribal levels to cover a wider geographical spread. To comprehend a crucial aspect of their reverence for the animal world in a ritual sense, we can turn to the myth of origin of a few tribes in the heart of Phom country at Piyongkong (at an altitude of 6560 feet) near the present Longling town in Tuensang district. The place is sacrosanct for Ao, Sangtam, Chang, Phom and Konyak segments for an important reason: the *mithun* acquired from this place for sacrificial purpose is considered to be more ritually sanctified than that procured elsewhere. Not surprisingly, Piyongkong figures as yet another place of origin of the above-mentioned segments.

Another reference can be made to the Angami village gate. It has the head of a *mithun*, saddled with a human head and adorned with hornbill feathers. The buffalo, which is used for

wet paddy cultivation, and is intrinsically connected with water, is yet another pivotal symbol. The Khonoma gate exemplifies the opposition between this creature and the *mithun*, human head and hornbill feathers. In another symbol, *i.e.*, in the *morung* carvings of Chang and Ao one comes across an ideal arrangement of lizard or crocodile at the bottom, atop which are vertically placed pictorial symbols of tigers, *mithun*, human heads and hornbill feathers. This structure is never reversed, indicating at any rate their overbearing patrilineal system. A tripartite symbolism is reflected embracing pre-natal, present and post-mortal life. This implies that the lizard/salamander or crocodile represents female and pre-natal life signifying also birth; while the hornbill feather represents the male and post-mortal life. The predominance of carvings on the village gate is characteristic of the Angami segment, which invariably acts as a catalyst in effecting communal solidarity in the absence of an institutionalized *morung*. In contrast, among the northern Nagas their *morungs* have these pictorial representations in the form of carvings. Such pictographic representations are seen on the frontal end of a log-drum, like that of a buffalo's head, or a crocodile. Both are symbolic representations of water, earth, and, of course, the female that is a symbol of social reproduction. A crucial aspect of Naga symbolism is the bi-polarity. It appears to be a mainstay in their symbols. Since the actual world is believed to be hemmed in by pre-natal life reflecting female, and post-mortal life representing male, it is not unusual to come across carvings of the *mithun* in the *morungs*/village gates representing a reversed reflection of actual life or the 'other dimension'. In other words, it is a medium of communication with their creator. The central symbol of the carvings is the *mithun*. For the Naga, this sacrificial creature seen as an animal is nothing else but the representation of a human being in the sky. The Ao and Chang contention that men's *mithuns* are souls of the inhabitants of the sky testifies to this belief. In the same way, the *mithuns* of the 'sky people' are said to be the souls of the inhabitants of the world. It follows, then, that killing the *mithun* in this world means executing an individual, whose soul is but a human in the 'otherworld'. By their reckoning, sacrificing *mithuns* results in depletion of souls of the

'sky world'. The Angamis, therefore, restricted excessive success of a 'big man' in head hunting as well as *mithun* sacrifice. This ensured a limitation or a stasis of sorts in the Angami type of polity formation.

Examples from the Lotha and Konyak segments would serve to explain this bipolarity better. They used to bury or expose their dead in boat-shaped coffins, which were decorated with hornbill feathers. Another good illustration is the decoration of graves with hornbill feathers or hornbill heads atop Y-posts among the Changs during the commemoration of their dead. The practice of attaching hornbill heads or tail feathers atop sacrificial Y-posts during the *mithun* sacrifice is predominant among most of the Naga groups. Since Y-posts are regarded as female symbols, it is characteristic of Nagas to posit an opposition between this post adorned with the hornbill head or tail feathers and a sacrificial *mithun*, which is tied up to the Y-post. In olden days the concept of fertility was connected with the acquisition of enemy heads. It was also linked with the retention of their deceased kindred's soul matter until the onset of spring, so that Nagas disposed off the corpses only then. They believed that the souls would have played their role in contributing to the production and reproduction process and so could be released through their annual festive ceremonies. The notion of death as the harbinger of fertility extended to the animal world as well, for even today the Marings believe that the skull of the first kill of an animal would bring a lot of magic. Hence they place the skull atop one of the six-forked Y-posts within a fenced-in worshipping place in the middle of the village. The Konyak *Angh* collects animal heads from hunters in the same manner. This concept of fertility was directly connected with agricultural rituals. Along with this, even the traditional games became a cultic activity. Among Ao Nagas even today, the game of top spinning is allowed only at specific seasons. They rationalize that while rice is growing the game is not to be played because the earth is pregnant. During the Ao *moatsu* (*mo*=paddy; *atsu*=pull) festival, a tug of war between men and women is ritually performed and the latter invariably comes out the victor or must be allowed to win. On this day 'mother' earth must be humoured or else the rice plants will not stretch out. Water, earth and fishes are essentially

symbols of renewal, pre-natal, female, fertility and well being, so much so that the Ao Nagas must begin their new *Pudo Menden* (traditional council) by fishing. Here, the incoming group must jointly go fishing and present their catch to the outgoing councilors. Annual community fishing articulates their inter-village alliances. It is a symbol of reaffirmation or renewal of social relationships, authority and legitimacy. They must also start their long drawn out ritual of *mithun* sacrifice by catching fish on a specific day.

Notably, the *mithun* was linked with allocation of politico-ritual positioning of different clans. It was especially evident among those Naga segments (belonging to conical types) that reckoned their seniority and ritual superiority on the basis of their emergence from a cave or stones. It would be instructive to use some narratives for comprehending the symbolism involved. The Rongmei (Kabui) oral tradition goes that *mahou taobei* (a cave) existed near Maken (Makhel). Since their legendary habitat could no longer hold the growing population, a field rat (*alou*) was sent out to survey the outer world. But a big stone slab closed the passage, so they got a *mithun* to gore it open and humanity surged forth like ants. But the *mithun* holding up this slab got tired and let it fall back leaving a large number of people in the cave. There is yet another narrative, this time ascribed to the Maring tradition, which mentions that after vain attempts had been made to gore open such a cave by using the buffalo (*malue*) and the cow (*namuk*) successively, their god finally told the people to use a *mithun* which could eventually clear a passage. That was why the *mithun* was sacred to them thereafter. As one moves up from south to north, starting from the *Khul* group, *viz*, Anal, Moyon, Monsang, Tarao and Lamkang, one finds that most of the Naga segments refer to an underworld existence which myth tapers off in the central part of Naga area with the *Angh* polity formation making its presence felt among the Phom, Chang, Yimchunger and Ao. The original *khul* model then gets transferred to one that has a megalithic reference, as exemplified by the Ao myth of origin from six stones. These stones are identified as three males, namely, *Tungpok* ('gored open'), *Longpok* ('sprang of stone') and *Longchakrep* ('shattered stone') and three females. As a given polity evolved to a higher

level, so also the myth of origin, which got re-articulated to refer to a heavenly origin myth or its equivalent. For instance, the Wancho oral tradition narrates the emergence of their chief (*Wang*) from red-gourds (*aju ajung*). A forest spirit supposedly split open a gourd and found therein a man and a woman, in another it found two men, and in yet another gourd, a man and a woman. The spirit made the man of the first couple chief of the Wanchos and sent out the rest to multiply.

Mithun sacrifice, fertility cult and megalithic culture are thus inexorably linked. Although the *Kemevo* and *Angh* are polar opposites in Naga polity forms, both attach a great deal of social significance to monoliths. The stone circles of Khonoma and the stone seat of the *Angh* of Chui highlight this point.¹⁰ The latter is exclusively meant for the *Angh* to adjudicate disputes and forms a vantage point to exercise his eminent position by prohibiting kinsmen and commoner alike from sitting there.

Territoriality, Myths of Origin, Segmentation and Politics of Kin Identity

All the Naga tribes performed a sacred fire ritual while establishing a new village. The descendants of the original priest never allowed the fire to die out. Along with this sacred fire that was brought over from their 'ancestral' settlements, a spear or *zunmi* (literally, 'spear of ages', in Ao) was transmitted from generation to generation. The eldest among the clansmen kept this spear.¹¹ Previously, when a new village was to be founded, it was members of a junior phratry that had to be the pathfinders. For instance, the clans or phratries such as Kuthemshi (Chang), Jamir (Ao), Yachembang (Phom), Khipur (Yimchunger), Mipongsandre (Lotha) and Lam (Khiamniungan) were definitely linked with water rites and were ritually assigned the function of searching for brine springs and village sites. Salt being a scarce commodity, large settlements often came up around brine springs. Wars also broke out between villages and, later, between the Nagas and the Ahoms for control of salt mines, especially in the Konyak-Wancho-Nocte region. It is not surprising that all the places of 'origin' have brine springs, *viz.*, Chungliyimti (Ao), Makhel (several Naga tribes), Changsang (Chang), Khimuphu

(Yimchunger), etc. According to traditional narratives, the founding of a village was not always easy; it was easy when claim to the territory was found to be uncontested. Otherwise it required a full-scale battle to clinch the issue of territorial control. Therefore, the importance given to the founding members was directly linked with their politico-economic privileges not readily open to others. It follows then that possession of land either for house building in the village or for cultivation within a well-defined territory was representative of one's politico-ritual standing. An appropriate cluster of exogamous clans or lineages founded new villages. At least two days were kept open to new arrivals; thereafter they firmly imposed political citizenship with attendant land rights; e.g., among the Aos of the earlier days, the founder lineages took up a major portion of the village land. They were (and still are) known as *Yimsor* ('born of village'); an immigrant who came in after the stipulated period was called *Tayimer* (affiliate). The latter, also known as *Ohma* (Mongsen) or *Puma* (Chongli), meaning a 'neutral' was consigned to the lowest rank in the village. The Chen group of Konyaks belonged to a different typology. In the Chen villages of Chenwotzo, Wangte, Nyanching, Hoyat, Lakhum, Longwi, Yinchung and Throilu, the clansmen could inherit immovable properties across a village territory unlike the other Naga segments. The collective defensive nature of a village brought about a degree of egalitarianism, in spite of the presence of private holding of land. It was inbuilt in their system of cycle cultivation. For instance, the *jhum* lands around a village were distributed direction-wise, i.e., the lands that were left unused for a number of years were taken up first. The lands in the other directions, therefore, were not used but were kept under the control of the village. This distribution was made according to seniority of age within the lineages. The more fertile or topographically well-endowed plots for surplus generation always went to the elders. Interestingly, even now in this type of cycle cultivation, most of the lineages or families normally do not have adequate lands of their own in that particular area. Therefore, they have to seek surplus lands for their needs by way of renting. Among Aos this rent is known as *luli* (=land, buy), which is quite nominal. The Sangtam *vithong* (=renting out) carries absolutely

no payment. Among the Tangkhuls (south and north) a sizable area of land falls under a category called *Yaruilam*, meaning public land in those cyclic *jhum* lands and families requiring more lands for cultivation may avail of this without rent. The Angamis recognize the rights of the individual to property in land. Their permanent terrace fields are freely sold or let out and mortgaged. Since early times, their terrace cultivation could sustain a large population, and the surplus generated was plowed into feasts of merit.¹²

In the days of yore, warfare (especially headhunting) was an added incentive to enhance kinship ranking, *i.e.*, it added prestige or status approximation among lesser-placed lineages. The alternative choice of migrating to another village certainly worked against an individual, as it entailed deprivation of rights and privileges associated with founder lineages. Therefore, within a fixed territory various forms of status mobility ensued. Basically, Naga villages came under territorial units of patrilineages of a greater ramified clan structure of wider geographical spread. A look into internal migrations within their region reveals that it was the dominant villages that bred satellite settlements and clusters of confederacies emerged thereon to form the building blocks of a tribal group or segment. These social groupings came about through manipulation of legends and myths. Their internal migrations reveal that it was the dominant villages and confederacies or chiefdoms that emerged as 'true groups'. There was also symbolic kinship affinity that stretched beyond the restrictive tribal segment. In this way different Naga segments ensured that their symbols were constantly activated and made use of. Thus their social control and further expansions were assured. It was also true in the case of fission process. The Naga myths of origin and legendary prose narratives show how social solidarity was articulated among them, and also give an insight into the basis of fission and fusion process.¹³ The mythical core extended to rituals connected with founding of villages, territorial claims, economic activities and clan rights. It is therefore instructive to ascertain the role of myths of origin in the process of social formation of Naga segments. This involves deciphering aspects of fabrications, permutations, and recombination of codes embedded in the myths of origin:

Ritual basis of clan, status ranking and segmentation

Segment (Tribe)	Legendary basis	Derived solidarity of clan or phratry and office	Divisions/ confederacies
Ao	Lungterok.	Conical clan structure.	Chongli Mongsen/ Changki.
Anal	Also known as 'children of the hole'.	Muchal choko and Chanang musum (moiety) Khuruwng (headman) now elected, earlier reserved for Sunruwing clan of Chanang musum (moiety).	None.
Bujjur(Moyon)	Came out of <i>trii</i> (hole).	Office determined by leadership while coming out of <i>trii</i> (underworld). Sumphuw and Jungvain (moiety) assigned Irwung (headman) and Khurfu (ritual head) respectively.	None.
Chakesang	Khezakenoma dolmen.	Elders' posts or councilors taken up by founder clans of a village.	Chokre and Keza.
Chang	i) Emerged from a banyan tree. ii) Emerged from a hole.	Highest post Ungshedbou goes to Oung clan, an advanced form of conical clan structure.	A number of confederacies
Khiamniungan	Originated from a water hole.	Conical clan structure: Meya, Shio and Lam clans arranged in a hierarchical order according to emergence from a water source/hole.	None.
Lotha	Khezakenoma /six <i>kotsos</i> .	Tompaktserre, Izumon-tserre, Mipongsandre (Phratries) with a number of clans. Hierarchical councillorship, i.e., led by Tongti and Chochang. Earlier polity akin to Sumi Akekeao known as Ekhang before settling down.	Liye (north); Ndreng (south).

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Segment (Tribe)	Legendary basis	Derived solidarity of clan or phratry and office	Divisions/ confederacies
Maram	Makhel.	A politico-ritual head known as Sagong hereditary to Dekakuina phratry.	None.
Maring	Underworld existence and emergence through a hole.	Conical.	Ramyang and Atouyong. Another one: the Khoibo group is claiming a separate Tribe status.
Nocte	Assumes Ahom-Thai myth: Khunlong and Khunlai as progenitor of their Lowang (Angh in Konyak).	Higher articulations of myth beyond the clan ordering of offices.	Split up into Anghdoms.
Njonnyu (Rengma)	Khezakenoma.	Headman from founder lineages.	Katenenyu-Azonya Inseni Kotseneu.
Pirr (Sangtam)	Emerged from stones at Chungliyimti.	Thongru, Langtithongru, Chingru (Phratries) offices designated as in Ao system.	Eastern/ Western.
Phom	-do-	Pongobang, Numidangbang, Yachembang offices, as designated in Ao system.	A mixture of Ao, Chang and Konyak types.
Pochury	Dominated by Khezakenoma charter.	Diverse but approximates conical.	Different villages dominated by Meluri.

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Contd ...

Segment (Tribe)	Legendary basis	Derived solidarity of clan or phratry and office	Divisions/ confederacies
Sirti (Monsang)	Came out of trii.	Sippuwti and Reennheti (Moiety) offices determined by leadership while coming out of trii identical to Moyons.	None.
Sopvoma (Memi or Mao). Poumei is now a separate segment.	Makhel version, Morohovucho post goes to and descendants of Dzuli Mosiirro, ancestress impregnated by a cloud.	Morohovucho founder clan of a village.	Nuchiachorona Kapematana, Tolepema and Pfikicholona.
Sumi (Sema)	Khezakenoma.	Clan Chiefships of village and confederacies. No mythical reckoning for the chief.	Clan groups under Akekao-s.
Tarao	Came out of Khulpu ('Hole in the earth').	Katrimsa, Khulpuien and Chana (conical) offices determined by leadership while coming out of the hole.	None.
Tenyimia (core: Angami)	Khezakenoma/ Makhel.	Divided into Ke-pezoma and Ke-pepfuma.	Number of Confederacies.
Wancho (Konyak)	Originated near Tuensang.	Higher articulation beyond the clan ordering of offices.	Split into Anghdoms.
Wung (Tangkhum)	North-western group follows Makhel charter rest point to Thaugdut and an easterly direction of migration through an earth hole.	Almost three hundred clans, office determined by founder clans of village.	Rephei, Kemo Kathur.
Yimchungru	Originated at Khimuphu (a brine spring location).	Khi-unger, Jager and Khipur (conical) offices determined by emergence from a hole at Khimuphu.	Moguri (Makwari in Burma) seeks detachment.
Zeliangrong	Makhel charter.	Conical clan structure.	Zemi, Rongmei, Liangmei.

Dynamics of Polity Formation

The coexisting Naga groups had diverse symbolisms, which delineated the intrinsic attributes of each Naga segment. We can classify them into four typologies, which in turn belonged to two extreme polarities. The Angami terrace cultivators, on the one hand, and Konyak-Wancho-Nockte swidden agriculturists, on the other, exemplified these polar opposites. It is convenient to call the two models *Kemevohood* and *Anghdoms* respectively. The two polar types were essentially expansionists. Oscillating between these two polarities was the welter of Naga segments, usually referred to as conical clan types within which a group of segments approximating the Angami model are the Anal, Khamniungan, Rengma, Lotha, Moyon, Monsang, Maring, Zeliangrong, to name a few. Another cluster that developed a tendency to move up beyond the reciprocity stage comprised the Ao, Chang, Phom, Yimchungru and Tangkhul. The formerly non-sedentary *Akekaod* of the Sumis (Semās) exemplified the fourth typology. The Naga socio-political organization indicated a transient form of early state formation. We can discern certain clear-cut developments here. One was the process of demographic expansion and centralization in the areas where swidden agriculture was practised. In the earlier days this centralization meant intensified labour input as exemplified by the *Anghdoms*. On the other hand the Angamis with their terrace cultivation generated surplus, which facilitated emergence of confederacies to take over trade routes in the plains. Another crucial development was the social blockades that curbed potential territorial expansions of interior Naga segments. Consequently, degradation of ecology took place especially in the central part of present Nagaland. It also led to a polity centralization of sorts in this specific area. This process is best exemplified by the evolution of *Akekaod* of the Sumis.

The development that took place among Naga segments of the conical types was the emergence of large exogamous and acephalous clans, where 'big men' and village councils replaced the headmen or chiefs. Among some of them, the vertical structure or conical clan structure virtually collapsed as shown by the Mao, Angami, Moyon, Monsang and Anal polity forms.

Among these segments, either their 'original' clans or maximal lineages were consigned to non-entities or their elders were turned into mere ritual heads along with attendant economic disabilities, as exemplified by the *Mevo* (priest) among the Maos. In a curious way, the Mao segment believed that the wretched economic condition of their *Mevo* was a reversed reflection of their well-being or prosperity. An interesting evolution in the south was that of the Tangkhul *Awungva* (chief), who could prevent 'big men' from scaling up the social ladder or approximating his status.

In the great *Anghdoms* (Konyak-Wancho-Nocte) the process of redistribution ceased altogether, and various forms of dependence and exploitation existed side by side. Clientele and compulsory labour became a dominant feature of this typology. In this political arrangement the autonomous character of the individual village polities ceased to exist as they got subsumed within larger political units. The process of subordination of lesser *Anghs* and extension of political influence to peripheral areas brought about a tightly woven network of external alliances and polity consolidation. This tendency towards a centralized politico-economic organization can be discerned in the light of their control over trade and the efforts they made to keep trade routes open. It was the *Anghdom* that had the capacity to maintain a considerable circulation of wealth in the economy of a large area.¹⁴ The *Angh* had also the privilege of autocratic power over the life of his subjects; and being the upholder of morals and customs of his people, he had tremendous control over the life of a person. Anyone who defiled his or her customs was summarily executed. In the Chui *Anghdom*, the executioner was known as *kaoba*. He was from the Wangshu 'class' of the Liangha lineage. The precipice on the bank of the river Tapi was used for that purpose. In other *Anghdoms*, the *Ngo* (priest) functioned as executioner. He was usually the son of a *Ben* (commoner) woman who had accompanied an incoming newly wedded wife of the *Angh*.

Among the Angamis, Khonoma traders were reported to have collected cowrie shells from the Zemi areas where they were predominant. The trading entrepôts were Semker on the Mahor stream and Maibong (in present North Cachar hills). The latter became a flourishing salt market. These markets were of

paramount interest to Khonoma for internal trade inside Naga country. Their barter trade-cum-political control over Zemi area produced a profusion of 'big men' and attendant polity expansion. The trade also involved disposing off unwanted individuals. The Nagas outside the *Anghdoms* resorted to simple expedience of selling off habitual thieves or criminals to adjoining tribal segments, for they had no custom or moral sanction of executing their erstwhile kinsmen. Early British records are replete with reports of an indeterminate number of 'broken' men and 'runaways' in the 'Naga Hills', who were loosely defined as 'slaves'. A point to note is that in subsequent records Semker was described as a flourishing centre for slave trading, where there "was widespread slavery and [slaves were] sold to Bengali merchants, Monepores were sold for Rs. 3."¹⁵ The Nagas of the north considered a big Burmese gong or *Lah* as equivalent to one 'broken man' for exchange. But such exchange medium was not in plentiful supply as it involved costly items. Besides, for surplus generation it was not a very lucrative option. Slavery *per se*, was not an integral feature here, as it never entered a commodity-circuit. Moreover, the kind of enforced labour prevalent in an *Anghdom* or *Akekaodom* and voluntary cooperation among other typologies substituted the need or demand for 'slavery' as such in its archaic sense. In most cases, 'enslavement' eventually attained a ritual meaning in a kinship sense of the term. That is, acquisition of individuals for assimilation was more of a dominant feature than 'enslavement' in perpetuity. This aspect is clearly shown by the Sumi *Mughumi* system under their *Akekao*. In some other instances, however, an individual could virtually enter into bondage for non-repayment of debts.¹⁶

An important influence on the Naga polities was the method of utilizing their ecology. Another was the attendant stimulus provided by the Valley kingdoms. To illustrate these points, the Angamis, who inhabit an area at an altitude of 800–1200 metres with valley suitable for terrace cultivation, could generate considerable surplus, establish confederacies and forge alliances. Later, they embarked upon territorial expansion into the territories of the collapsed Dimasa-Kachari kingdom at Dimapur. That event soon thereafter allowed them the opportunity to directly link their politico-economic interest with the North Cachar hills and the adjoining areas that

supplied to Bengal a number of forest and animal products, viz., timber, precious wood (including sandal), cane, rubber, cotton, silk and elephant tusks. For effecting a firm hold over the plains the confederacies found it necessary to establish colonies. One such colony can be identified with the Nzoteri-Phenyu settlements. The Zemis settled in the area up to the river Kopili were also subjected to Khonoma's control. Beginning with the recorded history of the Valley kingdoms of the post-twelfth century, these two polar types seem to have successfully resisted the expansionist policies of the Chutiya, Ahom, Meitei, and Dimasa-Kachari kingdoms. They also managed to develop and maintain regional and long-distance trade with the Chutiyas, Burmans, Ahoms and Tibetans. We can compare the characteristics of the two models thus:

Characteristics of the two models	Anghdom	Kemevohood
Agricultural system		
Swidden	+	o
Terraced	-	
Mixed	o	
Labour cooperation		
Enforced	+	-
Voluntary	-	
Mixed	o	
Megalithic culture		
Dolmen	+	o
Menhir	-	
Mixed	o	
Polity		
Centralised	+	o
Conical	-	
Bigman	o	
Feasts of Merit (reciprocity)		
Restricted to specific clans	+	-
Unrestricted	-	
Absent	o	
Musket & gunpowder technology ¹⁷		
Controlled	+	
Not controlled	-	-
Production	o	
Control over inter polity trade		
Controlled	+	+

Note: +o represent presence/absence of particular characteristics

(i) *Kemevohood*

Of all the myths of origin, Makhel appears to have been the most ambitious in Naga claims. Although it effectively articulated a communality of Memai (Mao), Poumei, Maram, Thangal, Zeliangrong, Angami, Chakesang, Pochuri and Rengma — known as Tenyimia group along with a few Tangkhul villages of northwest Ukhrul District and some Sumi — it was extended to cover all the other Nagas. Along with this articulation, the *Morovocho* (head priest) of Makhremei village of the Mao Nagas controlled the agricultural calendar of the Angamis and their cognate segments. A dominant constituent of the Makhel charter was the Angami segment that was earlier a central power belonging to a particular typology of Naga social structure. Their settlements straddled the crucial trade route that emanated from the Somra tract of Burma to the plains. The most assertive among them was the Khonoma confederacy consisting of Khonoma, Sachema, Mezoma, Jotsoma, Kigwema and their offshoots, *viz.*, Thekrezenama and Sachnobama. Kohima village led another confederacy that comprised all the northern settlements. Viswema headed the Dzunokeheno-Zonnuo-Keyhonou group of villages. The villages nearer to the Dimapur plains collectively known as Chakroma consisting of Razephema, Chimukedima, Sitikima, Piphima, Medziphima, etc., were direct offshoots of both Khonoma and Kohima. East of the Viswema sub-segments and hemmed in by Chokre (Chakriima), Angami and Mao segments were the Kheza villages. They were considered 'demilitarized', *i.e.*, no headhunting could take place among the constituents and such constituents virtually came under the ritual control of Khezakenoma. It appears that the Chokre sub-segment was a boundary maintenance group and a cognate to Kheza.

We can discern two types of legitimation of their politico-ritual articulations, *viz.*, Makhel/Maikhel and Khezakenoma. They were no doubt 'charters' of the composite Tenyimia group and also of political extensions to Sumi and Lotha. The first had domination over the Angamis in the ritual sense of the term, and got even more assertive among segments of the Dzunokeheno Zonnuo-Keyhonou group. Collectively, the Angamis along with other members of the Tenyimia group

traced their origin from Tilmousa/Dzuli mosiuro, who, according to tradition, got impregnated by a passing cloud. The members of the Dzunokeheno-Zonnuo-Keyhonou while remaining a part of the greater Angami group continued to assert their peculiar attributes, which included a single genealogical structure and a compact territory. Their land tenure was also closely linked with the kinship structure and an overbearing importance was given to their ancestress, namely, Dzuli mosiuro. This aspect became crucial in the light of their dual inheritance system, despite prevalence of a patriarchal kinship system. In this arrangement, the *Kayie* ('estate') belonged to a particular lineage, and inheritance included both self-acquired property and ancestral property. The division of such properties was made during the lifetime of the parents. Though it ought to have been ideally based on patrilineal principle, in effect two women — i.e., the widow and the daughter — were included in the priority for choice of heirs in order of precedence. This division of property was part of a wider system of inheritance. Thus, a group of agnates (including women) were in possession of a *Kayie*. Provided that a woman with her children had taken up residence in her patrilineal *khel*, she and her children were entitled to a share of *Kayie*.

The other type of legitimation came from the Khezakenoma dolmen in the form of a political charter asserted by Khonoma and Kohima confederacies. From the oral tradition of those Angami segments one can also discern a deliberate and conscious articulation on the part of the confederacies to legitimize their expansionist designs by the expediency of maintaining real or ritual kinship with other segments, *viz.*, Lotha, Sumi, and Rengma. According to tradition the Nzongteri-Phenyu group of Njjonnyu (Rengma) migrated to the present settlements and eventually 'belonged' to a northern flank of Angami expansion in the Valley. Notably there was a close affinity between the Rengma and Angami segments. The influence of Angami polity was found among the Rengma villages of Tseminyu, Phensenyu, Sendenyu, Tsonkwnyu and Tsownyu. Their oral narrative mentioned that one Kselie of Khonoma established Phensenyu in its present political form; he was reputed to have made a round stone seat, presumably

in the fashion of the stone-sitting circle at Khonoma. It is highly suggestive of planting Khonoma's political form in Phensenyu. The Rengma village of Tsownyu village was partly inhabited by the Angamis. Moreover, the Kent clan of Tseminyu is identified with Tsutonami clan of Kohima and is closely akin to the Sopfuma clan of Maos. The Rengmas' politico-jural institution in its original form was centred on a clan warlord; that is, the authority of their village was called *Kokhugu* or *Kekhoung* (almost identical with the erstwhile *Ekhung* of the Lothas). It was an unstable kind of power structure. Although this headship was hereditary to a founder clan, any gross mishandling of affairs would deprive the clan of this right.¹⁸ The northern group of Rengma villages known as Iseni-Kotseneu had undergone admixtures with the Lothas despite the close affinity of their polity with that of the Angamis. In the erstwhile eastern Rengma villages, *viz.*, Meluri, Lephori and Sahonyu, 'big men' used to manage their political affairs. They had a religious functionary known as *Kachiwa/Kuzesha/Pensengo*. However, in Meluri the *Kachiwa* took over the *Morung* administration, and another functionary, *viz.*, *Tzuozari* was (and still is) the village priest. Their polity had evolved the following functionaries:

Clan	Office	Function
Tshori	Kachiwa/Tsuozari	<i>Morung</i> chief.
Nyuwri	Kachiwelo	Initiated cutting of jungle and setting it afire in <i>jhumming</i> .
Ngori	Atsuo-Kevitewa	First to harvest paddy.
Nyusori		
Nuthiri		
Phojiri	Ashipiwa	First sower of seed grain.

This politico-ritual conglomerate that came under the two charters, *i.e.*, Makel or Maiekhel and Khezakenoma dolmen, could be bracketed within what we can call the *Kemevohood*, as it had a direct relevance to acquisition of higher status as well as polity formation. The reference point here was the *Kemevo* (priest), who was always from the founder lineage and directed all public ceremonies. He was also the repository of genealogical charts and the history of the village. The very nature of his sacrosanctity made him immune to attacks

during war. While establishing a village, the *Kemevo* selected and built the first house after all required rituals were performed. A significant aspect was the veneration of the *Tehuba* (stone circle), which contained graves of the deceased *Kemevo* underneath. Public affairs were conducted from this sacred place. The *Khonoma* group had a *Kemevo* for conducting public rituals, and a lesser-placed *Zhevo* for conducting personal rituals such as the *mithun* sacrifice of 'big men'. On the occasion of a thanksgiving festival called *Terhunysi*, held for ten, thirteen and seven days in *Khonoma*, *Kohima* and *Viswema* villages respectively, the whole village contributed a portion of the crop to the *Kemevo* or *Zhevo* to remunerate him for his services. Over the years changes undoubtedly took place in their kinship structure. The two original *kelhu*-s or broad classification among the *Angamis* comprised the *Pezoma* and *Pepfuma*. It was a division supposedly determined by their emergence from a cave. The two *kelhu*-s of the *Angamis* used to be exogamous before, but now *thepfu* has become the real exogamous unit. That is, marriage within the same *thino* is an accepted fact not unlike the breakdown in *Ao*, *Chongli* and *Mongsen* exogamy principle. It means that now incest taboo covers only the same *thepfu* but not other *thepfu*-s of the same *thino*. Each *thepfu* has a number of *pfutsano*-s. In *Khonoma* village each *thepfu* occupies specific wards within a *thino* residential sector having one common gate. The *Merhuma thino* of *Khonoma* makes a good illustration:

Merhuma		...thino(Sector)	
Meyase	Lieayuse	Gwizatsu	...thepfu
Zetsuvi	Liegise	Dolie	... <i>Pfutsano</i>
Iralu	Khate	Chase	-do-
Sanyu	Sakhrie	Savino	-do-
Pulise	Terhuja	Meru	-do-
Kenieu	Thou	-	-do-
Khwukha			

The *Kenieu* and *Khwukha pfutsano*-s were reckoned as descendants of *Meyase*'s two uncles, and the *Kemevo* of *Khonoma* hailed from the *Khwukha pfutsano*. This was in keeping with the evolved principle of devolution of authority on

the youngest *pfutsano*. To clarify this point further, the Sanyu lineage adopted the Iralu lineage into their common *thepfu*. It is therefore not unusual for Sanyu lineage to give precedence to Iralu lineage in terms of seniority within the *thepfu*.¹⁹ Being a junior lineage in the Angami sense meant a higher status in terms of politico- ritual responsibility. The Chang Nagas also still follow this principle of inheritance devolving on the youngest son.

Among the Mao, their *Mevo* was — and still is — the custodian of the agricultural calendar besides being a ritual head of their village. Basically, an elderly person from a founder lineage was always the *Mevo* or *Morohvocho*. In the bigger villages, the pivotal *Morohvocho* who controlled both secular and ritual affairs had one or more secular headmen subordinate to him. The lesser-placed headman was called *Hodzu-movoh*, usually a 'big man'. The *Mevo* of the Kheza group could neither be killed in war nor be engaged in agricultural activities. Ideally the *Mevo* of Khezakenoma village was always from the Tseme clan. However this principle did not extend to other Kheza villages. It was mostly status holders that assumed the powers of the *Mevo* in those villages other than Khezakenoma. The title and principle behind the *Kemevo* status assumed importance when it became a reference point for 'big men' to acquire legitimacy. This status could be attained or approximated by giving a series of feasts of merit. Both the qualities of a 'big man' and a warrior of many hornbill feathers (a hornbill feather represented one enemy head taken) coincided in almost all the cases. Thereafter, the 'secular' *Kemevo* status thus acquired would bring the 'big man' not only enhanced status but ritual kinship with like secular *Kemevo* of other villages. The 'secular' *Kemevo* entered into *Chuza* (peace treaty) with other 'big men' of neighboring villages by sacrificing *mithuns*, pigs and buffaloes. Henceforth, it was taboo to perform headhunting amongst the participants of *Chuza*. In other words, no one dared to hunt for their heads for the simple reason that the combined wrath of a number of 'secular' *Kemevos* would descend upon such perpetrators. This mechanism facilitated the conditions for emergence of confederacies. It implied generation of surplus through trading and reciprocities based on *mithun* sacrifice. This typology

was marked by an attempt to repudiate the privileges of inherited social rank of a specific clan, *i.e.*, *Mevo* or *Kemevo*. This was done by the simple expediency of crippling economically or politically the 'ritual' *Mevo/Kemevo* and devolution of political authority on the assumed 'secular' *Kemevo* for contracting alliances outside a village territory and forming confederacies. It also facilitated expansion beyond their 'traditional' territories. The early states of the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys provided the neighbouring Naga segments with the necessary incentive to advance their polities further.

(ii) *Anghdom*

According to the tradition of the northern Nagas, *i.e.*, Nocte, Wancho, Konyak, Phom, Ao and Lotha, the river Molutz (literally, 'boiling water') or Punitzu (Brahmaputra) was regarded as the water of the Nagas as well as that of their neighbours. Apparently their polities approximated each other. The Nagas even had marital alliances with the Chutiya ruling chiefs who were interacting with the Mon-Khmer dynasties of Southeast Asia. There are now a number of written documents of local narratives about these relations. During this period, the Nagas collectively or as individual segments controlled two important trade routes, *i.e.*, the present Pangsau pass and the other emanating from the Burmese Naga settlement of Sinkaling Hkamti to connect with the former capital of the Ahom kings via Tobu (Chang-Konyak), Hakjang (Chang) and Tamlu (Phom) villages. The erstwhile Daflas, known locally as Nokranger, appear to have settled along the lower ranges of Ao territory.²⁰ Their autocratic polity under a chief was challenged by the confederacy of Longkhum and Waromong villages. The conflict was in essence a struggle between two forms of power: a council-run village polity and emergence of chieftainship on the fringes of Ao territory.²¹ The internecine feud that reportedly lasted from A.D. 860 to 1687 ended with the eviction of the Nokranger. It appears that the Nokrang elements sought protection from the nascent Ahom kingdom. The process of 'cleaning up' involved raids upto the banks of Punitzu over a long period of time. It reached a point of culmination during the reign of the Ahom ruler Gadadhar Singha (alias Supatpha)

during the third quarter of the 17th century. Local tradition refers to the Molunger alliance with Longkhum and clashes with the Ahoms during such raids. The Molungers, who were originally of a Shan-Thai group, known for their expertise in blacksmithy, were absorbed into the Ao segment since then.

The Nocte, Wancho and Konyak segments gave their ruling 'class' the prerogative in all their origin and migration traditions. The Nocte, despite counting themselves as offsprings of the union between the sky god's daughter and the spirit of the earth, preferred to give precedence to their rulers (*Lowangs*) based on the reckoning of their origin. The origin myths of the present *Lowangs* of Namsang, Borduria and Laptang ascribe their emergence to Khumbao, the first Nocte chief, who had two sons, *viz.*, Khunlung and Khunlai. This story linked them with the Ahoms. However, the Ahoms had their genealogies attached to the Hindu pantheon, *i.e.*, through Khenkham (the son of Indra), who was the 'progenitor' of Hkun-long and Hkhun-lai. When the Ahom state formation took place in the Brahmaputra valley, the *Lowangs* were not encapsulated within the same legitimating process of social formation. That legitimacy which could have come from the Brahmanical system belonged to a particular historical stage, and state formation, after all, had its own dynamics: it entailed requirements of a certain kind of environment including nature. Obviously, the *Lowangs* had yet to reach that stage.

The *Angh* (Konyak), *Lowang* (Nocte), *Wang* (Wancho), *Ongshedbou* (Chang), *Unger* (Ao) and *Chongpo* of Yimchungru represented the highest gradient of polity of the Nagas. Among them the ideal social organization was that of the *Anghdom*. The *Anghdom* was a reference model for translation of political and social behavior of a number of Naga tribes, *viz.*, Phom, Ao, Yimchungru and Chang. For want of an equivalent terminology, *Anghdom* — both the nomenclature and embodiment of the ideal social organization — is used, as it had ceased to redistribute, clearly indicating a polity different from mere chieftainship. The *Thendu* or tattooed group of Konyaks developed large *Anghdoms*, as illustrated by those of Mon, Chui, Sangnyu, Longwa and Borduria. This group was marked by a rigid social stratification and the *Angh* families sought the principal wives from among daughters of equivalent *Anghdoms*.

Moreover, extinct lines of *Angh* were replenished by importing individuals from friendly and like *Anghdoms*. As late as 1952, Longsam (a colony of Chanu) was given a *Wang* (Wancho *Angh*) by Niaunu to replenish an extinct line. This principle also held good for the Konyak *Anghdoms*. Originally, the *Wang* of Niaunu (Arunachal Pradesh) hailed from the *Anghdom* of Sangnyu (Mon District). Sangnyu seems to have expanded either by means of supplanting existing *Wang/Angh* or by establishing colonies.²² Expansion was also achieved by acquiring tributes from villages whose *Morungs* were controlled by second or third grade *Anghs*. The socio-cultural identity of a Konyak or a Wancho emanated from being a member of a specific *Morung*. It also operated as a sanction for the constituents to offer 'traditional' services in the form of labour and tribute. The *Anghdom* of Sangnyu is a good example of the tributary system that no doubt evolved over a long period of time (See table on page 144).

In the more developed *Anghdom* of Chui, a particular typology of prestige and system of legitimization was associated with the *Wangham*. It was the highest order of lineage superiority and was considered of 'royal blood'. Its members entered into matrimonial alliances with like 'royalties' of other *Anghdoms*. But for reasons of social solidarity they also took in wives from lesser placed clans or 'classes'. Consequently, their union with *Ben* ('commoner') lineage would produce *Wangra*, who was virtually debarred from taking up office of the *Angh*. In such a case, after a child was born, the mother took it to a *Ben's* house. On attaining eight to ten years of age, the child shifted to the *Angh's* house to assert his/her non-*Ben* status. The boy on attaining manhood would be heading one of the *Morungs*. In this *Anghdom*, the 'aristocracy' was divided into three sections, known as *Wangham* (akin to *Wangyem* of Mon), *Wangsha* and *Wangshu*. The first section comprised the offsprings of the union between the great *Anghs* and their wives from great *Anghdoms*. The *Wangsha* were offsprings of the union of *Anghs* with women of lower rank. *Wangshu* was the lowest ranking nobility but higher than commoners. They were descendants of *Wangshu* men. This 'class' was 'permanent' and could not be downgraded further. In other words, all descendants of *Wangshu* 'nobles' in all the succeeding

Anghdom of Sangnyu

Angh	Anghs from Sangnyu	Tributaries	Alliance	Forms of tribute
Angh Luhpong= Alih (wife from Shianghah Chinyu). Exchange brides with Pongchau Anghdom	Nyashia Niaunu (Niano) Longzang Pumau Pongchau	Ruka Wetting Longphong Zu (Vinyu?) Tizit Longkao Wanu Maihua Ngangting Zakko	Pongchau Langnyu Langsa Sangsa	Longzang, Ruka, Wetting, Nyashia, Longphong, Zakko, Ngangting, Sangsa and Tizit: Big fishes caught in community fishing; skins of game animals; bushels of paddy during Aoling festival; vegetables, three times a year; once a year a cup of rice collected from each and every household; Angh's paddy field maintained in all the villages. Chating, Lonkao, Wanu, Maihua and Bonia: Pigs killed in Angh's honour every year. A peahen presented every tenure of an Angh.

generations would remain Wangshu. The Wangsha and Wangshu grades of Chui Anghdom were assigned to offsprings of hypogamous marriage, and were designed for consolidation of power through the *morung* institution within the village of the Angh or of any of his tributaries. This arrangement became more specific, when sub-Anghs i.e., Wangsha or Wangshu controlled a number of *Morungs*.

The *Morungs* comprised a tightly knit system for the purpose of offering services to their Angh. It was at any rate not a strictly exogamous system but was more of a politico-administrative setup. It is apparent that the pressures mounted on them by the Ahoms invariably stimulated such a polity formation. According to their tradition there had been

endemic hostility between them from the 13th century till the 16th century, punctuated by mutual plunder-promenades and truces to keep their trade routes open. As in the case of the Chui Anghdom, the Tobu-Hakjang route was equally essential for the Ahoms. During the latter part of the 17th century, the Ahoms exchanged beads, cotton and ornaments with the Nagas for *gongs, daos* and spears. The coming of the British curbed further extension and development of the Anghdoms, which had evolved several generations earlier. A good illustration of an Anghdom's expansion is provided by Mon (the urban town adjacent to this village is also called Mon):

Anghdom of Mon

Hereditary Anghs	Lesser Anghs from Mon/subsidiaries	Exchange of bride	Tributes	Alliances
Yanliem	Pongkang	Chui	Longkai	Sheangha
	(Phungkong)	Sheangha	Leangnyu	Longwa
Chongwang	Tanai (Tanhai)	Longwa	Wanpoi	
	Wangla	Sangnyu	Tumai	
Longwang	Tiru		Pokton	
	Oting		Leponsanpo	
Taiwang	Longtem		Tangken	
	Lapa		Mokwak	
Yangwang			(Lumpang	
			Shianghah)	
Khaoba			Angh of	
			Mon receives	
Ato=Aluem (wife from Sheangha)			a tribute of	
			ten maunds	
Wangpong (present Angh)=Shensa (wife from Chui)			of rice per annum.	

From an evolutionary point of view, most of the domains of lesser Anghs were potential Anghdoms and upon attainment of such levels, the 'class' character of their Anghs was stressed so as to restrict others from moving up to usurp power. The erstwhile Tang Anghdom is a case in point. It is said that earlier it had risen to the strength of the present Anghdoms of Sangnyu, Sheangha, Mon and Chui. In fact, Tang's headhunting grounds comprised these settlements. It also had a number of

tributaries then, e.g., Sheangha and Longwa, to name just two prominent present-day *Anghdoms*. Eventually, these two had outstripped Tang and seceded. Longwa rose in strength as a large independent *Anghdom*. Presently Longwa receives tributes from six villages, *viz.*, Hoyat, Choilew, Longhe, Khonmoi, Longwi and Longwa Chingnyu. They all lie in Burma (Myanmar) beyond the administrative jurisdiction of the present Nagaland state. (Incidentally, the Indo-Burmese 'boundary line' runs right across the long house of Longwa's great *Angh*; nevertheless, the politico-jural writ of Longwa still holds across such imaginary lines).

A few more illustrations will highlight the fission and fusion process of their polity. The Wancho *Wang* (chief) of Ngosa was given the option of either accepting the 'overlordship' of Pongchau or perishing. The expected help of Ngosa's kinsmen from Ruka (in Mon area) was not forthcoming as war broke out. The *Wang* abdicated and fled. The victor took over Ngosa and renamed it Bonia. At the time of this takeover, a *Wang*, *Ngo* and other priests were sent over by Pongchau to Bonia. A 'blood brotherhood' was thus established between the two villages and intermarriage was prohibited. From the outset, the *Wang* of Bonia was not allowed to marry a *Wangcha*, so that there would not be any *Wangham* in the subsequent days. We are reminded here that *Wangcha* is the daughter of a *Wangham* born of a 'royal' mother. Of course, the *Wang* could marry a lesser-placed woman and so his sons would be *Wangsha*. It therefore followed that all the offsprings of *Wangsha* grade would become *Wangshu* in the coming generations. Pongchau thus made sure that Bonia could not challenge its authority in future. Henceforth, the Bonia *Wang* could not even think of exchanging brides with the great *Anghdoms* but considered himself independent anyhow. This principle seems to have been very consistent elsewhere. For instance, members of the *Wangshu* grade always ruled over Longkao and Maihua. Longkao being the recipient of a *Wang* earlier from Pumau still accepts the latter's overlordship. Both Pongchau and Pumau received their *Angh/Wang* from the great *Anghdom* of Sangnyu. To ensure a kind of political stasis the deputed 'overlords' were never allowed to marry a *Wangcha*.

Within the Konyak Tenkoh (non-tattooed) group, stratification was not so rigid. Its members belonged to either potential or broken *Angh*doms. It appears that in their villages a good number of 'fallen' *Angh* families were consigned to the *Ben* 'class'. Chowha (Towha) village with its kinship composition best exemplifies it thus:

Originally of Angh extraction	Other existing Ben clans
Chen Wanglem (of Chen village Angh clan)	Kaihilem
Wetorhu (Offsprings of Weto)	Lamlem
Yahorhu (Offsprings of Yaho)	Yanwalem
Pangnyei (Offsprings of Pangnyei)	Melulem
Moklaolem (Moklao clan)	Akanglem (from Anghpang village)

Apparently most of the *Ben* clans comprised former *Angh* families from other villages. This would explain the oscillation between *rhu* (offsprings) and *lem* (clans) in both the 'classes' *i.e.*, erstwhile *Anghs* and commoners. In most cases, they came from subsequently non-identifiable villages or perhaps they preferred to keep it that way. This submerged principle became a dominant feature in the peripheral areas of *Angh*doms, especially in the Tengkoh group of villages and beyond, *i.e.*, Phom, Ao, Chang and Yimchungru.

It becomes clear that the *Angh*dom had achieved a centralised political structure, based on a hereditary and hierarchical 'class' arrangement with its own brand of aristocratic ethos. Here administrators were appointed to run the *Morungs*. In this social form, kinship values became marginal, as the *morung* became essentially a politico-administrative institution rather than an exogamous clan recruiting point as among other Naga segments. The polity was marked by an absence of status validating feasts of merit and of redistribution by the great *Angh*. The *Angh* also had control over supralocal population through specific functionaries. A rigid stratification system insulated the *Angh* from the commoners. Within the structure there was a series of rankings, which were designed for politico-administrative functions. There was no way whereby hypergamy could allow an individual to scale up this 'class' hierarchy.

Extension of the *Angh* Model to other Segments

The politico-demographic composition of Tamlu village exemplifies Chui *Anghdom's* polity extension. Tamlu is now a part of the Phom segment comprising twenty-five villages belonging to a welter of sub-segments, *viz.*, groups of villages under Yaongyachem (Ao); Aokching (Chang); and Tamlu. It is clear from their oral tradition that Wanching, which was a subsidiary of Chui *Anghdom* deputed an *Angh* for the establishment of Tamlu. This implant formed the sector called the *Angh khel* comprising forty households. Other clans migrated to Tamlu from different places. As one moves away from Chui, one can see that fission and fusion process took place. The formation of Kanching village presents a good illustration. The two *khels*, namely Khanga ('those who came crossing the river Dikhu') and Ungpang ('*Angh khel*') were established by a number of clans coming from different places. Migrant clans from Tansa village, namely, Ailing ('foremost'), Munkhao, Oungh and Lokpanhu, settled the former, while the Ungpang *khel* was inhabited by the Niam, Lokpanhu and Noklang lineages from Yongya, Yongshi and Tansa villages respectively. Even though the inhabitants of Ungpang *khel* were considered to be of *Angh* class, the Ailing lineage had precedence over them in becoming *Unger (Angh)*, which was also a powerful post among Ao Chongli villages and was hereditary to Pongen clan. Thus, the Ailing clan at Kanching readily assimilated a number of Ao Pongen clansmen. The establishment of Ao Kangtsung (Kanching) is a good example of the nature of political alliances that emerged as a precondition for polity extension. Oral tradition holds that one Ungerdangba ('taker of Unger's head'), son of Rangtsung from Chubayimkum, which is now a part of the Ao village of Longsa, landed up in Merangkong and met a trader from Yachem, who informed Ungerdangba of a possible accommodation in Tansa village. Subsequently, in Tansa one Mukhao, who was the *Angh* then, assimilated Ungerdangba into his lineage. Later, the three sons of Ungerdangba (born of the union with a widow of Noklang clan) were made to establish Ao Kangtsung village. This type of politico-demographic manipulation facilitated cross-cultural communication.

The extension of Chui *Anghdom's* influence was marked by the relationship between Yongya (Phom) and Wanching

(Konyak). During *Monyu*, the spring festival of the Phoms, representatives of Wanching *Angh*, a satellite of Chui *Anghdom*, descended upon Yongya. They were feted and given customary presents. This ramified into extended politico-ritual alliances of Yongya with the villages of Tansa, Yongshi, Tamlu, Kanching and Merangkong (Ao). During such mutually friendly visits, there were exchanges of one *Dao* and one spear to reinforce their alliance; inevitably countless pigs were slaughtered. This alliance was known as *jongpang medem* ('warriors protecting each other with shields') or *Jongshi* ('peace pact' in Ao language). But the highest order of fraternity was the *mithun* alliance. Tradition goes that many years back the Konyak village of Longching had entered into such an alliance with Hakpang. On that occasion Longching made an offering of *Lah* (a brass gong worth one man in exchange), bushels of millet and two *mithuns* to Hakpang. An understanding followed this that "Till black hens turn into white, we shall be at peace." During their spring festivals, *i.e.*, Aoling (Konyak) and Mongnyu (Phom), reciprocal 'meat' was exchanged between their representatives. It appears that Hakpang emerged as the dominant power among the Phoms. The clans or lineages of this village became residential groups and their politico-jural positions got organised thus:

Morung	Khel	Clan	Lineages	Pangsa (councilor)
Longkang	Phenyu Khakyung Nokshung	Angbang	Oingnak Panglanghu Manchinghu Poklukhu Hukdok Langyilangbong Nyubaohu	2
Ongi	Hejan Yongjong Yinglongjong	Pongobang	Lungkhu Alunghu Opuhu	3
Molim	Hipu Lampang Longka	Numidangbang	Malanghu Manglanghu Saponghu Anganghu Longhu	5
Nokchen	Angbabu Hayanok Lingkang	Yachembang	Langlakpong	3

Among the Phoms the Anghbang clan appears to have been equated with the *Angh* of the Konyaks but here the 'class' character of the *Angh* was derived from an exogamous principle. In fact it was based on an enhanced form of conical clan structure. The ritual justification of Anghbang clan predominance comes from a myth, which runs like this:

In the beginning god gave to every clan a hen each of different colours, but to Anghbang clan only a black one. So they asked god, "Why only a black hen, creator?" Then god replied, "Ah, Anghbang clan, just so that you shall be the overlord of all other clans."

Food taboo is an essential part of a functional myth, so much so that even today, Anghbang womenfolk do not partake of the flesh of cows, of *mithuns* with a white mark on the forehead, catfish, barking deer, goats and white hens. It is said that Pongobang men were expert traders while Numidangbang was known for sooth-saying and Yachembang had priestly attributes. Surely, a degree of functional allocation of duties was getting institutionalized. (It is also true that these attributes are still attached to them today).

It becomes apparent that a great deal of admixtures among the Konyak, Chang, Phom and Ao segments had taken place. One may refer to Yaong village, which was infused with an Ao politico-jural structure but was generally considered to be a part of the Phom segment. In this village, the Okping clan was subdivided into Angh and Longkong lineages and reckoned themselves as synonymous with the Ao Imsonger lineage of Pongen and Jamir clans respectively. The Okping clan was graded higher than the Luni clan. This Luni clan consisted of three lineages, *viz*, Loji, Yimyaji and Sungdok (akin to Ao Ozukum lineage) and was considered to be an Ao Mongsen group that had gone over to Yaong quite some time earlier. The lineages of Loji and Yimyaji became exogamous, while Sungdok could enter into marital alliance with both of them. By this reckoning they could be classified as clansmen not by consanguinal relationship but with reference to their roles in the politico-jural set up of their village. A crucial aspect of their solidarity was that, as a composite Okping and Luni group of Phom segment, they definitely claimed descent from a composite Yangpir group

or forebears who had come away from Changsang and had crossed the river Yongpei from Chang lands.

Among the Aos, the Chongli group that dominated Langpangkong range adjoining the Chang, Phom and Konyak villages developed social forms that approximated their neighbours. This was also the case with the Chongli moiety in the villages of Ongpangkong, Asetkong and Changkikong ranges. Their politico-ritual positions were essentially based on conical clan type of structure. This typology subsumed the influence of *Angh* model within the not too significant office of *Unger*:

Office	Assigned to Clan	Meat portion	Duty
Unger	Pongener/ Yimsunger	Head	Council head
Tonglu	Longkhumer	Head, if a number of pigs were slaughtered	Deputy Unger
Tazungpur(4)	Junior lineages of above and Jamir clan	Hump	Executive members
Tokongpur	-do-	Neck	Supplied meat for feasts and sacrifices
Shosanglak/ Chidangundang	-do-	Stomach	Distribution of meat during festivals

In the Chongli dominated villages, while maintaining their councilor-run polity, the *Unger* appear to have resembled a hereditary chief. Although the office of *Unger* represented a kind of stratification system, it denoted more of prestige rather than power in its absolute sense of the term. Nonetheless, it did reflect at any rate an overflow of *Angh*dom influence.

We have noted that those Nagas living close to the plains controlled the trans-polity trade. The other Nagas in the interior, *viz.*, Chang, Yimchungru, Sangtam, Khamniungan, and Sumi evolved mechanisms to compensate for their inability to have direct trading in the plains. The Changs started using large brass gongs known as *lah* as exchange medium. The brine springs near Tuensang village and at Changsang produced just about enough salt to barter for goods from the plains via Ao and Phom traders. Apart from development of a kind of currency for trading, the restricted nature of long distance trading

of the interior Nagas precipitated their invasion of Ao territories. The Aos were incessantly attacked by the confederacy of Tuensang and separately by a combined force of Sumi *Akekao*s. The absence of a centralized polity among the Aos made them even more vulnerable.

The Changs could maintain their internal solidarity through their *Oungh* clan and develop confederacies. The *Oungh* was a priestly clan and was present in each and every Chang village. It is obvious that this clan was an extension of the *Angh* model but only as a dominant clan in Tuensang and Hakjang settlements. This linkage can be established on the basis of an oral tradition narrated by them. It speaks of the creation of Ounghphaysem settlement by two warlords, namely, Seang and Thongdi Yongpen of Oungh and Kuthemshi clans respectively. This village (located between Tobu and Nyenem) is deserted now, but it is said to have been established before Tuensang was founded from Changsang. Ounghphaysem went to war with Changsang over the right of possession of a barking deer killed in a chase. In the contest that ensued Changsang was worsted so as to force its settlers to abandon the place. Led by the Oungh clan they moved to the upper Konyak region and settled at Anghbang village (now deserted) near present Tobu about six *mudens* ago (one *muden* is roughly a hundred years). It is probably for this reason that a number of Wancho-Konyak *Anghs* point to the present Tuensang region as a source of their migration. Tuensang village broadly represented the Chang politico-jural structure as:

Clan	Lineage	Office	Duty
Oungh	Chonganshi Pongenshi Ongokshi Nogong	Ungshedbou	Washed headhunters' hands; acted as peace makers between villages on warpath; abstained from eating meat of stag, goat, cow and field rat.
Kangshu	Kosumchaba Sangtishi Tsadangyimpou Impou Hakiong	Kongtenbou	Village crier; his house was the administrative seat of councilors.

(contd. ...)

Jongpou	Sangpuokishi Okagshi	Kipungungbou	Broadcast first seeds of paddy.
Loumou	Tesou Aosakshi Aoyokmat Yachishi	Jempungnakkbou	Collected new crops from each household for enhancing prosperity.

The Yimchungru are neighbours of the Changs. Their *Khi-unger* clan approximates the *Oungh* clan but with a local reference. Their myth of origin from Khimuphu was presumably an articulation to retain a local character within the cultural belt. The Khimuphu, a cave in this case, was identified as their place of origin and first settlement as well. They too underwent a considerable demographic and cultural admixture with the Changs. Their ideal politico-jural structure emerged as follows:

Clans	Lineage	Office	Duty	Affinity
Khi-unger	Kongpo Kosenkhiunger Unger	Chongpo	Priest and Morung head	Pongen (Ao) Oungh (Chang) Angbang (Phom)
Jager	Jager Langpur (exists in Longkhum, Ao) Jongpujager (Jongpou of Chang)	Yangten-pou	Sowed the first seed, Sowed the first seed, clearance, started bridge making, worshipped spring.	Jamir (Ao) Jongpou (Chang) Numidangbang (Phom)
Khipur	Khipur Kissor Shunakpur (Found among Sumi and Sangtam segments)	none	none	Longkhumer (Ao)
Jankhi-unger	Dangmiang Jankhiung	none	none	Lemtur (Ao) Loumou (Chang)
Limch-unger	none	none	none	Tzudir (Ao)

Closely approximating Yimchungru typology is the development of Sangtam polity. The Sangtams probably comprised an early group of Chins that emerged in the secondary regrowth area suitable for swidden agriculture. They are akin to the Ao Mongsen moiety in their linguistic as well as polity characteristics. One cannot help but conclude that there is a close affinity of the Sangtams with the Yimchungru and northeast Tangkhuls known as *Luhutpa* ('Conical head gear wearers'). It appears that Chungliyimti region had been a place of confluence of diverse groups. We have noted earlier that the emergence from *Khul* is a basic characteristic of the origin myths of the southern Nagas. This model is progressively rendered into a megalithic cult as one moves further north. Nonetheless, the essential charter to maintain a conical clan structure is not lost. As one enters the realm of *Anghdoms* there is this articulation of a heavenly entry of the *Anghs*; or identification of Piyongkong mount in Phom area as a ladder to heaven. There is a faint trace of emergence of a higher polity among the Aos, which is embedded in the myth of the tiger (soothsayer's medium with God), *tia* (earthly soul of human kind) and man descending from heaven. From Chungliyimti southwards one could have expected a continuous stretch of identical politico-jural structures if not for the Sumi migrations that split them apart. This is testified by a Sangtam oral narration. Earlier they were known as *Tukomi* or Southern Sangtam and Western Sangtam till their recent amalgamation as a composite segment. It is said that during one of the British war expeditions, these two groups met in their Labour Corps camp, got together and started recounting their stories. Before that, the story about their earlier dispersal in the wake of Sumi migration was being recounted almost like a myth. There had been no headhunting among the western Sangtams as they considered themselves offshoots of their ancestral settlement at Perahiri, which was known to the Aos as *Lupenyimchen* ('old village on Jhumland regrowth'). In order to maintain goodwill with their Ao neighbours they entered into *Aksu* ('pig kill') peace pact with adjoining villages, such as the alliance Chari entered into with Longsa, Chuchuyimbang and Ao Mokokchung villages. Another type of alliance was *tinu jongfu* ('blood brotherhood') of the 'big men' of Chari and Chuchuyimbang. This involved sacrifice of thirty *mithun*-s in

all and was cemented by an exchange of exclusive clan names. These relations were buttressed by cohabitation of Ao and Sangtam households in the six *khels* of Chari village, *viz.*, Imsen (Christian *khel*, a latter day addition), Pongen (Thongru), Longkumer (Anar), Mangoterong (Mangoting), Aolenden (Ao), Aomepu (Ao). The Aos could retain their own *Sosang* (head councillor) heading their *Puto Menden* while *Runu-sosang* from Thongru clan became the Sangtam representative. The latter acquired the prerogative of convening the joint village council. The Aos in a peculiar way had acknowledged their Sangtam identity while retaining their own form of politico-jural structure.

(iii) *Akekaodom*

The Sumi, who were responsible for splitting up the Sangtams into western and south-eastern groups, were late entrants to the degraded secondary growth areas of central Nagaland. Delimited as they were by both ecological conditions as well as the resistance given by other sedentary social segments (*i.e.*, Ao, Angami, Lotha and Rengma), the Sumi developed a centralized polity under a clan warlord called the *Akekao*. It is generally assumed that sedentarisation triggers population growth and that correlated pressure on resources leads to centralization of a given polity. But in this case, their inherent migratory nature is indicated by the proliferation of new settlements; and such villages have households ranging anything from fifty to a few hundreds. An *Akekao* would lead these bandlike and rapid moving villages with an attached *mughumi* bound by a system of land tenure. In the olden days, if an individual ever sought refuge and called an *Akekao* his 'father' he was never turned away. Presentation of paddy, a spear and a *dao* was enough for him to be absorbed as a ritual kinsman of an *Akekao*. He would then become a part of a *mughumi*. Subsequently, after hard and diligent service rendered to his *Akekao*, he could earn the right to a wife after paying bride price. Furthermore, a tie of land tenure brought an individual all the rights attached to a consanguine member of the *Akekao*. In those days every member of the village including those non-*mughumi* were expected to give service of four to sixteen days in a year in the *Akekao's jhum* field. The surplus generated was confined

in the *Akekao's* granaries: But then, an *Akekao* was always considered to be the repository of the community's wealth and not a usurper. It becomes clear that the relationship between an *Akekao* and his *anulikesimi* ('dependents') was neither an archaic form of slavery nor a feudal prototype. The *Akekao* was a secular clan leader without any pretensions of a cosmological legitimacy of his standing. This model, in terms of polity formation, essentially formed a cluster of clan groups where most of the members were potential recruits into its kinship structure led by a dominant clan warleader designed for predatory war conditions. The *Akekao* managed his 'centralised' domain with the assistance of a council of nominated members called *Chochomi* or elders and his own 'kinsmen council,' the *Kekami*. The reference to centralization in this case is loosely defined, since they were yet to settle down as a sedentary polity. We are not at all suggesting that *Akekaodom* possessed a peasant-militia or manorial attributes in the manner that even Hutton²³ had referred to, though with great hesitancy. It is apparent that the *Akekao* can be equated with the Mizo Sailo chief. In this sense, an *Akekaodom* did not approximate a chiefdom. What is seen here is a specific characteristic of a non-sedentary group as it happened to a number of Naga segments at an earlier stage of their migration in search of fertile lands. For instance, the position of the Lotha *Ekhung* went to a member of founder clans or maximal lineages and became hereditary. The incumbent had the privilege of free labour of his villagers. But as the Lothas became sedentary, there was a transition from *Ekhung* to *Tongti* and *Chochang*, which were also powerful political entities amongst the Ao conical clan type of structure. Interestingly enough, the *Akekao* developed only in the Ao, Sangtam and Rengma areas where combined Sumi villages tried to break through to escape ecological depletion. A number of effective band-like and rapid moving *Akekaodom*s emerged in those areas. As late as the 1860s, twenty villages comprising anything between 50 and 300 households combined together and attacked Ao territory. However, in the southern settlements around the Angami and Chakesang areas they settled down to a sedentary and council-run political organization. One can see that in the Sumi villages of Lazami, Seromi and Satami there were simply no *Akekaos*. It is also noted that in Philimi and Rotomi

settlements free labour (either voluntary or enforced) was non-existent.

The Sumi migrations emanated from the direction of the area occupied by the extreme southern group of Mao Nagas that T.C. Hodson referred to as Koiraos.²⁴ As they moved northwards, the Sumis encountered a blockade formed by the large Angami villages. This probably dissuaded their intended westward migration. After their conflict with the Angamis near Swemi, they entered the Doyang (river) catchment area. A group that crossed over to the west bank settled down in predominantly Asumi clan villages of the Lazami group. The Sumi of this region evolved a polity similar to the Angami type. Meanwhile, the Yephotomi and Ayimi clans ascended the Tizu and Tita (rivers) catchments and underwent admixture with the Sangtams and 'Eastern' Rengmas after splitting them apart, as mentioned earlier. The Zhumomi, Awomi, Chisilimi and Kinimi clans positioned themselves at the centre and began to push the Ao villages northwards. But further north the dominant Ao villages of Longkhum, Longsa and Ungma checked them. Moreover, the expansion of the *Anghdom* in its various forms prevented further movements from the south. This in turn created a tremendous backlog of sorts in the area of the present Phek district so as to leave a group of villages without a dominant polity, *i.e.*, that of the present Pochury. For instance, the Matikhru village is a Tangkhul village but now forms a part of the Pochury segment. Perhaps it represents a dislocated part of the Ao Mongsen, Yimchungru, Sangtam and Luhutpa continuum. This means that with the appearance of *Akekaod* whatever institutional linkages they had earlier had probably disintegrated.

(iv) *The other conical groups of the South*

The brine springs that dotted the Mao and Tangkhul areas were the meeting places of all sorts of 'native' traders.²⁵ The traders from Khonoma, Jotsoma and Somra villages descended on this place. The salt that was crudely manufactured reached even the Ao villages in the north through a series of intermediaries. They used to call the salt brought up from the south *teretlong* ('bone-stone'). In spite of social dislocation, cultural forms

persisted to the extent that the Ao Mongsen women wear ornaments identical with those that Somra Tangkhul women use. Presumably these articles continued to move up along with the salt. Among the southern Nagas, the Tangkhul *Awungwa/Wungwa* was a hereditary position earmarked for the founding clans of villages. Apparently the Rephei group of villages dominated by Ukhrul was the most dominant among them. Of the thirty-two clans in Ukhrul itself, at least six clans could not acquire — or were deprived of — voting rights in the *Hangva* (council). It represents an extreme case of politico-ritual deprivation. At the tribal level, a council of representatives nominated by a group of *Awungva* called the *Longva* maintained an inter-village confederacy. In the earlier days, within this confederacy, the status of *Awungva* was unquestioned, as only they could become members of *Longva* and 'big men' were virtually excluded from this council. This was made possible by a ritual known as *marankasa*, a form of competition without resorting to war.²⁶ It involved the erection of five logs of wood with their branches carefully pollarded. Their front side bore caricatures of buffalo head, animal footprints, etc., which were either grooved or raised by chiselling. All the clans other than that of the *Awungva* were debarred from performing the *marankasa*. The *Awungva* had to feed the villagers till the monoliths were dragged out from the woods and erected. A fixed quota of animals was to be slaughtered, *viz.*, twelve buffaloes, one cow, ten pigs, five dogs along with an unspecified number of cocks. In order to perform this feast of merit an *Awungva* must have constructed for himself a *Longcheng shem* (similar to the 'secular' *Kemevo's* house) that was made of planks and had wooden shingles on the roof. The front of this house was adorned with long eaves (*Lengchengkui*). However, other rich men could build *Longcheng shem* along with a *sumkok* (long bed) about 25 feet long and 8–9 feet wide at one end and 6 feet at the other end, hewn out of a single tree trunk. Such 'big men' who could build the house and bed were entitled to be patrons of a *Lengnao* or *morung*.

South of the Tangkhuls are the *Khul* group of Nagas, namely, Moyon, Monsang, Anal, Tarao, Lamkang and Maring. They are located in and around the old trade route that connects Thaugdut of Burma with Cachar *via* Tamu and old

Cachar road in Manipur. They belong to the conical clan type except for an earlier instance of the Moyon segment that had achieved a chiefdom of sorts alongside the Moirang group of Manipuris. According to tradition this chiefdom emerged around the seventh century A.D. Their chief, one Kurkham Ngarii of Ngoru clan is said to have controlled twelve villages.

Conclusion

In this paper an attempt has been made to blend both diachronic and synchronic models to explain the causal factors responsible for generation of the central features of Naga socio-political typologies. In the process, the aim has been two-fold: (a) to decipher how polity formations took place in those 'archaic' entities as given in their oral traditions; (b) to suggest that origin myths form the central charters to which different Naga typologies and behaviors are attached. All told, this exercise is an effort towards finding a place for oral tradition in Social Sciences. Admittedly there is still a great deal more to be done in terms of refining the existing techniques of research.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Much of the data used in this paper is sourced from my fieldwork undertaken in the early 1980s in connection with my doctoral research. See C.L. Imchen, "Comparative Typology of Naga Socio-Political Systems" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1987). A part of this data was used in a paper entitled "Shared Symbols and Strategies For Cross-Cultural Communication: The Nagas" in Mrinal Miri (ed.), *Indian Horizons* (Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Vol. 48, No. 3, New Delhi, 2001), pp. 47-65.
2. The first part of the 20th century witnessed the publication of a series of monographs. The writers were mainly administrators and missionaries. The works of Mills and Hutton — especially those of the latter — were influenced by diffusionist paradigms. Both highlighted the similarities between the Naga and other cultures such as the Melanesian. Thus Naga culture was made to fit the anthropological metaphor of the 'primitives'. Primitive societies are allegorical representations of the past, as may be discerned from Hutton's work. See J.H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas* (Bombay: OUP, 1969), p. viii. Obviously based on that cultural assumption, the Nagas were also described as inept in high thinking (*ibid.*, p. 185). Their belief system had been represented as lacking a moral code: See J.P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas* (Bombay: OUP, 1926; Reprinted 1973), p. 215.

3. This pioneering scholar of African history has discussed this aspect in great detail. See Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985). See also idem, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*, H.M. Wright (translated) (Chicago and London: Aldine and Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965.)
4. See James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1980). Cf. E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (London, 1873). For some people myth may be 'false belief' or irrational. But it is important to realize that myth is a distinct form of thought for which scientific standards of 'truth' and 'falsehood' have no meaning. Myth makes no distinction between a subjective world of personal experience and the objective world that is deciphered through empiricism. Modern science makes such a distinction. That is why science cannot reproduce or reveal the richness of 'primitive' perceptions. Myths are unique in the sense that they stimulate human thought patterns and emotions that allow them to make sense of particular dimensions of their world, which cannot be usually explained away. For a fuller discussion, see David Maybury-Lewis, *The Millennium: Tribal Wisdom and the Modern World* (New York: Viking, 1992), pp. 175-202.
5. See Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion*, Collected Essays (Boston, 1948); Franz Boas, "Mythology and Folklore", in Franz Boas (ed.), *General Anthropology* (War Dept., Washington, 1948).
6. See Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology 1* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), specifically, Chapter XI: "The Structural Study of Myth". Levi-Strauss considered cultures as systems of communication, and developed models based on structural linguistics, information theory and cybernetics to interpret them. In structuralism scientific objectivity is achieved by analyzing a system's structure in the abstract. Levi-Strauss went to great lengths to substantiate his position that mathematical or scientific methods can be extended to Social Sciences. He maintained that such a methodological exercise already exists in the field of language, especially in structural linguistics. See, Claude Levi-Strauss in "Language and the Analysis of Social Laws" in Chapter III of *ibid.* He then insisted that myth is language, because myth has to be told in order to exist. It is also a language with the same structures that Saussure described as belonging to any language. See, Ferdinand De Saussure, *Course of General Linguistics* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959, W. Baskin [tr.], 1916; London: Peter Owen [tr.], 1960). Myth, like language, consists of both *langue* (i.e., language or grammar) and *parole* (i.e., speech or speaking parts which are recordable). In that sense, both the synchronic, ahistorical structure and the specific diachronic details co-exist within the structure. Levi-Strauss added a new element to Saussure's *langue* and *parole*, pointing out that *langue* belongs to what he called 'reversible time', and *parole* to 'non-reversible time.' It means that *parole*, as a specific instance or event, can only exist in linear time, which is unidirectional in the sense that one cannot turn the clock back; *langue*, on the other hand, can exist in the past, present, or future, since it is simply the structure itself. Levi-Strauss said that myth also exists on a third level, in addition to *langue* and *parole*, which also proves that myth is a language of its own, and not just a sub-set of language like

literary works. He identified that level in terms of the story that a myth tells. That particular story is unique, because it survives any and all translations. While poetry cannot be translated, or rephrased without changing some of its basic features, according to Levi-Strauss, a myth can be translated, rephrased, reduced, expanded or otherwise manipulated without compromising its elementary structure.

7. Enough has been said of headhunting mostly related to fertility cult and soul matter as part of the Naga cosmological order. The prerequisite of endemic rivalry for prestige is relevant to understand headhunting in the light of ritually 'fixed' statuses that marked the Naga structure. Their worldview gave room for structural dynamism; because headhunting or acquisition of *Alar* (an Ao Naga term loosely translated as slave) provided an avenue for the emergence of 'big men' to compensate lesser-placed individuals for their 'inherently' lower status. Among the Konyak, Wancho and Nocte, all headhunting raids were planned and centralised by the *Angh/Wang/Lowang*. All the heads were then stored in their houses. Among the other conical groups heads were hung on the branches of a specific tree, i.e., the *Erythrina Aborescens*. Notably only heads taken from villages at war could be hung on the tree. The victim's name, clan and village were verified before the head was ceremonially taken to the head-tree. Others were not considered ritually potent, especially the non-Naga heads: See J.H. Hutton, "The Divided and Decorated Heads as Trophies in Assam" in *Man*, Vol. 22, 1922. See also idem, "Head Hunting" in *Man in India*, Vol.4, 1930, p.207; J.P.Mills "The Effects of Ritual Upon Industries and Arts in the Naga Hills" in *Man*, September 1936, p. 132.

8. I owe this information to Dr. Visier Sanyu of Khonoma.

9. See L.R.N. Srivastava, *Among The Wanchos* (Calcutta, 1970), pp. 104-105.

10. J.H. Hutton (in *The Angami Nagas*, pp. 47-48) said in respect of the former: "...a number of graves of men long dead, including among them the heroes of almost legendary times, are found surrounded by one great wall banked up inside to a level top and furnished with a ring of large stones as a sitting-place opposite the *Kemevo's* ...may also be used as a coign of vantage in clan disputes.... The sitting place in front of the *Kemevo's* house is called "*tehuba*" and is used as a dancing place at festivals". The association of monoliths (menhirs or dolmens) with headhunting, feasts of merit, ancestor cult, lithic cultures, social prestige, social inequality and mixed 'racial' characteristics is described by J.H. Hutton in *Man*, 1927, pp. 61-62; idem, *Man In India*, X, pp. 214-15. Cf. Furer Haimendorf, *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, IX, pp. 149 ff.

11. In Longkhum, a village founded about fourteen hundred years ago, the 90 year-old Aoriba, who is also a renowned Ao Baptist Reverend, is the custodian of the Imchen clan's *zunmi*. Till today, the sacred fire is kept burning in someone's hearth to be transmitted quietly within the Imchen clan in the Chongli-Mongsen mixed village of Longkhum.

12. As late as 1872 the density of population in Kohima area was found to be 50 per square mile: See, J. Butler, "Rough Notes On The Angami Nagas and Their Language" in *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XIIIV, 1875.

13. The Chakesang segment formed by administrative notification offers a good example. The Chakesangs belong to three distinct groups, viz., the "Eastern Angamis" (See, J.H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*), Sangtams and

"Naked Rengmas" (See J.P. Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, London: Maxmillan, 1937). Solely for the purpose of administration they came to be known as a tribe. Recently the last group could break away as a separate Pochury segment after hard bargaining with the State. Nowadays it needs more than a native assertion to get their natural fission process recognized. The new nomenclature is an amalgamation of four social groups, *viz*, *Sapu* (Tangkhum), *Ruwu* (migrants from Burmese side), *Kechu* (Rengma) and *Kheuer* (a group that uses tattoo marks). The dominant villages coming under this segment are: Yisi and Akikho known for their salt production; Lalori, a village of potters. The Meluri village (of erstwhile 'naked' Rengma) and its adjacent township by the same name of course politically and linguistically dominate this new entity. In the case of the Ao Nagas, it is discreetly agreed that Mongsen is a submerged group among them. According to their oral tradition both Chongli and Mongsen sprang from six stones at Chungliyimti. But when their progenitors are named, the Mongsen group is given a 'piggyback' sense of origin. The Baptist missionary writer W.C. Smith, however, gave them six male ancestors and the Mongsen readily followed this line, at least till the early 1980s: See W.C. Smith, *The Ao Naga Tribe of Assam* (Mittal Publishers, Delhi, 1980), p. 49. During one Seminar, a responsible Mongsen man claimed that the Aos had six male ancestors, three for each of the moiety. The Chongli group expectedly threatened to excommunicate anyone tampering with such a venerable and sacred *Lungterok* tradition. Thus, the whole Ao area seethed for a long time. The Mongsen group is now organized into a body determined to find their 'roots' beyond Chungliyimti. But, of course, it does not make them less Ao than Chongli. Yet another fusion type is the "administrative tribe" best exemplified by the Phom tribe. Earlier it was a cluster of mixed villages in the Ahom-Naga border, which controlled a number of Ahom-Naga *Dwars*. They practically resisted and stood outside the Konyak *Anghdom-s* and Chang confederacies. The Phoms have an admixture of Ao political system represented in Yaong and Yachem villages, and Chang polity in Hakpang village, while Tamlu has a Konyak ward affiliated to the Konyak Baptist Church but administratively to the Phom tribe.

14. Regarding the currency prevalent that time, salt being an essential ingredient for household consumption was used as a form of currency for trading purposes. There were other barter forms as follows:

30 medium <i>Lah</i> (gong)	1 slave
1 big <i>Lah</i>	1 <i>mithun</i>
1 small <i>Lah</i>	1 cow
1 <i>Jabili</i>	1 day's wage
1 <i>mithun</i>	5 cows or a pair of ivory armlets
3 cows	5 conch shells
1 bamboo tube of salt (small)	1 <i>dao</i> or spearhead
1 packet of salt (1.5 kilograms)	5 baskets of paddy or one <i>dao</i>

Lah were large disks/gongs cast out of brass or its alloy, whereas the iron plates were designated as *Jabili*. Both were currencies in the northern block of Naga territory. In the south conch and cowrie shells were standard exchange medium.

15. E.A. Grange in *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, No 79. 1838-47, p. 452.
16. There was a crippling system of loan, debt, mortgage and sale among the Nagas. Rice was the main article for lending and borrowing with interest. Interests were cent percent per annum, and were collected at the end of a year. The minimum amount of rice loaned was six baskets and interest was calculated for three years as under:

Interest in first year	10 baskets
Interest in second year	20 baskets
Interest in third year	40 baskets

Interest on a loan of paddy-seed had to be paid before any other loan could be secured. The traditional method of recovery of non-repayment of loan was outright appropriation of land. Another system that prevailed in Tuensang area involved bondage of the debtor's children or even their grandchildren along with attachment of land.

17. The *Angh*doms and outlying areas of the Phoms and Changs developed an indigenous technique of making gunpowder and muskets. In the cold season of January and February, cold winds dry up the surface soil to dust. Perched atop their mountains are houses set on bamboo piles, which have urinals of bamboo platforms behind each such house. Down below these urinals the soil dries up with its saturated chemicals. This is scooped up by a scraper and boiled in water in huge iron troughs. Ashes of the bark of *rhus similiata* tree are also stirred in. As the water evaporates, the sediments thus collected produce two types of gunpowder: black and white. The powder is sold by a measure of half-kilogram enamel mug and each cupful costs Rupees Five.
18. See J.P. Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, pp. 138-139.
19. In the 1980s the *Kemevo*, Pfukolie Khwukha, represented the principle of *pezoma* usurpation of *pepfuma* prerogatives over politico-ritual authority as indicated in their tradition. It appears that the custom of allocating politico-ritual authority based on emergence from a cave was reversed in this case. Dr. Visier Sanyu has provided this data. Recently, Prof. Imdad Hussain has pointed out to me the continuing schism that still exists between the two social divisions of Khonoma in the form of modern day political articulations. See also J.H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, pp. 112-113.
20. J.P. Mills (in *The Ao Nagas*, p. 9) referred to a group of erstwhile Daflas (Nishis of present Arunachal Pradesh) visiting their ancestral place that was destroyed by Longkhum and her allies.
21. The oral tradition has been reproduced in the vernacular writings. See W. Chubanungba Ao, *Pentochipchip Ritsung* (Allahabad, 1964); the Waromong Village Council (ed.), *Nokranger and Nokrang* (Calcutta, 1993).
22. The Konyak and Wancho are of the same stock but are regarded as separate tribes in administrative parlance. It appears that a British official happened to take seriously a casual reply given by Wakching's *Angh* to his query of how they name themselves. Of course, as distinct from the blond English, *Khanyak* (*Kha*=hair, *Nyak*=black) seemed to be the most logical answer to the *Angh* and his people were recorded as Konyak henceforth.

23. See J.H. Hutton, *The Sema Nagas* (Bombay: OUP, Rep 1968), p. 148.
24. About the Maram and Mao segments, T.C. Hodson (in *The Naga Tribes of Manipur*, Delhi, 1974 reprint, p. 3) states: "...while they are often associated, they are in all probability as different *inter se* as any two Naga tribes in such close proximity can be." The former appears to be closer to the Zeliangrong. Though there is an affinity of the Koirao with the Mao and Maram segments, the Zeliangrong are undoubtedly closer to the Maram.
25. The brine springs in Mao area are linked to a local tradition, according to which an old woman named Shiromate passed urine and henceforth the Nagas got a plentiful supply of salt. As a token of gratitude, the elders of Mao villages wrapped up thirty packets of salt in plantain leaves and placed them in the brine springs as her share every year. These brine wells assumed a politico-ritual significance and made possible the establishment of large settlements. For instance, the Changsang mount lies behind Naokhu peak; and about one kilometer down its eastern slope is a brine spring, which certainly attracted settlers including the very 'ancient' kind. A little further away from Changsang lies a site known as Maksha, which has engravings on moraines. The designs vary from geometric to non-geometric ones, such as circles, criss-cross, concentric and tattoo signs. This Changsang site does not belong to a single culture. Here the ceramic technology reveals close similarity with Chungliyimti purported to be another place of origin. Recently, a Neolithic site has been identified at Chungliyimti (at a site 6000-7000 ft above sea-level). The stone artefacts consist of various shapes and sizes, which include stone bowls, pestles, grinding stones, hand axes, hammers, balls, querns, mullers, whorls, knives, scrapers, cores, flakes, terracotta and stone 'smoking' pipes. For details see, V.Nienu, *Highlander* (Kohima: Department of Art and Culture, March, 1974).
26. See Y.K. Shimray, "Tangkhu Language and Culture" in K.B. Singh (ed.), *An Introduction to Tribal Language and Culture of Manipur* (Imphal: Manipur State Kala Akademi, 1976), pp. 2-30.