

**INTERPRETING AO NAGA ORAL LITERATURE: A STUDY OF
SELECT FOLKSONGS, FOLKTALES AND PROVERBS**

(Thesis submitted to Nagaland University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English)

By

IMLIRENLA LONGKUMER

Registration No-572/2014

Under the supervision of

Dr. Lemtila Alinger



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND EDUCATION

NAGALAND UNIVERSITY, KOHIMA CAMPUS

MERIEMA, KOHIMA, NAGALAND- 797004

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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I, **Imlirenla Longkumer**, do hereby declare that the thesis entitled, *Interpreting Ao Naga Oral Literature: A Study of Select Folksongs, Folktales and Proverbs*, submitted for Doctorate of Philosophy in English is a bonafide research and that it has not been submitted either in full or part or previously formed the basis for the award of any degree on the same title

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This is to certify that the thesis entitled *Interpreting Ao Naga Oral Literature: A Study of Select Folksongs, Folktales and Proverbs* is a bonafide record of research work done by Ms. Imlirenla Longkumer, Regd No. 572/2014, Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus, Meriema during 2014-2021. Submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for award of Doctorate Degree in English, this thesis is the fruit of her original investigation conducted during the period of her research.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

1.1. Introduction

In any social set up, one cannot help but observe that regardless of progress or decadence of society, there are certain practices and principles which have evolved over the years and centre round any society. They form an integral part of their tradition and culture which are passed on by means of word of mouth (oral narration) or through other means. It consciously or unconsciously becomes a significant part of the people and their identity as an individual or a group. Life in the urban setting has become a mixture of different groups. However, there are still these traces of their culture in the lifestyle of those living in urban settlements, which is also true of those living in rural places. The state of Nagaland situated in the north eastern part of India is neither exclusive in this regard nor does it stand alone with a completely different development of the history and progress of its settlers which consist of different tribes with their own customs and traditions, having their own wave of migration patterns. However, it still cannot be denied that each tribe has its own independent practices which include their mores, traditions, beliefs and even their own system of administration. It is true that with the advent of Christianity and modern knowledge through education changes have occurred and many practices considered 'savage' have been abolished; still, this chapter tries to highlight the traditions and customs of the Ao Nagas as was practiced in the past and their importance in the everyday lives of the tribe.

1.1.1. The Nagas

In her book *A Pilgrimage to the Nagas* Milada Ganguli writes that India being a 'fusion' of various races, the original inhabitants is unknown, however, the tribal population in 'modern India' is accepted as the descendant of the original settlers. She further divides the tribal population into three broad categories based on their regional distribution- the tribes living in the north and north-eastern zone covering the sub-Himalayan region and the hill and mountain ranges of north-eastern India; the central zone occupying the central belt of the older hills and plateaus between the Indo-Gangetic Plains to the north and Peninsular India to the south; and finally the southern zone consisting of tribes scattered over the extreme corners of south-western India, concentrated in the southernmost part of the Western Ghats (1).

The Nagas live in the north-eastern part of the Indian subcontinent, between the valley of the Brahmaputra River and neighboring Myanmar. The eastern boundary is marked by the Patkai range; to the west the plains of Assam, to the north lay Arunachal Pradesh and Assam; and Manipur to the south. Historians and scholars trace the origin of the Nagas to the Mongoloids, though it is not yet ascertained since there is no specific chronicle of migration from the oral narratives of the Nagas themselves. Ganguli further adds,

The origin of the Naga race is veiled in obscurity. Most probably they migrated towards their present homes from different directions across the mountains, possibly the overland route or tracks extensively used by the Chinese traders and embassies between China and India and from China to Upper Burma and Assam (6).

In *The Nagas with the Three Great Nations* Kibangwar Jamir also writes that the Nagas have their own ways of preserving their history from generation to generation through folklores and oral storytelling; this oral history of all the Naga tribes point to the South-east, East and North-east of their present country as the place from where they come from(1).

Nagas settled permanently preserving their culture when they found suitable land for cultivation. They established their own sovereign villages which were self-sufficient by means of cultivation, hunting and fishing with their own customary laws and tradition. The Naga tribes have different languages and though they do have similar cultural practices and traditions. The Nagas practised head-hunting and were hostile to one another which led to quarrels and constant head-hunting battles between them. However, with constant subduing of raids by the British Government and the consistent work of the American missionaries to civilize the tribes through the spread of Christianity, the Nagas gradually settled down to a peaceful life of cultivation and trade, leaving aside some of their old customs while the oral tradition continued to inform the younger generations.

1.2. The Ao Nagas

The Nagas have sixteen major tribes and other sub tribes with each tribe having its own distinct dialect, one of the major tribes being the Ao Nagas on the north-eastern part of Assam. On the north-west it extends to the plains of the Brahmaputra valley, where it touches the district of Sibsagar; the Lothas and Semas form the southern boundary while on the east and north are the lands of various Naga tribes, collectively called "Miri" by the Aos. The whole of Ao territory consists of a mass of hills; there are no level stretches, with deep valleys in between the layers of

hill after hill and ridge after ridge (W.C. Smith 1). The villages of the Ao Nagas, which is also true of majority of the other Naga tribes, are established on hill tops so as to have a better view of the ridges and be aware of the attacks of the enemies. Unless there is involvement of some unavoidable reasons, once a village has been set up, it is with the aim of permanent settlement without shifting to other sites or areas (L. Sosang Jamir 2).

1.2.1. Origin Story of the Ao Nagas and their Clans

The Ao-Nagas give much importance to the tradition of oral narration not because it is an important part of their culture but because it carries along with it their very history. The history and origin of the the Ao-Nagas in the oral tradition also has two major opinions among the two major phratries, the Jungli and the Mongsen.

The Jungli Version:

According to the tradition of the Chungli (or Jungli) phratry, the Ao-Nagas originated from the *Longterok*; the literal meaning of which is “six progenitors” who came out of the six stones at a place called the Longterok, that lay on top of a spur on the right bank of the Dikhu, opposite of Mokokchung village, which is about 20 kms from Mokokchung town. They first formed the Chungliyimti village near this place, where they settled and stayed for a considerable period of time. Presently, Chungliyimti is occupied by the Sangtam Nagas under the Tuensang District of Nagaland. Of the six progenitors, who burst out of the six stones, three were male and three female belonging to three different clans. The first to emerge out of the stone was named *Tongpok* of the *Pongen* clan who married *Elongshi* from the *Jami* clan; the second person to come out was *Longpok* of the *Longkum* clan who married *Lungkupokla* from the *Pongen* clan; *Longchakrep* was the third to emerge and he was

the progenitor of the *Jamir* clan, he married *Yongmenzala* from the *Longkum* clan (Purtongzuk Longchar 43-46). The three pairs got married which eventually led to the emergence of the three main clans of the Ao Nagas. They first settled at *Chungliyimti* with which the social life of the Ao Nagas began. Gradually with the increase in population, the Aos started migrating to different places where they settled forming individual villages. The migration and formation of villages has resulted in the establishment of more than sixty villages located in six different ranges of the Ao Naga country (Jamir 1-2). The total number of villages has increased today.

The history of the *Ozukum* clan as oral tradition narrates traces to *Longkongla* the only daughter and the youngest among *Tongpok's* children. It is said that when she was weaving, a hornbill flew over her head; she wanted the hornbill's feather when suddenly a quill fell down on her. She tucked it into her skirt and became pregnant by it. She named the child born to her *Pongtangdi*. Another opinion was that she kept the quill inside the round conical basket, which later turned into stone. She threw away the stone at the *Mangkoturong*, a place where trophies were hung on the branches of trees. The stone evolved into a boy who cried throughout the night; the next morning no one was able to coax him except for *Longkongla* who named him *Songmaket* which can be construed as "without blemish" (in the Jungli dialect *Song* means 'rust' while *maket* means 'clean').

The young boy grew up wise and handsome loved by the maidens of the village and invoking jealousy and resentment of the men. In the schemes to target *Songmaket* his third son *Pongya* was killed by enemies in battle. The dead body was later on found guarded by a group of hornbills on the banks of the *Tzula* (Dikhu River). After six days the hornbills buried the dead body inside the sands and went away. This incident was a confirmation for the Chungliyimti villagers that *Songmaket*

was really the son of the hornbills and the public recognition of the *Ozukum* clan became clearer after the funeral service observed by the hornbills (Longchar 46-48)

The Mongsen Version:

The Ao Mongsen Phratry comprises of three major clans: the *Longchar*, the *Walling* and the *Imchen*. Interestingly these clans have a migration pattern which later on culminates at Jungliyimti village together with the other clans belonging to both the Mongsen and Jungli phratrics, and form the Ao-Naga settlements expanding over six ranges as they stand today - the *Ongpangkong*, *Langpangkong*, *Asetkong*, *Jangpetkong*, *Japukong* and *Tsürangkong* ranges respectively.

In his book *Historical Development of the Ao Nagas in Nagaland* Dr. Purtongzuk Longchar writes,

The pedigree of the *Longchar* clan who migrated from beyond the Myanmar (*Meditakong*) undivided land as told by our traditional history was named *Wazang*, who lived in Somra village. His wife's name was *Ongshipenla* the daughter of *Mangasang* (*Mangachang*) of the *Walling* clan...it is true that Naga nomads lived in different places at Myanmar for about a century...they finally reached the *Phokhungri* village in Phek district where they stayed for some years...the people speak a language quite similar to the Ao Mongsen language even today. The Ao Mongsen group has a traditional tale which mentions that a group of the Nagas stayed at *Phokhungri* for a long time...from there they migrated to *Atong Lemjem* (*Khezakenoma*), the historical place from where all the Nagas dispersed. However, there are two opinions regarding the dispersal of the Ao Naga Longchar clan (54-55).

In Chungliyimti when the Medemsanger generation had formed the council for the first time by the six major clans, *Longmetang* was the representative from the *Walling* clan. His wife was *Longpangrenla* (ibid 65). Another clan of the Ao-Naga Mongsen group is the Imchen clan. ‘The Imchen clan also migrated from the south east Asia, many years ago. Only a few names of their ancestors are remembered and those are: Tsungremkocha, Tsunglem, Tsungremtsung, Tsungremchang and Watikocha. They lived at various places in the south-east but when other Nagas settled at Chungliyimti, Tsungremchang (Nungtener) also settled at Chungliyimti. He was one of the founding members of the village and the name of the Imchen clan originated from him. Impamezo was the name of his wife’ (ibid 67).

‘The fountain-head of everything in Ao folklore is the belief that the ancestors of the Aos emerged at the Lungterok... the Ao myth records that of the six stones, three were males named Longpok, Tongpok and Longjakrep and the other three were females named Longkakpokla, Yongmenala and Elongse’ (Ao 1). The emergence of the six clans at Jungliyimti led to settlement in the area, but slowly the populace began to spread out to the adjoining areas and establishing their own unique form of administration.

1.2.2. Village Administration of the Ao Nagas

The Jungliyimti village, according to oral tradition was like a semi city where more than twenty five hundred houses with nearly twenty thousand people had settled. It had seven Ariju which were divided between two khels, upper and lower. The village was controlled by a system of strong administration with five cycles known as *Sanger* or *Putu*. The word *Sanger* bears three kinds of meanings; the *Yim Sanger* meaning the people of that particular village; the *Kidong Sanger* meaning the

lineage of a male from a certain progenitor; and *Putu Sanger* which means a generation, mass of people, living in an age at a certain period of time (L.S. Jamir 78).

Each generation of councilors takes the name of the cycle coming after that of the successors. The cycle of the *Sanger* started from the *Mejensanger* (the rulers never break away from an agreement and the people of this period were truthful) The other three *Sanger(s)* are the *Medemsanger* (united in purpose and in decision making, the rulers were never uneven but in one principle), the *Rionsanger* (this period of time saw no chances for tranquility or calm for the people, the news was all about the wars of men and with wild animals), the *Kosanger* (in this period they were compelled to ring the wild animals every now and then) and ended in the *Mopungsanger* (in this generation news and rumours spread like the wind, the village government had no stability and firmness and the character of the people was beyond control). The duration of a *Sanger* is 30 years and is known as *Atsung* which means en masse replacement at a time. Now the *Sanger* of the villages are not found all at the same time, for the *Sanger* of a village is changed according to the time when a particular village is founded and so the Tatar Menden customs also vary in different villages (ibid78-79).

In the present day, each Ao-Naga village is independent within its jurisdiction. Every Ao-Naga village is governed by a ruling body called the Putu Menden (Jungli) or Samen Menchen (Mongsen). This governing body consists of a group of people that are selected from the villagers representing all the founding clans of the village. Each founder clan selects from its own clan senior and qualified men capable of running the village administration; with a good knowledge of Ao-Naga customary laws and practices as their representatives. These members exercise legislative, executive and judicial powers of the village (L.S. Jamir 2).

1.2. 3. The Arju and Tsüki

In the Ao Naga society, a learning institution exists called the 'Arju'. It means to 'fight with the enemy'. It is an ancient institution where the young men of the village go and prepare themselves with all necessary qualifications related to their own self defense. Generally, an Arju is first built by the people of a newly established village at the main entrance of the village gate inside the stockade. In the beginning at Chungliyimti, the population was less so there was just one Arju called the Sendenriju. All the members of the three clans constructed this Arju and as a custom they composed a song to enshrine their views

Longtroko poker;

Bochi asem sangria;

Lima tasen mesemdena yur;

Chungliyimti ali tema pang nung;

Sendenriju yangerkone.

With the emergence at Longtrok,

The sons of three clans,

After founding a new site

At Chungliyimti land,

Was the Sendenriju erected (N. T. Jamir 40).

Gradually, as the population in the village increased, the Arju could not accommodate the entire young men of the village, so they started constructing their own Arju for their own clan boys. Thus, besides the Sendenriju the following Arjus were constructed namely Lemturiju, Ajenriju, Nungdangriju, Pemyuriju and Chipangriju. In Jungli, Mongsen and Changki the guardhouse was referred to only as Arju (N. T. Jamir 41). The girls also had their own dormitory divided according to clan division called Tsüki. An unmarried woman was put in charge of the girls' dormitories and it is here that they learned different chores as well as to be independent. Oral story telling was passed on by word of mouth in these dormitories besides the handing down of learned knowledge from the older generation to the younger ones.

1.2.4. Arju and Tsüki as Learning Institutions

Every winter, the eldest zünga (age group) of boys would be ready to enter into Arju. Six boys would be selected on the basis of seniority in age from the seniormost batch and no one, unless an invalid, was exempted. A zünga is a phase which is compulsory for all able-bodied boys to go through without which one cannot be inducted into the Putu Menden or Samen Menchen, here "Putu" is Jungli and "Samen" is Mongsen.

The first Arju established at Chungliyimti had been the Sendenriju and its objective had been to guard the village and to impart training to the young boys to make them fit for any eventuality. There was not much to be taught formally by a teacher but each boy learned through hands on experience during the tenure of six years. The whole process of absorbing good or bad influences is considered part of a boy's development into manhood. During the six years of service, boys imbibed

discipline, work culture, the virtue of honesty and other arts and manners. Weapons and other implements were made in winter. The fancier works like making of fishing implements and bird traps was done in spring season. Cutting and splitting of bamboos was done in summer and the collection of materials for making various types of implements during autumn (N. T. Jamir 42-43).

We can observe that for the Ao Nagas the process of learning in a more extensive way begins from the Arju. There are other forms of passing the oral tradition but this is another mode of transmission. In civic life an Ao undergoes four stages of life in the Arju according to increase in his age and each of the four stages are *Süngpu*, *Tenapang/Tzuyir*, *Sangremzen Arichu-In or Juzen*. Every three years, six boys from each clan are inducted into the first stage which is the *Süngpu* stage as *Süngpur* in the *Arju*. Since these boys are selected from each clan based on their seniority, boys from bigger clans with high number of boys get their turn only when they attain 14 or 15 years, while those from smaller clans enter when they are as young as 12 or 13 years of age. One age group is formed by persons born within the period of three years called as *yanga* (M) or *zünga* (J) (L. S. Jamir 28-29). In his book *The Ao Nagas*, J. P. Mills has written about the numerical difference in the stages of the age-group systems in the Changki, Chongli (J) and Mongsen systems with Changki organization having five stages and the latter two having four stages each (177-79).

In the book *Naga Society and Culture*, N. T. Jamir and A. Lanunungsang writes that there are six stages in the Arju. The first is the *Süngpur* (J) or *Tzüir* (M). ‘*Süngpur*’ means, ‘wood carrier or server’ and the term ‘*Tzüir*’ stands for ‘pouring water’. The second stage is *Tenapang* which means blooming age who are ready to get married. The third stage is the *Sütsüng*, the middle class group, who attains the

status of seniors and only works designated assignments. The fourth stage is called *Salang* who are exempted from hard work and punishment but are bound by a set of rules. They train up juniors. The fifth stage is the *Senyin* who are the financial advisers and holders. The last category is the *Jozen or Ajozen* whose members are called *Arjuchanger*. Their main duty is maintaining the Arju system and assignment of duties (84-87).

The Tsüki functioned as a dormitory for the girls. It was a learning institution for the girls the same way as Arju is for the boys. Unlike the boys' Arju, the zünga system for the girls was not too rigid, although there existed a system of age group which is prevalent even today. Young girls became part of the Tsüki after attaining a certain age and joins after getting permission from the person in charge of the dorm called the *Tsükibutsüla*. The function of the Tsüki is given clearly as follows:

‘(i) To train Tsükir (members) into womanhood. (ii) To strictly discipline them to maintain the dignity of a woman regarding family norms, socio-cultural activities, and proper placement in society. (iii) To educate members on dignity of labor....(iv) To initiate the process of courtship and partners bridging the gap between parents and (v) To often act as the meeting place for un-married boys and girls...(102).

Thus it can be seen that Arju and Tsüki both play a very important role in the lives of young girls and boys as they grow into adulthood. The necessary training to survive on their own as they venture out from the confines of the Arju or the Tsüki to carry on with their lives responsibly through the skills imparted to them play a pivotal role for both men and women. The importance of the Arju for the Ao Nagas is seen in the way the system of Arju has been incorporated and organized. Arju and Tsüki

served as the best instructional institutions since time immemorial, however, in today's age their existence is made aware only by the institutional name.

1.2.5. Cultures of Learning: Folk life and Material Culture

Cultural, social and economic setting of any population is greatly influenced by the prevailing topography of the region, the same way the Ao Nagas gradually scattered and reached their present native domicile. They gradually settled embracing the traditional farming system as well as other sources of occupation like hunting and fishing. The Ao Naga family structure consisted of the father, mother and children who grouped together to form the household. There are different factors that form the structure of the Ao-Naga social order which includes the laws and customs, marriage, religious beliefs and practices, the family, dresses and ornaments, festivals, symbols manifest in the craftworks or tattoos, etc.

The Ao Naga society is patrilineal in nature where the father is the head of the family and the ancestral property is owned jointly by the members of the clan, and cannot be sold by any individual. The father is the sole owner of the self acquired property (N.T. Jamir 75). Among the Aos, marriage within the same clan is strictly prohibited and they follow monogamy system of marriage. In his book, *Ao Naga Customary Laws and Practices*, L Sosang Jamir writes that endogamy, bigamy or marriage between a man or woman after deserting the wife or the husband are void marriages. A marriage is valid when a boy and a girl agree to it according to existing local customs and usages. However remarriage between a widow and a widower is also valid (39). A married person may also marry another woman if he so desires but only after divorcing the first wife and is rare in Ao Naga society because there are not many who condone divorce.

In W. C Smith's *The Ao Naga Tribe of Assam* he writes about the ornaments of the Ao Nagas of both genders. Clothes according to Smith in the early days were not deemed as necessary as it was 'for a baby to have some ornaments from the very first.' Men wore fresh cotton or other such articles on the ear lobes. Also, some of the men having won recognition in the battle field have a small boar's tusk dangling from the lobe. A necklace of four wild boars' tusks is worn by men. Men also wore armlets or wristlets. In addition to all these more ornaments were donned on celebrations and festivals. The women also have their share of finery, where two large holes were made for the ears to accommodate enormous spirals of coiled brass wire which passed through the ears and held against the temple by another braided cord of hair reaching over the head. There are several kinds of neck ornaments worn by the women with different colours of which white and red are common, some women also wear bracelets of heavy brass or iron (22-24).

The Ao Naga men do not tattoo but the women are tattooed on the face, breast, arms, neck and legs. In each village there is generally only one woman who does this work and this privilege is passed down from mother to daughter. The girls are generally tattooed before puberty where they are from the age group of ten to fourteen years. Another characteristic of tattooing is that the patterns marked on the women differ according to the Jungli and the Mongsen clans. 'In the main, the Chongli women have broader tattoo marks than those of the Mongsen moiety' (ibid 20-21).

In the early days the Ao Nagas celebrated different festivals including Moatsü and Tsüngremmong which are two festivals which are still celebrated today. It was celebrated according to convenience and seasons in the past. Moatsü is called the festival of blessing and is the main festival of the Aos celebrated during the spring season. It invokes blessing upon new grain in the field and also protection of new

crops from other calamities. Tsüngremmong is known as thanksgiving festival. It is a pre-harvest ceremony. Its main objective is to offer prayer for good harvest and good crops from the cultivated field (Jamir and lanunungsang 128, 139). All these define the folk culture of the social order which also includes folktales and folksongs, proverbs, riddles, dances and so on becoming an integral part of any society that depends heavily on oral tradition.

1.2.6. Significance of Oral Tradition

Folklore, according to the Oxford Dictionary of English is defined as “the traditional beliefs, customs and stories of a community passed through the generations by word of mouth.” The folklore and culture of the Ao Nagas centre on the oral tradition. Songs, tales, myths, beliefs, proverbs, etc., have formed a significant part of the survival of the old traditional culture itself. Literature in the written form for the Ao Nagas can be traced to the advent of Christianity and the early missionaries to the land in the nineteenth century who started the formal school since 1879 in the Ao Naga village of Molungyimsen. It was followed by the establishment of a small printing press in 1883 which aimed at publishing school textbooks and to aid in the translation of Christian literature from its headquarters at Impur town (Jamir 334). In his book *Aoo Kaketkeno Lipok* written by I. Ben Wati which traces the early literature of the Ao Nagas, he writes that the earliest place of learning was the village school in 1878 for the Ao Nagas. The first writing in Ao was published in 1887 by Mrs. Clark titled *Ao Primer* (20). The introduction of Education brought about many positive changes —age old practices like head-hunting, etc., considered honorable started losing importance and ultimately ceased to exist.

The Ao-Nagas today are caught in a transition between the past, the present and the future embracing all aspects of their culture, here culture being implied in a broader sense of the term. The traces of the past linger in the oral vessels that exist in the villages or in the memory of an older generation living in an urban surrounding; they are in turn challenged to suffer total annihilation from the present fast paced reality of a technological shift which will in turn affect the future identity of the Ao-Nagas.

1.3. Review of Literature

Temsula Ao's *The Ao Naga Oral Tradition (1999)* is a good source when it comes to reference with regard to Ao Naga society, culture and belief system. It is a compact book on the folklore and folklife of the Ao Nagas including the basic introduction to the language in terms of time, numerals, weights and measures. The book also has oral narratives like myths and tales. There are transformation tales, animal tales, supernatural tales and heroine oriented tales. There is also mention and translation of Ao Naga folksongs. In this paper the scholar will also be introducing the culture and society of the Ao Nagas but only as a brief introduction. The bulk of the study will specifically focus on interpreting Ao Naga folksongs, folktales and proverbs as important part of oral literature.

Aoo Kaketkeno Lipok (2011) written by I. Ben Wati talks about the early literature of the Ao Nagas and the different stages of literary progress. The book is a good source on Ao Naga literature through its beginning and development from the nineteenth to the twenty first century which any scholar studying Ao literature should be aware of. However, though the book is an efficient reference, it focuses solely on

the literature after its introduction to the Ao Nagas and not on the oral tradition and folk literature that existed during the time of the Ao Naga forefathers.

The Ao Nagas(1926) written by J. P. Mills is a detailed account of the Ao Nagas as they existed in the early twentieth century and prior to that. It is a valuable documentation of the Ao Nagas from an anthropological viewpoint and more. Mills has made some interesting observations about the Ao Nagas, he has also added insights into the language and there are some folktales and folksongs in the book. However, the absence of writing the songs and verses in either of the Jungli Mongsen, or Changki variations make it less authentic even if the translation is given. Also, the scholar will in this paper translate and interpret folksongs, folktales and proverbs both from an objective standpoint as well as imbibing the native viewpoint as well.

The Ao Naga Tribe of Assam (2002 reproduced) written by W. C. Smith is a good book especially from a sociological perspective. The writer studies and compares the habitat, social organization, religion, family etc of the Ao Nagas. A general introduction is also made about who the Aos are as well as various activities done by them. It is a good source of knowing more about who they are as a people. However, it is only possible to give the readers a general idea on the way of living. The elements of oral tradition like songs, tales, etc is missing which otherwise form the bulk of the scholar's writing.

Ao- Naga Cultural Heritage (1997) written by N. Talitemjen Jamir is a book on the practices and culture of the Ao Nagas and their society from the forefather's period. This is also a store house of information to have a better knowledge about the cultural heritage of the Ao Nagas, regardless of its page numbers. The scholar has

been able to understand certain practices, yet there are still more factors that need to be added in this paper which remain obscure in this particular book.

Naga Society and Culture (2005) written by N. Talitemjen Jamir and A. Lanunungsang is a collective writing of Jamir and Lanunungsang. Some of the portions have been taken off from a smaller book written by Jamir called *Ao Naga Cultural Heritage*. There are many valuable insights about the Ao Nagas that have been given in this book including settlement, social cultural, administrative and other cultural system. There is a section on folksongs, folktales and proverbs too. The changing trends from tradition to modernity also need a mention. It is once again a very enlightening book to read. It is again a book that gives help to the scholar for further study. There are still some areas that need more contexts for the scholar's study.

Ao Naga Customary Laws and Practices (2012) written by L. Sosang Jamir, as the title suggest in the book that largely leans towards exhibiting the rich customary laws and cultural practice of the Ao Nagas. It talks about the emergence of the early Aos, village formation, the village administration, the structure of the houses, Arju, and a lot of other laws like that of marriage, social procedures dos and don'ts in Ao Naga culture and custom etc. Besides this rules, there are more given on the Ao Naga laws and practices. The study that is undertaken by the scholar will be more specific under the broader term

Historical Development of the Ao Nagas in Nagaland (2002) written by Purtongzük Longchar is a book that chronicles the historical development of the Ao Nagas in Nagaland. It is book that is quite informative even for non-history scholars and readers. It speaks about Ao Naga society from a historical point of view. Looking

from a different perspective is important and studying this book has helped the scholar to agree if not all, at least a few of what is written and as well as ask questions which will aid the scholar in conjuring more ideas.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The object of the study is to bring the reader to realise the rich heritage of tribal folklore by examining and interpreting oral literature of the Ao Nagas with reference to folk songs, folk tales and proverbs. The effects of post colonialism on the Ao Naga tribal society in its gradual progress from oral tradition being transferred to the medium of writing will also be briefly highlighted. The aim of the study is to also try and salvage what has been passed on from the past by means of oral tradition through present findings, to document them in written form to preserve them for future reference.

1.5. Delimitations of the Study

The Ao Nagas have six ranges with each range having a total of more than five to ten or more villages, and as such the collection of materials for study is restricted to three or less number of villages per range. The folksongs, folktales and proverbs will also have slight variations in Jungli and Mongsen with regard to the village source and the territorial confinement and there will be differences in spelling accordingly. The scholar has been able to compile and study only a select collection of oral literature (both through personal interview or those already written) out of the many that are still not documented.

1.6. Methodology:

The methods used for the study is personal interview of village elders and other individuals with a good knowledge of cultural practices from at least one village in all the six ranges of the Ao Naga. The materials, thus acquired have gone through a process of translation by the scholar. The writings of Naga writers like Temsula Ao, N. Talitemjen Jamir, L. Sosang Jamir, etc. are sources for the study, also including writings of I. Ben Wati etc. in the Ao language. The Ao language has two types of divisions—*Jungli* and *Mongsen*—both of which are used with variations according to the concerned Ao village. There is another variation used in folksongs which is neither *Jungli* nor *Mongsen*, but a conglomeration of both. The Modern Language Association (MLA) Eighth edition research methodology has been applied in this study.

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Chapter 2

Folklore and Oral Literature

2.1. Meaning of Folklore

The term *Folk-lore* is said to have been coined by the English antiquarian William John Thoms in 1846 to take the place of the 'rather awkward expression' *Popular Antiquities*. It consists of 'unrecorded traditions' which spans into the initial stage of collection and classification, two methods of scientific deduction, historical and natural, reconstructing a spiritual history of Man, 'as represented by the more or less inarticulate voices of the 'folk'.' Thus, the term folklore and its study also form an important, inevitable part of oral or folk literature. Folklore is historical 'because it attempts to throw light on man's past' it is a science 'because it endeavours to attain this goal, not by speculation or deduction from an abstract principle agreed upon by *a priori*, but by the inductive method which...underlies all scientific research, whether historical or natural' (Krappe xv).

In *Folkloristics: An Introduction*, Robert A. Georges and Michael Owen Jones write that the word *folklore* indicate 'expressive forms, processes and behaviors' in two ways. Firstly they are customarily learned, taught and utilized during up close interactions. Secondly, they consist of that which one judges 'to be traditional' either because they are based on known instances or models; or because they are evidences of 'continuities and consistencies through time and space in human knowledge, thought, belief and feeling'. The discipline devoted to this study is known as *folkloristics* and those trained in these are called *folklorists* (1).

Folksongs, folktales and proverbs have always been an integral part of any ethnic group highlighting their individual identity with a distinct language. It is true, however, that these come under the general term of folklore. In modern usage, folklore comprises the sum total of traditionally derived and orally or imitatively transmitted literature, material culture, and custom of subcultures within advanced societies while comparable study among wholly or mainly non-literate societies comes under ethnology and anthropology. In popular usage, the term folklore is sometimes restricted to oral literature and tradition (<http://www.Britannica.com>). Folklore thus consists of legends, myths, music, oral history, beliefs, proverbs, tales, etc of a people.

2.1.1. The Study and Theories of Folklore

The nature of folklore has been commonly studied and conceived in three ways according to Georges and Jones. The first is regarding folklore as ‘individual items’ and exemplifying them into specific forms like the folksong, folktale, folk speech, folk art and to make these “folklore genres” and examples of them ‘the foci of study’. The second way of approach is to study folklore as a sub-discipline of different studies like literary study anthropology, linguistics, history, psychology etc, and in providing data. The third approach is that folklore is the product and possession of certain groups, making these ‘folk groups’ and their traditions the sources of and subjects of folklore study (22).

The study and aim of folklore is based on various theories that have been propounded over the years. Some of these theories or methods that ‘currently vie for acceptance’ (Richard M. Dorson 7) are the Finnish historical-geographical method, the historical-reconstructional method, the ideological approach, the functional

approach, the psychoanalytical approach (also the most speculative of the current folklore theories), the structural theory, the oral-formulaic theory, the cross-cultural folklore theory, the folk-cultural theory, the mass-cultural theory, the hemispheric theory of folklore, and the contextual theory which is still a 'growing movement among energetic folklorists in the United States' (Ibid 45). Dorson sums up his views on these theories thus,

No observer can be impartial, and I myself am committed to one of these twelve outlooks...generalizations can be advanced. All these theories are strongly proclaimed, monistic in concept, and imperialistic in design, seeking to annex more and more folklore genres...yet they are not mutually exclusive, and an eclectic folklorist may find all of them useful at one time or another. He will at least need to be acquainted...to become a knowledgeable student of folklore and folklife (Ibid 47).

In *The Science of Folklore*, the deduction of folklore studies is mentioned by A. H. Krappe especially on whether the study is a part of the natural sciences. The aspect of natural science is that it has 'two different modes of procedure, observation and experiment' while historical science has the observation mode 'in the form of a study of the documents'; and from which viewpoint 'folk-lore has been generally subjected to the criticism of historians' since 'folklorist cannot claim great antiquity' for the 'vast majority of the documentary materials collected'. The only response that can be given is that 'the mere date of a given document is of little consequence, both in history and in folklore' (xvi). The writer further adds:

Man's intellectual power, however varying in degree, is yet essentially the same in kind. From this follows that his spiritual growth in different parts of

the globe and under different climes has on the whole assumed very similar forms, however great the difference in pace. Thus, a certain human tribe, in a certain spot in the globe, will at this time represent the stage of spiritual evolution left behind by another tribe, in a different spot, several hundred years ago. Thus, a study of the former tribe will throw light on the past of the latter, a light highly welcome when there exist no documents, or very unsatisfactory documents of that past (xvii).

The study of history is important to understand the present social order, at the same time there are so many areas of study that contribute to this too, both in the sciences and the arts, to be able to understand the past, and progress (or decadence) of a society and its people; and in the process the effect on their literature. The old and the new, co-existing side by side can be seen in human society even in the form of some high civilization. Modern technology and development in science have come about in today's society, with the increasing invention and usage of gadgets etc. However, there also exists with it the belief in the supernatural and in superstitions. Thus, the blend of the traditional with the modern can be seen quite clearly in a lot of societies today. In some, it might be quite balanced, while in others one aspect might have a stronger influence over the other. Modes of writing have faced change over the ages depending on the progress of the society in terms of technology or other such equivalents yet we find that the "form" dominant is orality. In a broader context, literature comprises of not just the written but the oral as well.

2.2. Literature- Definition and Meaning

Literature in its traditionally accepted definition means any valuable form of "writing". In the article *Literature*, written by Kenneth Rexroth, the term literature in

simple terms means a body of written works. Traditionally, it had been applied to those 'imaginative works of poetry and prose distinguished by the intentions of their authors and the perceived aesthetic excellence of their execution.' Literature may be classified according to a variety of systems, including language, national origin subject matter example, Arabic literature, Celtic literature, Latin literature, French literature, Japanese literature, and biblical literature or other classifications in the literary historical period and genre of literature. Rexroth further adds that the definitions of the word literature itself 'tend to be circular' and derives from the Latin *littera*, and is 'first and foremost humankind's entire body of writing; after that it is the body of writing belonging to a given language or people; then it is individual pieces of writing.'

It cannot be refuted that the term literature has loosely been understood over the passage of time as any existing written material that gives various insights into the whole aspect of human existence as well as the environment surrounding them. It envelops the non-fictional contents of facts collected and presented either in a detailed or a compressed form, be it the sciences or the art forms; it also refers to the aesthetic element of fiction and imagination in written form. The Latin root *litterature* or *litteratura* was used to refer to all written accounts. The concept has changed meaning over time to include texts that are spoken or sung like oral literature as well as non-verbal art forms. Thus, though literature has been used in terms of the written, the aspect of oral or spoken element forms an important and distinctive trait. It cannot be denied that the meaning and definition of literature has seen a gradual change from the earliest works to the present covering a span of different 'eras' of literary forms.

2.2.1. The Study of Literature

It cannot be denied that there are many elements that have an impact on the study of literature of times past or in the present setting; in addition to which there are external and internal factors which have an overall result on what comprises literature. In *Theory of Literature*, René Wellek and Austin Warren explain the distinction between literature as a creative art and literary study as ‘if not precisely a science...a species of knowledge or of learning’ (15). Literature can thus be portrayed as art in the bounds of the imagination or creativity embracing history especially with regard to the culture, tradition, lifestyle and the distinctive identity of a people which also includes ‘oral literature’. However, a better clarity with regards to this, ‘the German term *Wortkunst* and the Russian *slovesnost* have the advantage over their English equivalent’ (22).

In the systematic and integrated study of literature, ‘literary scholarship’ and ‘philology’ are the most common terms; the former term stresses more on academics and less on criticism while the latter includes not only the study of language and literature but on ‘studies of all products of the human mind’ which projects too many diverse meanings and becomes confusing.

Literary study on the other hand presents two extremes- the first is a more technical implication with stress on a methodical coordination through collection of facts and controlled by certain rules which is similar to if not exactly like the logic of the sciences. The second stresses on presenting every work of literature’s ‘uniqueness’ emphasizing on a subjective personal ‘individuality’ and which deviates completely from the logic of science. The risk in this would be that no work of art can maintain a wholly ‘unique’ stance; the words in every literary work are

actually 'generals' and not particulars, a debate that began with Aristotle's proclamation of poetry to be more universal and hence more philosophical than history which concerns with the particular. But one should recognize that 'each work of literature has its individual characteristics', 'but it also shares common properties with other works of art'; the attempt to characterize 'the individuality of a work, of an author, of a period, or of a national literature' has been done both by 'literary criticism and literary history'. This characterization, however, 'can be accomplished only in universal terms, on the basis of a literary theory' (ibid 18-19).

It is true that the art of reading for pleasure cannot be ignored too, apart from an extensive critical understanding; but that is not the whole aspect of appreciating art since it serves 'as an ideal for a purely personal cultivation'; it is thus 'highly desirable', and acts as a center 'of a widely spread literary culture', though it cannot replace the idea of 'literary scholarship', conceived of as super-personal tradition, as a growing body of knowledge, insights, and judgments' (ibid 18-19).

There are two different approaches to the study of literature namely, the extrinsic approach and the intrinsic approach. The former is the method of studying literature in relation to its backdrop, its atmosphere and other external causes- biography, psychology, philosophy, society and other Arts. The intrinsic approach is the explanation and study of the works of literature or studying the text internally. This is the specialization of the naturalistic researcher. There is case study research with subjectivity, without ignoring the objective of what people do or records show etc., then comes the qualitative elements to seek the underlined reasons leading to the process of outcomes. The naturalist researcher is not a detached scientist but a

participant observer (Bill Gillham 6-7). The scholar will be using the intrinsic approach in this study.

The study of literature through intrinsic approach can be through different theories of literary criticism that have risen overtime with different literary movements (Romanticism, Neo-Classicism, Modern, Post Modern, Formalism, and Feminism etc), other literary devices (euphony, rhythm, metre, style, stylistics, image, metaphor, symbol, nature and modes of narrative fiction etc) and literary genres.

In his article on *Literary Theory* Vince Brewton writes that “Literary theory” is the body of ideas and methods we use in the practical reading of literature, it refers to the theories that reveal what literature can mean. “Literary theory,” sometimes designated “critical theory,” and now undergoing a transformation into “cultural theory” within the discipline of literary studies, can be understood as the set of concepts and intellectual assumptions on which rests the work of explaining or interpreting literary texts. Literary theory refers to any principles derived from internal analysis of literary texts or from knowledge external to the text that can be applied in multiple interpretive situations. All critical practice regarding literature depends on an underlying structure of ideas in at least two ways: theory provides a rationale for what constitutes the subject matter of criticism- “the literary”- and the specific aims of critical practice- the act of interpretation itself.

In *Postcolonial Literature* written by Pramod K Nayar, the writer says that postcolonial theory looks at or addresses some issues like the psychological effects of colonialism on both the colonizer and the colonized, the role of apparatuses such as education, English literature, historiography, and art and architecture in the ‘execution’ of the colonial project (18). “Postcolonial Criticism” investigates the

relationships between colonizers and colonized in the period post colonization. Vince Brewton continues in his article “Literary Theory” thus,

Though not the first writer to explore post colonial theory, the Palestinian literary theorist Edward Said's book *Orientalism* is generally regarded as having inaugurated the field of explicitly “Postcolonial Criticism” in the West. Said argues that the concept of “the Orient” was produced by the “imaginative geography” of Western scholarship and has been instrumental in the colonization and domination of non- Western societies. “Postcolonial” theory reverses the historical center/margin direction of cultural inquiry: critiques of the metropolis and capital now emanate from the former colonies...Like feminist and ethnic theory, “Postcolonial Criticism” pursues not merely the inclusion of the marginalized literature of colonial peoples into the dominant canon and discourse. “Postcolonial Criticism” offers a fundamental critique of the ideology of colonial domination and at the same time seeks to undo the “imaginative geography” of Orientalist thought that produced conceptual as well as economic divides between West and East, civilized and uncivilized, First and Third Worlds. In this respect, “Postcolonial Criticism” is activist and adversarial in its basic aims. Postcolonial theory has brought fresh perspectives to the role of colonial peoples- their wealth, labor, and culture- in the development of modern European nation states. (<https://www.iep.utm.edu/>)

Nayar writes about post colonial writers in this way that they ‘take recourse to their native narrative forms and traditions in order to counter, oppose, or re-write canonical Euro-American literature. The attempt is often to provide an alternate view

of their culture. While such attempt is...borrowed from the former colonizer culture, the genre is adapted and injected with native traditions' (221). He goes on to write about the structural features in postcolonial writing which have their different themes based on the orality and literature, folk, myth, history, magic realism, decolonization and postcolonial English.

In the book *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*," Peter Barry writes, all post colonial literatures ...seem to make this transition...an unquestioned acceptance of the authority of European models...called the '*Adopt*' phase of colonial literature...second stage...called the '*Adapt*' phase since it seems to adapt the European form to African subject matter (or the Indian subject matter)...in the final phase there is ...a declaration of cultural independence called the '*Adept*' phase , since its characteristic is the assumption that the colonial writer is an independent 'adept' in the form..." (195). The writer further supplements that postcolonial critics, reject the claims the universalism, show how much literature is often evasively and crucially silent on colonization and imperialism, they examine and question cultural difference and diversity in literary works, celebrate hybridity where individuals and group belong simultaneously to more than one culture. They develop a perspective not just applicable to postcolonial literatures (198).

The study or interpretation of literature is that of an individual's personal expression of the aesthetic nature of the work or text in hand; at the same time it should not be too idealistic as to completely twist facts, but rather should aim to balance any work of art or literature (in this case) to retain a balance between the particular and the general conceptualism.

2. 3. Folklore and Oral Literature

In any society, there always exist sources which help explain the culture, state of affairs, polity, history and socio-economic conditions of that group or race of people. These sources can either be oral or written transmission of knowledge from one generation to the other. It can also be in the form of art itself. This passing on from word of mouth or through written form plays a significant role. Oral or spoken tales comprising of myths, legends etc would come under the category of unwritten literature. In *The Ao Naga Oral Tradition*, Temsula Ao quotes N. Scott Momaday's definition of oral tradition as a process by which the lore of a people are 'formulated, communicated and preserved' orally. She then adds another 'dimension' in the context of the Ao Nagas 'which includes the collective history of the people, the belief system and all the principles governing community life of the tribe' (7). Therefore, to understand the oral tradition of the Ao Nagas it is important to also know something about the history and the social order. It is essential to understand what constitutes literature both in the oral and the written form and a general idea of where it all begins, namely a general study of folklore itself.

Richard M. Dorson has written in *Folklore and Folklife* that the definition of the term folklore 'has also caused confusion and controversy' (1) both to the layman and the academician. This has led to the development of other fields of study, one such being 'folklife' the supporters of which claim maintain that while 'folklife embraces the whole panorama of traditional culture, including oral folklore', folklorists 'neglect' the 'tangible' arts; the folklorists on the other hand 'stoutly maintain that their term includes traditional arts and crafts' (Ibid 2). There are four

‘groupings’ that a student of folklore or a student folklife has to place their division into when it comes to the field of studying folklore or folklife.

The first is *oral literature*, also called ‘verbal art or expressive literature’ where the ‘spoken, sung, and voiced forms of traditional utterance that show repetitive patterns’; the subdivisions under it are the folk narrative, folksongs or folk poetry, anecdotes, proverbs, riddles, non-verbal expressions like yodels, hollers, cries, chants and laments. ‘Oral literature can and frequently does enter into written literature’ (Ibid 2). The other grouping is physical folklife which is generally called *material culture* which deals with what is visible, the ‘techniques, skills, recipes and formulas’ passed through generation- the traditional way of how men and women prepare food, farm or fish, make tools, process the earth, design their furniture and utensils etc; the folklife specialist ‘directs his attention to the high civilization where the phenomenon of cultural lag is evident... belong to an older, submerged culture about which...little is known and recorded’ (Ibid 2-3). The traditional life that lies in between and faces the direction of both oral literature and material culture is *social folk custom*, where emphasis is not on the individual but on social or group interaction, performance and skills. These customs are strongly connected with deep folk beliefs which constitute yet another folklore genre. ‘Customs that have acquired considerable magical and sacred potency are known as rituals...the participation of large social units...leads to social folk custom...festival and celebration’ (Ibid 3). In the study of folklore and folklife, a fourth sector called the *performing folk arts* may be assigned, which constitutes basically of traditional music, dance and drama. The nature of the renditions of folktales and folksongs are usually taken as ‘more casual’ performances than the ‘conscious presentation of these arts’ by groups or individuals using ‘folk instruments, dance costumes and scenario props’ (Ibid 4).

2.4. Oral Literature- Folksongs, Folktales and Proverbs

2.4.1. Folksongs

The folk-song is a song which is similar to a lyric poem, originating “anonymously, among unlettered folk in times past and which remained in currency for a considerable time” (Krappe 153). The Collins English dictionary defines it as a “song originating among the people of a country or area, passed by oral tradition from one singer or generation to the next, often existing in several versions, and marked generally by simple, modal melody and stanzaic, narrative verse”. It becomes a folksong not simply because it is liked by some people but because of the persistent singing in a way of their own, picking up “the colorations, nuances, and styles of the group...it circulates ...continually rephrased to suit their responses to time, place, rhetoric, and performance” (Barre Toelken 147). Like other genres of traditional expression, in order to be called folklore, folksongs do not have to be ‘ancient’, ‘rural’, ‘backward’, or ‘quaint’ but they are characterized by ‘absorption into a group’s expressive performances’, ‘shaping of presentation and meaning brought about by the group’s value, and by constant change and development’ (ibid 148). A more precise idea of the folksong can be understood from the following passage from *The Science of Folklore* where A. H. Krappe writes,

The folk-song is lyric in character, that is, above all, intensely subjective. It treats its theme with a great deal of seriousness; it is emphatic, sometimes childishly so. It lacks the finer shades of feeling, and its colours are usually somewhat harsh, as indeed they are in peasant craft. Its general temper is not gaiety, at least not gaiety of the light-hearted sort. Many folk-songs are in fact melodramatic; over others there hovers an atmosphere, if not of tragedy, at

least of life's hardness and even bitterness. The folk-song is highly emotional, sometimes even sentimental; but the emotions are simple; there is no question of 'problems', of 'conflicts', let alone searching self-analysis or even introspection. A good number clearly betray by the softness of their tones, feminine origin (156).

There have been various categories of the folksong. The oldest genre of the folksong is the love song which has different 'definite sub-types', one of the oldest been the *serenata* which is sung when the lover visits and courts the woman at night. The *Alba* or *Aubade* is the 'farewell song of the lover at dawn, sometimes a dialogue between man and woman'; the third sub-type is the *pastourelle* where the man woos his lover at day time in the open field. The dancing song which is also a love lyric otherwise known as *ballata* is a composition sung to a group dance. After love songs, there are work songs that accompany the rhythm of a certain occupation. The *weaving song* is a song sung by women sitting behind the loom and spinning, and is usually gloomy and sad. Similar to this type of song is the *song of the water-carrying* women sung by women while fetching. The *cantilena molaes* is a work song which goes back to the time in which the women had to grind the grain with a sort of pestle. The *cradle song* is another song that is sung by women. The other type of songs of the folk is that which concerns with rites and rituals and will come under *ritual songs* (ibid 158-69). Krappe further adds about the folksong thus,

The folksong is of individual authorship in the sense that it was first composed by one individual, sometimes a known literary figure, sometimes a man of the people whose name has remained obscure. Its composition may be but is not necessarily due to improvisation. The folk-song is communal in the sense that its text is never quite fixed and that alterations, modifications and additions

can be practiced freely. It is communal also in the sense that a given song, especially the cumulative song, may in fact have a dozen or more authors, each being responsible for a stanza or two (ibid 170).

2.4.2. Forms of the Folktale

The distinguishing characteristic of the folktale from each other is very difficult, if not improbable; mainly because these dividing characteristics overlap with the other and some if not all of these traits are prevalent in just one narration itself. Although each place and region might have their own different oral narratives and certain tales might exist only for, or in a particular period, there are some terms that can be used in a general sense, since there is a similarity in the fundamental organization and the establishment of human lifestyle all over the world. Such kind of a division of general categorizing is actually not only useful but also necessary for further study and comprehension. Some of these general terms that can be used for different ‘forms’ of folktales and which have been elaborated more by Stith Thompson in *The Folktale* are as follows:

a) Märchen: One of the most ‘frequent concepts’ while studying the folktale is that which is called *Märchen* by the Germans; in English it has the not so satisfactory translation of ‘fairy tale’ (though the term fairy is used, most of the tales have no fairies) or ‘household tale’, while in French it is used as *conte populaire*; household tale and *conte populaire* might be applied to all kinds of tales since they are general in nature. A *Märchen* is a ‘tale of some length’ and involves a ‘succession of motifs or episodes...moves in an unreal world without a definite locality’ or ‘characters and is filled with the marvelous...humble heroes kill adversaries, succeed to kingdoms, and marry princesses’ (Ibid 7-8).

b) Novella: It has a similar general structure to the *Märchen*, and they often overlap in that, some tales appear in one land with a *novella*'s characteristics, those of the *Märchen* in another. The *Arabian Nights* or Boccaccio are literary examples of the *novella*, but these are also 'widely told by the unlettered, especially by the peoples of the Near East'. The trait of a *novella* is that, here 'the action occurs in a real world with definite time and place...though marvels do appear, they are such as apparently call for the hearer's belief in a way that the *Märchen* does not' (ibid 8). The novella is also called the romantic tale and 'there is more emphasis on human qualities like cleverness, wit, wisdom, trickery, endurance and patience than on heroism' (Dorson 67).

c) Hero tale: A *hero tale* may 'move in the frankly fantastic world' of the *Märchen* or 'the pseudo-realistic world' of the *novella*; it is therefore, a 'more inclusive term' than either *Märchen* and *novella*, which would hardly be called hero tales unless a series of adventures of the same hero is narrated. The examples of such clusters of hero tales are those like 'the superman struggles of men like Hercules or Theseus against a world of adversaries'; the kind of stories 'particularly popular with primitive peoples or...a heroic age of civilization, like the early Greeks or the Germanic folk in the days of their great migrations' (Thompson 8).

d) Sage: The German term *Sage* has been widely adopted for a general narrative pattern -structurally simple, with a single narrative motif- used worldwide which expression of idea has been attempted in English and French as '*local tradition, local legend, migratory legend, and tradition populaire.*' It asserts an extraordinary happening, an ancient legend 'which has attached itself' to a particular locality, equally told with similar fervor of other places the world over and believed to have actually occurred. It may tell of an encounter with- fairies, ghosts, water-spirits, and

the devil (marvelous creatures which the folk still believe). It ‘may give what has been handed down as a memory – often fantastic or even absurd – of some historical character’ (ibid 8-9).

e) Explanatory tale: The *explanatory tale*- other terms include *etiological tale*, *Natursage*, *pourquoi story*- is close to the local legend which often ‘explains’ the tale behind the existence of ‘some hill or cliff’ or ‘ a certain river’ in the landscape. There are stories that explain the ‘origins and characteristics’ of ‘animals and plants, the stars, and mankind and his institutions’; often, this ‘explanation seems to be the entire reason for the existence of the story, but...these...merely added to a story to give an interesting ending...may indeed be attached to almost any narrative form, such as the *Märchen* or the hero tale’ (ibid 9).

f) Myth: *Myth* ‘has been discussed too long’ and ‘used in too many different senses’ that it has become difficult and confusing and such a discussion leaves it ‘inconclusive’. Myths tell ‘of sacred beings and of semi-divine heroes and of the origins of all things...are intimately connected with religious beliefs and practices of the people...may be essentially hero legends or etiological stories, but they are systematized and given religious significance’ (ibid 9). Regardless of which one preceded the other-the hero legend and the origin story or the myth- the fundamental rational difference is clear.

g) Animal tales: Animals appear in myths of primitive peoples where the culture hero often has animal form; they act and think like human beings and often take the shape of a human. *Animal tales* is a term used when qualities of humans are ascribed to animals in non-mythological stories. The general idea behind these tales is ‘to show the cleverness of one animal and the stupidity of another...interest usually lies in the

humor of the deceptions or the absurd predicaments the animal's stupidity leads him into...the popular European cycle of the fox and the wolf...are ...examples' (ibid 9).

h) Fable: An animal tale 'told with an acknowledged moral purpose' becomes a *fable*. 'Aesop' and the 'Panchatantra' are the best known literary collections. 'The moral purpose is the essential quality which distinguishes the fable from the other animal tales' (ibid 10).

i) Anecdotes: Short anecdotes are told for humorous purposes and are referred to in various ways- *jest*, *humorous anecdote*, *merry tale*, and (German) *Schwank*. Some are usually animal tales, but even then the action is essentially that characteristic of men. The absurd acts of foolish persons also called *the numskull tales*, deceptions, and obscene situations are what form the subject matter for humor and jest. Humorous adventures become attached to some characters that attract into their 'orbit' all kinds of appropriate and inappropriate humor encouraging the inclination of jests to form cycles. The same hero may be celebrated for his 'clever ruses', 'utter stupidity' or told about in 'obscene tales'. These humorous tales travel with ease and survive long since they are easy to remember and have a universal appeal (ibid 10).

j) Legend: In some languages the term *legend* (which has already been used for the local and the explanatory legend) 'can be used only in the special sense of the life of a saint. In English it is necessary to use...*saint's legend* ...Such pious stories are normally handed down in literary collections, though a number have entered the stream of oral tradition' (ibid 10).

k) Saga: Another term used is *saga* which is misleading. Its use is 'restricted to...tales of the heroic age, particularly of Scandinavia and Ireland, and not...loosely ..."an

experience” or “a story”...it should not be confused with the German *Sage*, which...has an entirely different meaning’ (ibid 10).

These are few of the forms of the folktale that are not so rigid since they blend into each other and thus can be used for more general study of the folktale. ‘Fairy tales become myths, animal tales, or local legends’ and ‘as stories transcend differences of age or of place...they often undergo protean transformations in style and narrative purpose...For the plot structure of the tale is much more stable and more persistent than its form’ (ibid 10).

2.4.3. Proverbs

The history of written proverbs and sayings dates back to as early as 2500 BC ancient Egyptian collections, grammatical rules in Sumerian inscriptions given in proverbial form, ancient Chinese ethical instruction, and the philosophical ideas expounded in the Vedic writings of India used, the biblical book of Proverbs, traditionally associated with Solomon.

One of the earliest English proverb collections is the so-called *Proverbs of Alfred* (c. 1150–80), containing religious and moral precepts. The use of proverbs in monasteries to teach novices Latin, in schools of rhetoric, and in sermons, homilies, and didactic works made them widely known and led to their preservation in manuscripts.

The use of proverbs in literature and oratory was at its height in England in the 16th and 17th centuries. John Heywood wrote a dialogue in proverbs (1546; later enlarged) and Michael Drayton a sonnet; and in the 16th century a speech in proverbs was made in the House of Commons.

In North America the best-known use of proverbs is probably in *Poor Richard's*, an almanac published annually between 1732 and 1757 by Benjamin Franklin. Many of *Poor Richard's* sayings were traditional European proverbs reworked by Franklin and given an American context when appropriate. The study of folklore in the 20th century brought renewed interest in the proverb as a reflection of folk culture.

The common phenomenon that exists in all societies and is inherent in the everyday practices of its members, which is widespread to all is that of the traditions of the lore, the reference here is to oral tradition since the spoken word is an everyday form of practice. It might differ in context according to the cultural differences, but there still exist universal truth in some; in this the proverb is one such creation of the human wit. The Oxford dictionary simply defines a proverb as a 'short, well-known pithy saying, stating a general truth or piece of advice', in other words it is a popular saying, or a phrase that successfully exemplifies ordinary truth based on practical experience or common sense and may have a symbolic representation. Proverbs are popular due to their usage in spoken language, which form an inevitable part of folk or oral literature.

The misunderstanding of proverbs in one of the easily observed, collected genres of traditional expression yet the least understood might be due to their familiarity and lack of the exotic and unusual says Roger D Abrahams in "Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions". This is in reference to the "modern" literature that have developed as a part of the verbal resource of "sophisticated Western cultures long after larger oral genres have been forgotten or have developed"; which to some extent is due to the long history of proverbs collections in print. (117)

In fact, the earliest popular books were collections of proverbs like Erasmus's bestseller of the early Renaissance, the *Copia*. The compilers of this encyclopedic work making use of the print medium were trying to permanently enshrine the oral tradition like the proverbs. Apart from being preserved collections, these were educational in two ways- as a storehouse of wisdom for the young courtier, and as important device to be learned and applied by beginning orators. However, 'belletrists' saw more to the proverbs than just oral devices. John Heywood developed a tradition which was witty and poetic, devising poems and songs from the proverbs, which was followed suit by many other poets as well as developed the literacy epigrams which further influenced development of the heroic couplet. The collection of proverbs continued to act as encyclopedic reference for those who wanted to add wisdom and wit in their speech or writings without reference of the *sententiae*. The study of proverbs, or paroemiology with its focus on rural dialects, came to be recognized with the development of folklore movement in the 19th century. The result was emergence of works related to the genre like Hislop and Henderson's books on Scottish proverbs, the English volumes by Wright and Lean, and the present century dictionaries in the United States of Tilley Taylor and Whiting, Jente, Arora, Brunvand and others. The social use and cultural situation cannot be known by reading the proverbs alone, therefore, the ethnographic reports of Firth, Herzog, Messenger, Seitel and Arewa and Dundes according to Abrahams, would help to understand the proverbs in regard to societies' "educational and juridical system" rather than the common usage of "argument-markers and intensifiers" in European conversation. In other words "proverbs must be studied with groups which use them ... to understand why so many diverse peoples have been attached to such sententious inventions" (ibid 117-19)

In *The Science of Folklore*, A.H. Krappe writes that ‘a proverb represents in its essential form, some homely truth expressed in a concise and terse manner so... It may express the general truth literally, by a mere statement of fact, as do, for example, all hortative proverbs’ (143). In simple terms, proverbs are sayings that express a truth based on common sense or experience, often metaphorical. ‘Each proverb is a full statement of approach to a recurrent problem...as artful, and therefore artificial and witty, items of discourse, proverbs use all of the devices we commonly associate with poetry in English: meter, binary construction and balanced phrasing, rhyme, assonance and alliteration, conciseness, metaphor, and occasional inverted word order and unusual construction’ (Roger D. Abrahams 119).

The two essential features of the proverb according to Krappe are its ‘didacticism for the contents, and its conciseness for the form. That conciseness is often heightened by mnemotechnical devices such as rhyme or alliteration’ (143). A proverb can be no more than a tale be considered a must product and has been coined just once, in a given locality, at a given time, by one mind with some gnomic talent. If the ‘coiners’ were individual minds, the transmission of proverbs lie with the ‘rank and file’ of the population which leads to alterations and slight modifications. The proverb may develop into a narrative in two intermediary forms, ‘the *Quotation Proverb*...contains a proverb or proverbial saying in the form of a quotation, together with an indication of the speaker and of the occasion on which it was uttered. ..the second class of proverb narratives comprises a certain type of story, of quite a varied character, purporting to explain the rise of a certain proverb or proverbial saying’ (ibid 144-9). Proverbs also make up the body of customary law in many illiterate societies as a legal formula. ‘From whatever perspective, the examination and analysis of proverbs and riddles can certainly be rewarding...careful analysis can

reveal that these genres are connected to basic patterns of thought and effectively communicate basic ideas and cultural values' (Caro 193-94).

2.5. Oral Tradition and the Ao Nagas

According to their oral tradition the Aos had originated at the *Longtrok* as *Ong*, their ancestors, which mean "human beings" (N. T. Jamir 1). The meaning of *longtrok* means six stones and according to legend three males and three females emerged. The first to emerge was Tongpok with his sister Lendina forming the Imsong or Pongen clan. The second to emerge was Longpok with his sister Yongmenala forming the Longkumer clan and the third to emerge was Longjakrep with his sister Elongshe forming the Jamir clan. Since it is considered taboo to marry within the clan, the three clans could now intermarry and they settled down at a place and named it Chungliyimti. As the population gradually increased, they started to spread out to other surrounding places and today the Ao Nagas are settled in these six ranges respectively- Ongpangkong, Langpangkong, Asetkong, Jangpetkong, Japukong and Tsurangkong.

It is said that the Aos had a written script which was written on the hide of an animal and hung on a wall. But a dog dragged it up and ate it when the people were away in the fields. From that time people committed everything to memory which succeeded on to the generations. Thus, oral tradition begun and became the repository of knowledge about 'the origin of the tribe, the clan divisions and organisation of the important institutions governing community life based on these divisions, as well as the belief system and forms of worship' (Ao 8).

The basis of the Ao Naga society is the clan. The members of a clan share a special relationship and are considered as brothers and sisters. Marriage among the

same clan members is therefore forbidden and considered incestuous. This rule applies to the same clan members even between two different Ao villages. The consequence of not following this rule was very grim in the olden days and sometimes the defaulters were sentenced to death. Today this has been replaced by banishment from the village and fines. The different clans have their own symbols and designs in their costumes and the clan to which a person belongs can be attributed to motifs in the dress he wears or even in the ornaments.

2.5.1. The Arju and Oral Literature

The concept of Arju and Tsüki carries a lot of customary and traditional significance. It had been an institution for imparting all kinds of trainings to young people from a young stage to early adulthood. It is here that boys learn the art of fighting, discipline, obedience, courage, woodwork like carving, carpentry, basketry, making of daos, spears, and other utensils. The girls learn what is expected and required of a woman regarding activities related with family, culture and society. An important aspect of an Arju or a Tsüki is that here the young boys and girls learn their cultural lores. They are passed on with the knowledge of their forefathers in the guise of songs, tales and proverbs.

2.5.2. The Introduction of Written Script and Development of Literature

The folklore of the Ao Nagas centered on the oral tradition. Songs, tales, myths, beliefs, proverbs, etc., formed a significant part of the survival of the old traditional culture itself.

Literature in the written form for the Ao Nagas can be traced to the advent of the early missionaries to the land who taught them to read and write. In this respect,

the first missionaries to the Ao Nagas were Dr. & Mrs. E. W. Clark who contributed a lot to the development and progress of the Ao Naga language. The first written literature of the Ao Nagas was the *Ao Primer* written by Mrs. Clark in 1877 as a text book to help teach the students who attended the first village school at Molungyimsen village. In his book *Aoo Kaketkeno Lipok*, I. Ben Wati divides the development of Ao Naga literature into five phases with the names of individuals important in that phase.

‘1) Clark Sab Tensa, 1872-1911 (Aoo Kaketkeno Lipok Mapang)

2) Rongsennüken Tensa, 1912-1929 (Aoo Tera Ayangba Mapang)

3) Imnameren Tensa, 1930-1950 (Aoo Naro Apungba Mapang)

4) Nokdenlemba Tensa, 1951-1972 (Aoo Süngjang Atangba Mapang)

5) Renthly Keitzar Tensa, 1972-2010 (Aoo Tebenja Mapang)’ (19).

A rough translation of what the author has written will be as follows.

1) The first phase from 1872-1911 is the phase of Clark Sab (Clark Sir) which saw the publication of the first three books in Ao language under the initiative of Dr. & Mrs. E. W. Clark – *Ao Primer*(1877), *Ao Naga Grammar*(1893) and the *Ao Naga Dictionary*(1911). These three books formed the basis of the genesis of written literature for the Ao Nagas.

2) The phase of Rongsennüken (1912-1929) is translated as the time when Ao language took root. It is during this time that the New Testament was fully translated into Ao by Mr. Rongsennüken.

3) The phase of Imnameren (1930-1950) is the time when Ao language flowered. The individual named in this phase had a significant role to play since he strongly supported the translation of a number of important books in Ao and was the first to bring it to the notice of others who acted on this view.

4) The phase of Nokdenlemba (1951-1972) is the time when the Ao language bore fruit. The Old Testament was fully translated during this time by Nokdenlemba. It was later compiled with the New Testament and the full translated Holy Bible in Ao language was published in 1964.

5) The phase of Renthly Keitzar (1972-2010) is the time when Ao language went into a state of disarray with certain differences arising in the language structure. The language along with the written literature was facing change and development; as such the confusion was inevitable.

The author looks forward to the ‘Aoo Tebenjem Tensa’ or the time when the Ao language will have a specific and whole structure as a spoken and written language.

There were many positive impacts caused by the influx of a new culture, especially that which prevented certain traditions from the time of the forefathers to have been recognized as wrong. Many positive changes were brought about—age old practices like head-hunting, etc., considered honorable started losing importance and ultimately ceased to exist. This brought about a change in the savage outlook towards one’s enemies being resolved rather by verbal discussion than that of the honor of chopping off an enemy head. However, this sudden assimilation of a new culture that was almost thrust upon the natives or tribes also had its own disadvantage, in that a development that needed to be slow and gradual was almost pushed or forced which

created a gap in understanding of the outside world for the then generation and the others that followed. Though there has been progress yet, the colonial rule brought with it- certain setbacks like the dilemma of developing a cultural identity. The Ao Nagas were introduced to a new culture of the colonizers, in which process they also started considering their culture as inferior resulting in much loss of the oral system. It resulted in the creation of a vacuum for the later posterity.

In this respect, the Naga society has always functioned under the rubric of oral tradition. The pre-colonial Nagas used oral tradition as the repository of all cultural history and traditions. Folksongs, folktales and proverbs were used in order to pass traditional knowledge from one generation to the other. It was an integral system in which the simplest of stories or sayings held a mine of information which allowed the listeners to grasp a better perspective of their identity and cultural reality. Though folklore itself has a broader connotation, the scholar will be focusing on interpreting select folksongs, folktales and proverbs of the Ao Nagas in the chapters that follow.

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Chapter 3

Interpreting Ao Naga Folksongs

3.1. Meaning of Folksong

Folksong is defined as “a song originating among the people of a country or area, passed by oral tradition from one singer or generation to the next, often existing in several versions, and marked generally by simple, modal melody and stanzaic narrative verse” by the Dictionary.com. ‘The folksong is a song, i.e. a lyric poem with melody, which originated anonymously, among unlettered folk in times past and this remained in currency for considerable time, as a rule for centuries’ (A. H. Krappe 153).

Every culture carries within it traces of past generations. The history, society and the stories related to it get incorporated along the way and get passed on from one generation to the other. Ao Naga folklore in the form of folksongs and folktales, besides others, are an important part of the Ao Naga society and culture. They symbolize many significant elements of the social order and have been passed on from generation to generation, from one storyteller to the other surviving in the rubric of oral tradition. The interesting thing that can be observed is that the existence of the people as a group with an identity they can call their own forms the very core of how their culture is preserved. The tales and songs highlight the early social structure of the Ao Nagas as well as what they believed. These songs and tales are a means to teach and advice the younger generation on values and morals.

3.2. Ao Naga Folksongs

It is said that our forefathers used to converse through songs so singing is an important characteristic in conversation that cannot be ignored. In fact, in most stories the whole conversation is carried on through singing. The songs have a poetic ring to it and the words are heavy with meaning. There are different kinds of songs according to the occasion. In the work of Hem Barua called *Folksongs of India*, he writes in his *Preface* that folksongs naturally bloom out of the rural landscapes and from the mountainous hilly areas to the valleys it is “one broad river of songs” enriched by the different socio-linguistic groups in the country. The folksongs of India which excludes ballads and long poems so as to enable lyric study are categorized by Barua as *Nature Songs, Love Songs, Marriage Songs and Songs of Married life, Lullabies and Cradle songs, Work Songs and Festive Songs*. He writes “*the life of the lyric is its inherent song-quality*” (Barua v-vi).

Singing always forms an integral part of any narrative account. In the Ao Naga culture and society, one of the important aspects of their folklore is the folksong. In its purest form it is governed by certain norms and each different occasion calls for the appropriate song.

Ao Nagas folksongs are sung according to the different occasions. In *The Ao-Naga Oral Tradition*, Temsula Ao writes about the different songs that are exclusively sung by men like *Nok Ken (War song), Nüngsang Ken (in praise of particular men or clans), Mera Ken (Love song), Kimak Ken (house warming song) and Lipok Ken (songs recounting creation, origin of man and settlement of villages)*. The songs exclusively sung by women only are *Tsüki Ken (songs sung in girls' dormitories), Mojing Araba Ken (songs to ward off evil spirits), Ilangtsü Ken (clan*

songs), *Masemba Ken* (love song of disappointment sung by a jilted girl), *Toktep ken* (impromptu competitive song), *Tanur Mesüziik ken* (lullabies) and *Mangyim Ken* (mourning song). Both men and women participate in *Jokshishi Ken* while performing dances (Ao 14). An important aspect that should be kept in mind however, is that owing to the number of Ao Naga villages, which have their own Jungli or Mongsen variants in dialect, there is again a difference in how some of these songs are called; although, it is also true that for the understanding of the whole community, a general term in the common language is used.

3.3. Characteristics of Ao Naga Folksongs

The Ao Nagas have different types of folksongs sung during different occasions as given above. They are also themed accordingly and might center around one motif or different motifs. It is important to check certain characteristic features of the Ao Naga folksongs to get more clarity on them. Also these characteristic features might be generally accepted or they might be exclusive to the folksongs of the Ao Nagas.

3.3.1. On the basis of Tune or Melody:

Ao Naga folksongs or the way they are sung- the same words to a song can be sung in different tunes, only a few are specifically independent.

Ao Naga folksongs can also be divided based on the melody or the tune. It is true that depending on different range and village there might be slight variations but those just make a tiny difference. The basis and characteristic patterns remain the same in the melody. There is *Masem*, *Amen/Kimak ken* etc., sometimes the same lyrics of a song can be used.

Masem kensü: Masem Ken has a particular melody and is sung by one person, it is especially sung when working in the fields. The following is in *Masem kensü* or in Masem tune.

<i>Tanü ku-lu sabang ko,</i>	<i>Today my field sabang at,</i>
<i>Mongza amung mera;</i>	<i>Eagle stay not come;</i>
<i>Sungko aying jano-a!</i>	<i>Tree lonely is !</i>
<i>Ijem Aoyimdong yaba,</i>	<i>Ijem Ao pathway shine,</i>
<i>Nang-ka tanila ratijenko</i>	<i>You also today (la) funeral at</i>
<i>Ayuanng kha küsü?</i>	<i>(Atsü ayu) had</i>

Free translation:

Today at the outskirts of my field,

The eagle has not come to stay;

The big tree feels so lonely!

Beloved who shines upon the pathway of the whole village,

It seems you are circling at a funeral today,

Are you taking part in the lawsuit?

Long time ago at Jungliyimti, there lived a young, loving married couple. Their happiness was short lived because at the prime of their life when the husband was strong and able, he died leaving his wife sad and lonely. As the elderly would

say, the situation for them became a *chendong lujok* (*chendong* means bed; *lujok* means take away) which meant that they could never be together since one of them had died. The young widow mourned for her husband's death without working in the field for some days as is the custom of the Ao Nagas when someone in the family dies. After her mourning period, the widow began her daily work in the field. When she would go to the field to work, it so happened that every day, there would be a crow perched on the largest tree of the Sabang. The eagle was actually the spirit of her late husband. He looked on and guarded his wife without disturbing, from a distance. He would accompany his wife the whole day till her field work was done and would then leave in the evening when the wife left for home. The wife was also aware that the crow was her husband's spirit watching over her. One day, when the wife was working in the field as usual, she realized that the eagle was not there. She had grown used to her husband being there in life as well as after his death and his absence affected her. She missed her husband and then started singing a song.

Tsük asendang atenba ken:

There are songs sung during the activity of pounding rice which is done in pairs within a family or in large groups during group harvest and during festivals or other celebrations, called *Tsük asendang atenba ken*. It is sung as a household activity between the members of a family or between larger groups of members in a community, and is mostly an activity done by the women. The first individual or group leads in singing while pounding, the exact words of which are echoed by the other individual or group. The melody of the song is simple with the notes travelling between short intervals making it easier for the other party to follow. The highlight of this song is the rhythm which follows the steady pounding of wood on the rice threshold and is evident even in the melody itself. The words follow a four syllable

division where each pound of the pestle works like a running beat right on the first and third syllable where in terms of rhythm the first singer pounds on the first beat and second singer on the third beat. It means that the beat would instantly fall as a heavy beat on alternate syllables. The only distinction is that the first group of singers will pound on the first syllable while the second will follow with their pounding on the third syllable.

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4
Kong-ro a-na // // | a-a - tong-ro // //

Each letter or groups of letters and // that is underlined shows the exact rhythm where the pestle pounds on the threshold. Here the // represents the gap between the words.

The following is an example of how rice pounding songs are sung, the meaning and translation is given in the appendix. The underlined letters or punctuation is the beat of the pestle, Singer 1 (S1) pound on the first and third beat and Singer 2 (S2) pound on the second and fourth beat. The // is the pause in the singing to match the rhythmic nature of the rice pounding. Also, though the two groups pound at alternate, specific beats, the singing itself continues regardless of whether they themselves pound the rice when they are singing or whether the other group is following them and giving the beat.

S1 - Kong-ro a-na // // |a-a- tong-ro, // //

S2 - Kong-ro a-na // // |a-a- tong-ro // //

S1 - Zu-ni to-a // // |me-me-te-ter // //

S2 - Zu-ni to-a // // |me-me-te-ter // //

S1 - Chu-ba len-mang // // |a-se ja-no // // |ne-ü // //

S2 - Chu-ba len-mang // // |a-se ja-no // // |ne-ü // //

S1 - Tzü-mok ku-u // // |o-ra a-se // // |la-po len-ji // //

S2 - Tzü-mok ku-u // // |o-ra a-se // // |la-po len-ji // //

S1 - Tzü-sen-la-er // // |nük-la-la-er // //

S2 - Tzü-sen-la-er // // |nük-la-la-er // //

S1 - A-a-tong-ro // // |ta-a-le-n // //

S2 - A-a-tong-ro // // |ta-a-le-n // //

S1 - Len-dong te-tang // // |ok-tsü ne-ü // //

S2 - Len-dong te-tang // // |ok-tsü ne-ü // //

S1 - Long-kong ki-ir // // |jung nung ma-yang // //

S2 - Long-kong ki-ir // // |jung nung ma-yang // //

S1 - Na-ro pen-yu // // |dang-i Zu-nü // //

S2 - Na-ro pen-yu // // |dang-i Zu-nü // //

S1 - Tao-ang me-me // // |tet-li ne-ü // // |oh-o-ho-lo // //

S2 - Tao-ang me-me // // |tet-li ne-ü // // |oh-o-ho-lo // //

The importance of group singing as well as community feeling is maintained and observed through such activities. The sub-conscious learning of interdependence among the members as well as that of trusting one another can be pointed out through

such an activity where the senses are involved both in pounding the rice rhythmically which requires a certain amount of concentration; and leading and following each other through singing which again involves trusting the other person and oneself too. Thus, although the activity of singing and pounding of rice does entail simplicity in the way observers look at it, there are certain elements that continue to surround the very core of its existence. It is here that the ones involved can let their guards down and develop a sense of communal bonding. The opportunity of learning more songs in the process is not to be doubted at all.

The same lyric can be used for other songs with a different melody like in the *Masem Ken* or with the help of an accompanying traditional instrument which is called the *Ko Kongki Ken*.

Kimak or Amen ken:

Another category of melody in Ao Naga folksongs is that of the *Kimak* (J) or *Amen* (M) *ken*. It is sung by the men only when they visit houses during festivals like *Moatsü* and *Tsüingremong*. The term *kimak* loosely translated means ‘to visit a house’ while *amen* means ‘to sit’. As the term implies the men sit in a circle on the floor, facing each other and proceed to sing songs. There is a leader in the group who first begins the song and he is echoed by the rest who are divided into two groups. These two groups are divided on the basis of those singing in the high register and those singing in a low register. However, unlike the regular Western musical division of parts for men into tenor or bass which have independent melodies most of the time, the *Amen ken* on the other hand has only one melody which is sung with a difference in octave by the two groups, one group singing the same melody in the high register and another group singing the said melody in the lower register.

In the book *Many Cultures, One Nation: Essays by Tata Fellows in Folklore* edited by M.D. Muthukumaraswamy the essay, on “The Traditional Songs of the Ao Nagas”, the writer says that there are at least a ‘dozen common/standard tunes that is known throughout the Ao areas from which to choose from, which is largely directed by their situation. One could sing the same stanza in several tunes. The tunes mentioned are *Züki* tune, *Mongpu* tune, *Masem* tune, *Motsiing Araba* tune, *Ohoila-hoila* tune, *Tsüksen* tune, *Manglong* tune, *Ayim* tune, *Longra* tune, *Kongki* tune, *Kimak/Amen* tunes, *Kentula* tune’ (Lemtila Alinger and I.B. Longkumer 309-10).

3.3.2. On the basis of the reason as to why they are sung as well as the occasion

Ao Naga folksongs are also sung based on different occasions. Some of the folksongs are sung during festivals or while celebrating a victory. Some of the songs are sung during sad occasions remembering the ones who have gone away and honoring them.

It is said that the Ao Naga forefathers used to converse through songs, so singing the words in the midst of the conversation is a very important characteristic that can be noted. In fact, often the whole conversation revolved around a diadem of clever response where individuals or groups of individuals would sing back and forth till the ones with the more witty response would rest the case. Even common conversation among the individuals would be done through singing. Therefore, there are different types of folksongs, based on their characteristic classification like songs sung between lovers, songs sung by groups, separate songs sung by the women and men, clan songs, songs of individual soliloquies, lullabies, and many more. Some of these songs overlap with one another with the same expressing different situations;

most songs form a part of folktales in the conversation between the characters, while there are songs simply there symbolizing something significant.

Lipok Ken (Songs recounting creation story, origin or village settlement)

The characteristic of *Lipok ken* or origin songs is that there is reference to *Longtrok* or six stones from where the Ao Nagas are said to have emerged in the village of Jungliyimti. According to this song, the members of the three clans constructed the Sendenriju after settling at Jungliyimti and as a custom they composed a song to preserve the occasion.

In the beginning at Jungliyimti, there was just one Arju called the Sendenriju due to sparse population. A learning institution which means to ‘fight with the enemy’ is called the ‘Arju’ in the Ao Naga society. Generally, it is first built by the people of a newly established village at the main entrance of the village gate. It is an ancient institution where the young men of the village go and prepare themselves for self defense and learn to discipline themselves in other traits of self sustenance.

Longtroko poker;

With the emergence at Longtrok,

Bochi asem sangria;

The sons of three clans,

Lima tasen mesemdena yur;

After founding a new site

Chungliyimti ali tema pang nung;

At Chungliyimti land,

Sendenriju yangerkone.

*Was the Sendenriju erected (N.T.
Jamir)*

Yimküm Ken (Songs on village formation)

This is a song that recounts how a village has been formed and as such is very significant for the members of that particular village. One such example is given below which is that of the Ao village of Lirmen.

Oh! Waromung ko Kúpza Molichanger;

Oh! Waromung at Kúpza Molichanger;

Ayim tesen kümu pangjemer,

Village new to settle discuss,

Lima kümro wali,

Land settling had gone,

Liri-tongmen yachetteter,

Lir tree under cleared,

Konang Rongendangba soyim;

Honor Rongendangba's birthplace;

Lijaba lima ko milong jongoker,

Lijaba's land at flame began,

Iba ayim tening Lirmen tü Jachetchar

This village name Lirmen is called.

According to this story the “Kupza Molichanger” namely two clans from Waromung village discussed about the formation of a new village. In those days, the formation of a new village could be done if different clans agreed on it and found a suitable land to settle, which is practiced even today. They set out after much deliberation to find the required land. After sometime they found a suitable place under a ‘lir’ tree (a gooseberry tree) and cleared the place. They gradually settled and the first son after the settlement in Lirmen was called Rongendangba.

Nüknerar Ken (Love songs)

The Ao Nagas also have a wide range of love songs which is sung by both lovers or it might be a ruminating song sung by either a girl or a boy. These songs represent different emotions of happiness and sadness which form an inevitable part of any relationship. The following song can be sung by either the girl or the boy and is a question being asked by the individual to the mother.

A) Solo sung by one person

Nüknerar melemvou,

Lovers not destined,

avi ni-dang a-sü?

mother me only is it?

Yimtabenlar nüknerar;

Whole village lover;

Nüknerar iesa lemvoui sang,

Lover us destined if only,

Ora Khar lemdang atangjaki,

That distant Khar hilltop would,

Lenden kümlaben!

Plain area do become!

According to this, the singer is asking his mother if he is the only person in the village who is not destined to settle with the one he loves. It ends with this declaration

that if at all he is able to settle with his lover then the hill top that can be directly seen by them above the village of Khar (one of the Ao villages) would be mowed down into a plain landscape. This song shows the disappointment and desperation of the lover and the usage of hyperbole also make the listeners realize that it is most certainly an improbable marriage.

b) Duet sung between lovers

Female:

<i>Jongpongtasang sun-küka,</i>	<i>Mithun best tied up-though,</i>
<i>Kilang tachi zulu-küka,</i>	<i>House decor nice-though</i>
<i>Nuza nüknerrar alakvi nung-a;</i>	<i>Young love forget not;</i>
<i>Yajang Riju mako,</i>	<i>Yajang Arju atop,</i>
<i>Pangmerem-jang sulunrarala!</i>	<i>Lips red person whoever yearning!</i>

Male:

<i>Ne-ang sulung-raro-wa,</i>	<i>Me instead whoever will yearn for,</i>
<i>Chubakulilar yarinaro?</i>	<i>Parent's daughter, beautiful flower?</i>
<i>Kü chendong-nü mera,</i>	<i>My bed below not come,</i>
<i>Chako alakangtala?</i>	<i>How would forget so?</i>

This is a song sung between two lovers. The first five lines of the song is sung by the girl where she says even if the finest Miithun (bison) is tied outside the house

or the decor of a house is magnificent, the love of youth is far better. The usage of Mithun is significant since for the Ao Nagas it symbolizes wealth and prosperity; the mention of a nice dwelling place points towards extraordinary beauty since Ao Nagas in particular and the other Naga tribes in general give special attention to the exterior of their houses which is adorned with the trophies of their head-hunting activities or in their hunt for animals; and all of these material and abstract qualities cannot measure to the love that is characteristic of youth. The Ao Nagas are very fond of chewing the Areca nut which when eaten alone or with betel leaf leaves red residue, and red stains on the teeth and lips of the one chewing. In today's generation the state of a man having stained red lips after chewing something might not be in terms with the accepted fashion norms. However, the practice of chewing areca nuts is a part of the culture of the Ao Nagas and it would seem rather strange to see someone not indulging in such a common practice. Even in the song, the young girl sees a handsome young man who is standing atop the 'yajang' Arju chewing the favored nut as he ruminates. The young girl addresses the handsome young man whose lips is red from chewing areca nut, standing on top of the Yajang Arju and wonders whom he is yearning for.

The second part of the song comprising of four lines is the reply of the young man. He is quick to address the question asked of him by the young woman and replies with a witty question saying whom would he yearn for other than the girl herself, implying that he is thinking of her. The girl is protected under the care of her parents; which does not make it easy for him to forget the difficulty of asking for her hand in marriage one day. Here, *Chubakulilar* refers to someone representing an authority and in this case it talks about the girl's obedience to her parents. It is to be noted that for the Ao Nagas, parents play a pivotal role in inculcating values in their

children including what to expect from a future spouse. Thus, even here the boy is wondering about the expectations that might be there from the parents of the girl he loves.

Külemkejaba Ken (Worship song)

There are worship songs sung by the Ao Nagas to give praise and honour to different elements in nature that are beyond their understanding or which are a source of provision. The following song is in praise of the *Aok(Pig)* or *An(Chicken) tsüba (river)* god that is located in a particular Ao village and exclusive to that area.

Aok tsüba tsüngrem, tsüngrem

Aok river god, god

An tsüba tsüngrem, tsüngrem

An river god, god

Yongmen ki nala, nala

Yongmen one sided wearer, wearer

Nar ki nala, nala

Nar one sided wearer, wearer

Ma-er khala, khala,

Riches abound, abound

Ma-ong khala, khala,

Blessings abound, abound

The literal translation of *Aok* or *An tsüba* means pig or chicken river. The place gets its name because here pigs and chicken take bath to clean themselves. The existence of a supernatural being in the particular area leads the inhabitants to pay reverence to the river entity which is said to protect the natives. The ritual of sacrificing an animal to appease the river god was practiced during the time of the forefathers.

If we look at the six line verse it is interesting to note that the repetition of the last two words in each line gives a chant like ritual effect. It also stresses on the importance of the words, the first and second lines emphasize on the word “tsüngrem” or god; the third and fourth lines emphasize on “nala” or wearer and the fifth and sixth lines emphasize on “khala” or abound. These words stress on the entity, to make certain that the one being worshipped is not forgotten or ignored since all three words point to that supernatural being. The Ao Nagas have a strong affinity to their surrounding and are sensitive to Nature that protects them.

Naklu Ken (Praise song)

These are songs sung in praise of warriors or a strong personality in the village. It was especially popular during the headhunting days when the warriors used to bring trophies from their raids. It is also sung in praise of deeds done by a person that is worth mentioning.

Nok Ken

These are war songs and are sung when the Ao Nagas return from the battlefield. It was sung in honour of the warriors who had fought and received victory.

Jungliyimti temen ko

Kuten sayir den tongtepdang meya

O Nok-ka kü nok a

Nü-a kü nü-a

Jong-a kü jong-a

Free translation:

At the hilltop of Jungliyimti,

I fought with Sayir

O! My nok is also my nok I use to fight!

My spear is also my spear I use to throw and pierce!

My shield is also my spear I use to defend myself and my comrades!

This is a war song which talks about having fought with the enemy on the hills of Jungliyimti. The singer has fought with courage and valor and he proudly sings about it. His 'nok' (dao) and spear are the two weapons he uses to fight while his shield is what he uses to protect himself and those who are dear to him. Most importantly, these are a symbol of his manhood and the warrior inside of him. This kind of song boosts confidence in the singer and represents the identity of an individual.

3.3.3. The Song in a Story

The Captured Headhunter

There are songs as is given in the following tale which is able to help a person escape from the clutches of the enemy.

In the days of the headhunters, the head of a slain enemy was considered to be the trophy, the greater the number of enemy heads, the more the valor and honor. During one such encounter, a young Ao man was captured and taken captive by an enemy headhunter from another village. He was imprisoned in an empty sty, those days the pigs were let loose during the daytime and they returned to the sty on their

own in the evening. Besides that, these places were the only closed enclosures which could be used like a prison even for humans. The captor confidently secured the sty so that the prisoner would not escape. He then went to sharpen the dao which was to kill and take the prisoner's head. The young man was also not oblivious to this fact as he quietly expected his fate in the solitary confinement that he was to die very soon. However, there was one thing that made him restless; it was not the fear of death, rather it was the heartbreaking reminder of the wife he really loved and the children whom he cared. He wondered what was to happen to them and he started to sing a song to pour out his emotions and feelings.

<i>Sar ki ko ni monger,</i>	<i>Headhunter house at I stay,</i>
<i>Ijem aoyimyala shi</i>	<i>Ijem land shine one</i>
<i>Molung koda li-i-kala</i>	<i>Heart how will survive?</i>
<i>Süngko na tonger, Tiyong na tonger</i>	<i>Tree has hidden, partition has hidden</i>
<i>Kü yim dang mepeni chetkani</i>	<i>My village is not viewable</i>
<i>Mong nang ka</i>	<i>Wind, you too</i>
<i>Kü yimko-ong chika wa-erchaba kola</i>	<i>If you go across my village</i>
<i>Nuya yangalar dangko</i>	<i>Tell to my childhood lover</i>
<i>“Yarang metsüiyoka dangni</i>	<i>“You no longer your lover meet</i>
<i>Tejeb telongra dangni!”</i>	<i>Don't cry don't miss!”</i>

I am imprisoned at the enemies', Ijem beauty of the land

I wonder how your heart will survive

The tree and the partition of the thatch wall conceals everything

My village landscape cannot be viewed

You too dear Wind, If you blow across my village

Tell the sweetheart of my childhood

“Your lover you will no longer meet”

“Cry not, remember not me.”

(This song expresses the prisoner’s realization of not being able to meet his love anymore. Ijem means ‘woman’ and here he is referring to his ‘wife’. He even sends a consoling message to his wife through the wind that would certainly blow past his village to tell her that he will no longer be able to meet her. He passes her the message not to cry for him after his death or to hold on to his memories making her own self more sad.)

As the young man waited what was to come, he caught a glimpse of his captor’s wife going about her house work which immediately added to his frustration, a painful reminder of his dear wife and family back home. This time also the prisoner sang but not to the self or to his loved ones. Surprisingly, he sang to his enemy’s wife.

O bendang lar,

Oh strange woman,

Nangi sur chemerala ?

You’re whose wife?

Kolang shishiro na,

Your smooth hair bun,

Ijem nu benti ashi jaoa.

Reminds me of child weaning Ijem.

Oh! Whose wife are you stranger?

Your hair smoothly bunned

Looks like Ijem my child's mother

(The sight of the captor's wife reminds the prisoner of his own wife in the similarity of the attire, the way her hair is tied up in the style of the traditional bun. The prisoner can view that she is also looking after and caring for her own child even as she goes about her housework which is again very akin to his own wife back home, reminding him of her and making him sing this song in misery and sadness to the wife of the enemy who would soon take his head as a trophy).

The wife of the captor heard the song and she felt the frustration of the prisoner. She could understand the pain of losing a loved one. The captor's wife was so touched by the song and she felt pity for the prisoner though he was an enemy. She did the unthinkable and freed the young man. Soon the captor returned after sharpening his dao, only to discover that the prisoner had escaped. He questioned his wife about the prisoner's escape and if she had seen or heard anything unusual to which she replied that she had no clue whatsoever. Thus, the young man's life was saved that day because of a song he sang which expressed his sadness and spoke even to his enemy compelling the latter to help him escape.

3.3.4. Songs that help to identify a Particular Clan

Under clan songs there is an important aspect which actually acts as an identification tag for an individual and that would be the chant or the cry also known as 'atempa' in both jungli and mongsen. This is usually done when the individual leaves a group activity like singing or dancing, it can also be used when sitting or

standing up as an introduction of who he or she is. Clan songs give a person's identity to the listeners, these songs also portray names or how a person got the name and their achievements.

During the Yartsüngsang, which is a dance during festivals or other such occasions, if the scholar were to engage in "atempa", the following words would be cried out followed by a holler.

Hok..... "Nokchalar" "Onganglar Naro"

Aooo.....Ulu.....lu.....lu.....lu.....lu...

Hok refers to a loud shout, *Nokchalar* means the father belongs to the Longkumer clan. *Onganglar Naro* means the daughter of a mother from the Ozüküm clan. This can be used only by women; for men "*Nokchalar*" becomes "*Nokchachanger*" and "*Onganglar Naro*" becomes "*Onganglar Nangpong*". The holler at the end is also different for men which have a shout like feature. Such kind of cries for different clans helps identify the clan of the individual even if there is no formal introduction.

3.3.5. Number of Singers in an Ao Naga Folksong

Folksongs are generally sung in groups or by the whole community, but there are instances when the required numbers of singers do vary. Ao Naga folksongs can be divided into a solo, duet or a group of three or more (small or large groups). One person singing can be wherever or whatever he or she might be doing, like a soliloquy; it can be an individual working in the fields or at home doing household chores or just musing over certain things while pondering on certain things. The duet characteristics of folksongs occur in almost all love songs, since they are sung by

couples expressing different emotions of their love for each other. However, it is not just characteristic of love songs alone but it can be a duet conversation between two individuals of the same gender or even different gender expressing a general topic. There are folksongs sung by three or more individuals depending on the occasion as well as the place. It could be a small group singing or it could be a large group which might include almost all the village members on certain occasions.

3.3.6. Sung Exclusively by Men or Women

Some of the songs are sung only by the female (example tzuki ken, lata ya ko tenba). Some of the songs are sung only by the male (example kimak or amen ken). Some of the songs are sung with both male and female participating.

3.3.7. Song Sung After the Advent of Christianity

Khristan yimsü arur (after 1872) lanurtemi konang makaba sasa bilemba kenka

The following is a song sung by the youngsters who feel like they are no longer going back to their glory days of the headhunters anymore. This shows the loss of the cultural element, an effect of postcolonialism.

<i>O iba-ibo iniüng-i!</i>	<i>Oh! This from now onwards!</i>
<i>Ao-saer iteni!</i>	<i>Ao headhunters from now onwards!</i>
<i>O leptep-ila kü yimya,</i>	<i>Oh! Headhunting my habit,</i>
<i>Yimsü tajung asü-ani.</i>	<i>Religion good it was,</i>
<i>O tzüta langlen alir,</i>	<i>Oh! River below reside,</i>
<i>Chuba ayin-ketba-i,</i>	<i>The ruler's power carrier did,</i>

Hokhum küma yua-er, Order made and kept,
O anoknaro makani! Oh! Dao's honor is not there!
O chuchu niang nunga-er, Oh! Chuchu, it is not only me,
Yimkong semer lanur, Ao land across young people,
Nemjem-er a-ni! Do regret so!

This song is a song of lament and regret sung by the Ao Nagas after a new culture in the form of a new religion came about. It is an example of the mixed emotions that had engulfed the Ao Nagas after they abandoned the age old practice of headhunting. The song talks about the arrival of a person through the plain areas of Assam. The person is said to hold power given to him by the authority. Here it refers to Dr. E. W. Clark who was the first missionary to the Ao Nagas and an important figure in the doing away of the said cultural practice. The song mentions about the honor of the dao that has been lost and will never recover. This means that for the Ao Nagas, the respect and honor that a person gets from headhunting is very high. The number of enemy heads taken as trophy is what identifies a brave and strong warrior; it also brings laurels of praise through songs for the individual.

However, since this practice is no longer a part of their daily routine, the singer says it is not the lament of just one Ao village. This honor and valor will not be known by the younger generation and it is echoed in the last two lines where there is a lament that the young people of the Ao villages are affected by this and share in the regret, since they will now not be a part of that lost tradition. This song shows another effect of the colonial rule on the natives.

3.4. Ao Naga Folksongs as they exist today

Folksongs are often given different names due to the spread out of the different villages. However, in the changing times the process might differ according to the different villages. The solution to being true and genuine to all these is said to be through meeting up during festivals and exchanging the oral tradition passed down. The Ao Nagas do so by meeting up frequently during festivals like Moatsü and Tsüngremmong, where the representatives from the different villages gather and exchange their lore to make certain that the authenticity is still preserved. Today the folksongs are a part of the traditional and cultural heritage of the Ao Nagas as more and more genres of popular and classical music infiltrate the music scene.

It is a fact that today's world presents to every culture a complex process of acculturation and assimilation, especially if they are an ethnic group. The challenge lies in complete absorption by the majority and a total erasure of one's culture. Of course, the absorbed customs, behavior, language etc of the other will ultimately become 'the' culture yet, there is the sense of loss over a totally different cultural inheritance. The traces of the past generation are carried along from one culture to another. The history, social order and the stories get incorporated along the way. Since time immemorial, societies have passed on their treasure chest through storytellers in the strain of oral tradition. Many attempts have been made in matters of documentation of the oral literature and there has been success too; yet a lot remains to be done. We must remember that with the deterioration of the past form of oral storytelling and the inevitable passing away of the vessels of the lores themselves, the present generation should strive towards preserving whatever can be salvaged today. If not we might end up lamenting over what could have been done and what should have been done.

The advent of literature led to the development of script and the adaptation of western form of singing. However, the Ao Nagas have a rich heritage of songs with different tunes, signifying different occasions with different meanings. Also there is a sense of community feeling as well as the shared bond that exists through knowing one's roots. The singing of these songs also leads an individual towards identity representations. There have been songs that have been sung lamenting over the bygone years of headhunting immediately after it had been abandoned and the sudden change in practices of the old days. Folksongs are important because they are basic for folktales and for proverbs or sayings too. Folksongs come under the bigger umbrella of the folktales especially when it comes to Ao Naga lore since the song is a compact combination of story-song-proverb as a mnemonic device that has assisted social memory of the Ao culture. It is true that some of the proverbs are also a gist of tales that reflect life lessons.

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Chapter 4

Interpreting Ao Naga Folktales

4. 1. Introduction: Meaning of Folktale

Many attempts have been made to define, classify, and describe the folktale. None of these attempts has done a completely satisfactory job because the folktale is just too inclusive. The term 'folktale' covers almost every traditional narrative, either oral or literary. Its diverse forms include legends and traditions, fairy tales, animal tales, fables and of myths (<http://www.patheon.org>). Webster's Dictionary defines folktale as "a characteristically anonymous, timeless and placeless tale circulated orally among a people." The importance of folktales is in their exemplary ability and the way it influences the listeners to imbibe what they learn from these.

The traces of past generations in every culture, the history, social order etc., and the stories related to a people gets incorporated along the way and gets passed on from one generation to the other where the folktale is another such means. In his work *The Folktale* Stith Thompson writes that the 'teller' of a story has always 'found' listeners, be it something 'recent', 'a legend' or elaborate 'fiction' listeners have 'hung upon his words and satisfied their yearnings for information or amusement, for incitement to heroic deeds, for religious edification, or for release from the overpowering monotony of their lives.' (3)

In *The Ao Naga Oral Tradition* Temsula Ao writes that the 'primitive' man takes the inanimate objects of nature as parts of the great pattern of the Universe, absolutely 'throbbing and pulsating with life and power, and potent with medicine'.

Ao quotes M. Eliade on the mythical ‘...myth tells how, through the deeds of supernatural beings, a reality came into existence-an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behavior, an institution. Myth, then, is always an account of a ‘creation’, it relates how something was produced, began *to be*. Myth tells only of that which *really* happened, which manifested itself completely’ (Ao, 76).

One theme that recurs in the context of the mythical is the point of interconnection between the natural and the profane, the supernatural and the sacred. In the context of the Ao Nagas, their tales also touch the aspects of creation and the origin of things. We can conclude that myths are those narratives relating to the origin and creation of man and the universe around him. Tales, on the other hand, are those narratives which are of a chronological observation about man’s life in general. While myths are generally accepted to be true, tales are supposed to be false and inventions of men’s minds.

Besides tales on creation and origin, there are other folktales which teach life lessons to the listeners. A lot of these tales teach the listeners values on obedience, respect, discipline, honor, bravery, valor etc. Some of these tales are very witty and carry in them deep moral lessons. Apart from tales and songs, there are also a good number of proverbs which advice, encourage, rebuke or teach the listeners.

4.2. Ao Naga Folktales

Students of the folktale are primarily concerned with the origin and dissemination of tales as well as the folktale as an art. As an art form it concerns the conditions of folktale telling such as by the kind of people that tell tales, circumstances of the telling, the reception of the audience, the way they are handed down, and the stylistic effects of this oral art (Shipley 124-5).

Ao Naga folklore in the form of folksongs and folktales, besides others, are an important part of the Ao Naga society and culture. They symbolize many significant elements of the social order and have been passed on from generation to generation, from one storyteller to the other surviving in the rubric of oral tradition. The interesting thing that can be observed is that the existence of the people as a group with an identity they can call their own forms the very core of how their culture is preserved. The tales and songs highlight the early social structure of the Ao Nagas as well as what they believed. These songs and tales are a means to teach and advice the younger generation on values and morals.

There are many folktales which bear a similarity with other written stories, the origin of the later might or not have been affected by the former. Either way, it is moralistic in nature and its purpose is to give a moral lesson to its listeners which will be highlighted by the folktales that follow. A fascinating thing that one can note here is the use of songs in the narrative by the characters which is an important aspect of any Ao Naga folktale. Also since these tales have an oral tradition, they have songs sung in between which add to the beauty and authenticity of folklore. It also justifies the view that folksongs are very much intertwined in any Ao Naga folktale.

The following folktales are collections through narration from individuals well versed in the art of oral tradition. The endeavor of the scholar will be to identify and classify the form or forms- since some might exhibit the characteristics of more than one form- of the given folktale.

4.2.1. The Shrewd Young Man

This is the tale of a young man who was cleverly able to make a decision to choose for himself a suitable wife.

In those days young men and women lived in separate dormitories called Arju and Tsüki, learning institutions where they went after reaching a certain age. There was a division in their batches according to their age and the chores or work they learnt from the basic means of living like fetching wood or water to the most important ones like carpentry or weaving was divided accordingly.

It was here in these dormitories that young men and women mingled among themselves and in the course of time the young men courted and wooed the young women whomsoever they found suitable to become their life partners. The tale is told that a young man in the Arju was also making decisions to settle down. He had been searching for the right person and in due time he was able to get to know and grow close to two girls. He realized that both of them were suitable partners for him but he also realized that it was difficult to choose since he liked both of their outer personalities.

He, therefore, decided in the end that he would test them on the basis of whose character stood out the better among the two. The next day, he invited them to go to the forest to collect firewood with him. The girls readily agree and they go together. After a hard day's collection of firewood, they finally decided to set back home. As they slowly trudged back, the young man suddenly tripped and fell, and lost consciousness. The young women were shocked and terrified but they tried to help him, and waited for him to regain consciousness.

The sun was already setting and no one was around, the first girl grew impatient and wanted to go back to the village. Her consideration had started to wane out and she was no more concerned about the young man but for her own safety and

tiredness. She, therefore, sang this song to her friend urging her to go back home together since the sun was setting.

Atongtsü, atongtsü tsüingi wada ila *Friend, friend sun sets, therefore*

Tsükaro-er rang ma da *Go back do come please*

The other young woman was not willing to do what her friend had suggested because it would mean abandoning a helpless person. She expressed her feelings to her and started to sing that even though the sun had set, she was not leaving an unconscious person under the tree alone.

Tsüingi tsüla wangko, *The sun, let it set*

Süngti dongmenko, Sangbang *Huge tree under, young man*

Meshira ka ni. *Unconscious still.*

The first friend on hearing this went along her way while the other stayed behind with the seemingly unconscious individual. The young man who had faked his fall and his unconscious state the whole time and had been listening to what was going on now had no doubt about whom to decide as his life partner. He opened his eyes and the two of them returned to the village. In due time, he courted the young woman who had a considerate heart, who had chosen to stay with him even if it meant danger in the forest and soon they happily settled down.

This tale has a common or universal appeal as to how one uses wit to make choices.

This tale does not have the theme of a hero surprising the audience with marvelous details and exploits, rather, it deals with how the young man is able to

determine what is best for him, the plot is not extraordinary but is relatable and believable, it sets a limitation that is normal and does not go beyond human understanding. The direction of the plot is guided by the wit in the character of the young man and it falls under the category of the *novella*.

4.2.2. A Young Husband and a Nagging Wife

Once there was a young family comprising of the husband, wife and their young children. The husband would go to the field everyday and work very hard while his wife would stay back home looking after the children and taking care of household chores. After a hard day's work in the field, the husband would trudge back home hoping to relax and rest his weary body. Alas! It wasn't to be so because what awaited him would be a nagging wife who would greet him complaining, not once would she ask how her husband's day was, failing to notice that he himself had a rough day. The husband would simply remain silent all through. One day in the fields he started singing thus:

<i>Ku lu takterak ila</i>	<i>My takterak filled field</i>
<i>Jaji ko pangtong shijong ja anua</i>	<i>Full of jaji, pangtong overgrown</i>
<i>Luyang sungko ene-er</i>	<i>Field man load of wood carries</i>
<i>Temsenshiko tsüka bala</i>	<i>Finishes very late and returns, yet</i>
<i>Ijemla na, ra-ja ketdang liteli!</i>	<i>Ijemla she complains on!</i>

The song says that after a long hard day of working in the field full of weeds like *takterak*, *jaji*, and *pangtong*, the young husband comes back home, the last among the workers in the field. He trudges towards the warmth of his home only to be rudely

awakened to the fact that his wife keeps nagging him about her day's work and about the children etc. This goes on for a long time and the young man becomes more and more unhappy. The relatives of the young husband come to know of this and they give him an idea how to get rid of her because the reason for divorce had to be there. They advise him to knowingly trip and throw the load on his wife the next time he returns from the field which would then instigate a quarrel leading to divorce. The wife's relatives come to know of this plan and advise her and try to reason with her about her behavior. They then tell her that that same evening when her husband comes from the field she should not complain and nag him about herself, she should understand that even he is already very tired so she should start taking care of him. The wife then foresees the drastic consequence of her actions and realizes her selfishness and lack of concern. The same evening when her husband returns, she quickly helps him in laying down his load basket saying, "Akaba's father let me help you with the load." She then makes something for him to eat. The husband is surprised by the wife's change of attitude but he is also happy with the change. They are able to gradually understand each other and as the story goes, they live a happy married life together.

The beginning of the tale is not a happy one and shows a dissatisfied character, the husband who is not happy with the constant nagging of the wife, the theme of this particular tale begins with a humorous and almost satirical bend on the qualms of married life and the form it brings out is that of the *Schwank*, which is similar to the *Anecdote*. 'The target of the *Schwank* is human frailty...' (Dorson70).

Stories like this help young married couples to understand each other about the duties expected of them as a husband or as a wife. It prepares young men and women for their future roles in the society and in a way 'educates' them in the truths of life.

The importance of family is reflected here as well as the role that spouses play for their marriage to be successful. The importance and influence of relatives in an Ao Naga marital structure is also seen here which is similar to most Indian marital systems and is far removed from the independent system of western society. The participation of relatives can be viewed as one of genuine concern for the two parties since they want them to be happy. The young man had been going through a difficult phase of working in the fields and getting tired and the song that he ends up singing is a lament of his situation which shows that he cannot even relieve his stress at home leading to mental tension. His relatives are quick to observe the situation and they give him the ultimate advice of divorce, to get rid of an unworthy wife. Another thing that is seen here is that they actually devise him a plan on how to give a divorce. The Ao Naga society is strict when it comes to divorcing someone and an individual cannot just divorce a spouse unless the reason behind it is strong. According to the writers of *Naga Society and Culture* divorce is rare in the Ao Naga society. However, there are certain instances which are causes for divorce in an Ao Naga marriage which include, 'unsound mind, incurable disease, sodomy, rape, adultery, cruelty, desertion, barrenness, and also on the ground of mutual incompatibility of temperament, taste, ideals, interests and careless management of household affairs (Jamir and Lanunungsang 201). The importance of relatives is once more emphasized when even for the young woman, rescue and advice comes from her relatives who somehow hear about the plan. In fact, the progress and development of both characters can be seen after the side characters make their entrance. The young woman is advised as well as made aware of the gravity of the situation because an argument and a divorce ensuing from neglecting the duties of a wife was not a good example. The implication is very apparent in the situation the young woman is in, since the status of being a young

divorcee returning to her parent's house would be disappointing. Another reason is because in the Ao Naga culture though the status of women is that of respectful treatment, the truth of patriarchy where men as the overshadowing authority and protector in the family cannot be ignored- the daughter under the protection of the father or brother and the wife under the husband's care. After being approached by the relatives the response of the wife is understandable; it is true that her actions might have been unconscious but those were because of the husband's tolerance. It further brings the reader or listener to ask why the husband had not complained sooner. The justification to that can be given in the fact that among the Ao Nagas men are expected to talk less which might have been the reason why the wife also could not understand what he was going through. The plot of the tale takes a different turn when one of the characters, the wife turns over a new leaf. She does the duties expected of her, like welcoming her husband home warmly, offering something to eat etc., which are traditionally expected of a wife. The most important thing however, is that she stops acting selfishly, focusing less on herself and more on her husband and their young family; which ultimately makes her husband consider the change in her as a genuine move for reconciliation and preventing the divorce.

4.2.3. Tale that Shows Who is Older- Man, Tiger or Deity?

In the days of the forefathers in Jungliyimti it was not known who was older- men, god or animals. This is a story that explains how they ascertained who was the oldest among them; it was important because the role of who was the most superior would be decided by that knowledge. In the Ao Naga culture the importance of the oldest, from a family unit to society as a whole, cannot be ignored, since it determines a lot of traditional practices which gives priority to the oldest or the eldest in the family or a social custom.

Therefore, one day, man, god and the tiger, representing all the animals, decided to meet up for a discussion to find out who was the eldest among them.

The tiger left midway through the meeting. It plunged and dived straight into the forest on its own, without caring about what lay along its path and disappeared into the forest. It showed its lack of knowledge and wisdom making it inferior among the three gathered. God held a flaming torch in one hand and pushed his way through the forest, he was, therefore, called the youngest among them. The one that remained was the man, therefore, he was declared to be the oldest among them.

Human beings realized that god was to be worshipped and the ritual of offering to the gods started. The following song tells the story, passed on by oral tradition from one generation to another.

Longterok nung poker

Stones six from emerge

Shiba tambu-ar tanubo memetet-a-ni

Who is older or younger not known!

Kiyi teremsaba kola koshi memetet

Tiger twist and turn, not knowing

Aong nemshia ogo ni

Forest push gone

Tsüngrem talaknungba meyilung ka ener

God, the youngest, flaming torch one held

Am jirong ka nemshia-ogo-ni

Am bunch pushes and goes

Aji agi meimchir tambu-a ta shiogo ni

That is why mankind/humans the oldest is declared!

This tale shows the superior element of human beings. Even here the physical force like the tiger and the spirit force like god are stronger than man who is actually the weakest, by sheer determination of will to survive takes the title of the eldest. The centrality of human beings can be seen here as well. The importance of the oldest among the Ao Nagas, be it among individuals, age groups, clans, or even the first settlers of a village, all of these are important for them.

4.2.4. Süngkotenem Lake Tale

From the time of the forefathers in the village of Mopungchukit, there existed the Sungkotenem Lake, as it had come to be called with reverence and which exists still today. This is the story of how the lake came into being. This happened during the age and generation of the Riyongsanger, the fifth in the cycle of generations in the *Putu Menden*. It means ‘the generation of many people who proclaim the war...*Ri*, or *ariür* refers to enemies and *riyong* means invitation or proclamation for war...the people in this generation were war like people...real fighters and war heroes’ (Jamir and Lanunungsang 41). It was during the time of the Riyongsanger that there was no lake; it was just a ‘süngkotenem’ which means a heavily wooded place with different types of huge trees. Atop one of the huge trees, a large python had decided to rest. On getting to know that, all the villagers refrained from going to the field and took out a day to put their effort in bringing the python down. At that time a person from another

village also happened to be present among them. It was also decreed that no one was allowed to leave the village whether it be a native from the village or others. On the assigned day, the whole village gathered to try and bring down the huge reptile; but no one succeeded in their effort even though they tried a number of times. At that time the person from another village who happened to be there asked if he could try too; and they gave him the catapult that they had been using. He let out a cry and said, ‘Aja naka meta, azu naka meta, ni Sametaba, kü matang ko keplazükang’, and then pulled at the catapult, which hit the python directly and it fell down to the ground. As the injured python rolled and slithered on the ground, it created a deep gorge which later progressed to the formation of a lake, and that is how the Süngkotenem Lake came into existence. The following song is sung to remember the day.

O Süngkotenem yongpang alisa-na

O Süngkotenem lake-source python-did

Payak saka angem tashi

Its design shown

Rionsanger tongpang koker

Rionsanger battle victorious

Mangkorepna tajen o-ni!

Head hunted in plenty!

So, as can be seen, this folktale would come under the category of an explanatory tale or a local legend. This tale is native to the area itself and explains how the lake came into existence. The story is already in the song and clearly explains it in one plot.

One thing that can be observed is the community spirit that is prevalent among the Ao Nagas. In the quest of getting the python down, the whole village stops their usual activity for a set time period and gives priority to do away with a danger that taunts the whole village. The customary law of the Ao Nagas can be seen here where the order of not leaving the village or allowing others to enter the village stockade is strictly followed. This rule is usually imposed by the ruling authority during different occasions and applies to visitors too who are expected to respect that once they are inside the village boundary. Here, the importance and respect given to rules chalked out can be seen.

4.2.5. The Tale of the Widow and Her Sons

Long time ago there lived three young boys and their widowed mother. When the boys were very young their father had been carried away and eaten by a man eating tigress. The boys were not aware of what had happened. Before long they all reached the stage where they could enter the male dormitory (Arju). It also meant that they could be a part of visiting the girls' dormitory (Tsüki), as was the practice during those days. The young girls already knew the incident of the boys' father because their background story had already been circulated by others who knew about it. They therefore, taunted and mocked the boys saying that the latter had not taken revenge for the death of their father and laughed at them for not manning up. The boys were quite surprised because they were unaware of this side of the story. Therefore, back home they decided to ask their mother if what they were mocked and criticized about was true. Their mother affirmed that their father was indeed carried away by a man eating tigress when they were small. The young boys who were all grown up then came to the conclusion that they would avenge the death of their father and at the same time shut the mouths of those who were mocking them and calling them useless.

After a few days of planning and searching, the boys were able to identify the tigress together with its lair. They also found out that the tigress was nursing cubs of its own. When the tigress had gone in search of food for its cubs, the boys who had been waiting for the right opportunity decided to go ahead with a plan. They came out of hiding, and slit the throats of all the cubs. The area was full of the (asong dong) tree and the three of them quickly climbed up and hid themselves. The tigress returned with its prey and tried feeding its cubs but was unable to do so. She shared this dilemma with her friends saying, "I am trying to feed my cubs, but whatever I place inside their mouth, it falls down from their throat". Hearing this, the youngest brother who is unable to control his laughter any longer lets out a stifled, "Hee! Hee!"

The tigress became aware of their presence and angrily rushed to climb the tree. The boys on their part threw the asong seeds at the tigress and as they continued to do so, there was only one fruit left. After much quick discussion about who should throw the last fruit, they gave chance to the youngest brother, who exhaled on the fruit and said, 'Let the pain be painful on your piles!' which was said like a curse on the tigress. The fruit struck the tigress in the forehead with such force that it immediately fell to its death.

After the tigress had been killed the three of them climbed down from the tree and cut off its head, ears, tail and legs. They then set off towards the house (dorm) of the spinster who along with the young girls staying with her had mocked the three young boys about their inability to avenge their father's death. At night when everyone was asleep, they put their plan into action. The leg of the tigress was placed in place of wood in the fireplace. One brother held the ears outside where the lifted bamboo verandah was, also called *singlang* in Jungli or *kilangi* in Mongsen, while another held the tail of the tigress near the entrance or the door post. In the middle of

the night when the girls went out to the *sünglang* for their needs, they groped the ear of the tigress and screamed in horror saying that there was a wild animal there. In their rush to get back outside they were then whipped by the tigress' tail at the entrance which led them screaming back to the sleeping room as they huddled and piled with fear upon each other. Those few who tried to light the fire were startled by the furry wood which is the foot of the tigress. The occupants of the dorm continued to have a sleepless and horrific night and in the midst of all that the matron who was in charge of the dorm was squashed to death in all the hustle and chaos.

The next morning, after the commotion of the previous night got over and the confusion resolved, the girls realized that they had done a grievous mistake in taunting the three brothers. They were also unable to say anything against the brothers because they were the ones who mocked and ridiculed them; and had instigated them to take revenge which the brothers did. The girls learnt a lesson from bitter experience.

This tale highlights the vices and frailties of human beings. The insensitive treatment meted out to the brothers can be seen in the choices of words used by the mockers. The years of psychological 'torture' that the widow and her sons went through culminated in that one night of trauma being inflicted on the scared girls in the dorm. It is also interesting to note that the death of the matron is not stressed upon much by the narrators of this tale with regard to the morality or grounds of being right or wrong. The same tale is written with slight variations in Temsula Ao's *The Ao-Naga Oral Tradition* (144-49) and also given as a reference in the appendix where the main events surrounding the plot like the revenge motif, the pursuit of fulfilling the revenge and the blatant tragedy of a character dying amidst the chaos is the same. It brings the listeners to the conclusion that it is not right to mock the fatherless or insult

the dead. The Ao Naga society has a set rule where the weaker sections of the society like the widows are protected by customary laws. The tragedy that was instigated from the poor treatment of the widow and his sons can be said to have a poetic justification to it. In a culture that is set on principles governed by invisible rules when it comes to applying certain principles, such tales help the listeners understand the nature of certain actions and their consequence thereof. It is true that in today's context, this situation would be viewed in terms of abuse, infringement of rights, murder etc. However, the context of this tale interpreted in terms of the social setting as was prevalent during a certain time would help the present readers to appreciate as well as imbibe more knowledge of the Ao Nagas.

4.2.6. The Story of Two Best Friends (Narokhum)

Long time back there were two friends who forged a very good and close friendship between them. Both of them belonged to different villages. One was from Waromung village and the other was from Unger village. The closeness and trust in their friendship could be seen in that they would simply visit and call upon each other's house as any close friend would do, and they would rest the night or stay for a few days in the other's house. The man from Waromung would rest at his best friend's place whenever he went up to Unger village; the man from Unger also did the same. The man from Waromung belonged to the Longkumer clan.

One day the man from Unger paid a visit to his friend at Waromung. That evening they had luli (a long type of beans- cowpea) for dinner. The next morning, they again had the same thing for their meal. The man from Unger sang in the following manner.

Waromung den jungshi-bo,

Luli den dang jungshir-a!

Having forged a friendship with Waromung,

Only with *luli* do I get to eat!

The friend from Waromung answered him, “*Temba*, let me continue the *talak* of the song”. “*Hai-ja toh, oang*”, replied the Unger friend and listened to the other replying thus:

Oh!!!

Ozü tsüingkhüm ajung yong-ang,

Luli den jia jungshir-a!

Oh!!!

It is but because of our splendid season,

That one can even get to eat with *luli*!!

His friend told him “*Aya Temba!* You have won indeed”.

The man from Unger village was eating only *luli* (a long type of beans-cowpea) at his friend’s house so he expressed that in the form of a jest. This is an example of an exchange of sentences or conversation through singing. The first portion is called the *temen* or ‘beginning’ where the friend sings that he had been only eating his meal with *luli* after his friendship with Waromung- here we see a reference being made of the village instead of the person’s name which is common practice when singing between two parties. The *talak* or ‘ending’ of the song is usually a reply

given by the other party which starts with a long “Oo...hh”. The reply given by the other person is that the reason due to which they are able to eat the luli is in itself simply because the season for farming the bean stalks has been favorable in their village. In other words, the harvest of luli had been plentiful which meant a well stocked and healthy storage of food. The friendly exchange of words stops after the witty reply from the host and the visiting friend accepts defeat.

Hence, the friendly battle of words through singing ended. The name *Akangjungshi* which means “strong friendship” is used to celebrate friendship and given as a *Narokhium* (A *Narokhium* is usually used to celebrate or commemorate a memorable event or situation. It can be given to honor the heroic deeds of a warrior. It can also be given to praise some noteworthy deeds/actions of a person of high standing. It can also act as a reminder to commemorate certain situations). In this story, the particular name acts in a significant manner to celebrate the bond of a close friendship shared between two individuals from two villages. The name *Akangjungshi* is also given to different individuals hailing from other clans too. However, those belonging to the Longkumer clan of Waromung use it as a *Narokhium* since the person mentioned in this tale belong to the same clan, remembering the importance of maintaining strong bonds and expecting the individual named as such to also share the same amount of positive energy with others.

Thus, we find that the giving of names or the name in itself play a very important role for the Ao Nagas in which the very fate of an individual would often be embedded especially during the time of the forefathers. The sequence of past events could often be unfolded in a particular name which more or less would have been given to a person by the whole village, by the clan members, or by the elders of a

family. At rare occasions, some names are given by two or more villages marking some important events.

In *The Ao-Naga Oral Tradition* Ao has written about the importance of names for an Ao Naga in this way,

Ao-Naga names are therefore statements of facts and not mere plays of imagination on words for achieving a certain poetic dimension in them. The idea behind the whole process seems to be that because these facts pertain to the tribe, they ought to be remembered in language. Thus Ao-Naga names become an integral part of what N. Scott. Momaday calls 'racial memory,' so that every time a name is uttered, the collective memory is revitalized. In as far as this is true, this form of traditional 'artefacts' play yet another role within the same tradition (28).

4.2.7. The Story of Risanglong

After the settlement and formation of the new village of Lirmen, when the Ao Nagas worshipped nature and its elements, the people of Lirmen also worshipped a big boulder called Risanglong. It protected the village by informing the villagers when enemy headhunters attacked or planned their attack on the particular village. This divine protection of the stone was accepted as well as held in awe and fear by the villagers who offered the stone their reverence and worship. As long as the stone was there, the village prospered in terms of producing warriors and great men. This continued for a while since the time of the forefathers.

However, with the coming of Christianity, the people were introduced to a new religion which was different from the animist practices. They started worshipping

a different kind of supreme God as was preached to them. The result was that the Lirmen people decided to throw away the stone. They dug up the stone with the plan to roll it away. The consequence was that the stone transformed into a rooster and flew off into the far distance. It is believed that after the stone flew away, the peace and prosperity of the land disappeared and the people regretted their actions about throwing the stone away.

This story highlights the immediate setting aside of the Ao Naga cultural practices which also meant doing away with age old traditional rituals after the introduction of a new faith. This sudden decision has had its advantage and disadvantage, the practice of head hunting was abandoned, but a lot of cultural practices were similarly done away with. The story of the Risanglong shows the willingness of the people to embrace the new, however it also shows the spontaneous action of doing away with something that held cultural value. It can be seen here that the introduction of a new culture has also left a dent in the identity of the people as can be observed in the reaction of regret, the postcolonial effect can be seen in such instances.

4.2.8. The Story behind the Tsüngremmong Festival

Long ago, in the time of the Ao Naga forefathers an old man visited and requested one house after another to let him stay. No one allowed him to stay making all kinds of excuses like *genna* (cleansing ritual), nursing the piglets, new born baby etc. Finally, at the outskirts of the village there was a small shack belonging to two sisters- Yarla and her younger sister. It was a rough patched shack which did not seem like anyone was occupying it.

The old man went to the sisters and asked if he could stay with them. They replied that they had nothing, not even food to eat but if he wanted to stay with them he was welcomed to stay. He stayed there and asked them to set the pot for cooking. He rubbed his forehead and took out a single grain of rice which he put into the boiling water and it was sufficient for all of them. Again he told them to place another pot on the fire; he pulled out a bone from his knee which filled the pot with meat more than enough for them. This continued for three days.

In the morning of the third day, the three of them went out to the bamboo majang (verandah) and the old man asked them questions about the fields and to whom it belonged. The sisters replied that it belonged to the villagers who made excuses not to let him stay in their houses. Yarla and her sister did not want to show their field to the old man. At a distance, in the far corner, there was a field covered with sieve that belonged to the sisters. The younger sister wanted to show it but the elder sister was hesitant as she was embarrassed.

The younger sister made a plan; she intentionally dropped the comb from the bamboo majang to the ground below and asked her sister to fetch it. When the elder sister went down to fetch the comb the younger sister showed their field to the old man. The elder sister came to know that the younger sister had told the old man.

As they sat there talking together, the old man told the two sisters that before they start reaping the harvest, during the phase when the field is already ripe, they should maintain a strict cleansing ritual for three days. After the three day period is over, they could harvest the field. This is called '*Tsüngremmong*' or '*Asemnümong*' by the Ao Nagas, which means 'observing for three days' and it is practiced till today. The old man told the two sisters to cut the strap of the basket when they had enough

harvest. One day, the younger sister got tired of harvesting continuously and spoke a lie to her sister that she was sick and could not come to the field. So, the elder sister went to the field alone. After sometime, the younger sister went up to the roof and cut the strap of the basket when the harvest was full.

Till today this particular belief about the strap of the basket is subconsciously there in the minds of the Ao Naga people. During the time of harvest when the basket is being filled with paddy, the concerned individuals make it a point not to rearrange the already tied straps as well as take extra precaution that they do not cut or scar the strap. This is to ensure that there is plenty of harvest to reap. This is how the festival of Tsungremmong came about and is celebrated all over the Ao area in the different villages. The significance of rituals or rites performed does not carry weightage today, however, the festival is still celebrated to bring about community feeling among the Ao Nagas as well as to preserve their culture and identity.

Other Tales:

Some tales teach life lessons to the listeners as can be seen in the story of “The Mother Crab and the Baby Crab” according to which a mother crab and her baby had come out of on the beach for some fresh air. As the mother crab watched her baby frolicking she suddenly noticed that there was an unnatural tilt in the way the baby was walking. So she called out why it would walk in such a funny way and to walk straight. The baby shouted back, “I am only imitating your walk!” (Ao 120-121). There are again different types of stories that teach lessons to individuals and to groups about how to behave with elders, the importance of discipline, responsibility, obedience, family life, social obligations etc.

Some of these songs and tales also present the elements of moral values and who as a person is considered good or bad. Folksongs and folktales thus form a very important aspect of the Ao Naga culture.

4.3. Some Characteristics of the Ao Naga Folktales

- i) Except for a few tales all the Ao Naga folktales have at least one song in it.
- ii) The narration of a tale is often affected by certain factors like the location of a village, the interaction with other tribes or groups. The examples in this chapter are the tale of the widow and her sons and the tale of the crab which can be found with variation in some other areas.
- iii) The Ao Nagas do not have just one storyteller, there are many who are able to weave the stories that they have heard from their seniors or the older generation. The skill to capture the listeners' attention depends upon person to person; however there is another difference in the narration technique. Some of these narrators of the folktales know only the plot of the story while others know both the plot as well as the songs that are associated with it. In other words, not all Ao Naga folktale narrators can sing the songs that form part of the narrative and end up depending upon another who is knowledgeable in that.

The folktales of the Ao Nagas have been passed on from one generation to the next to preserve the culture and traditional practices through oral tradition even without the presence of a written script. There are different forms of the folktale given by the scholars of folkore, which have been used as a comparison. However, there are some which do not come under a specific form. The melody of the Ao Naga folksongs is simple but the words there are compact in themselves. The story of individuals and

society is highlighted. The story of the shrewd young man talks about wit and decision making, it is instructional in theme. In the case of society, the importance of relationships and the impact and support of the extended family can be seen. The fact that divorce is detrimental can be seen and that it is not a light matter for the AOs as against what Mills had written in his book about divorce. The Ao Naga folktales also talk about the Existential world of the AOs in a subtle way, where man considers himself to be the central figure not because he is strongest or greatest but simply because he has to be. Another aspect is that of the mythification of its geography in the story in the tale that talks about the existence of a lake. The tale of a boulder been thrown away in the name of religion shows a clash of cultural dominancy. Some tales talk about standing for the weak and poor as well as justification for them like the widows tale. More on relationship like close friendship as well as community bonding is made aware in the tale of the two friends and the tale of the Tsüngremmong Festival.

All of these talk about the Ao Nagas being represented as individuals with certain ideals expected of them as well as the importance of society in the life of that individual; which points out to the fact that the Ao Nagas are the product of the society and its ideals as presented through the tales.

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Chapter 5

Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions of the Ao Nagas

5.1. Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions

As already mentioned in the introduction, proverbs form part of oral tradition and they have played a significant role in every society even before writing existed. In the case of societies that have discovered written script, proverbs have been 'valued and collected' for posterity which have gradually evolved and increased.

Proverbs therefore, have a general sententious, witty and wise expression about them which is characteristic of all cultures or societies around the world where there is written record as well as oral transmission. However, it is also true that apart from the general commonality there exist differences and specifics which are characteristic of one culture over another.

5.2. Ao Naga Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions

The basis of the Ao Naga proverbs is the natural environment surrounding them, the everyday experiences as well as the material culture of the people. It is common practice to speak using proverbs or proverbial phrases for most of those who are well versed in it especially if it is the elderly or if it is a native speaker in the rural areas since they are more exposed to the cultural practices. However, this does not limit the usage of proverbs to rural areas only. In *Naga Society and Culture* it is written that the proverbs of the Aos are deeply rooted on philosophical grounds exhibiting their mentality and richness of culture and tradition. The common usage of refined proverbs even in everyday discussion began from civilization at *Jungliyimti*. Irrespective of an Ao Naga being educated or not, or settled as a rural or urban

dweller proverbs are common practice especially so with the elderly people. The wisdom and knowledge of a person is understood through the kind of speech using proverbs, which is gradually decaying in modern Ao society with the younger generation not aware of the existence of the proverbs and their importance in the daily life of Ao Naga culture (Jamir and Lanunungsang 251-52).

As stated earlier, the Ao Naga proverbs have a strong influence of the environment around them and this can be seen through their use of plants, animals, natural phenomena, everyday material implements and cultural elements in the proverbs. Some of the examples can be seen in the following proverbs.

5.2.1. Proverbs that have Plant Reference

In Ao Naga proverbs, the characteristic of human observation is brought to the forefront. The significance of plant references is derived from observed phenomena in nature. The Ao Nagas have lived as part of nature for a long time, as such the activities surrounding them become an important part of their expression not only through physical activities but also through utterances like proverbs.

a) *Nüpang-üm nung tzü ma-mung (Jungli).*

[Water does not stay on the yam leaf]

- The leaves of the yam plant have a water repellent cover over them, which do not allow them to retain water on them like other leaves. When it rains the other leaves would normally retain droplets of water, while in the case of the yam leaf, water droplets roll off its surface barely leaving a mark. The Ao Nagas often used leaves to collect droplets of water or as a quick drinking vessel in certain circumstances,

especially when out in the wild and the yam leaf definitely stands out in stark contrast with other leaves.

The proverb refers to a person who ignores the corrections given like the water droplets that roll off the yam leaf. It is similar to the phrase ‘to fall on deaf ears’.

b) *Likokdongi tur molu penzü ama (Jungli)*

[To climb up a bitter shrub and glance around with the greatest desire]

- The plant of the likok (bittergroud) is not tall; in fact, it is almost like a shrub. No matter the amount of distance covered by the eye, even if one climbs it, the landscape will still be narrow as opposed to a larger view when climbing a taller plant or even a tree. It is therefore, a “bitter” situation to actually climb a shrub to fully embrace the landscape. It is ironic as well as the bitter truth.

It means when fools try to act wise or when those who do not have much pretend and act like they do.

c). *Merlashi ama (Jungli)*

[Like Merlashi]

- The seed of the merlashi is actually crooked. According to “*Arok Osep*” (Ao dictionary), merlashi is a *type of wild fruit, looks good outside but the seed is very crooked*. The fruit looks good and appealing from the outside and tends to draw the onlookers attention but they are fooled because the seed inside turns out to be crooked which is far different from the outside appearance.

An individual who outwardly seems to be honest and speaking the truth, yet, when the real deeds come to surface the heart of that person or the actual intention is found to be very different from what the individual really projects himself to be.

5.2.2. Proverbs that have Animal Reference

The animal kingdom is another area where the sayings and proverbs of the Ao Nagas draw a large bulk of their expression from. There are proverbs that show animals reflecting that relationship of being an adversary, where fear emancipates from a world that could cause harm. Some show the absurdity in some actions of animals to teach a lesson while there are still others that through its existence can make the young mind to also ponder on certain lessons.

a) *Heirem matangko jener akhu takgo jenok (Mongsen)*

(Shirem tsiüngdang nungi jener Keyi dak jenok) (Jungli)

[To escape from a bear and run into a tiger]

- As the proverb says it means to finally be able to escape from the clutches of the bear, only to find oneself in the presence of the fearsome tiger. The Ao Naga territory is surrounded by hills covered with deep forests. As such, the existence of different types of animals is evident here like the bear and the tiger. This particular proverb hints that even though the bear itself is a frightful animal, an even scarier creature is the tiger which the natives would want to avoid running into at all costs as can be seen in this particular proverb. The meaning of the proverb is, 'To escape from a grim situation only to run into a similar or a grimmer situation.' which is equivalent to a common proverb, 'Out of the frying pan into the fire.'

b) *Ak-i siingdongi matur (Jungli)*

[A pig does not climb a tree]

-As can be observed from the translation of the proverb, it talks about what is not possible logically like a pig being able to climb a tree. In the same way it is not possible for a foolish person to become wise. Someone who is foolish is usually a person who thinks he knows everything there is to know and does not listen to others' advice. Such a person is referred to as a foolish pig who tries to climb a tree. Even if the individual self declares himself as wise he will never become one just like the pig that can never climb a tree.

It also means that an uneducated person who is not aware of anything cannot become educated.

A fool cannot become wise.

c) *Tsüngen lanu ama (Jungli)*

[Like a baby crab]

-Here comparison is being done to a baby crab which has a weak shell. The shell of a crab is strong and it is this that protects the crab from getting injured especially the fragile portions of its body. It acts as a shield. However, for a baby crab the shells are still very weak to undergo pressure. If placed under such extreme situations, the shells crumble immediately. The proverb refers to a person who is weaker than the rest in a group and who is unable to defend himself.

It is a comparison to those people who are weak.

5.2.3. Proverbs that Refer to Natural Phenomena

A natural phenomena is an occurrence that happens in nature, and which is not man-made and in the hilly and plain ranges of the Ao Nagas, there are many instances of natural phenomena that find their way into proverbs. The Ao Naga proverbs are used to emulate certain actions in nature using metaphors and similes in trying to compare the visibility and display of human nature or expression.

a) *Tsiingda pela (Mongsen)*

Tsiing-pret (Jungli)

[Like a flash of lightning]

-The translation of the words given simply means the flash of lightning and it also brings out the characteristic of lightning as being very quick.

It means a person who is really fast and smart in what he does.

b) *Tsiingmok aten nung au telatsü ama (Jungli)*

[Like the bamboo that tilts with dew when the thunder claps]

-This proverb has metaphorical implications where it means to be in constant fear of something happening to us (though it has not yet happened); a calamity, sickness, death or any other crisis which is currently ongoing in other people's lives.

c) *Kisa anü medem (Jungli)*

[When the sun shines brightly once before setting after a cloudy day]

-After a whole day of being covered in cloudy weather, the clouds part and the sun brightly shines, once before it sets. This is the comparison given here as 'kisa anü'.

It means to see only once.

d) Menungnok nokra, kibulung, jangjalung, peyong tenem, item ajungai oja, oja ta ayimtener.

[As the earthquake occurs every mountain shakes]

-In the aftermath of an earthquake (*Menüingnok*) huge boulders like *Kibulung*, *Jangjalung* and mountains like the Saramati (*Peyong tenem*) shout and call out, ‘Mother! Mother!’. In other words, these proverb talks about the huge sound that can be heard even in nature when a natural phenomena like an earthquake takes place.

There is no one who does not cry in distress in times of crisis or danger.

5.2.4. Proverbs that Refer to Material Elements and Elements of Culture

In the Ao Naga proverbs the use of material elements of everyday use is part of the sentence and it helps to get the message across easily. It is also a matter of common sense to be using those words and phrases that are known since they are not new to the work in hand too. The use of cultural elements and motifs is also connected to the everyday use since for an Ao Naga culture is an unavoidable part of his life. The pattern of material elements and elements of culture run through a parallel paradigm of their own.

a) Menja apunger ta-tsükshishi (Jungli)

[Under the loosely woven basket, do not try to hide]

- A “menja” is a flat and loosely woven bamboo basket, which is usually kept above the fireplace in a traditional Ao Naga kitchen setting and is used to dry meat or fish. Unlike other tightly woven baskets, which can easily hide a person if needed, the menja has small openings in it which makes hiding behind it difficult. This proverb gives an advice to individuals not to stealthily cover themselves with the menja.

Do not try to hide the truth or secret that is already out in the open; and about which everyone already knows.

b) Tzü nokzük ama (Jungli)

[Cutting water with dao]

-If one uses the dao to cut clear water it cuts clean and smoothly across it without any difficulty. The purpose of a dao is to cut something and in this case, it is not able to fulfill that.

It means whatever a person says or does there is nothing right about it.

c) Arju nung chi-tem te-sala (Jungli)

[Do not open rice packed in leaf in the Arju]

-The term chitem' means rice wrapped in banana leaves with or without meat in it. Just like packing lunch for work or depending on the occasion. Chitem is referred to as packed food. In an Arju, a large number of people gather including same peers, seniors and juniors; so when one opens his Chitem in the Arju, he will end up parting with his share of food to those around. The individual would have brought the meal but the others would be the ones enjoying.

It means to not talk secrets in a group.

d) Tsüingsangera mereprangshi tujema meyongshi (Jungli)

[Neither could dancers observe, nor could porridge drink]

-This is from a story from olden days where a person made porridge to drink before going to watch the dancers in the festival. However, after making the porridge, it already was time for the dancers to take centre stage. So the person decided not to drink the porridge though it was already ready. He made his way to watch the

dancers, only to catch a glimpse of the ending. He could neither drink the porridge nor could he watch the full dance.

It means not being successful in anything. (Neither here nor there)

5.3. Devices Used in Proverbs

There are many devices associated with poetry that is used in proverbs; like meter, binary construction and balanced phrasing, rhyme, assonance and alliteration, conciseness, metaphor, and occasional inverted word order and unusual construction (Abrahams 119). Proverbs often make use of grammatical and rhetorical devices that help make them memorable, alliteration, rhyme parallel structure, repetition of keywords or phrases, strong imagery.

5.3.1. Effect of Balance in the Composition

The witty effect of the proverb is produced by the pronounced effect of balance and this balance arises most notably from a binary (two-part) composition. “The proverb is generally a sentence that is perceptibly broken in the middle (*caesura*)” (ibid 120). This is also an example of a simile.

An Ao Naga proverb shows a similar witty effect of balance as given below.

Etsüngdongzüng nung /omok pela ama

Sesame plant under/ omok happy like

The omok is a ground bird that expectantly waits for the sesame pods to ripen which according to the nature, is not possible. The fact is that the pods bend towards the ground when they are not ripe which the bird waits in anticipation to ripen.

However, when the pods ripen they face upwards away from the ground dashing the hope of the omok.

People who are good for nothing, and do not understand the situation in whatever they do are used in the above reference.

5.3.2. Assonance

A poetic device that can be seen in Ao Naga proverbs is the use of assonance. Assonance is defined by the *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary* as a ‘relatively close juxtaposition of similar sounds especially of vowels...repetition of vowels without repetition of consonants... used as an alternative to rhyme in verse.’ The Ao Naga language makes use of vowel sounds in an extensive way. As such, it is not a surprise to see the prevalence of repetitive vowel sounds in their proverbs. The following are examples.

i) “*Ak-i anüing angu ama*” (Like a pig that can see the sky)

This saying illustrates the use of assonance- *Ak-i anüing angu ama*.

-A pig can only see the sky when it is lying down; at other times when it stands normally, it cannot look up at the sky. It refers to a person who is full of oneself and who pretends to know much more than the little knowledge one has.

ii) *Arakima azüü ama (Jungli)*

[Like a dog in the midst of a feast]

-When there is a feast or a community gathering where meat is used, the leftover food which is strewn on the ground is eaten by animals. The animals reared in the Ao Naga villages are let loose most of the day except in the evening, so they can move about

wherever they want to; in this case it is the dog that does not absent itself from places where food, especially meat is being used.

It refers to a person who is present in each and every celebration or feast.

iii) *Arijui auer atu ama (Jungli)*

[Like a thief entering an Arju]

-Arju is a huge abode where the young men of the village gather, it is spacious but it is also used as a dorm and there are no valuables kept there. If a thief tries to enter the arju to steal, there is nothing of value for him since what awaits him is a just a big dorm.

The house is big but inside there is not much available. In other words, in a situation where there is no hope or expectation one should not push oneself at all.

5.3.3. Alliteration

The *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary* defines alliteration as ‘the repetition of usually initial consonant sounds in two or more neighboring words or syllables.’ It further adds that alliteration as poetic device is often ‘discussed with assonance, the repetition of stressed vowel sounds within two or more words with different end consonants, as in “stony” and “holy”; and consonance, the repetition of end or medial consonants...’ The use of alliteration is found in Ao Naga proverbs functioning together with assonance. The following is an example.

i) *Menüli mepong jepli mepong (Jungli)*

[Can neither laugh nor cry]

This saying illustrates the use of alliteration- *Menüli mepong jepli mepong*.

-There are situations presented in such a way where a person can neither laugh nor cry. It usually happens in extreme situations when the individual is put in a difficult position of expressing himself where the person is put in a state of confusion. It means to turn a deaf ear to any advice given to an individual, whether that advice is good or bad.

ii) *Metsüba melangpha (Mongsen)*

Mali melangtet (Jungli)

[To be empty and uncut]

Alliteration; *Metsüba melangpha (Mongsen)*

-It means someone who is “empty” minded or an airhead, and therefore cannot “cut” words directed to them or be alert about the situation. It also refers to someone who keeps to himself more instead of sharing his thoughts with others which can often be a dangerous thing to do.

A simple, naïve and straightforward person.

5.3.4. Rhythmic Structure

This is an example of the use of meter, more specifically the basic rhythmic structure of a trochee where the first syllable of each word is stressed and the second syllable unstressed can be seen. The proverbs mostly catch the attention of the listeners because of the rhythmic structure in them.

i) **Ak-i/ a- nüng/ ang-u/ a- ma**

/ U / U / U / U

ii) *Yongza nung kihli chung(Jungli)*

(Kihli, feeding in a small river)

-The kihli is a small fish that is available in small rivers. The fact that it is a small rivulet makes the kihli feel superior to those around since there are no other larger fishes. It is blind to the bigger world as well as the existence of other larger creatures. It means to unabashedly try being superior in a small group setting.

iii) *Songlali mepong kangtenli mepong(Jungli)*

[Can neither stretch nor fold one's leg]

-It means an awkward situation where one can neither stretch one's leg nor can one curl or fold it into place..

To be stuck in between a situation of either being vocal about something.

5.4. Features of the Ao Naga Proverbs

5.4.1. The Imperative 'Do Not' in Ao Naga Proverbs

In the Ao Naga proverbs the negative imperative is quite evident in the urgency or significance of certain situations related to the cultural norms. Some of these proverbs are simple warnings, while others are more serious in their implication to the listener. The imperative 'do not' in most of the Ao Naga proverbs functions more towards giving awareness to the listeners, laying stress on certain principles that need to be observed through the strong use of a negative implication.

a) *Waro or tempang nung takoshi (Jungli)*

[Do not knock on the tree stump after the crow has gone]

-Waro means crow, while tempang refers to the tree stump.

Do not try after the opportunity has gone or is no more

b) *Yimdong nung wara atsür tesenzü*

[Do not drag along a wara wherever you go]

- A *wara* is the top part of the bamboo and often scattered along bamboo grooves or place where bamboo is used in a large quantity including Ao Naga bamboo house. The leaves as well as the bamboo splinters are quite coarse and often cause injury. So, here we get a picture of someone carelessly dragging along strips of bamboo or *wara* along with them and affecting everyone around them.

According to this proverb, it advises a person to be careful of not hurting others wherever they go.

c) *Sürangpong nüksak saker tesenzü*

[Do not keep open your eyes like the grasshopper]

-As the proverb shows, it cautions a person not to keep their eyes open like the eyes of the grasshopper which can look at all direction at one go wherever it goes. In the same way it talks about a person who 'looks everywhere' like the grasshopper with all round vision and keeps poking in other's business, complaining and objecting about the works of others.

d) *Milongsang aiben tejemshi*

[Do not stoke the wood inside the fire a lot of times]

- *Milongsang* refers to the pile of burning wood in a lit hearth or furnace. It means that one should not stoke the wood inside the hearth too many times as it will only make the fire burn more. In the same way one is advised not to repeatedly say something which would lead to petty as well as large quarrels. It also refers to a problem one

solved which should not be opened continuously on the same topic bringing discord among many.

e) *Yangko semer tawazii*

[Do not work with a bag in hand]

-It means to think only about himself and always have selfish motive even if in public domain or office. In other words, serving the people carrying one's own bag hidden from others with an intention to steal or corrupt.

5.4.2. Saying or Expression Rooted in a Tale

Some of the proverbs are part of folktales while others are a gist of the whole story brought out in one line like an anecdote. Without the knowledge of the story the expression is difficult to grasp-they are intrinsically connected.

i) *Azii-o Ak na Lumung Ama*

Like the Dog and Pig Working in the Field.

The given proverb is better understood through an Ao Naga folktale about a dog and pig that were the farmer's companions and lived with him and were of help to him in the fieldwork. They went to work during the day and returned home every evening. Of the two, the pig was simple and hard-working whereas the dog was cunning and lazy. As such, everyday, the pig would finish the task given to him with commitment and since the dog never worked and just lazed around, he even had to do the dog's portion. The pig started arguing with the dog about this and began complaining to the farmer about how the dog had been avoiding his share of the work.

But the dog in all his cunningness always found a way to disprove the accusations of the pig.

The pig's routine complaints and the ensuing squabbling between him and the dog made it difficult for the farmer to turn a blind ear to what was going on and so he decided to verify the truth of the matter himself.

To put his plan into action he told them one day that after they were done with their work he would pay them a visit at the end of the day and check their work to see whoever had weeded the greater part of the field. The individual who had done the most work would be rewarded. The pig was happy with what the farmer said because he thought that he would be able to get the recognition needed for his hard work and sincerity and at the same time the dog's lies would also be exposed. So, on the proposed day, the pig worked as much as he could and gave his all and doing a large portion of the work. The dog was lazy as usual, sleeping the whole day and waking up only to eat the midday meal. Meanwhile, the pig continued to toil hard, working diligently and at the end of the day after he was satisfied that he had finished whatever job he was given he went home confident and happy that at last his faithfulness and that of the dog's, could now be easily differentiated.

The moment the pig set out for home, the cunning dog got up and began to walk over the length and breadth of the field in such a manner that the pig's footprints got enveloped and gradually got overshadowed by the dog's footprints which alone covered the entire field. The result was that, in the evening when the farmer came to inspect the work done that day, he could only see the dog's footprints on the earth which made him get angry with the pig thinking that the latter had been telling him lies all along.

After reaching home, the pig received a sound scolding from the farmer for lying and to punish him and teach him a lesson for his supposed misconduct, the pig was sent out of the main house and made to live in the outer room. On the other hand the cunning dog who had managed to trick the master was accepted by the man to live with him in the main house and became a loyal friend trusted by man. To this day, in Ao-Naga households the outer room is the area where pigs are transported whereas dogs have free access to the main house, ‘enjoying this superior status on the domestic hierarchy’.

Ao further continues and adds -this tale is the origin of an Ao-Naga folk idiom to signify similar human situations. When a wrong person gets the credit for another’s labour, the Aos nod their head wisely and say, “Oh, the same old pig and dog story” (Temsula Ao 121-22).

ii) *Tsüngen-i Aon Asoba Ama*

Like the Crab that Makes Curry

Once upon a time, there were four very good amphibian friends who belonged to the same *zünga* (age group). As is customary among the Aos to work collectively, taking turns in different fields among families, relatives or even among close friends who are part of a *zünga*, which helps the work done quicker with less exhaustion (Ao 122). Even these four friends started the collective work on their respective fields and on the first day they went to the crab’s field. After reaching the field the four friends walked along the length of the field working as well as engaging in conversation as they gradually finished the first portion of the work and sat down to rest. As they

started the second portion, towards the middle the crab announced that she was going to the *jendang* (a hut built in the field) to prepare curry, saying that she left the three friends in-charge of the work.

After placing the curry pot inside the *jendang* the crab realized that there was nothing available inside to cook and after searching for some food outside for the same but found none. With the empty pot, with just boiling water inside, the crab was worried as she circled around the fire hearth. At last out of desperation she tore off one of her legs and threw it into the pot. Again, the crab was not satisfied with just that so in a state of bewilderment as she circled near the pot's edge, she suddenly slipped into the already boiling curry and got cooked.

Meanwhile the three friends were really hungry but since the host had not called yet and going there on their own without being called would be a matter of embarrassment, so they waited. However, they waited for a long time and since they could not wait any longer they went on their own to search for the crab's *jendang* but they could not find her anywhere. They searched along the length and breadth of the field but still they were not able to track her down. Later, the frog took a random peek inside the pot and found the crab inside, red and fully cooked which came as a shock and it also had a comedic effect. But in the attempt in trying to resist laughter while closing his mouth and gradually moving away from there, the frog's throat became large and swollen and the strain broke his backbone. After seeing the frog's behavior the shrimp also looked inside the pot and saw the condition of the crab and said, 'Tsa, tsa!' which is an expression of surprise, after which he started walking backwards, and continues till today. The small fish also looked inside the cooking pot and in her bid to prevent herself from making sound showing shock, she placed both hands over her mouth, and in the process it took a permanent form.

5.4.3. Proverbs specific to the area

i) The proverbs of the Ao Nagas are very much relatable to the village setting, so there is a large usage of the local expression.

Example, *Hing-hok-shi* which means hing-hok words.

ii) Another interesting characteristic of the Ao Naga proverbs is that even though there are general proverbs and sayings that are part of the Ao Naga setting in general, the fact that there are also a lot of other proverbs that is exclusive for every village cannot be ignored since all the villages have jungli and mongsen dialect variation as well as confined to their respective areas. *Napa chü (in mongsen)* which means an oversmart person is used by a certain village.

5.4.4. Sayings or Expressions Associated with Sound

The Ao Nagas also have certain expressions they use which coordinate with the action to be done and evoke the sound of that action or the meaning in the sound. It will come under words that define onomatopoeia.

a) *Zeb-zeb*: When the Ao Nagas refer to something firm or determined, it is expressed using 'zeb-zeb' the sound of which evokes the abstract nature of the action.

b) *Mum-mum*: This phrase is used to express the action of eating something. So, it is used while coaxing a baby to eat.

5.5. Functions of Ao Naga Proverbs

Proverbs also express emotional and intellectual attitudes: disappointment, sympathy, intention, acceptance as well as moral attitudes-approval, disapprovals,

appreciation, apology or regret. These functions can be seen in Ao Naga proverbs too. In *The Science of Folklore*, A.H. Krappe provides further insight and writes that a proverb,

...represents in its essential form, some homely truth expressed in a concise and terse manner so as to recommend itself to a more or less extended circle. It may express the general truth literally, by a mere statement of fact, as do, for example, all hortative proverbs...all proverbs implying an unfulfilled condition, as *If everything could be done twice, all would be wise*, and many others. Or it may express that truth hyperbolically, that is, assuming an extreme case, for example *Where nothing is to be had the emperor loses his right*... Or the truth may be stated metaphorically...It may, finally, have recourse to allegory, as in the German *Hochmut kommt vor dem Fall, Vorsicht ist die Mutter der Weisheit*, and many others. The two essential features of the proverb are...its didacticism for the contents and its conciseness for the form (143).

5.5.1 Proverbs that Express Emotional and Intellectual Attitudes

a) Disappointment

i) *Pokpü nü mejangchang ning ata (Mongsen)*

(Pokpoi mesangjang amen ata) (Jungli)

[The owl waits for the seed of the mejang tree to ripen]

-The word “mejang” or “mesang” in this context refers to a tree that is itchy. It also bears seeds which though found in plenty is always green, unripe and remain inedible.

It is said that the owl waits for the seeds of this tree to ripen, which unfortunately does not happen.

To hope and wait for something that would never happen

ii) *Meyi tsüngen meso medem*

[The summer crab has no taste or fat]

-It is believed that the crab that is caught in summer for food does not have much meat or fat in it, as such it is not a very satisfactory appeal to the palates. It means that something or someone is of no use at what they do.

To be of no use.

b) **Sympathy**

i) *Along alar medem (Jungli)*

[Like the along or flying ant that slaves away]

-The along is a flying insect that has its nest underground and it comes out in the evening hour before the rainy seasons, almost all of them do not stay long in the air but they fall to the ground and most of them shed their wings. Studies suggest that these are the male ants where only the strongest are able to fly to where the female is; those that are left on the ground with wings shed off are referred to as being 'alar' or 'slaves' to unfortunate circumstance.

It refers to a person who is born under unfortunate circumstances; either without the help of proper care or lacking the needed care because of being orphaned.

ii) *Kilem, jara maket ki (Jungli)*

[Sudden demise of the head of the family]

'Kilem' refers to the roof of a house while 'jara' refers to the wall. For a house to be independent and able to protect its occupants and keep them safe it needs all its

respective structures. This is similar to a home where every family member plays an important role whether big or small. However, there are certain structures like the roof or wall of a house which are crucial for the wellbeing of its occupants. This proverb talks about the sudden demise of either head of the family like the husband or wife, father or mother. The metaphorical imagery is that of a broken down and wasted material house.

It refers to the death of a husband or wife in the family.

c) **Intention**

i) *Koya longki-i angling süir ai ama (Jungli)*

[Like the rat that drags a ball of thread into a cave]

-When a rat drags away a ball of thread into a cave it rolls away out of sight; not only does the thread get lost out of human sight but it also becomes dirty and not useable.

To hide something in such a way that it is difficult if not impossible to find it.

ii) *Tsünü shijen ama (Jungli)*

[A fox hiding meat]

-‘Tsünü’ is a small fox while ‘shijen’ is a place where it drags and hides parts of its prey. Another thing to keep in mind is that the fox does not bury its catch at just one place but hides it at various places. This action of the fox is compared to a situation of someone who also has the habit of hiding things from the eyes of others. Usually, such individuals hide or store these things in different places which most cannot see. The intention is not to hoard but as a precaution of storing for the future. It can also have a negative connotation of selfish motive where an individual hoards for himself and hides it from everyone else. It means to drag everywhere.

d) **Acceptance**

i) *Shisang dang shitu tesayu*

[Do not teach a squirrel to dig for sweet potato]

This proverb is an acceptance that a young person should not advise the elderly, since he is already accustomed to long years of experience in the ways of life more than his juniors. It also refers to the wisdom of abstaining from giving advice to the wise, especially by one who is ignorant.

Do not teach the wise or the elderly.

ii) *Nikongdang anü agi tsiük marar*

[The evening sun cannot dry the paddy]

-This indicates that the aged person cannot carry heavy responsibilities. It shows acceptance of old age as a process of life cycle that everyone has to go through.

Evening sun dries no grain.

5.5.2. Proverbs that Express Moral Attitudes

a) **Approval**

i) *Mishi ana dak chibo metongdaktet*

[Pots cannot be placed on two hearth stones]

-It is not possible to have a one or two stoned hearth. The ideal number is three where one is able to balance the pots properly. In the same way unless there is consensus

opinion or approval, no final decision can be arrived at and everything becomes failure. It is just like the pot that needs three stones for it to find the perfect balance and composure

b) Disapproval

i) *An-i tsüngen angu ama (Jungli)*

[Like the chicken that sees the crab]

-The crab does not crawl in just one direction but it can be seen crawling back all over. The action is confusing for the chicken as it stands and gazes at the crab in amazement and wonder.

It means when a person does whatever he wants to do, or goes in whichever direction he wants to follow without an understanding or knowledge of the situation. In other words, there is nothing socially good about that individual.

ii) *Yangko semer tawazü*

[Do not work with a bag in hand]

It means not to carry along a bag to fill it with random things as one goes about doing one's work. It is a direct disapproval of a person who is serving in a place of authority and has the habit to 'carry one's own hidden bag' and in the process to secretly extort from the public money.

It means one should selfishly not take the collective money of the people.

c) Appreciation

i) *Pa-ji ajem tajung (Jungli)*

[He is a good needle]

-When a person is able to be a good mediator between friends and other groups of individuals he is said to be a good needle. A needle is able to sew and patch torn clothes just like a person who can patch torn relationships. So, this proverb refers to such a kind of individual.

A peacemaker is like a good needle.

d) Regret

i) An melokpang nung atüm (Jungli)

[The fowl perches on the edge of the basket]

-When the fowl perches itself on the edge of an open and empty basket, the weight of the bird makes the basket to fall over and cover the former; thus becoming a victim of its own actions.

Unconscious actions or words can lead oneself into danger.

ii) Omok aser Orak nemjem ama (Jungli)

[Like the regret of the omok and orak]

-According to the story in this proverb, the omok is a small land bird that lives under the paddy and does not fly beyond, the orak on the other hand is a bigger bird and flies on taller trees. The omok falls in love with the orak and waits for it to respond every day. However, it is not possible for the orak which is a bird that lives on tree tops and flies above these to stay with the omok. The omok continues to wait for it and as time passes, it slowly turns to regret. The proverb talks about doing things that are beyond one's capability and to later regret about it.

To regret after something has already gone by.

In *Naga Society and Culture*, the writer says that many of the elderly 'converse' with 'song', 'word', 'proverb' even in domestic life and such a style and art of speaking is honored and respected because it shows wisdom and philosophically rooted knowledge on the part of the speaker. The usage of such rich proverbs has now started to dwindle as many youngsters today are unaware of the deeply rooted cultural values and customs (Jamir and Lanunungsang 251-52).

It is a known fact that in simple terms a proverb is a saying that is witty and is used for correction and encouragement. The proverbs between different places or cultures might differ due to the language or the environment people are exposed to, but the common factor of expressing in a compact form is still there. However, there are certain features that form part of the Ao Naga proverbs. The Ao Nagas are influenced in their day to day conversations by their surroundings and the elements that form part of these surroundings like the plant matter, the animal kingdom, elements of nature and its phenomena and the material and cultural elements that are used by the people in their everyday domestic life. So, we find a lot of such elements in the proverbs themselves. The proverbs also show devices associated with poetry like balanced phrasing, rhyme, assonance, alliteration etc.,. However, the presence of rhyme, assonance and alliteration is more common in Ao Naga proverbs.

The Imperative 'do not' is also found in the Ao Naga proverbs functioning as an extra precautionary advice or even as a rash command to avoid eventualities. Another feature of the Ao Naga proverb is that of the existence of a tale in one sentence. Ao Naga proverbs also feature specific attributes at times owing to difference in locality. There are still some other functions of the Ao Naga proverbs that express attitudes of emotion, intellect, and morality which act as a basis to educate, encourage or give a lesson to anyone just like any other proverb does.

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Chapter 6

Conclusion

Oral tradition has been an obvious part of people who have had no means of written script. These have been passed on by word of mouth by the general folk; while some are passed on by particular storytellers depending on the occasion or the custom of the local mass. For the Ao Nagas, the advent of American missionaries in the nineteenth century opened a new insight to a new world different from their cultural practices and beliefs, including the introduction to a written script. Also some of the practices like head-hunting and tribal beliefs as well as rituals have ceased to exist along with some age old tradition and lore related to tribal beliefs.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the Ao Nagas had begun the process of learning in a more broad way in the Arju and the Tsüki, this process began once they reached a certain age. This concept of the Arju continues till today though the institution itself is no longer in existence. The disappearance of one of the vessels that was used to pass along knowledge of one's culture as well as an institution that once disciplined its young people is regrettable. However, the practices that were established there like the zünga (or batch system) is still followed today and it is through this system that workload is still distributed when working together as a group. Thus, the community feeling that the Ao Nagas have is still retained and followed in this way. The Ao Naga folksongs, folktales and proverbs continue to form a part of the lifestyle of the people especially in the rural areas where culture and tradition are part and parcel of their daily activity. History, social order and culture get entwined along the way.

The second chapter is on Folklore and Oral Literature – the study has tried to look broadly at the concept of Folklore and the co-existence of Oral Literature form in

the Ao context. Folklore has commonly been studied in three ways – the folk genre that has been addressed, the second is as a sub-discipline or as a literary source of writing. It is to be noted that literature influences society and oral tradition rises from the society and also control society. And thirdly, folklore is the product and possession of certain groups so it talks about the society that presents it. The study has explained how this folk genre has been important touching a little bit of all three approaches. Again there are two approaches to the study of literature – extrinsic and intrinsic approach. The study has used the intrinsic approach in the explanation and study of the text. Different sources have been collected after field work and these sources have gone through a process of interpretation after translation.

The third to fifth chapters study the folksongs, folktale and proverbs of the Ao Nagas.

The interesting thing about the Ao Naga folksong is that they are a projection of the identity of an individual in the surrounding communal space. There are different types of songs which can be identified with more study. The folksongs are important because they form part of the folktales and act as a bridge in a society where singing plays a very important role. Ao Naga folksongs are very community oriented and there is even division for men and women to sing different songs too. The influences of nature that can be seen in these songs are an important lesson for each listener which can be interpreted accordingly. There are the soothing songs of lovers, the sincerity of those offering worship, the commitment and valour filled songs of warriors which are all a mixture of songs that appeal to different situations and phases even in life. These are part of the Ao Naga folktales.

The Ao Naga folktales are tales that have individual significance with tales that teach the listeners about decision making or the importance of friendship. They also center on the importance of family relationships and communal harmony. In the

tales about the geographical existence of a lake in the Ao Naga folktale, the rules set up for smooth functioning of social order is observed. Thus, there are prohibitions and laws made to keep certain elements in check. These rules protect the poor and downtrodden in society too. The system of justice is, therefore, quite strong. Man's relationship with the world around him is also projected in the tales and it also deals with his self centralism in the cultural existential universe of the Ao Nagas.

The basis of the Ao Naga proverbs is the natural environment around them and the everyday life of the people. There are references to plants, animals, natural phenomena when it comes to natural environment, and there are material elements of everyday use as well as cultural references. The everyday observation of plant life, the examples set by the actions of animals, the fascinating picture that nature opens in front of the native's mental eye, the dependence on everyday implements and the impact of culture all of these contribute to the rich collection of Ao Naga proverbs. There are other poetic devices that are also made use by Ao Naga proverbs like rhyme, metaphor, assonance and alliteration. All of these devices are there in the proverbs, but they also overlap with each other even in one sentence. It is observed in Ao Naga proverbs there is a lot of alliteration and assonance. However, an interesting thing is that alliteration and assonance both combine almost like one device in a lot of the proverbs. The Ao Nagas also use the imperative 'do not' to denote a strict comment. Sayings or expressions related to onomatopoeia form a part of Ao Naga proverbs. Besides the above, Ao Naga proverbs also perform the function of advising, encouraging, warning or giving a lesson etc.

These folktales, folksongs and proverbs have also gone through reinterpretations, depending on individual narrators have also changed with the mode

of communication used; for instance from oral to written script, and also through the use of multimedia.

Reinterpretation

It is important to note the reinterpretation that has been done in oral literature in deriving their relevance according to the modern society today, context as well as the medium- individuals, church, organizations like students union, etc.

One is the use of proverbs, tales and songs of the folk as a means of imparting learning in an institution like the church in the Ao Naga society. The way it has been interpreted is important since the basis or the structure needs to be there. At summer camps or Vacation Bible School attended by the scholar, there were various competitions. In terms of literary both in action or through writing, there were points or themes taken from the proverbs. For instance, in an extempore speech competition there were proverbs used which was from Ao Naga folklore which introduced young minds to learning more about their roots.

Another example of interpretation is that of the cultural troupes of the Ao Nagas who perform locally, or in the cities, including some who get to perform on an international level. It is during such times that the cultural heritage is highlighted to the younger generation as well as exhibited to other cultures too. Reinterpretations take place when two or more tribes are involved. The Aongreju Club an Ao Naga cultural dance organization is a cultural club that has performed both at the local, national and international level, which includes folkdances and folksongs. The authenticity of the performances is still there which definitely helps in preservation. However, they often work with other tribes to come up with new interpretations of songs or dances, which is done not to destroy what has been inherited but more like an assimilation of cultural knowledge from both sides. In their tour the club

collaborated with the Zeliang tribe and sang and danced to a simple Ao Naga song. This helps them come to a collective standpoint because Nagas have different tribes and each tribe have their own system of values culturally as well as in terms of oral narratives, songs, dances, proverbs, etc. Another example would be the annual Hornbill festival initiated by the Government of Nagaland from December, 2000 onwards. It is not a particular festival of any one particular tribe of Nagaland. Yet, here one can see that they all gather to exchange their cultural inheritance. The root inheritance which is central to the tribes individually is there but the learning association enhances knowledge of each other's tribes.

There are different Naga writers who have used the themes of oral tradition passed down in their respective tribes and used them in their narratives. This is another kind of interpretation and it greatly boosts literature. It is true that the preservation of the narratives in their original form be retained and that is what many scholars are doing presently- collection, documentation, translation etc., and along with that when there is an additional leverage in implementing modern writing or story telling it enhances these narratives more. A comparison of all these helps readers get a better idea of interpreting whatever they read by themselves and not that of the writer alone. Folksongs and its greater aspect, namely folk music is another area where there has been reinterpretation, where folk music and fusion of modern times have taken place.

It is important to note how a folksong, folktale or proverb is interpreted by the storyteller, writer, singer, etc., and how the lore been passed on impacts its interpretation in the long run have been interpreted; songs have taken a fusion form though the pure traditional also exist. Change must have definitely been made in the way some of the tales are now told today, example the belief system, concept of god

etc. The means of communicating all these lores in the present day have taken a new form as well.

The general conclusion of those interviewed so far has been that preservation of whatever is left of the culture so far has been through the passing on of folklore. Is it also possible to accept and use the knowledge acquired by not keeping it caged like in a museum but to contextualize and assimilate according to the changing times? It is important to know one's roots but it is also important to advance and adjust with the present, to do that one must be acquainted with the knowledge of the past to have an identity and at the same time move forward. The balance is therefore, very important for any society. The folksongs, folktales and proverbs are a rich inheritance from the forefathers, but making use of them in the present generation is now the responsibility of those in the present. Keeping that as a measuring landmark yet without losing the originality, one must be able to even advance with one's identity which can only come about if one is aware of one's past. It is rather a situation of knowing the past, though not living in that moment, but using that knowledge to expand one's horizons.

There is a term used in the Ao Naga language called *Sobaliba* which is usually translated and used for the term culture. However, in a broader context if one were to actually explain it, it would mean the whole life cycle of an individual from birth to death. The Ao Naga folksongs, folktales and proverbs are a small part of preserving the identity and root of the individual Ao Naga and the group. They are a relic passed on from generations past in the step towards civilization and have been gradually going through a process of assimilation and acculturation in contemporary society. Thus, change is good but it should also not drown or swallow the whole essence of one's roots. There should be a balance to maintain identity.

APPENDIX-A

AO NAGA FOLKSONGS (ORIGINAL TEXT AND FREE TRANSLATION)

(Free Translation by the Scholar)

Sl. No. 1 was personally collected from Sobuchiba Jamir of Chungtiyimsen village. Sl. No. 2 was collected from Nungsangkaba Longkumer of Lirmen village. Sl. No. 3 was collected from Mepulila of Longkhum village. Sl. No. 4, 6, 8, 9 and 12 were personally collected from Shisakumla Lemtur of Waromung village. Sl. No. 5 was personally collected from A. Mar Jamir of Ungma village. Sl. No. 7 and 10 were collected from Imkongnüken of Chuchuyimlang village. Sl. No. 11 was personally collected from Nungshimeren of Mopungchukit village. However, it must be mentioned here that the spellings have been modified according to current usage.

1. Masem Ken (Tanü ku-lu sabang ko)

<i>Tanü ku-lu sabang ko,</i>	<i>Today my field sabang at,</i>
<i>Mongza amung mera;</i>	<i>Eagle stay not come;</i>
<i>Sungko aying jano-a!</i>	<i>Tree lonely is !</i>
<i>Ijem Aoyimdong yaba,</i>	<i>Ijem Ao pathway shine,</i>
<i>Nang-ka tanila ratijenko</i>	<i>You also today (la) funeral at</i>
<i>Ayung kha küsü?</i>	<i>(Atsü ayu) had</i>

Free translation:

Today at the outskirts of my field,
 The eagle has not come to stay;
 The big tree feels so lonely!
 Beloved who shines upon the pathway of the whole village,
 It seems you are circling at a funeral today,
 Are you taking part in the lawsuit?

2. Yimkum ken (Songs on Village Formation)

<i>Oh! Waromung ko Küpza Molichanger;</i>	<i>Oh! Waromung at Küpza Molichanger;</i>
<i>Ayim tesen kümu pangjemer,</i>	<i>Village new to settle discuss,</i>
<i>Lima kümro wali,</i>	<i>Land settling had gone,</i>
<i>Liri-tongmen yachetteter,</i>	<i>Lir tree under cleared,</i>
<i>Konang Rongendangba soyim;</i>	<i>Honor Rongendangba's birthplace;</i>

*Lijaba lima ko milong jongoker,
Iba ayim tening Lirmen tü Jachetchar*

*Lijaba's land at flame began,
This village name Lirmen is called*

3. Nüknerar Ken (Love songs)

A) Solo sung by one person

*Nüknerar melemvou,
avi ni-dang a-sü?
Yimtabenlar nüknerar;
Nüknerar iesa lemvoui sang,
Ora Khar lemdang atangjaki,
Lenden kümlaben!*

*Lovers not destined,
mother me only is it?
Whole village lover;
Lover us destined if only,
That distant Khar hilltop would,
Plain area do become!*

b) Duet sung between lovers

Female:

*Jongpongtaasang sun-küka,
Kilang tachi zulu-küka,
Nuza nüknerar alakvi nung-a;
Yajang Riju mako,
Pangmerem-jang sulungrarala!*

*Mithun best tied up-though,
House decor nice-though
Young love forget not;
Yajang Arju atop,
Lips red person whoever yearning!*

Male:

*Ne-ang sulung-raro-wa,
Chubakulilar yarinaro?
Kü chendong-nü mera,
Chako alakangtala?*

*Me instead whoever will yearn for,
Parent's daughter, beautiful flower?
My bed below not come,
How would forget so?*

4. Külemkejaba Ken (Worship Song)

*Aok tsüba tsüngrem, tsüngrem
An tsüba tsüngrem, tsüngrem
Yongmen ki nala, nala
Nar ki nala, nala
Ma-er khala, khala,
Ma-ong khala, khala,*

*Aok river god, god
An river god, god
Yongmen one sided wearer, wearer
Nar one sided wearer, wearer
Riches abound, abound
Blessings abound, abound*

5. Nok ken

*Jungliyimti tenem ko,
Küten Sayir den tongtepdang meya
O nok-a kü nok-a!*

Nü-a kü nü-a!

Jong-a kü jong-a

Free translation:

At the hilltop of Jungliyimti,

I fought with Sayir

O! My nok is also my nok I use to fight!

My spear is also my spear I use to throw and pierce!

My shield is also my spear I use to defend myself and my comrades!

6. The Captured Headhunter

a)

Sar ki ko ni monger,

Ijem aoyimiyala shi

Molung koda li-i-kala

Süingko na tonger, Tiyong na tonger

Kü yimdang mepeni chetkani

Mong nang ka

Kü yimko-ong chika wa-erchaba kola

Nuya yangalar dangko

“Yarang metsüiyoka dangni

Tejeb telongra dangni!”

Headhunter house at I stay,

Ijem land shine one

Heart how will survive?

Tree has hidden, partition has hidden

My village is not viewable

Wind, you too

If you go across my village

Tell to my childhood lover

“You no longer your lover meet

Don’t cry don’t miss!”

Free Translation

I am imprisoned at the enemies', Ijem beauty of the land

I wonder how your heart will survive

The tree and the partition of the thatch wall conceals everything

My village landscape cannot be viewed

You too dear Wind, If you blow across my village

Tell the sweetheart of my childhood

“Your lover you will no longer meet”

“Cry not, remember not me.

b)

<i>O bendang lar,</i>	<i>Oh strange woman,</i>
<i>Nangi sur chemerala ?</i>	<i>You're whose wife?</i>
<i>Kolang shishiro na,</i>	<i>Your smooth hair bun,</i>
<i>Ijem nu bentu ashi jaoa.</i>	<i>Reminds me of child weaning Ijem.</i>

Free Translation

Oh! Whose wife are you stranger?

Your hair smoothly bunned

Looks like Ijem my child's mother

7. *Khristan yimsü arur (after 1872) lanurtemi konang makaba sasa bilemba kenka*

<i>O iba-ibo inüing-i!</i>	<i>Oh! This from now onwards!</i>
<i>Ao-saer iteni!</i>	<i>Ao headhunters from now onwards!</i>
<i>O leptep-ila kü yimya,</i>	<i>Oh! Headhunting my habit,</i>
<i>Yimsü tajung asü-ani.</i>	<i>Religion good it was,</i>
<i>O tzüta langlen alir,</i>	<i>Oh! River below reside,</i>
<i>Chuba ayin-ketba-i,</i>	<i>The ruler's power carrier did,</i>
<i>Hokhum küma yua-er,</i>	<i>Order made and kept,</i>
<i>O anoknaro makani!</i>	<i>Oh! Dao's honor is not there!</i>
<i>O chuchu niang nunga-er,</i>	<i>Oh! Chuchu, it is not only me,</i>
<i>Yimkong semer lanur,</i>	<i>Ao land across young people,</i>
<i>Nemjem-er a-ni!</i>	<i>Do regret so!</i>

8. *The Shrewd Young Man*

<i>Atongtsü, atongtsü tsüingi wada ila</i>	<i>Friend, friend sun sets, therefore</i>
<i>Tsükaro-er rang ma da</i>	<i>Go back do come please</i>
<i>Tsüingi tsüla wangko,</i>	<i>The sun, let it set</i>
<i>Süngti dongmenko, Sangbang</i>	<i>Huge tree under, young man</i>
<i>Meshira ka ni.</i>	<i>Unconscious still.</i>

9. *A Young Husband and a Nagging Wife*

<i>Ku lu takterak ila</i>	<i>My takterak filled field</i>
<i>Jaji ko pangtong shijong ja anua</i>	<i>Full of jaji, pangtong overgrown</i>
<i>Luyang sungko ene-er</i>	<i>Field man load of wood carries</i>

*Temsenshiko tsüka bala
Ijemla na, ra-ja ketdang liteli!*

*Finishes very late and returns, yet
Ijemla she complains on!*

10. Shiruru o meimchir na tambu raktepba ken (Who is older-man, tiger or deity?)

Longterok nung poker

Stones six from emerge

Shiba tambu-ar tanubo memetet-a-ni!

Who is older or younger not known!

Kiyi teremsaba kola koshi memetet

Tiger twist and turn, not knowing

Aong nemshia ogo ni

Forest bush gone

Tsiüngrem talaknungba meyilung ka ener

God, the youngest, flaming torch one held

Am jirong ka nemshia-ogo-ni

Yam leaf jirong one

Aji agi meimchir tambu-a ta

That is why mankind/humans the oldest

shiogo ni

is declared!

Free translation:

After emerging from the six stones,

Man, god and tiger did not know who was older or who was younger;

Tiger

Pushed his way through the forest;

God turned out to be the youngest as he held one flaming torch in hand,

And pushed an am jirong,

That is why it was declared that the man among the three was indeed the oldest!

11. Süngkotenem Awatsüing Ken

O Süngkotenem yongpang alisa-na

O Süngkotenem lake-source python-did

Payak saka angem tashi

Its design shown

Rionsanger tongpang koker

Rionsanger battle victorious

Mangkorepna tajen o-ni!

Head hunted in plenty!

12. The Story of Two Best Friends (Narokhum)

Waromung den jungshi-bo,

Having forged a friendship with Waromung,

Luli den dang jungshir-a!

Only with luli do I get to eat!

Oh!!!

Oh!!!

Ozü tsüingkhüm ajung yong-ang,

It is but because of our splendid season,

Luli den jia jungshir-a!

That one can even get to eat with luli!

APPENDIX-B
TRANSLATED AO NAGA FOLK ORAL NARRATIVES
(Translated by the Scholar)

The narrative consisting of Sl. No. 1, 2, 5 and 6 were narrated by Shisakumla Lemtur of Waromung village. Sl. No. 3 was narrated by Imkongnuken of Chuchuyimlang village. Sl. No. 4 and 8 were narrated by Nungshimeren of Mopungchukit Village. Sl. No. 7 was narrated by Nungsangkaba Longkumer of Lirmen village.

1. The Shrewd Young Man

This is the tale of a young man who was cleverly able to make a decision to choose for himself a suitable wife.

In those days young men and women lived in separate dormitories called Arju and Tsüki, learning institutions where they went after reaching a certain age. There was a division in their batches according to their age and the chores or work they learnt from the basic means of living like fetching wood or water to the most important ones like carpentry or weaving was divided accordingly.

It was here in these dormitories that young men and women mingled among themselves and in the course of time the young men courted and wooed the young women whomsoever they found suitable to become their life partners. The tale is told that a young man in the Arju was also making decisions to settle down. He had been searching for the right person and in due time he was able to get to know and grow close to two girls. He realized that both of them were suitable partners for him but he also realized that it was difficult to choose since he liked both of their outer personalities.

He, therefore, decided in the end that he would test them on the basis of whose character stood out the better among the two. The next day, he invited them to go to the forest to collect firewood with him. The girls readily agree and they go together. After a hard day's collection of firewood, they finally decided to set back home. As they slowly trudged back, the young man suddenly tripped and fell, and lost consciousness. The young women were shocked and terrified but they tried to help him, and waited for him to regain consciousness. The sun was already setting and no one was around, the first girl grew impatient and wanted to go back to the village. Her consideration had started to wane out and she was no more concerned about the young man but for her own safety and tiredness. She, therefore, sang this song to her friend urging her to go back home together since the sun was setting.

The other young woman was not willing to do what her friend had suggested because it would mean abandoning a helpless person. She expressed her feelings to her and started to

sing that even though the sun had set, she was not leaving an unconscious person under the tree alone.

The first friend on hearing this went along her way while the other stayed behind with the seemingly unconscious individual. The young man who had faked his fall and his unconscious state the whole time and had been listening to what was going on now had no doubt about whom to decide as his life partner. He opened his eyes and the two of them returned to the village. In due time, he courted the young woman who had a considerate heart, who had chosen to stay with him even if it meant danger in the forest and soon they happily settled down.

2. A Young Husband and a Nagging Wife

Once there was a young family comprising of the husband, wife and their young children. The husband would go to the field everyday and work very hard while his wife would stay back home looking after the children and taking care of household chores. After a hard day's work in the field, the husband would trudge back home hoping to relax and rest his weary body. Alas! It wasn't to be so because what awaited him would be a nagging wife who would greet him complaining, not once would she ask how her husband's day was, failing to notice that he himself had a rough day. The husband would simply remain silent all through.

After a long hard day of working in the field full of weeds like *takterak*, *jaji*, and *pangtong*, the young husband comes back home, the last among the workers in the field. He trudges towards the warmth of his home only to be rudely awakened to the fact that his wife keeps nagging him about her day's work and about the children etc. This goes on for a long time and the young man becomes more and more unhappy. The relatives of the young husband come to know of this and they give him an idea how to get rid of her because the reason for divorce had to be there. They advise him to knowingly trip and throw the load on his wife the next time he returns from the field which would then instigate a quarrel leading to divorce. The wife's relatives come to know of this plan and advice her and try to reason with her about her behavior. They then tell her that that same evening when her husband comes from the field she should not complain and nag him about herself, she should understand that even he is already very tired so she should start taking care of him. The wife then foresees the drastic consequence of her actions and realizes her selfishness and lack of concern. The same evening when her husband returns, she quickly helps him in laying down his load basket saying, "Akaba's father let me help you with the load." She then makes something for him to eat. The husband is surprised by the wife's change of attitude but he is also happy with the change. They are able to gradually understand each other and as the story goes, they live a happy married life together.

3. Tale that Show Who is Older- Man, Tiger or Deity?

In the days of the forefathers in Jungliyimti it was not known who was older-men, deity or animals. This is a story that explains how they ascertained who was the oldest among them; it was important because the role of who was the most superior would be decided by that knowledge. In the Ao Naga culture the importance of the oldest, from a family unit to society as a whole, cannot be ignored, since it determines a lot of traditional practices which gives priority to the oldest or the eldest in the family or a social custom.

Therefore, one day, man, deity and the tiger, representing all the animals, decided to meet up for a discussion to find out who was the eldest among them.

The tiger left midway through the meeting. It plunged and dived straight into the forest on its own, without caring about what lay along its path and disappeared into the forest. It showed its lack of knowledge and wisdom making it inferior among the three gathered. The deity held a flaming torch in one hand and pushed his way through the forest, he was, therefore, called the youngest among them. The one that remained was the man, therefore, he was declared to be the oldest among them. Human beings realized that the deity was to be worshipped and the ritual of offering to the gods started.

This tale shows the superior element of human beings. Even here the physical force like the tiger and the spirit force like god are stronger than man who is actually the weakest, by sheer determination of will to survive takes the title of the eldest. The centrality of human beings can be seen here as well. The importance of the oldest among the Ao Nagas, be it among individuals, age groups, clans, or even the first settlers of a village, all of these are important for them.

4. Süngkotenem Lake Tale

From the time of the forefathers in the village of Mopungchukit, there existed the Sungkotenem Lake, as it had come to be called with reverence and which exists still today. This is the story of how the lake came into being. This happened during the age and generation of the Riyongsanger, the fifth in the cycle of generations in the *Putu Menden*. It means ‘the generation of many people who proclaim the war...*Ri*, or *ariür* refers to enemies and *riyong* means invitation or proclamation for war...more headhunting practices were at hand...the people in this generation were war like people...real fighters and war heroes’ (Jamir and Lanunungsang 41). It was during the time of the Riyongsanger that there was no lake; it was just a ‘süngkotenem’ which means a heavily wooded place with different types of huge trees. Atop one of the huge trees, a large python had decided to rest. On getting to know that, all the villagers refrained from going to the field and took out a day to put their effort in bringing the python down. At that time a person from another village also happened to be present among them. It was also decreed that no one was allowed to leave the village whether

it be a native from the village or others. On the assigned day, the whole village gathered to try and bring down the huge reptile; but no one succeeded in their effort even though they tried a number of times. At that time the person from another village who happened to be there asked if he could try too; and they gave him the catapult that they had been using. He let out a cry and said, ‘Aja naka meta, azu naka meta, ni Sametaba, kü matang ko keplazükang’, and then pulled at the catapult, which hit the python directly and it fell down to the ground. As the injured python rolled and slithered on the ground, it created a deep gorge which later progressed to the formation of a lake, and that is how the Süngkotenem Lake came into existence.

5. The Tale of the Widow and Her Sons

Long time ago there lived three young boys and their widowed mother. When the boys were very young their father had been carried away and eaten by a man eating tigress. The boys were not aware of what had happened. Before long they all reached the stage where they could enter the male dormitory (Arju). It also meant that they could be a part of visiting the girls’ dormitory (Tsüki), as was the practice during those days. The young girls already knew the incident of the boys’ father because their background story had already been circulated by others who knew about it. They therefore, taunted and mocked the boys saying that the latter had not taken revenge for the death of their father and laughed at them for not manning up. The boys were quite surprised because they were unaware of this side of the story. Therefore, back home they decided to ask their mother if what they were mocked and criticized about was true. Their mother affirmed that their father was indeed carried away by a man eating tigress when they were small. The young boys who were all grown up then came to the conclusion that they would avenge the death of their father and at the same time shut the mouths of those who were mocking them and calling them useless.

After a few days of planning and searching, the boys were able to identify the tigress together with its lair. They also found out that the tigress was nursing cubs of its own. When the tigress had gone in search of food for its cubs, the boys who had been waiting for the right opportunity decided to go ahead with a plan. They came out of hiding, and slit the throats of all the cubs. The area was full of the (asong dong) tree and the three of them quickly climbed up and hid themselves. The tigress returned with its prey and tried feeding its cubs but was unable to do so. She shared this dilemma with her friends saying, “I am trying to feed my cubs, but whatever I place inside their mouth, it falls down from their throat”. Hearing this, the youngest brother who is unable to control his laughter any longer lets out a stifled, “Hee! Hee!”

The tigress became aware of their presence and angrily rushed to climb the tree. The boys on their part threw the asong seeds at the tigress and as they continued to do so, there

was only one fruit left. After much quick discussion about who should throw the last fruit, they gave chance to the youngest brother, who exhaled on the fruit and said, 'Let the pain be painful on your piles!' which was said like a curse on the tigress. The fruit struck the tigress in the forehead with such force that it immediately fell to its death.

After the tigress had been killed the three of them climbed down from the tree and cut off its head, ears, tail and legs. They then set off towards the house (dorm) of the spinster who along with the young girls staying with her had mocked the three young boys about their inability to avenge their father's death. At night when everyone was asleep, they put their plan into action. The leg of the tigress was placed in place of wood in the fireplace. One brother held the ears outside where the lifted bamboo verandah was, also called *sünglang* in Jungli or *kilangi* in Mongsen, while another held the tail of the tigress near the entrance or the door post. In the middle of the night when the girls went out to the *sünglang* for their needs, they groped the ear of the tigress and screamed in horror saying that there was a wild animal there. In their rush to get back outside they were then whipped by the tigress' tail at the entrance which led them screaming back to the sleeping room as they huddled and piled with fear upon each other. Those few who tried to light the fire were startled by the furry wood which is the foot of the tigress. The occupants of the dorm continued to have a sleepless and horrific night and in the midst of all that the matron who was in charge of the dorm was squashed to death in all the hustle and chaos.

The next morning, after the commotion of the previous night got over and the confusion resolved, the girls realized that they had done a grievous mistake in taunting the three brothers. They were also unable to say anything against the brother because they were the ones who mocked and ridiculed them; and had instigated them to take revenge which the brothers did. The girls learnt a lesson from bitter experience.

6. The Story of Two Best Friends (Narokhum)

Long time back there were two friends who forged a very good and close friendship between them. Both of them belonged to different villages. One was from Waromung village and the other was from Unger village. The closeness and trust in their friendship could be seen in that they would simply visit and call upon each other's house as any close friend would do, and they would rest the night or stay for a few days in the other's house. The man from Waromung would rest at his best friend's place whenever he went up to Unger village; the man from Unger also did the same. The man from Waromung belonged to the Longkumer clan.

One day the man from Unger paid a visit to his friend at Waromung. That evening they had luli (a long type of beans- cowpea) for dinner. The next morning, they again had the same thing for their meal.

The man from Unger village was eating only luli (a long type of beans- cowpea) at his friend's house so he expressed that in the form of a jest. This is an example of an exchange of sentences or conversation through singing. The first portion is called the *temen* or 'beginning' where the friend sings that he had been only eating his meal with luli after his friendship with Waromung- here we see a reference being made of the village instead of the person's name which is common practice when singing between two parties. The *talak* or 'ending' of the song is usually a reply given by the other party which starts with a long "Oo...hh". The reply given by the other person is that the reason due to which they are able to eat the luli is in itself simply because the season for farming the bean stalks has been favorable in their village. In other words, the harvest of luli had been plentiful which meant a well stocked and healthy storage of food. The friendly exchange of words stops after the witty reply from the host and the visiting friend accepts defeat.

Hence, the friendly battle of words through singing ended. The name *Akangjungshi* which means "strong friendship" is used to celebrate friendship and given as a *Narokhium* (A *Narokhium* is usually used to celebrate or commemorate a memorable event or situation. It can be given to honor the heroic deeds of a warrior. It can also be given to praise some noteworthy deeds/actions of a person of high standing. It can also act as a reminder to commemorate certain situations). In this story, the particular name acts in a significant manner to celebrate the bond of a close friendship shared between two individuals from two villages. The name *Akangjungshi* is also given to different individuals hailing from other clans too. However, those belonging to the Longkumer clan of Waromung use it as a *Narokhium* since the person mentioned in this tale belong to the same clan, remembering the importance of maintaining strong bonds and expecting the individual named as such to also share the same amount of positive energy with others.

Thus, we find that the giving of names or the name in itself play a very important role for the Ao Nagas in which the very fate of an individual would often be embedded especially during the time of the forefathers. The sequence of past events could often be unfolded in a particular name which more or less would have been given to a person by the whole village, by the clan members, or by the elders of a family. At rare occasions, some names are given by two or more villages marking some important events.

7. The Story of Risanglong

After the settlement and formation of the new village of Lirmen, when the Ao Nagas worshipped nature and its elements, the people of Lirmen also worshipped a big boulder called Risanglong. It protected the village by informing the villagers when enemy headhunters attacked or planned their attack on the particular village. This divine protection

of the stone was accepted as well as held in awe and fear by the villagers who offered the stone their reverence and worship. As long as the stone was there, the village prospered in terms of producing warriors and great men. This continued for a while since the time of the forefathers.

However, with the coming of Christianity, the people were introduced to a new religion which was different from the animist practices. They started worshipping a different kind of supreme God as was preached to them. The result was that the Lirmen people decided to throw away the stone. They dug up the stone with the plan to roll it away. The consequence was that the stone transformed into a rooster and flew off into the far distance. It is believed that after the stone flew away, the peace and prosperity of the land disappeared and the people regretted their actions about throwing the stone away.

This story highlights the immediate setting aside of the Ao Naga cultural practices which also meant doing away with age old traditional rituals after the introduction of a new faith. This sudden decision has had its advantage and disadvantage, the practice of head hunting was abandoned, but a lot of cultural practices were similarly done away with. The story of the Risanglong shows the willingness of the people to embrace the new, however it also shows the spontaneous action of doing away with something that held cultural value. It can be seen here that the introduction of a new culture has also left a dent in the identity of the people as can be observed in the reaction of regret, the postcolonial effect can be seen in such instances.

8. The Story behind the Tsüngremmong Festival

Long ago, in the time of the Ao Naga forefathers an old man visited and requested one house after another to let him stay. No one allowed him to stay making all kinds of excuses like *genna* (cleansing ritual), nursing the piglets, new born baby etc. Finally, at the outskirts of the village there was a small shack belonging to two sisters- Yarla and her younger sister. It was a rough patched shack which did not seem like it any one was occupying it.

The old man went to the sisters and asked if he could stay with them. They replied that they had nothing, not even food to eat but if he wanted to stay with them he was welcomed to stay. He stayed there and asked them to set the pot for cooking. He rubbed his forehead and took out a single grain of rice which he put into the boiling water and it was sufficient for all of them. Again he told them to place another pot on the fire; he pulled out a bone from his knee which filled the pot with meat more than enough for them. This continued for three days.

In the morning of the third day, the three of them went out to the bamboo majang (verandah) and the old man asked them questions about the fields and to whom it belonged. The sisters replied that it belonged to the villagers who made excuses not to let him stay in their houses. Yarla and her sister did not want to show their field to the old man. At a distance, in the far corner, there was a field covered with sieve that belonged to the sisters. The younger sister wanted to show it but the elder sister was hesitant as she was embarrassed.

The younger sister made a plan; she intentionally dropped the comb from the bamboo majang to the ground below and asked her sister to fetch it. When the elder sister went down to fetch the comb the younger sister showed their field to the old man. The elder sister came to know that the younger sister had told the old man.

As they sat there talking together, the old man told the two sisters that before they start reaping the harvest, during the phase when the field is already ripe, they should maintain a strict cleansing ritual for three days. After the three day period is over, they could harvest the field. This is called '*Tsiingremmong*' or '*Asemnümong*' by the Ao Nagas, which means 'observing for three days' and it is practiced till today. The old man told the two sisters to cut the strap of the basket when they had enough harvest. One day, the younger sister got tired of harvesting continuously and spoke a lie to her sister that she was sick and could not come to the field. So, the elder sister went to the field alone. After sometime, the younger sister went up to the roof and cut the strap of the basket when the harvest was full.

Till today this particular belief about the strap of the basket is subconsciously there in the minds of the Ao Naga people. During the time of harvest when the basket is being filled with paddy, the concerned individuals make it a point not to rearrange the already tied straps as well as take extra precaution that they do not cut or scar the strap. This is to ensure that there is plenty of harvest to reap. This is how the festival of *Tsungremmong* came about and is celebrated all over the Ao area in the different villages. The significance of rituals or rites performed does not carry weightage today, however, the festival is still celebrated to bring about community feeling among the Ao Nagas as well as to preserve their culture and identity.

9. Other Tales:

Some tales teach life lessons to the listeners as can be seen in the story of "The Mother Crab and the Baby Crab" according to which a mother crab and her baby had come out of on the beach for some fresh air. As the mother crab watched her baby frolicking she suddenly noticed that there was an unnatural tilt in the way the baby was walking. So she called out why it would walk in such a funny way and to walk straight. The baby shouted back, "I am only imitating your walk!" (Ao 120-121). There are again different types of

stories that teach lessons to individuals and to groups about how to behave with elders, the importance of discipline, responsibility, obedience, family life, social obligations etc.

Some of these songs and tales also present the elements of moral values and who as a person is considered good or bad. Folksongs and folktales thus form a very important aspect of the Ao Naga culture.

APPENDIX-C
PROVERBS TEXT
(Free Translation by the Scholar)

Sl No. 1, 2,8,11,28,42,43 and 44 were personally collected from Lanumatong of Chuchuyimlang village. Sl No. 3, 15 and 38 were personally collected from Nungshimeren of Mopungchukit village. Sl No. 4, 30, 45 and 46 were collected from Pangeryapang of Longkhum village. Sl. No. 29 was collected from Lanutemsu Lemtur of Longsa village. Sl. No. 10, 33, 37 and 39 were taken from the book, *Naga Society And Culture* written by N. Talitemjen Jamir and A. Lanunungsang. Sl. No. 24-27, 35, 36 and 47-50 were collected from Nungsangkaba of Lirmen village. Sl. No. 5-7, 9, 12-14, 16-23, 31, 32, 34, 40, 41 and 51-68 were personally collected from B. Atu Jamir of Khar village. All the proverbs have been translated by the scholar.

1. *Nüpang-iüm nung tzü ma-mung (Jungli).*

[Water does not stay on the yam leaf]

The proverb refers to a person who ignores the corrections given like the water droplets that roll off the yam leaf. It is similar to the phrase ‘to fall on deaf ears’.

2. *Likokdongi tur molu penzü ama (Jungli)*

[To climb up a bitter shrub and glance around with the greatest desire]

It means when fools try to act wise or when those who do not have much pretend and act like they do

3. *Merlashi ama (Jungli)*

[Like Merlashi]

An individual who outwardly seems to be honest and speaking the truth, yet, when the real deeds come to surface the heart of that person or the actual intention is found to be very different from what the individual really projects himself to be.

4. *Heirem matangko jener akhu takgo jenok(Mongsen)*

Shirem tsüingdang nungi jener Keyi dak jeno (Jungli)

[To escape from a bear and run into a tiger]

The meaning of the proverb is, ‘To escape from a grim situation only to run into a similar or a grimmer situation.’ which is equivalent to a common proverb, ‘Out of the frying pan into the fire.’

5. *Ak-i süngdongi matur (Jungli)*

[A pig does not climb a tree]

It means that an uneducated person who is not aware of anything cannot become educated. A fool cannot become wise.

6. *Tsüngen lanu ama (Jungli)*

[Like a baby crab]

The proverb refers to a person who is weaker than the rest in a group and who is unable to defend himself. It is a comparison to those people who are weak.

7. *Tsüngda pela (Mongsen)*

Tsüng-pret (Jungli)

[Like a flash of lightning]

It means a person who is really fast and smart in what he does.

8. *Tsüngmok aten nung au telatsü ama (Jungli)*

[Like the bamboo that tilts with dew when the thunder claps]

This proverb has metaphorical implications where it means to be in constant fear of something happening to us (though it has not yet happened); a calamity, sickness, death or any other crisis which is currently ongoing in other people's lives.

9. *Kisa anü medem (Jungli)*

[When the sun shines brightly once before setting after a cloudy day]

It means to see only once.

10. *Menungnok nokra, kibulung, jangjalung, peyong tenem, item ajungai oja, oja ta ayimtener.*

[As the earthquake occurs every mountain shakes]

There is no one who does not cry in distress in times of crisis or danger.

11. *Menja apunger ta-tsükshishi(Jungli)*

[Under the loosely woven basket, do not try to hide]

Do not try to hide the truth or secret that is already out in the open; and about which everyone already knows.

12. *Tzü nokzüik ama (Jungli)*

[Cutting water with dao]

It means whatever a person says or does there is nothing right about it.

13. *Arju nung chi-tem te-sala (Jungli)*

[Do not open rice packed in leaf in the Arju]

It means to not talk secrets in a group.

14. *Tsüingsangera mereprangshi tujema meyongshi (Jungli)*

[Neither could dancers observe, nor could porridge drink]

It means not being successful in anything. (Neither here nor there)

15. *Etsüingdongzüing nung /omok pela ama*

[Under the black sesame plant, the omok bird waits in anticipation]

People who are good for nothing, and do not understand the situation in whatever they do are used in the above reference.

16. *Ak-i aniing angu ama*

[Like a pig that can see the sky]

It refers to a person who is full of oneself and who pretends to know much more than the little knowledge one has.

17. *Arakima azü ama (Jungli)*

[Like a dog in the midst of a feast]

It refers to a person who is present in each and every celebration or feast.

18. *Arijui auer atu ama (Jungli)*

[Like a thief entering an Arju]

In means, in a situation where there is no hope or expectation one should not push oneself at all.

19. *Menüli mepong jepli mepong(Jungli)*

[Can neither laugh nor cry]

There are situations presented in such a way where a person can neither laugh nor cry. It usually happens in extreme situations when the individual is put in a difficult position of expressing himself where the person is put in a state of confusion. It means to turn a deaf ear to any advice given to an individual, whether that advice is good or bad.

20. *Metsüba melangpha (Mongsen)*

Mali melangtet (Jungli)

[To be empty and uncut]

A simple, naive and straightforward person.

21. *Yongza nung kihli chung (Jungli)*

(Kihli, feeding in a small river)

It means to unabashedly try being superior in a small group setting.

22. *Songlali mepong kangtenli mepong(Jungli)*

[Can neither stretch nor fold one's leg]

It means an awkward situation where one can neither stretch one's leg nor can one curl or fold it into place. To be stuck in between a situation of either being vocal about something.

23. *Waro or tempang nung takoshi (Jungli)*

[Do not knock on the tree stump after the crow has gone]

Do not try after the opportunity has gone or is no more

24. *Yimdong nung wara atsür tesenzü*

[Do not drag along a wara wherever you go]

According to this proverb, it advises a person to be careful of not hurting others wherever they go.

25. *Sürangpong nüksak saker tesenzü*

[Do not keep open your eyes like the grasshopper]

-As the proverb shows, it cautions a person not to keep their eyes open like the eyes of the grasshopper which can look at all direction at one go wherever it goes. In the same way it talks about a person who 'looks everywhere' like the grasshopper with all round vision and keeps poking in other's business, complaining and objecting about the works of others.

26. *Milongsang aiben tejemshi*

[Do not stoke the wood inside the fire a lot of times]

. It means not to repeatedly say something which would lead to petty as well as large quarrels. It also refers to a problem once solved which should not be opened continuously on the same topic bringing discord among many.

27. *Yangko semer tawazü*

[Do not work with a bag in hand]

It means to think only about himself and always have selfish motive even if in public domain or office. In other words, serving the people carrying one's own bag hidden from others with an intention to steal or corrupt.

28. *Azü-o ak na lumung ama*

[Like the dog and pig working in the field]

To get credit for the work done by someone.

29. *Tsüngen-i Aon Asoba Ama*

[Like the crab that makes curry]

It means to carry the burden of others. It can also refer to a selfless and self sacrificing person.

30. *Pokpü nü mejangchang ning ata (Mongsen)*

Pokpoi mesangjang amen ata (Jungli)

[The owl waits for the seed of the mejang tree to ripen]

To hope and wait for something that would never happen

31. *Meyi tsüngen meso medem*

[The summer crab has no taste or fat]

To be of no use.

32. *Along alar medem (Jungli)*

[Like the along or flying ant that slaves away]

It refers to a person who is born under unfortunate circumstances; either without the help of proper care or lacking the needed care because of being orphaned.

33. *Kilem, jara maket ki (Jungli)*

[Sudden demise of the head of the family]

This proverb talks about the sudden demise of either head of the family like the husband or wife, father or mother. The metaphorical imagery is that of a broken down and wasted material house. It refers to the death of a husband or wife in the family.

34. *Koya longki-i angling süer ai ama (Jungli)*

[Like the rat that drags a ball of thread into a cave]

To hide something in such a way that it is difficult if not impossible to find it.

35. *Shisang dang shitu tesayu*

[Do not teach a squirrel to dig for sweet potato]

Do not teach the wise or the elderly.

36. *Nikongdang anü agi tsiik marar*

[The evening sun cannot dry the paddy]

Evening sun dries no grain.

37. *Mishi ana dak chibo metongdaktet*

[Pots cannot be placed on two hearth stones]

It is not possible to have a one or two stoned hearth. The ideal number is three where one is able to balance the pots properly. In the same way unless there is consensus opinion or approval, no final decision can be arrived at and everything becomes failure. It is just like the pot that needs three stones for it to find the perfect balance and composure

38. *An-i tsiingen angu ama (Jungli)*

[Like the chicken that sees the crab]

It means when a person does whatever he wants to do, or goes in whichever direction he wants to follow without an understanding or knowledge of the situation. In other words, there is nothing socially good about that individual.

39. *Pa-ji ajem tajung (Jungli)*

[He is a good needle]

A peacemaker is like a good needle.

40. *An melokpang nung atiim (Jungli)*

[The fowl perches on the edge of the basket]

Unconscious actions or words can lead oneself into danger.

41. *Omok aser Orak nemjem ama (Jungli)*

[Like the regret of the omok and orak]

To regret after something has already gone by.

42. *Lenjang süing (Jungli)*

[The wood on the pathway]

A person on whom every one depends.

43. *Akong tsükli mürem (Jungli)*

[The prawn immediately becomes red when burnt]

It means to easily and quickly get angry or irked.

44. *Per süür mesüküm lepdaktsü ama (Jungli)*

[To cut a snake that is already dead]

Sometimes while walking towards a certain destination the path is often quite long and it can be seen like a never ending spiral. During such times, the one who is walking often wonders when the seemingly unending path will reach its objective. The reference here in the proverb is made to a snake's length.

45. *Tenem sep ko pokpo rülak (Mongsen)*

Tenem tesepe nung pokpo rüzük (Jungli)

[An owl hatches in a hornbill's nest]

In an owl's nest an owl will hatch and in a hornbill's nest a hornbill will hatch, to each its own kind. However, this proverb talks about a situation where a tiny owl hatches in the nest of the mighty hornbill bird.

46. *Tsütakou ko teri süp (Mongsen)*

Tzüshikhu nung tar asa (Jungli)

[Like collecting innards in a bamboo water container basket]

To not be in agreement with the group and to do whatever one wants.

47. *Tzurongrong nung ola ayimoktsu ama (Jungli)*

[Shouting/screaming in front of a waterfall]

It refers to a person whose speech is not taken seriously by others just like the scream, shout of an individual is absorbed by the loud noise of the waterfall, such is the case of a person whose words are not taken seriously by anyone else.

48. *Nashikong nung tsungtsung alenoktsu ama (Jungli)*

[Like tying a bell around the neck of a cow]

A person who is too proud of himself and think as if he carries the burden of the world. Even if the work done by him is not that much, he brags like he had done all of it by himself just like the bell tied around the neck of a cow that walks around in a stately manner carrying the tinkling bell.

49. *Nashi-i sungo tou angu ama yimsu tesu*

[Do not rule like the cow that sees the green leaves.]

This particular proverb refers to thinking only about one's selfish gain or advantage when in a ruling position or where the individual is at authority. In other words, just like the cow has the whole pasture to its advantage to use it in any way, an individual might also misuse one's authority to his advantage.

50. *Teni nung ako nung tenuk nungi nuksu alu ama. (Jungli)*

[When the nose is smacked, the tears fall from the eyes]

This proverb talks about the importance and affinity of close relation like family and other dear ones. It means that if a person injures or hurt a family member or relative, whatever they suffer also affect us. In other words if someone near to a person gets hurt then the person himself also goes through the same situation of feeling the pain even though it might not be a direct injury.

51. *An-i jana chir tepang meshia sayu ama (Jungli)*

[After the fowl eats stool it wipes the dirt off its beak]

It means to pretend that nothing wrong has been done even though one has done something wrong.

52. *Azü kolak nung chitem sendaktsü (Jungli)*

[Tying leaf- wrapped rice to a dog's neck]

To help someone but not expecting any help or other return from them; helping in vain.

53. *Achaba chikomong (Jungli)*

[Achaba's rice basket]

It refers to a person who is surrounded by both good and bad influences; and he greedily collects all of these.

54. *Ango-lang tepen nung amet ama (Jungli)*

[Grasping a freshwater eel by the tail]

A person who speaks lies again and again.

55. *Ango-i shi mekümtet (Jungli)*

[Fish cannot become meat]

Falsehood and lies cannot become truth.

56. *Amitsüri tenem ozü aginü medem (Jungli)*

[A widow who wants a hornbill bird]

To hope for something that would not happen.

57. *Atsüng agi telang meyt ama (Jungli)*

[To wipe the anus with atsüng leaf]

It means to give wrong judgment about a situation and hurting oneself.

58. *Amitsür lu nung ak shi den chiyong ama (Jungli)*

[Eating rice with meat in a widow's field]

It means to get blessing in an unexpected place or situation.

59. *Mongzü atura (Jungli)*

[The eagle has arrived]

To get bitterly hungry.

60. *Enzü lakto medem (Jungli)*

[Like the shoot of the enzü]

When something or someone is used in comparison to say he is lacking in strength, this expression is used.

61. *Entsü agi akonger (Jungli)*

[The egg crows]

It simply means when a person has the mannerisms and behavior of someone older than or beyond his years.

62. *Jangjang ampet medem (Jungli)*

[Like a chirping cicada in one's grasp]

An individual who complains a lot.

63. *Kiyonger shijep atadang keyi-i atu ama (Jungli)*

[The tiger enters the house while the owner waits for the share of meat from the neighbor]

To fall victim to an uneventful circumstance while expecting and waiting for something.

64. *Napong techimi-i misen ai ama (Jungli)*

[Like maggots inside a goat's anus]

Unable to wait, to be impatient and restless.

65. *Shiti narong nung sangcha rüshi medem (Jungli)*

[To pierce an elephant's ear with a wooden needle]

It means a useless situation.

66. *Nashi soü nung long teploktsü ama (Jungli)*

[Throwing stone into a cow's dung]

It means to stay in one situation and not to move forward.

67. *Sangzü-nü-nem ama (Jungli)*

[To get scarred by the sangzu leaf]

It means a work which is very difficult.

68. *Shiti narong per agi memekümpangtet (Jungli)*

[An elephant's ear cannot be covered by a per, a large flat basket]

Something which is bad cannot be made good.

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