

Traditional Art Forms

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ANGAMI TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS & DEMONSTRATIONS

Tati/Lübo (Musical instrument)

Tati/Lübo is one of the most popular traditional musical instrument of the Angami Nagas, used as an accompaniment to various songs. It is a stringed instrument made of a dried bottle gourd, a well ground bamboo stalk, a dried swine or cattle bladder and inner bark of a tree as the string.

The instrument produces a beautiful and melodious sound, serving as a perfect accompaniment to all types of songs. When the Terhünyi festival is observed, between the harvesting season (EcieKhrü) and the next sowing season (TsatiKhrü) i.e. between 20th October and February of the following year, this instrument is popularly used by both men and women. In olden days, it was a very popular instrument used by young men courting prospective wives.

Terhükewhuo Do (Warrior's Tactics)

Terhükewhuo Do refers to the battle tactics used by the warriors during head hunting. These tactics are passed down and taught to the young boys by the warriors. The tactics include holding the spear/machete in the right way and aiming at the enemy from the right angle, so that with the throwing of the spear the target is hit.

Seguo mi (Traditional fire-making)

During our forefathers time when there were no match sticks, fire was lit by traditional methods. In traditional fire making process a bamboo string, a piece of dry wood and some cotton is used. The bamboo string is rubbed continuously on a piece of dry wood for a certain period of time till fire is generated on the cotton. Another method is by putting shavings of a bamboo (keprü) to a dry stick to light a fire. This traditional fire making process is used to light a fire on the first day of the Sekhrenyi festival and is kept burning continuously for the next three days of the festival.

Mekü (Yelling/Shouting)

Mekü which means yelling/shouting in Angami, is performed only by the men folk. However, not every man can perform the Mekü. Only those who are capable of producing the required sound can perform it. The sound can be produced anytime. It is a form of expressing one's joy and happiness. It is also produced while performing folk songs and folk dances, as an opening or a

concluding statement. During times of pain and sorrow, this sound is produced to encourage and boost each other's morale and notify one's presence.

Ketsükekhon (Horn Blowing)

In olden days when there was no means of mass communication, '*Ketsü Kekhon*' meaning 'Horn Blowing' served as a very effective means of communication. In times of need, '*Ketsü Kekhon*' formed the vital source of communication for the entire village. It is said that through the varied tunes and rhythms of this Horn Blowing, the listeners could decipher the messages for which the horn is blown. It was blown during emergency events to alert the villagers. In times of animal attacks, the horn is blown to alarm the villagers and other domestic animals to be prepared and be alert of the intruder.

2. FOLK DANCES

Ho-le-ho (Dance)

There is an old saying that at one time men and spirits lived together. There was also a time when men, nature, animals and spirits could communicate with each other. But as humans were more intelligent than the other, they developed more melodious sounds.

The dance-song, '*Holie Ho*' is performed by both men and women on special occasions and festivals. It is believed that the song originated when two friends went for hunting and heard the spirits singing "Holie-Ho". On coming back to the village, they imitated the 'Holie-Ho' tune and developed it further. These days, the dance-song is performed in groups of twos and fours alternately. While singing, the group imitates the leader in words and movements.

The traditional attires and ornaments worn by the Angamis during various cultural/Folk performances are:-

Male: - 1. Headgear- *Tsüla*, *Tsuphie*, *Ramei* (Hornbill feather) 2. Earring- *Thevüdzü* (made of cotton), *Zanyie* (Meza's feather) 3. Necklace- *Cüzie*, *Ziepriei*, *Cütho*, *Chükriü* 4. Armlet- *Zunuopa*, *Chütho* 5. Wristlet- *Dziepa* 6. Sash cloth- *Terha* 7. Waistbelt- *Chiecha* 8. Kilt- *Kesünei* 9. Calf sock- *Phipa* 10. Ankle sock- *Phiso* 11. Spear- *Rüngou* 12. Shield- *Pezhü* (warrior's shield)

Female:- 1. Earring- *Nieso* 2. Necklace- *Tacü, Cüzie, Cütho, Cüjie* 3. Armlet- *Thuobvü* 5. Wristlet- *Thuoda* 6. Chest cloth- *Vathi* 7. Wraparound- *Pfhemhou, Chiecha*

Dapfhüphita (Dapfhü Dance)

Kohima Village comprises of four Khels, of which Dapfhütsumia occupies the South Eastern part of the village. The people of Dapfhütsumia are mostly cheerful, Sports lovers and fond of music and dance. They perform different types of dances. Among the dances, *Dapfhü Phita* is the most thrilling and colourful dance. It is performed during big festivals and other social gatherings.

The song accompanying the dance goes as:

“Men folk, during their prime time, dancing in the playground, carrying feathers in their head to glorify their parent's name”.

Rüünuomiahelim (Girl's Dance)

As Dapfhütsumia people are very fond of sports, music and dance, even girls perform dances during festivals and other social gatherings to add extra beauty to the occasion. Rüünuomia Helim is a dance which is performed by the unmarried girls only.

The song that is sung during the dance goes as follows: -

"But for the girl child, happiness and joy of a youth life is so brief and only for a short while; Married, they, this year; begets their offspring right next year. Followed by it her youth, regrettably fades away."

Kuokelierülou (Victory dance)

In the olden times, *Kuokelie Rulou* (victory dance) was performed by our forefathers to celebrate their victory over their enemies. Young man and woman dance together to honor the victorious warriors. It is performed amidst merry-making and feasting. In these modern times when there is no more headhunting, this dance is performed to celebrate victory over darkness and evil so that the light of love and humanness will prevail. This dance is performed during festivals and other important cultural occasions.

Phita (A friendship ritual Dance)

Traditionally, *Phita* is a warrior's dance performed by the men folk. However, with time women folk also perform alongside men. Dressed in their

full traditional attire, the performers sing “HOO...AA, HOO...AA, HOO...AA, HOO...AA” in four different tunes, till the end of the dance. The lead-dancer gives the cue to change their dance steps by uttering his commands.

Phita is performed during *Kida Ki Nyi* (Friendship rituals) where citizen of one village host guests from other village and makes new friends. Observing this ritual strengthens the relationship between the two village and the spirit of unity is upheld during the good and the bad times. It is also performed during the Sekhrenyi Festival and during other Cultural occasions.

3. FOLK SONGS

Tati Pfhe (Tati Song)

Tati is a single-stringed musical instrument used by the Angami Nagas. It is made of a bottle gourd, a well ground bamboo stalk, a dried swine or cattle bladder and the inner bark of a tree which is used as the string for the instrument. It is mainly used as an accompaniment to various songs. There is a story behind the Tati instrument which goes like this- there lived a man who loved a lady very much. He tried to catch a beautiful, colourful bird called 'Meza'. He thought that if he caught the bird he would use the soft feathers as an earring and visit his lover's house at night. The man also says that his visits to his lover's house at night would reveal their clones to others. But if they don't reveal their love where would they find solace? He tells the girl if you really need me, put on your bangles and dream with me. Though I don't have strong muscles of steel, use my arms for comfort". Though he can't express himself he wished his beloved to be happy in her future life. This song reveals the story of a man who has no courage to tell his beloved of his love and so he has to remain lonely.

ZotshakezePfhe (Cotton spinning song)

In the past, our fore-fathers depended on cotton for their clothing. The women folk spanned cotton and wool into thread to weave their clothes. While Spinning the Cotton, they sing melodious songs giving rhythm to their work, making it less boring and tiresome.

The song goes –

*"After today, either tomorrow or day after,
We may depart without seeing one another,
To go to different routes,
Let us therefore spend successive days together happily"*

TsieshüPfhe (Stone Pulling Song)

There is a traditional believe that the soul of the dead comes back among the living. To arrange a resting place for them, stones are ceremonially pulled and erected in their memory. This is done only by the male members and mostly at night, accompanied by a special song called *Tsieshüpfhe*. The stone is selected and prepared prior to the stone pulling ceremony and it is erected just outside the village gate. Rich and well to do people who have performed the 'Feast of Merit', can only perform this ceremony. The song is sung while pulling the stone. As the song is so melodious, it is believed that even spirits come to listen to the song.

Tsia du Pfhe (Seed Sowing Song)

Various agricultural activities have their specific accompanying songs. The song sung during the sowing of seeds is called, "*Tsia du Pfhe*". The song is both an invocation seeking divine assistance as well as to invigorate and encourage the sowers. Towards the end, persons who are expert in this song place themselves on either sides of the field and simultaneously sow the seeds as they sing. This activity is carried out only during jhum cultivation.

Nuopie Pfhe (lullaby)

Nuopie Pfhe is a melodious song sung to lull a baby to sleep. It is not uncommon to notice that a very admirable trait among the Angami tribe is to hum, sing and utter sounds of regular rhythm while at work in the village and in the fields.

*Go off to sleep or else you will be knocked on the head,
Go off to sleep for there are more works to be done and
Go off to sleep so that works could be done.
Go off to sleep...*

4. RITUALS

Rituals performed during the Sekhrenyi Festival

Sekrenyi, the '*Festival of Purification*' is the most important festival of the Angami Nagas. It is celebrated on the 25th of February, the Angami month of Kezei. The festival lasts for ten days. It is also known as Phousanyi, and is primarily for males. Kizie is the first ritual in this festival. As part of this ritual, few drops of rice water are taken from the top of the jug called Zumho and is

put into the leaves. Then the leaves are placed at the three main posts of the house by the lady of the house.

On the first day of Sekhrenyi, all young and old men clean the village ponds. After the cleaning, the youths guard the ponds into the night to avoid anyone from fetching water. The next morning all the young men of the village wake up early and wash themselves from the ritually cleansed water. They also wash their tools and weapons with this water. Young men then put two new shawls, the white Mhoushü and the black Lohe and sprinkle water on their breast, knees and on their right arm. This ceremony is called *Dzuseva* and is done to wash all the ills and misfortunes. After returning home, a ritual is performed by killing a rooster for each male celebrant. The intestines of the fowl are taken out and are hung outside the house in the village. An elder examines the manner in which the rooster's legs are crossed in death to see if the person will have a good future or not. If its leg is crossed over the left, it is taken as a good omen and indicative of success in any enterprise the participant may undertake. The celebration includes different age groups sitting together and singing folk songs for three days. The song Sekreselie is sung by the men folk. During Thekra Hie, which is considered as the best part of the festival, different age groups sit together and sing traditional songs throughout the day. Rice beer and meat is served to the participants. The young men go for hunting on the seventh day of the festival. The most important ceremony falls on the eighth day. On this day, bridge-pulling or gate-pulling is performed. Inter-village visits are also exchanged. Field work is prohibited during this season of feasting and merry-making.

Phichumevo (selection of the high priest)

Mevo refers to a Male priest. The main role of the Mevo is to pray for the prosperity of the village. Among the Angami Nagas, the practice of selecting a New High Priest is done in an assembly where prospective candidates from all the *khels*(colony) in the village would be present. An unblemished rooster previously selected, would be brought out by a young boy (Phouse) and he would present it to any one of the prospective candidate for the High Priest. If the candidate considers himself as unworthy he would normally refuse it. But if his hand touches the rooster, it would be taken as an acceptance gesture. In preparation of the office of the High Priest, he undergoes self-purification ceremony called, "*Thuphigeizhie*". After that he steps out and standing on a piece of wood (not touching the ground) he shouts in a loud voice, "*O...o...oooooooo...Vishelievilalie di.....*" (*we shall rise again*) and announce either a genna or a working day after which he takes over the Office.

Neiyie Tsüpre (Test of strength and maturity)

In olden times, young lads in order to prove their maturity and eligibility for marriage had to perform certain rituals. One ritual is to carry a hearth stone above the head without touching the body, and walk around the yard to prove his strength and might. Failure in doing so, was interpreted as immaturity. But if he is successful in carrying out the tasks, he is deemed fit to marry. This is also performed during festivals and sports event, where volunteers are invited to participate and prove their strength and might.

Kiyazho (Marriage Ritual)

Every Angami village is divided into three or four clans, each of which are further divided into sub-clans. Members of the sub-clan cannot intermarry. When a man attains a marriageable age, one of his female relative such as a paternal aunt takes the initiative of approaching the woman of his liking with a proposal of marriage. If the girl accepts the proposal, the two are given a specific period of time to listen to their dreams. If one of them has a bad dream or if a relative from either side dies during the proceedings, the marriage plan is called off. If all goes well, the marriage takes place in the night. The bride's parents send her off to her husband's house with a basket laden with food. She is accompanied by a woman companion, a young boy and a young girl. The bridegroom is also accompanied by a young girl. The groom gives one chicken each to the members of the wedding party. They feast together and the friends of the bride leave, all except for the female companion who spends the night with her. The bride and groom keep away from each other on the second day in order to perform more rituals.

On the third day, called tsukhrü the married couple goes to the fields together for the first time. In the third or fourth month, an elder performs a ritual for the new household. He washes the mouth and legs of a chicken, asks the couple to touch it, and then swings the bird back and forth pronouncing blessings of a long life free from diseases upon the house. He then takes the chicken beyond the village gate and kills it.

Nusonubo (Birth Ritual)

The Angam is believe that if the father of the child is not present during childbirth, the spirits would take away the child. So the father's presence played a very important role. Right after the birth of the child, the father had to perform the ritual of claiming the child by putting saliva on a finger, touching the forehead of the infant and proclaiming, 'I am first'. The placenta of the child is

carefully buried within the compound of the house. There is an old Angami belief that a person longs for the place where his/her placenta is buried.

The Naming ceremony is observed a few days after birth. The name of the child is carefully selected and made sure it does not hamper the child's future.

AO TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

The story of Lijaba

Lijaba refers to a supernatural being who was revered by the Ao Nagas as 'God'. Long time ago, in a small Ao village, Lijabawas said to make his presence disguised as an ugly old man. He went to every house in the village in pretense of seeking shelter for the night. But no one agreed to let him stay.

One day he visited the house of two sisters who were orphans. Yarila and Matajenla agreed to let the old man take shelter in their humble cottage and offered the old man a Cot, which they only possessed. The next morning, the old man asked the two sisters to show him their paddy field from a distance. On being shown, the old man chanted some words, blessed the two sister's field and cursed the rest of the fields.

When the time for harvest came, the old man's word came true and the two sisters reaped a huge harvest while other villager's harvest were meagre. The villagers were amazed when they realized that Lijaba did visit their village. Since then, the Ao Naga's celebrates Tsungremmong, a pre-harvest festival and regard every visitor as *Lijaba* in fear and respect for the awesome God or Lijaba.

Kongkiwa (Instrumental drama)

Kongki refers to a stringed instrument used as an accompaniment. Since olden times, the AoNagas have used different musical instruments to accompany songs relating to different seasons and occasions. Some of the prominent instruments include the log drum, drum, sea shell, different varieties of wind instruments made of animal horn, bamboo, paddy stem and also different types of stringed instruments made of dried gourd, etc. Log drum is sounded in times of tragedy, animal horn is sounded during festivals and arrju flute is played in the *Morung*. Different stringed instruments were played in the *Züki* (women dormitory) and also in the open at night.

In this drama, a young boy with his best friend goes to the women's dormitory to visit a girl he fancies. A widow is also present there. The two young lovers express their feelings through songs and play the *Kongki* (stringed instrument) as an accompaniment.

Boy: "Dearest one, you are like a flower that blooms in a tall tree. It is my wish to marry and live happily with you in the heart of this Ao village. However, my dearest one, it is very sad that your mother does not approve my

proposal. O! Shining star of the village! If only you can stand up against your mother's disapproval. For our future's sake, please do not let her disapproval be an obstruction for our marriage."

Girl: "I regret to say that I can't tell this concern to my parents. Please do not shed tears. O! That we were born destined to marry and live together! Your beloved lover, who always brightens all your moments and follows you along, finds little reason to live on... Your favourite flower, fully bloomed, is haunted by death and the approaching end."

Keja rishi (Head hunting demonstration)

Keja rishi means 'a single warrior who goes alone for head hunting'. In olden days, the Ao Nagas were a tribe of head hunters. The prestige of a young man is determined by the number of *Mangko* which means 'the head of an enemy', he brings. The preparation itself is very complex. He has to undergo a lot of hardship, training, strategizing and working out tactics. Therefore during the preparation period, one has to spend at least 6 days in meditation, a period called *Anempong*.

During this period he has to be isolated from his wife and he is not allowed to participate in other activities. Only after which he goes for head hunting. His movements from place to place is very tricky. He takes an animal leg and imprints it in place of his footprints so that his presence is not detected by the enemy. He hides under the bushes and attacks anyone that comes by.

When the man brings an enemy head, he is greatly honored and exalted and his victory is celebrated with great honor. He is elevated as a warrior of higher rank among his peers. Songs are composed and sung to him on the day of celebration. The warrior is identified by the tattoos on his chest and back. These tattoos are marked in different categories according to status and honor, ranking from lower to higher category. As they are the defenders of the village, they become the ruler of the village.

Sari JeliJebshi (Training in warfare)

Sari Jeli Jebshi means training of the youth in fighting with dao (machete) and spear. During the head-hunting days, people were full of fear and insecurity. Thereby protection and security was of utmost importance to every citizen. Expert fighters were very much needed and hence, they were always aware of this training. Experienced warriors taught the young men the art of fighting using spears and daos. So every young men had to undergo this training.

The *Morung* or the *Ariju* (dormitory) was the Centre of learning one's culture and all types of tactics of head hunting. Once the boys mastered the fighting tactics they were considered as educated. Girls admired such boys as those days security was their primary need.

Sungkong Atepba (Beating of Log Drum)

In the past, log drum was an integral part of the Ao Nagas and an important medium used to convey different messages to the people. The tree for the log drum was carefully selected from a place that was free from any disputes, where no evil remarks were uttered. It had to be a healthy tree with a sizeable trunk and considerable height. Once the tree is cut down the people spend days hollowing out and carving the log drum until it is completed. The log drum is then set up in the village and rituals are performed to dedicate it. Different beats are drummed to convey different messages such as:

- i. Invasion by the enemy
- ii. In times of death and mourning
- iii. When leaving for battle
- iv. To convey victorious deeds
- v. During festivals
- vi. To sound alarm in times of natural disasters.

2. FOLK DANCES

AngaMalu (Fish dance)

In Ao, '*Yar*' means dance movement accompanied with singing and '*Tsüngsang*' means dancing with fast movements. Both type of dances are accompanied with meyu (echoing melody). Most of the Ao folk dances are imitations of the movements of birds, fishes and animals.

The Ao Nagas believed that community fishing was an important part of the social life of our forefathers. While living in the ancestral site of Chungliyimti, the Dikhu River was the spot for their fishing adventures. Legend has it that they saw a large shoal of fish (*Ngapuyima*) in the deep waters. All these fishes were swimming in line starting from the biggest to the smallest fish, seeming to enjoy the company of each other. It so charmed and attracted the villagers that after returning to the village they started imitating the movement of the fish which was named as '*Anga Malu*'. Today this dance is performed in all the festivals with the hope that this Fish Dance will give a clear picture of fishes dancing together in Dikhu River.

The traditional attires and ornaments worn by the Ao Nagas during Folk Performances are:

Male- 1). *Temko* (Headgear made of hornbill feathers) 2). *Ozümi* (earrings made of bird's feather worn only by a leader) 3). *Shibo* (wild boar tusks worn around the neck) 4). *Lakümbang* (worn on the shoulders in a criss-cross manner, made of animal hide) 5). *Kümpang* (Armlet) 6). *Kaap* (gauntlet worn on the wrist) 7). *Rongmangnokleptsü* (Dao holder) 8). *Nok* (Dao) 9). *Zübolangtem* (loin cloth decorated with cowrie shells) 10). *Rongnü* (spear)

Female- 1). *Kolang* (head gear/hair bun) 2). *Ozümi* (Hornbill feathers put on the hair bun) 3). *Tongbang* (Earrings made of marble) 4). *Wally* (earrings made of dyed animal hair) 4). *Mejungsangshi*(necklace) 5). *Sarengsangshi* (necklace) 6). *Chubakaap* (Necklace) 7). *Wangküim*(necklace) 8). *Kisen* (wristlet) 9). *Etsüingsü* (chest cloth) 10). *Süpeti* (Mekhala)

TenemSungjok (Hornbill Dance)

The Hornbill is one of the most treasured and revered bird for the Nagas. It is greatly admired for its majestic movements and instinctive alertness. It is also a symbol of noble disposition. The Hornbill came across the Mountains (*Tenum*) of the Ao inhabited area, hence its name is derived from this.

When it is time for the female bird to lay her eggs, she enters a hollow tree trunk where the eggs are laid. The male hornbill covers up the entrance to the nesting space, leaving only a small hole through which he feeds the female and the chicks when they are hatched. The male keeps an eye on his family, hopping from one tree branch to another in the hope of scaring away intruders or diverting attention.

In this dance the forward and backward movement is an imitation of the movement of the bird on the branches of the trees. The song invites the young boys and girls to put on their colorful attires and dance like the Hornbill which hover and circle around the canopy of the tall trees. Among the many dances, the Hornbill dance has a high place of honor. It represents the highest social virtues of the people-fidelity, friendship, fame, pride, beauty and bravery.

Antipongrara (Cock fight dance)

The cock is a symbol of strength, agility and courage. This dance is an enactment of the actual fight between two warriors in a battle. Usually a *Nokzenketer* or the best warrior from both side fights in the duel. It is fought with great ferocity culminating with the winner beheading the other. The trophy

head is taken to the village with great pride and an even greater honor is given to the warrior. The trophy head is then hung up at the center of the village for all the people to acknowledge. This dance is performed in various festivals where the warrior signifies the pride and honor of the fighting cocks.

ArpuTsungsang(War dance)

This is a dance that portrays the ancient battles and demonstrates the war skills, famously known as the *Arputsungsang*. War dance illustrates the stories of bravery, power, courage and strength.

This dance is performed in three parts with each part detailing the preparation, the technique used and the culmination of a successful battle.

- a) War dance: It displays the warrior's preparations for the battle ahead and coming together during the battle.
- b) Warrior dance: This part details the challenge and daring of the two opposing great warriors, exposing the tactics and techniques employed by the warriors to defend and attack. This part of the dance is important as the warriors challenge one another that they are willing to sacrifice their trophy which is the head, the ultimate trophy sought after by all warriors.
- c) Trophy dance: It signifies victory when enemy head is taken. This dance is performed around the trophy (head) during the war in celebration.

Naklu Dance (Dance of praise)

The *Naklu* dance is a 'Dance of Praise', performed by the community youth in honor of a rich man and his family who has been abundantly blessed by the almighty. The rich man as a token of appreciation and for seeking continuous blessings graciously donates livestock (including a Mithun which is a symbol of wealth), food and wine for the community feast, which is also called 'Feast of Merit'. They sing and dance in front of the rich man's house praising him for his generosity and sharing his abundance with the people.

3. FOLK SONGS

Ten-rem moyu (Song of cultivation)

In the olden times, Jhum or Shifting cultivation was the main source of livelihood among the Ao Nagas. According to tradition, the people helped each

other by working in age groups drawn from the *Morung*/dormitory. They start working from one end of the field to the other end. As they work, they hum and Sing songs and every time a portion of the field is completed, they shout joyfully. Side by side the girls will be gazing at the boys romantically and sing songs of appreciation. This song is called “MOYU” in Ao.

Ongmesang ken (love song)

This love song was traditionally sung by young lovers from mountain and hill tops.

*Boy: O! Tall tree amongst the orchard,
What do you think...?
Last night I dreamt that
We will be marrying each other...
The cowrie shells that adorn the king, suits you well.
Walking along our village road, if I don't see you even for a day,
It feels like we have not seen each other for ten long years.
Girl: My young admirer, whose smile lights up my dormitory,
Among all the youth, you are the only one;
You're mine and you're the best.*

Arr-ken (Tug of war song)

This song is sung during *Moatsu* and *Tsungremmong* festivals by man and women holding long cane vine which connects them in the shape of a circle, invoking the blessings of God.

“Let us Play Tug of War”

Boys: *Oh young women of similar age group, you are orchids on branches of trees.*

Girls: *Oh young man of similar age group, Adorned with ivory armlets...*

Let us compete in the tug-of-war Come, let us wrestle it out. If you lose while playing against us, call your wives to come and help you.

AluMeyo (Harvesting and Threshing Song)

*Soba tiaba
Tanualujentiniko
Arangtevurangni
Taniwadangbangkoyala
Yashikunangnumoavuangni(3 times)*

English translation:-

*Almighty, the creator of God
On this day of harvesting and threshing
You, God of blessing
Plentifully bless us
Oh, God of blessing
Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes*

4. RITUALS

Significance of Moatsü Tongshi

Moatsü is the main festival of the Ao Nagas, celebrated in the month of May. The purpose of this festival is to invoke Divine blessings upon the crops and the field and hence celebrated after the sowing season.

Even there are numerous activities plenty during the festival. As part of *Moatsü Tongshi* is one of them. Tongshi is a bamboo pillar on which every manly youth competes with each other to reach its top.

Moatsü: The entire structure is called *Moatsü Tongshi*. *Tongshi* means 'Pillar'. The Pillar symbolizes human prayer of blessings upon the entire citizens and is to be of 'Lingmi' variety - without any scratch, blemish or scar and a season done.

Renra: Symbolizes the first major fortune one meets in life. The effort to reach it and pluck it symbolizes one's effort to meet and respond to the first major fortune in life with confidence, honesty, wisdom and generosity. A prudent man's achievement of the first fortune only gives vistas for greater heights in the rest of one's life.

Arlak: Its placement at the top of the pillar symbolizes the greatest blessings and achievement in life. This is the target everybody must aim to reach without failure or setback in life's journey.

Awatsülak: Symbolizes Longevity and healthy relationship between spouses. Its significance is also to invoke blessings upon crops and vegetation being cultivated.

Tsüngpret: It means 'Lightning'. It thus symbolizes human prayer to make his spirit smart, dashing and shining as the lightning in his pursuit for winning the highest achievements in life.

A bamboo pillar where manly youths, compete with one another to climb to its top. There are various styles of climbing the pillar under specific names- so named after various animals like the monkey, hen, bear etc. Marriageable girls eye on those boys who evince the smartest performance in this sport for prospective friendship.

- | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Mangshi | - Pulling up with the hands. |
| 2. Anjaja | - Climbing like hen walk. |
| 3. ShiremJaja | - Climbing like bear walk. |
| 4. ShitSŭjaja | - Climbing like monkey walk. |

SŭngkongAtsüba (Pulling of log drum)

For the purpose of Pulling out a log drum and placing it in position, certain rituals are observed. First a huge tree, free of any scar or blemish, one leaning toward the east is to be identified in the forest. The selected tree is then cut down and carved into a log drum by village artisans. The carver must remain chaste till the completion of the work.

When the carving is completed, a toss is made to decide who will sit on the head of the drum. The man so elected will dress up in full dancing attire and go down to the site of the log drum along with all the men folk. A cock is killed and its blood scattered on the head of the drum. A small amount of rice beer is also sprinkled on it. A group of people place round wooden rollers on the ground to make the log drum move freely, while some, with long wooden poles, standing on either side of the log drum, guide and place it in the right direction. The drummers can produce different sounds to convey different messages like raising an alarm, announcing festivals and celebrations.

Mezütemsepmong (Fire dousing ritual)

In the past, Houses were made of highly inflammable materials and once ignited could sweep across the village consuming everything in its path. The dry spell before the onset of monsoon was particularly a worrying time. Therefore as a preventive measure a fire killing / dousing ceremony is carried out by the elderly priest of the village during the month of February every year.

A day before the ceremony, fire wood is collected from every house hold and on the appointed day, it is carried to the village gate along with an unblemished male pig. Prayers are offered to the Gods by the accompanying elders. At the selected spot a thatch hut is erected and the fire-woods stacked is set aflame in such a way so as to deliberately cause the hut to catch fire. With a show of alarm the assembled folks douse the flames. Finally when the fire is

controlled the pig is killed and rituals are performed by the elders invoking the God's to prevent outbreak of fire accidents in the village for that year.

Mesen- mong (Insects and Pests killing ceremony)

Mesen-amu which can be translated as insects and pests killing ceremony is unique to the Ao's of Chungtia village. The ceremony is conducted only when insects and pests infest the crops. So, when such infestation is noticed by the villagers, the village council or the elders decide to perform the *Mesen-Mong* ceremony.

The villagers are instructed to collect all kinds of insects and pests from their field and submit to the elders at the village gate a day before the festival. At the same time the elders collect local herbs like tobacco, bird's eye chilies and local leaves called *Nukmeremla* which is used as insecticides and pesticides. The concoction is poured on the insects and simultaneously the elders invoke God's protection while chanting curses on the pests. They believe that such ritual will help in eradication of the problem.

CHAKHESANG TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS & DEMONSTRATION ETC.

Tsorüsa and Nürülü (A folk drama)

In olden days, head hunting was considered a game of power and considered as a benchmark of honour or supremacy. Against such a setting lived a warrior by the name of Tsorüsa, who was well known in and around his village. One day, Tsorüsa got ready to go head hunting. He tested his luck, which turned to be positive. Hence the emboldened warrior went out and sat, looking out for the kill. Soon, he saw a maiden from another village working in her field on the other side of the river; he went towards her to kill. As he stealthily approached her, the maiden turned round and saw him. She realized that the man was a warrior and intended to kill her. In order to save herself, she smiled warmly at him and asked him, “What is your name?” He replied that his name was Tsorüsa. The warrior did not enquire the maiden’s name as he intended to kill her. However, she introduced herself as Nürülü and initiated a dialogue. They went on talking till he decided not to kill his new found acquaintance. The clever Nürülü proposed that he take her bangles so that his honour or unaccomplished mission was compensated for. However, warrior Tsorüsa declined her offer saying he would neither kill her nor take her bangles as his honour was not at stake. They further went on talking and found each other admirable. At last, they promised each other that they would neither confront or kill each other in future be it in war or otherwise. Thus, they parted and went to their respective villages.

Years went by and they did not meet each other. One day, Tsorüsa set out on a quest to make a kill and came across his former acquaintance Nürülü, whose beauty had enhanced further. Not recognizing her, he drove his spear into her. When Nürülü turned round to look at her attacker, she recognized him and spoke to him thus, “Tsorüsa, my love! Didn’t we promise never to kill each other?” He realized his mistake and took hold of her and said, “I have speared you mistakenly! Please forgive me if you can!” Nürülü replied, “I forgive you”. Tsorüsa took out wine from his bag and offered it to her saying, “Drink this and get well soon”. Nürülü replied, “Even if I drink it, I will not be well.” They sat there talking for a long time but the fear of Nürülü’s villagers discovering them made her tell Tsorüsa to go away. Though it pained Tsorüsa to see her plight, he had to go. He told her, “Don’t die! Get well soon. Thank you for forgiving me.” Then he left her and went on his way. Afterwards, he came to know that she did not recover from her wound. The news of her killing reached her villagers who came and carried her dead body home.

Sühtsuh (Wooden wine vat)

When a rich person prepares to give feast-of-Merit to the whole village, the citizen's helps him in carving a man shaped wooden vat out of a tree trunk, in the deep jungle far from the village. It is then pulled ceremonially to the village well ahead of the day of scheduled feast, so that the family can make necessary preparation.

CekaTsusü: A monolith stone commemorating the feast-giving ceremony is also compulsorily erected within the Village or on the main public path surrounding the village. When all formalities are completed, the feast giver is entitled to construct a house with elaborate carvings on wooden panels. After this, he becomes a respected citizen of his Village.

Kütsü kükhu (Blowing of traditional trumpet)

After grains were harvested from the fields and stored in granaries, the trumpet was blown, signalling that the newly harvested food items are ready for consumption and the time for festivities had arrived. It heralded in the season for harvesting nettle plants, collecting thatch to repair/replace worn out roofs and put on new clothes by all the people of the village. It was only this one time in the year that blowing of trumpet was allowed.

Rüswüh münatü (Demonstration of mass cursing)

Traditionally, the practice of mass cursing was annually exercised on the first week of December. During this time, all the villagers from upper and lower khel would gather at a public meeting place and curse those indulging in illegal activities like witchcraft, robbery, land encroachment, rape, murder etc. The village priest performed rituals, cursing the offenders according to the crimes committed, followed by the whole community cursing in unison.

Mücci, mmhi mu dotho (Exulting cry, yelling and stomping)

- a) Tülhü-mmhi (Feast cry): When people gather at the feast venue or gather at a place for a working meal, they first yell excitedly and then perform the exulting cry, saying "Woh..1, 2 groups hi...hi." 'Hi' means feasting.
- b) Vüzho-mmhiye (Festive flowing phonal cry): At the time of partaking feast for Youth festival, Colony feast, Feast of Merit, Mass working-force feast, clan feast, work-force group feast, etc. people gather and yell excitedly and thereafter, perform the mass festive flowing phonal cry,

saying, “Yih...3,4,5th Woh... 3,4,5 Yih...3,4,5” and they continue to yell, sing, eat and drink till dusk.

- c) Mhatho-mmhi (Working cry): When mass work-force work or any other group work, they yell in unison and then perform the working cry, saying, “Yih...2, 3, 4” and thereafter, they start working.
- d) Riwhü-mmhi (War cry): In olden days, 2 or 3 warriors also could go head-hunting, and if they happen to kill their enemies, they would carry home the head, limb, etc, and keep shouting the war cry, saying “Hih...Woh...2 Hah...2 Woh...2 Hi... Hi...” on every hillock on their way home to convey the news to the neighbouring villages.
- e) Dotho (Stomping): Out of joy, one jumps into the air and stomps the ground twice. This is repeated by back-stepping to about 7 feet, poses there, he then jumps and makes a rapid alternating back and forth motion of the foot and stomps on the ground twice. He then steps forward and jumps into the air and kick-touch his own forehead with the toes twice. This is followed by stomping the ground twice as in the first instance. In the last act, he poses in a wrestling posture simultaneously thumping the ground around and shouts – “My father’s Ox”, which signifies strength, vigour, courage and bravery.

2. FOLK DANCE

Lünyei pheto (War dance)

Most of the dances in Chakhesang Naga Culture are associated with festivals of different agriculture seasons. But there are some dances which are performed during war times, when one village is fighting with another village; the dances are performed in groups or in most of the cases by the whole adult population of the khels or Village. The dances are being performed in a war action manner and in challenging their enemies. While group dances are being performed some of the physically strong men use to come out of the group and used to perform special war cry challenging their enemies. These special dances are called as Hop-dance. After performing their Hop-dance, they will join back the group. These war dances are being performed to encourage each other to be brave and strong and to withstand the enemy in fighting, wrestling, etc. The community feast will be organized whenever these types of dances are performed. Moreover, to be physically strong, they will be feeding mostly on non-veg. (meat) and specially prepared rice beer. In this way they encourage

each other to have unity amongst the community and in the process the community bond use to get strengthen.

Rünyie festival (Paddy festival)

‘Rünyie’ is a joyous festival celebrated for ten days in the month of December. The term ‘Rünyie’ denotes two words ‘Rü’ meaning paddy and ‘Nyie’ meaning festival. The festival is marked with both ritual purification and celebration. Everyone in the village put their best traditional costumes singing, dancing and feasting together.

Remu nye pheto (Post sowing festival)

This dance is performed during ‘Remu nye’, a post sowing festival. With the winter season gone and sowing is done, it’s time to witness seeds sprouting in the field. In celebration, men and women sing, wave and clap their hands while performing this dance.

Sükrünje pheto li (Sükrünje folk dance)

This dance is performed during Sükrünje festival, celebrated annually in the first month of January. As they perform, the dancers sing, “People who are sick, people who are poor and in need, people living in a state of despair- rise up. This is a new beginning. Purify yourselves and start anew.”

Pheto (Folk dance)

Pheta is one of the most important dances in the Chakhesang community. Pheto is performed by both male and female with their complete traditional attires. Along with dancing, all the performers sing simultaneously making the voice in different tunes harmoniously. Pheto is mostly performed during Sükrünje festival which is one of the dances to be observed in the festival.

3. FOLK SONG

Dzülha rriwhü lizzo (Ode to the dzülha warriors)

In the Naga head-hunting tactics and ethics,
We took the goodwill of the village and blessings of the elders,
Predictor performed the art of prediction for the warriors,
With favourable predictions, warriors went forth for the hunt.
Let our armours be blessed and bring good luck;

Let the hurling of our spears be marksmen throws, the release of my spear's grip so pierced the sentry. Brave warrior, whom are you called? Reluctantly declared, "My name is Ciküyi" (Extoller).

We carried home your head by crossing the hills,
Shouting war cries on every hillock, sending news to the neighbours,
The enemy's head is taken to the compound of the High Priest.
Animals were killed for the mass triumphant feast;
Performing war dance and the patriotic poem composed,
And the name of the victor ever extolled.

Tükhanye lizo (Welcoming spring season)

Tükhanye is the last festival before monsoon sets in and is celebrated to welcome spring. This festival broadly means renewal, rebirth and re-growth. Plants, animals and birds awake from their winter hibernation. Just as the flowers, birds, trees and animals welcome spring with their brilliant colours, songs and new leaves, the village folk heartily sings this song, welcoming spring.

Tsalitsülü likharüpo (At the village gate)

At the village gate, this morning,
Met my pal and was playing with him;
One of my brothers found us,
He told me that I may not be the one to match him,
I replied and told him that even the closet bamboo
nodes, there leaked water and an unmovable Stone in
the river, do flow water beneath, so also, is the girls,
please tell me not.

Swrozü li (Spinning of cotton)

'Swrozü li' is one of the finest songs of the Chakhesang tradition. It is sung only by adult female when all the harvesting was done. This song is sung during the work of spinning cotton.

A prü-o (to my brother)
Taswrozüpühhaprü-o khwüdo
Hi-o betome hi-o betora.

The spinners sing to their brother that they spin their cotton in this way and finally wove the clothes. They asked their brothers either this or that cloth they choose to wear.

Tükhürü-thürro lizzo (Ode to the pied hornbill-great hornbill)

In the vast dense of Naga green forest,
The mighty pied Hornbill – Great Hornbill, Dwells with pride and unmatched beauty;
Even the mightiest tree is shaken while adorning the feathers;
Its magnificent beauty fascinates the hills and mountains;
As they flock and whoop out together for their feed,
In a fleet array, their wing-stroke in flapping waves,
Reverberating the hills and the valleys,
Attracting the eyes of men till they fly out of the sight.
How precious is thy magnificent feather?
The innocent lad does not deserve to wear the Pied Hornbill feather;
Only the adults qualify to wear the Pied Hornbill feather,
Yet, they are not eligible to wear the feather of the Great Hornbill;
Only the gallant is entitled to adorn themselves with feathers of the Great Hornbill;
Your adorable beauty makes you a prey of jealousy;
Your life snatched away by the greed of this cruel world.
Even so, we Nagas feast by your name.

4. RITUALS

Tekhezuso (Enactment)

Tekhezuso, is a traditional assembly held every year during the Rünyie Festival which falls in the month of December. The Priest prepares Hazhu (rice beer) and invites all the Tshüdukhürü (Elders of 'Netho Ketshü' comprising of Leshemi, Lasumi and Zapami villages) to deliberate on certain issues for the welfare of the 'Netho Ketshü'. Here, various agendas covering Village administration, rituals and customary laws are discussed and enacted. The Priest will perform a ritual by rolling the enemy's head through the Chi Tso (Basically, a place where the enemy's head is rolled between the two stones). The meeting ends with the Priest crushing ginger over the Chi Tso.

Romeni-fuphre (Annual traditional ritual)

'Romeni-fuphre' was a strict traditional ritual, observed annually in the month of March. On this day, just before sunset, two strong men selected from amongst the villagers, carrying a spear each and one chicken, go far from the village gate and releases the chicken saying, "*This chicken has carried away all the sins and sicknesses of the village.*" Immediately, they head back and shut the village gate for the night, to make sure that no sickness or ill-fortune befalls

upon the village. The villagers also perform this ritual in order to be blessed with a bountiful harvest.

Mewo-ku (Ordination of village priest)

This traditional ritual was observed for ordination of village priest. Usually, 'Mewo-ku' was observed for three months beginning of March. During this time, it was taboo for even one strand of hair to fall into the village well and nor could anyone from an enemy's village come near for chopping even a small piece of wood for fear of becoming an easy prey for enemy's attack. Mewo-ku was a title rich priests had to earn by giving feast to the entire village for three days. Huge quantities of rice beer and various animals were consumed. There were certain restrictions he had to follow for an entire year. After these rituals were fully observed the Mewo-ku could perform his duties with authority.

Talie li (War cry)

During the head-hunting period, warriors and youth guard the village lest enemies harm the women and children. Before heading for war, the village people gather and perform "kühu" a ritual with war cry. They move around in circles giving out war cry and yodelling, as a warm up in preparation for the task ahead. The other interpretation is that whenever they are in any kind of war like situation, they arrange themselves in position before moving ahead to attack an enemy.

Nanyi tsüshwüh (Erecting Monoliths)

Monoliths were erected by rich individuals in villages. The size of the stones varied from 4 to 8 feet in height and width measured from 3 to 4 feet. In order to qualify for this honour, a person had to give three feasts to his entire village. Giving the first feast earned him to wear a prestigious shawl, known locally as 'Thipikhu'. The second feast earned him the honour of setting up 'Ceka' (house horns) on the top front of his roof. Finally, the third allowed him to erect a stone monolith. Weeks ahead, a suitable stone is selected in the forest and carved into shape. Early on the feast giving day, while the feast giver's wife and other ladies stay back and prepare delicacies, the entire male populace dressed in their best traditional attires, places the monolith carefully on a sledge, secures it with vines and drags it slowly all the way to the village. It was customary to let a person who had taken the most heads or the hunter of a ferocious wild animal stand on the stone while it is being dragged. The monolith is then set up in front of the feast giver's home or in some conspicuous place in the village.

CHANG TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS & DEMONSTRATIONS ETC.

Dongsen senbü (Pulling of log drum)

During the time of our forefathers the log drum was regarded as one of the most integral part of the hakü custom. The Chang's Hakü is the guard house and the customary court. The tree for the log drum was carefully selected through rituals and given a particular name that it is to be called by after identifying it as a male or a female. The villagers would sing folk songs while pulling the log-drum. The young warriors beat the log drum once they are brought to the village for different purposes or occasion relaying information to the villagers. It is also beaten when there is a natural calamity, victory during war (head hunting), festivals and to announce the death of a warrior or the elders of the village.

Wan satbü (Indigenous fire making)

In the olden times our forefathers made fire using items provided by nature such as wood and bamboo. First a piece of dry soft wood is split at one end and wedged apart by placing a small stone or wood. Then shavings of dry bamboo are bunched and placed between the wedged wood as tinder. A sizeable length of bamboo string is placed underneath the wood and swiftly drawn. This friction produces spark which transfers to the tinder. Blowing gently on it the fire catches on. Through the discovery of fire survival for the people became much easier and safer.

Kaishi lakshibü (Traditional community fishing)

During the winter season when harvest is completed and hard labour is over for the year the celebration comes that is community fishing, where the young and old go to the river to catch fish. This activity is carried out through indigenous method by the man folk. They sing songs and grind a kind of plant known as "Kai" (*Millettia pachycarpa* Benthham) which is mixed in the running water. This plant helps fishing easier as it causes the fish to dizzy and stay above the water thereby making the catch easier. As the men folk work and sing in unison women folk also joined and who also get busy collecting the fishes.

Phalangkü (Treating the sick person)

Whenever a person falls sick the elder or the shaman of the village visit the house of the sick person. He rebukes and performs the ritualistic act

upon the sick person and chase it away and also invoking the gods to remove the epidemic from the household. After the rituals the elder was treated with a meal and sent off with packed rice as thanks giving.

Kongkin pitbü ayingsi tuokbü (Jews-harp)

The Kongkin pitbü is an indigenous musical mouth organ or Jews-harp made of bamboo. The women use it to bring out melodious tunes during the summer festival Naknyulem, symbolizing a sense of satisfaction from the abundant millet harvest which is solely used for making millet cakes during the feast.

2. FOLK DANCE

Puanglem festival (Winter's festival)

Puanglem is the most popular and biggest festival celebrated for six days in the month of January. An elderly man from Hongang clan announces that the festival will take place in six days. A bamboo strip with six nodes is sent out to friendly neighbouring villages, which is taken as a formal invitation to attend the festival. On that first big day, guests start arriving early bearing with them goods and commodities to be sold, which begins right after lunch. After some hours of brisk business, the host village and guests sit together for a grand feast after which they sing and dance through the night. He pongsi, pongsoyaa..... meaning '*We enjoy the blooming at the festive mood*'. Shoji shola, khangthong shoji melou.....meaning '*The wild Khangthong and shopi flowers gives its pleasantness to the dancers*'.

Wapyu-suyu po (Victory dance)

This dance is performed as a victory dance following a successful raid on the enemy village. The warriors while performing this dance send out a message through songs declaring that they have taken enemy heads, which are now filled with worms. They declare that they have won the battle and have conquered the enemy lands.

Süa lüah (Feast of merit)

'Süa-lüah' is performed during 'Puanglem' which is an important harvest festival of the tribe. To perform a 'Süa-lüah', the entire arrangements are made by a wealthy person of the village. As host he has to provide enough lives stock

and farm products to his village community. The men sing and dance till dawn with the women there to serve rice beer.

Litcha phanga dombü (Dance under moonlight)

It is the time when girls enjoy dancing at the full moon night. In a smooth ground they gleefully join together with holding hands and dance with a tune called “üt... üt...” and ‘chila, chila... hange uongou chila; aupa thokji chila...; küna nüngkou kününgkou...”. Although it is not seen popularly today in villages little girls enjoy this dance under moonlight even today.

Jeshok-Lamshok (Peace within neighbouring village)

Sangpin pungle-eh he..... Sadang loe-oho helo he.....mean ‘We are coming to as we are invited by the youth’

Sa-le Sa-le Sa..... Su-a su-o oh ho....sa-le....means “The elephants teeth (Khungkhap) at the arms of the dancers look proud and grand.

3. FOLK SONG

Kündang lem chia (Seed sowing song)

Just after clearing and burning the field, Kündang lem is observed in the month of April. The first three days are spent collecting materials for construction of hut in the field. On the 4th day, the site for construction is decided and levelled. The next day, all relatives help out in the construction. In the evening, after returning to village, they celebrate by feasting together which continues on till the next day. On the 7th day, they plant ‘Aoulak jaangbü (Japonica tree). A daughter born while observing Kündang lem is usually given the name Kündang.

Mang hapbü chia (Mourning song)

This is a mourning song sung by the village women during the death of the village elders. They sing “*living together on this earth is precious. By your death silence prevails on earth. And we are saddened to sing such a mourning song.*”

Sangbü dobü yakei lao hangentibü chia (Praising song for wise women)

This song is sung in honour of the wise women who helped their husbands become leaders in the society. A wise wife leads her husband to a

position of honour and stature among others. This is the wisdom of women who selflessly supports their husbands to achieve their exalted position.

Shemshe odangbü chia (Song of grinding pestle)

During forefather's time, people used a grinding wood to pound rice which is carved out of a big tree. Dao and other tools are used to make a hole in the wood. After the grinding wood is completed, the women sing this traditional song called 'Odangbü'.

*The Uphai kongh mountain sun is shaded,
They were told to be early to bed and early to be raised, Hurry for the
cultivation, (Ngojang) River source of Grinding Tool, (Wongpou) River source
of Grinding Wood.*

4. RITUALS

Langh ngabü (Calling for rain)

This act is performed when the people undergo long days without rain. The people perform this ritual in order to protect the crops which are affected due to lack of rainfall. To start off the ritual, the Hoang clan go to the river to catch small fishes which are impaled on sticks from the mouth to the other end. The fish is placed upside down on the river banks and the clan member's splash water on the fish from behind pronouncing rain is falling down heavily.

Naknyulem (Rituals of naknyulem festival)

In traditional Chang lore, for three days, the world was enveloped in total darkness, people could not do their usual chores. When light finally dawned, their joy knew no bounds and beseeched god never to let such darkness come upon them again. In celebration of the light returning, the Changs observe Naknyulem for six days in the month of July. The commencement of festivities is pronounced by an elderly man from Oungh clan. On the first day, women prepare sticky rice cake from freshly harvested millet. Mithuns and pigs are killed for the ensuing feasts. Every home hangs the Ngounam grass to ward off evil spirits. Every night, before sleeping, three saponaria seeds were placed at the front door which needed to burst outside the house – a sign of good omen for the year ahead. This act was observed till the end of the festival.

Shatbü dakbü ayingsi chühbü (Traditional way of healing)

In the olden days in the absence of medical care all the sick people were taken to the shamans who had their own traditional beliefs, practices and ways of healing. One important practice of healing the sick was to release a cock in the forest and certain rituals were performed and chanted which is believed to eventually heal the sick person.

Kuikui jangbü (Declaration of winter season feast)

After the harvest is over, the villager's hoist bamboo post in the village decorated with white festoons in the shape of Sun, Moon, Stars and Fish. Hornbill feathers are hung symbolizing that winter has arrived and all the field works including harvest is over for the year. They invoke the almighty's blessings for the new-year. This festive month is also regarded as the most prosperous and plentiful month of the year.

Sangmai kumbü thesilan (Peace treaty)

This is an act of agreement for peace between two former warring villages. In order to conclude the peace agreement, the village elders from both villages gather at the border. The two parties bring one pig each which is killed and consumed during the negotiations. Spear and dao (machete) are exchanged between the two parties. The exchanged items are an indicator that if any party broke the agreement, the defaulter will die by the same weapons.

GARO TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

A'king nokma (Folk drama)

Long time ago, in one of the villages of the Garo hills there was a *Nokma* (village chief) called Joreng. He had one close friend named Karak. Joreng and Karak ensured that the village is governed by strict rules and regulations. The *Nokma* always instructed the villagers to cultivate the ancestral fields and stay happy. The villagers in turn loved and respected their *Nokma* and obeyed him. But sadly, the people of the neighbouring villages were envious of Joreng and his village. They resented Joreng and his rules as it hindered their willful hunting and fishing.

One day, Joreng along with his wife and sister went for fishing. While they were fishing, A'kimbe (Joreng's sister) went in another direction and started playing flat stones near the river side. Suddenly she saw some enemies from the neighbouring villages coming towards their place (A'kingnokma). A'kimbe panicked and went running towards her brother and his wife to inform them about the enemy's movements. Joreng immediately told his servant Lipson to gather all the '*matgriks*' (village warriors) to his place. After the *matgriks* gathered, he instructed them to fight against the enemies and protect their motherland. Joreng and his warriors fought bravely against the enemies and in the course of the fight, Joreng was severely wounded. After he was brought home, he laid writhing on the ground and told his family members that he would not be able to rule the village anymore as he was almost on the verge of death. Therefore, he handed over all the powers of *Nokma* and the authority to govern the motherland to his wife. Since then, the Garos believe that the matrilineal society was initiated among the Garos and till today the same is being followed.

A'galmaka or a'galdoa (The Jhum Burning Ceremony)

This is one of the most important ceremony associated with jhum cultivation among the Garos. Here, a cock and rice beer are offered (Churarona) to invoke the blessings of *Tonggitchak-Gitok-warika* the mother of fire, to free the land from any profanation, pollution and desecration through fire.

Millet seeds are scattered in all directions for good harvest. After the sowing of the seeds every one returns to the village. The elders circulate from

house to house in the day time and the young visit the same house all night. Time is generally spent in feasting, dancing, singing and merry-making.

Mi Amua or Mejak Sim'a (Insects repelling ceremony)

This ceremony is performed to drive away all crop-diseases through prayers to the Supreme God. Fences of half-burnt stems and branches are ritually erected along the boundaries of the jhum field. House-holders move around carrying baskets reciting rituals to drive away evil-spirits and diseases from the jhum field.

Ro'ong dea (Stone lifting)

This is an indigenous game played by the Garos since time immemorial. This game loosely resembles the modern day weight lifting. A smooth round stone weighing about 100kg or more is placed among the spectators. Anybody from among the spectators can come forward and give it a try. The participants try to lift the stone as high as possible and the one who lifts it the highest is the winner and is declared to be the strongest man in the village.

2. FOLK DANCES

Wangala Chroka or Wangala dance

'Wangala' is the biggest 'thanksgiving post-harvest' festival of the Garos. The Sun god *Misi Saljong*, who is believed to provide mankind with nature's bounties and prosperity is highly honored. This festival is celebrated in the month of October/ November. In the Wangala dance, men and women dance to the beat of the *Damma* or the log drum. This dance signifies the thanksgiving to the sun god (*Misisaljong*). Young men wear wrap around garments and a *kotip* (traditional turban) adorned with rooster feathers and carry a drum with shoulder strap. The 'Dama' (girls) wear colorful attires and their hair is adorned with colored plumes. The dancers line up separately and dance to the rhythmic beat of drums and songs, accompanied by the blowing of buffalo horn by the males, creating a surreal atmosphere. Both groups shuffle forward in parallel lines.

The chieftain, known as the *Matgrik* or *Goera* raises the spirit of the troupe by yelling war-cries and wielding the *Milam* (the warrior's sword). The gestures and movements of the dancers reflect the effort of rice planting and harvesting and portrays unity among the people.

Sequence of the Wangala dance:

1. The drummers try and raise enthusiasm of the young boys and girls with their drum beat.
2. The female dancers walk around the male dancers and knock off the headgears of unruly boys.
3. Walking on the heel as instructed by the goddess *Ajema*.
4. Cutting down corn stalks to gather corn.
5. Pecking of wild doves.
6. Picking up pomelo.
7. Moving like a centipede and checking if their limbs are intact.
8. Moving up and down to see if they can move smoothly along.
9. Checking the soles of feet to see if any thorn/leaches are struck on it.
10. Clapping hands to chase away wild birds.
11. Chasing away monkeys that come to take away the winnowing fan.
12. Looking at the moon (indicating that one should not live on futile and empty dreams)
13. Serving rice beer/wine.
14. Chasing away sparrows.
15. Measuring height (meaning that life should have its aspirations)
16. Cutting down the maize stalks
17. Conveying farewell to each member of the group.

Quarrel/duel dance

This is an interesting traditional dance of the Garos. This dance reflects the quarrel between the clans of the Garo's, *Sangma* (intelligence) and *Marak* (power). So, in essence it is a quarrel between power and intelligence. It starts off with rituals that are performed in a traditional way. Two persons holding a 'millam' (sword) and 'sepi' (shield) try to overpower each other. After the duel is over, the females perform the folk dance and making of peace follows.

Grika (The warrior Dance)

Warrior dance is performed when a warrior or hero experiences victory or wins an impossible feat. In this dance the victor dancer proclaims and exults at what he has achieved for the land, the clan and for mother and sisters. The warrior dances with the *mil-am* (sword) and *spi* (shield) in his hand. He gestures in a wild and threatening way and matches his actions with his words. He proclaims his mental strength, physical prowess and extols himself as the warrior of the land. *Grika* is self-eulogy. This often entails belittling others, provocation and incitement and finally contest and combat. Such a warrior is thought to be an asset to the clan.

Chambil mesara (Pomelo dance)

This dance requires exquisite skills and is a solo dance. The performer dangles a pomelo or some other ‘fruit’ from a cord around his waist. He spins the pomelo round his waist, faster and faster, using minimum movement of his waist and hip. Some experts can swing two to four pomelos

3. FOLK SONGS

Dimdim Dimchong Dadichong

This folk song and dance is performed during Wangala, a post-harvest festival of the Garos. Here is a translation of the song:

To the sound of the drum beat, girls and boys dance

During the celebration of our wangala festival

A good, young fattened bull, reared in a specially built hut,

Let’s dance eating its meat whilst celebrating our wangala festival.

Let me use the newly bought turban,

I want to use it at least once, during the year.

Nanggorere Goserong

This song is sung during festivals and many other occasions.

It is so, oh yes it is so!

It is truly so!

Boy: why do you allow the chilies in the jhum-fired to over ripe?

Alas, you have allowed the lovely damsel to shed tears.

Girl: *Me-gong* has blossomed, dry season has come and brought cheer,

The moment I beheld you darling, my heart began to flutter.

Badi dake na’ade

This is a translation of the popular Garo folk song Badi dake na’ade:

This song is sung in a group by boys and girls. It speaks about the richness of village life especially during times of festivities after harvest. It also mourns about boys and girls no longer wanting to stay at home listening to the drum beats and the wails of trumpets blowing in the distance, beckoning them to dress in colorful attires, go out of their homes and dance gleefully, drowning themselves in the festive mood. The song also talks about the rice and meat cooked during the festival and being fed by dainty hands of village damsels.

Mention is also made of the Chu (Rice Beer) which has been fermented over a period of seven years.

*How can you remain like that?
Oh! Later on you will miss chances to enjoy
Why then, should I remain home any longer?
Drum beats of bachelors uproariously reverberate,
Feels like lifting our feet up and down.
I would love to eat rice cooked by hands of damsels, from the winnowing fan...
Wish I could eat cooked meat fed by their dainty hands.
Let me taste the seven years matured fermented rice beer
I wish to be drunk, drinking it only this time, o!*

Ancheng re're

This is a popular Garo folk song, reminiscing about one's birthplace and memories attached to it. This is a group song sung by boys and girls. The lyrics recollect the life spent in their village, reminding one about the sensuous things of the natural world that abounded there, like waterfalls, sounds of chirping birds, beautiful flowers, etc. Though one may yearn for all these beautiful things yet these will be just memories fondly recollected only while singing this song.

4. RITUALS

Rugala(Ritual of libation)

Rugala is practiced by the ancient *A'chiks*, as a thanksgiving ritual for the blessings showered by the Sun God 'Misi Saljong'. The pagan priest performs the ritual to predict the forthcoming harvest, if they will have a rich harvest or suffer a famine. The priest pronounces all the prayers and spells to please the Sun God, *Misi saljong*. Out of the two helpers who help him in the rituals, one stands by the side to ensure that there is no interference during the prayer and another helps him by supplying the necessary things required for the ritual.

Usually a bull is offered to the gods but when they find none, a pair of crabs is offered. The priest takes the crabs as an offertory gift to the sun god. The priest utters the spell, and pleads to the sun god to accept the offering. Now, to know about how the harvest is going to turn out next year, the priest takes an egg and throws it with all his might. If the egg is found to be perfect, good fortune is predicted but if it is defective, it is believed that they are going to face hardships and difficulties in getting a good harvest. The priest starts

dancing when the ritual is completed. The women around him accompany him in his dance. This ritual is practiced even today in some parts dominated by the A'chiks.

Wangala Festival

The most important festival of the Garos is the Wangala known as 'the post-harvest' festival of the Garos. It marks the end of a period of toil in the fields and harvesting of bumper crops. It is a time to dance and sing with joy and thanksgiving to the Gods. The occasion commences in the field with a simple but impressive ceremony, known as *Rugala Rugala*. This is then followed by the ceremony of incense burning known as *Sasat So'a*. This is performed inside the house of the *Nokma* (chief) of the village. The chief, amidst burning of incense, beating of drums and chanting by the people, utter a few words of incantation, pour rice beer and sprinkle rice powder over a collection of jhum cultivation products which are offered to the gods. This is immediately followed by drinking, dancing and merry-making.

Biaka'ani (Marriage Ceremony)

There are various forms of marriage amongst the Garos. '*Do-deka*' or '*Dobuknia*' is the principal form of traditional marriage. The marriage ceremony is performed in the bride's house. The boy and the girl sit on the floor and the *kamal*, (the Priest) chants certain hymns. Two fowls and a big cock (dorasong) are sacrificed. After killing the birds, their position determines whether the omen is good or bad. If the heads of the birds lie with the beaks pointing towards each other, the omen is good, but if they lie with the beaks apart, the omen is bad and it is thought that the marriage will be an unhappy one. Then follows feasting, drinking and dancing. The couple has to eat together from the same dish. The sacrifice is performed by non-relatives of the couple.

Mangona or chugana (post-funeral ceremony)

Mangona is a post-funeral ceremony of the Garos. A small hut with a bamboo structure is erected on the courtyard of the house that is known as 'Delang'. The calcined bones are kept in an earthen pot (to be later buried near the doorstep of the house of the deceased after the ceremony).

After the burial of the calcined bones, the guests are served with beef and pork. During the performance of the last rites for the 'Spirit' of the dead, dancing and singing continue throughout the night with the chanting of funeral dirge known as "Mangtata (Grapme chia) or Kalee". The ritual dance is accompanied with concave brass cymbals, and the ringing sounds of reeds

(Kimjin), the peals of ‘horn-trumpets’ called ‘adils’, and the soft sound of a ‘chirging’(a bamboo stringed musical instrument).

KACHARI TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS & DEMONSTRATION ETC.

Hangma (Despair)

This short drama is based on the story of a poor farmer in a village who took a loan from the village money lender to buy a plot of land for cultivation. He was worried and feared that the money lender would seize his land and house if he failed to repay the loan in time. The farmer's wife, in order to help him, offered to sell her ornaments to repay the loan. After selling the ornaments, the farmer hid the money in a bag used for storing cattle feed. Unfortunately, unaware of this fact, the wife sold off the bag containing cattle feed, to a hawker. When they realized, it was too late. Now finding no way out they were in great distress and despair and resigned themselves to their fate.

Bwrai Bathou (Worship of deities)

Among other gods and deities worshipped by the Mech Kacharis, Bwrai Bathou or Shibrai is also one prominent god. Bwrai Bathou is worshipped along with 18 (eighteen) other gods and goddesses in various contexts. Bathou represents the five basic elements of life-processes i.e., Panchabhuta, they are: earth, air, water, ether and fire. These basic elements are the root of everything. The Sijou plant (*Euphorbia splendens*) which is considered the living embodiment of Bwrai Bathou is planted at the northeast corner of the courtyard in every Mech Kachari household, in an altar called Sijousali, which is usually fenced with eighteen pairs of bamboo strips with five fastenings. Each symbolizes a minor god/goddess. The five fastenings signify, from bottom: birth, pain, death, marriage and peace/pleasure. The bottom three fastenings, called Bando, are those that one cannot escape in life; whereas in the case of the top two, one may avoid it. The Kacharis praise and worship Bwrai Bathou daily, both in good and bad times by offering fruits and flowers, lighting earthen lamps, incenses etc.

Kharam jahng bai-hadubani (Hoeing & tilling)

Dimasa Kachari folk dance depicts hoeing and tilling of jhum fields by villagers for cultivating paddy and other crops, this is done in the month of March-April. After clearing and burning the area to be cultivated, villagers work united with hoes and spades. Kharam jahng bai- hadubani literally means 'cultivating with drumbeats', it is performed by both men and women. The instrument used here are the 'Kharam' (drum) and 'Muree' (Wind instrument).

They perform this dance to usher in abundant harvest and be self-sufficient in food grains.

Nana dihonba (Folk drama)

In Dimasa Society, a child born to a family is a welcome gift. It is the elderly women who assist the mother during delivery. However, as per tradition, no infant is taken out of the house immediately after birth. It is only after the umbilical cord has fallen and the elderly women of the village gather and perform certain ceremonies that the child can be taken out of the house. The ceremony is known as “Nana dihonba” or “Daosathaiba.” During this ceremony various delicacies are prepared in abundance. After completing all the formalities, the baby, wrapped in a fine cloth is brought to the door where the closest uncle of the baby apply oil on the forehead for a bright future and sprinkle flowers as blessings. The child is then formally handed over to the father waiting outside, only then can the child be taken around.

2. FOLK DANCE

Bai-bin or suphen (Dance in fiddle or flute tune)

This form of folk dance is performed only by playing single string Bin (Fiddle) or Suphen (Flute) accompanied with playing the rhythmic sound of the Kharam the traditional drum. There is no role of "Muree", a wind instrument of a powerful and brilliant deep tune, which is performed in all the festivals. However, this dance is fondly performed in the post-harvest festival call "Bishu" celebrated in the month of "Magh" approximately the month of January in English Calendar.

Bai jubo (Serpentine dance)

This is a form of another folk dance performed by all, irrespective of sexes, in twisting rows adopting and imitating the crawling python. It is performed in such a way that the dancers go in rows like a snake crawls on the ground and hence the name of the dance is derived from its movement. This dance is generally performed in all the occasion of celebration of festivals like annual Bishu, marriage ceremonies and any other happy and merry making occasion.

Bai-maijai (Dance of winnowing fan)

The Dimasa celebrate their annual post-harvest festival known as Bishu after all their rice crops are harvested, thrashed and stored in the granaries. This festival is marked by feasting and merrymaking through singing, dancing and playing traditional sports and games. During preparatory stage of this festival young boys and girls carry out cleaning works particularly cleaning of rice using Maijai (a home-made winnowing fan made of fine bamboo splits) for the festival. It is said that, at one time during the days of yore, the youths became so excited with the thought of arrival of Bishu that they starts singing and dancing with the Maijai during festivals. Later it became a specialized art of dancing. The expert dancers even put an egg on the Maijai and dance without letting the egg to fall. Thus, this tradition of dancing with Maijai was passed on to present day. These days' plates have replaced the Maijai but the name remains the same Bai-Maijai i.e., the dance of winnowing fan.

Bathou aros (Lord's Prayer)

This dance is performed in praise of Bura Bathou (Lord Sibrai) who according to Kachari religious faith is believed to be the only creator of the Universe. He is considered to be the most powerful God without whose blessings, there cannot be any success in our day-to-day activities at the individual, family or community level. Therefore, this particular dance is performed to invoke his presence and guidance before starting any progressive activity for the community as a whole. It is also performed at the end of any community activity to acknowledge his guidance, with whose blessing only the community can accomplish success in any endeavor.

Bagurumba (Dance Merrymaking)

This dance of the Mech Kachari community is mainly performed during the Kachari month of Aghwn (Nov-Dec) by girls and womenfolk after harvesting season is over. This dance signifies the joy and excitement of womenfolk on completion of the tedious job of farming, from the day of seed sowing to harvesting and storing the produce in granaries. Families are free from worry because the granaries are full. Now, for a short time, they can enjoy the fruit of their hard labor by singing, dancing and making merry like the butterflies.

3. FOLK SONG

Samphithor ha sainjer khambani (Working unitedly)

This is a song generally sung by damsels and young men during noon-break while weeding their jhum field. The meaning of the song goes like this:

- Men: *Oh! Beloved sisters, the sun is already over-head; the day is half gone. Come let us have lunch and rest awhile.*
- Ladies: *We do long to have lunch and drink water in the bamboo mugs, replenishing our strength. But alas! Our share of weeding is yet to complete.*
- Men: *Nay! Don't you worry, for together we will accomplish the work?*

At the end of the day reminding all that the sun is setting down beyond the hills and it is time to go to our sweet homes, leaving the work in the jhum field behind so as to reach home before it is dark. This folk song emphasizes the importance and value of time and working unitedly in achieving our life's goal no matter how difficult it may seem.

Bakhao dima (Folk song)

This song is sung by men and women of all age group, on the eve of the seven days post-harvest festival called Hansaw Bishu. This song has four stanzas and is sung while walking in a row. The first stanza welcomes all villagers and the guest of honor to the celebrations. The second stanza expresses the determined effort put in by the villagers to raise funds, the hard work invested to grow rice to make the celebration of Hansaw Bishu festival a grand success. In the third stanza, the performers declare the name of the 'Gajaibao', (host family) on whose compound the festivities are held. In the fourth stanza, they sing praises and gives glory to the Lord Sibarai for the seven days of celebration.

Slemah dikhawbani (Folk song)

This song is an appeal to fellow farmers encouraging them to work hard and look forward to the annual 'Bishu' festival. The meaning of their song goes like this-

*"We will not forsake our traditional livelihood; we are not lazy.
We will be blessed doing this work.
Remember, we have to nurture and love our near and dear ones.
Hard times will soon be over- Time for merry making will draw fast.*

*Like the young bamboo shooting up, while
The older ones begin to bend
Our life also transformed from one to the next stage.
This is how we are; this is our tradition.”*

Dhansiri Dimapuri (Folk song of Mech Kachari Kingdom)

This song is sung in remembrance of the past glories of the ancient Kachari kingdom whose capital was Dimapur. The song reminisces of the past and the importance of the Dhansiri River in shaping the progress and prosperity of the Kachari kingdom.

Jongkhainai methai (Teasing song)

This folk song is a playful act of teasing and is performed by all age groups. In this song, the members try to outsmart each other in a war of words accompanied by funny body movements supporting the meaning of the song. This song is a good source of entertainment for the Kacharis and it finds prominence during certain occasions like marriage and other festive seasons.

4. RITUALS

Bardwisikhla (Goddess of nature)

In Kachari language “Bar” means wind, “Dwi” means water and “Sikhla” means girl. Thus, Bardwisikhla means “Goddess of Nature”. According to the belief of the Kacharis, the advent of spring season signifies the rejuvenation of the world bringing in new dreams and hopes. Therefore, the Kachari damsels offer prayer to ‘Bardwisikhla’ for welfare of the society by performing this particular form of dance.

Baad bheta (Gate structure made of bamboo)

This is a religious practice of the Mech Kacharis. It is performed by setting up a gate like structure made of bamboo which symbolizes it as an obstruction to all the evils and epidemics plaguing the community. Sacrifices and offerings are made to the gods and goddess by the Deuri (priest) and Dheushi (priest helper). The rituals are performed in the presence of the community members who pray together for good harvest, health and peace.

Sudhi-sabah (Shaving head ceremony)

The Sudhi Sabah a ritual is held after twenty one days in case of male baby and thirty days in case of a female baby. On this day the child's head is to be shaved by the father and the hair that are cut have to be preserved ceremoniously. On the occasion of Sudhi sabah, a few devotees are invited to hold Namkritan. The baby is blessed by the devotees so that the little one from that day becomes a real Kachari.

Atma-punorjanam (Rituals of rebirth system)

The Sonowal Kacharis believe in sprit of Atma and Punorjanam or rebirth. When a child is born, it is not known to which caste, religion, race or gotra the newborn baby belonged to in the previous life. Thus, they believe that the whole family became impure with the birth of the baby. They call it as Ahushi or Suwa loga or Jiya Suwa. The villagers do not dine with the family till the Huchikaran or purification ceremony is performed.

Bajuliwa (Navel cord rituals)

It is a ritual when the navel cord falls from the baby; male devotees are invited to whom 'Mah-Prasads are offered. The mother then makes salutation and the devotees shower blessings wishing all good to both the mother and the child.

KHIAMNIUNGAN TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Lunak lo/Piulam (Harvesting Job's tear)

To the Khamniungans, job's tear is an important food grain. It is one of their staple food. The husk serves as fodder for pigs, and the grains are used for brewing a popular traditional drink.

Sowing is done in the month of March/April by groups of men and women working in each other's field on rotation. In one agricultural cycle, weeding is done 3 or 4 times to ensure a bumper harvest. Folk songs usually accompany their hard toil and labor. In October, the grains are harvested – first the job's tear grass is cut and kept out to dry for a week. Huge mats are laid out and the grains are beaten free of the grass. The grains are winnowed, poured into baskets and carried all the way to the village. While harvesting, sufficient food and drinks are served to the workers.

PoniuPhe ta (Ceremonial pulling of log-drum)

Among the Khamniungans, the use of log drum has been a custom since time immemorial. It is accorded a place of honor and plays an indispensable role in the smooth functioning of village administration. It is a means to communicate important information to the villagers. Different beats carry different information - conveying death of a fellow villager, fire breakout, and an eminent attack by approaching enemies, victory in war, etc.

Strict set of rules and rituals had to be observed while carving a log drum. The wood, the artisans and the tools to be used are dedicated by a priest from the *Meyo* clan. The workers involved in the carving stay in the jungle till it is completed. On the day the log drum is dragged to the village, the *Morung* (Pou/Kanmoi) elder invokes the blessings of the Almighty. Dressed in their traditional fineries, the log drum is pulled ceremonially using a rope, amidst singing, dancing and yelling victoriously. A warrior dressed in full traditional attire stands in front of the log drum when it is brought inside the village. After reaching the designated spot, a ritual is performed by an elder by sacrificing a red cock and a tree decorated with warrior replicas is placed, depicting the log drum as a warrior. Thereafter, the village people perform a dance called *Pailem* dance surrounding the log drum, asking for blessings and peaceful co-existence.

I-yah (Retreat from the Battle)

During the headhunting days, the warriors from the village are carefully selected to go for raiding the neighboring villages. After raiding the village they collect the heads and hands of the enemies to be carried back to their native village. Captive slaves known as Sho-ahare also carried away. Before reaching the village they stop at a place called Keykam meaning ‘resting place and give out victory cries as a signal to their fellow villagers indicating a successful raid. As the victory cry is heard, the young boys and some old men go searching for that particular place. As they reach the spot, the young boys are urged to cut the enemy’s hand to encourage them to hunt down enemies in the near future. After all the formalities are done, they march towards the village gate shouting victory. Those warriors who actually cut the head will say ‘ong pho’ and those who helped in cutting the head will say ‘oh-la’, meaning we have won, we have conquered. In the village the enemy heads are kept inside the log drum.

Eh-khik (Stinging Nettle)

This is a demonstration of the traditional method of weaving bags and shawls. Eh (Stinging Nettle) is a type of plant found in abundance in forests and in the vicinity of the village. It is a very poisonous plant and can even cause death. The process of preparation, from the collection of raw materials to fine finished products is done systematically. First the plant is cut and collected from the forest. Then the skin or the cover of the harsh thorn plant is peeled. This is called ‘Sam’ in the local dialect. Next it is dried in the sun. It is then boiled in hot water. After cooling, the skin of the plant is pounded using a traditional wood to extract the thread. The thread is then used for weaving shawls. There are two different types of shawls. One is known as the ‘Nemok’ which is a furry blanket, and the other is called the ‘Ne’ which is essentially a plain mini shawl.

AbeniuTsem Thao (General village Grinding)

The Abeniu Tsem Thao is an activity which takes place in the first week of February involving the entire village people. A rich man of the village hosts feasts for the people (Feast of Merit) as an act of sharing and also displaying his wealth. Preparations for the feast starts ahead starting with the brewing of rice beer. For that purpose, in the morning of the appointed day the men will dry the paddy and also collect the rice pounding log. During the day the female group will thrash the paddy and winnow it for the purpose of brewing the rice beer.

2. FOLK DANCES

Noknapizuinuap (Peace Treaty Reception Dance)

The peace treaty between villages is usually carried out in the month of January when the village folks are free from jhum cultivation. The ceremony is done with the mutual desire of villages to end hostilities and bring about friendship and peaceful coexistence. The village hosting the reception gathers at the entrance of their village and welcomes the guest by performing the *ZuiNapand* exchange machetes. A grand feast is then followed by singing of the song, '*K...jiaopuHoliamsu*' meaning, 'we are as smart as the tiger' and '*Osaholiam sui*', meaning 'we are as brave as the wild pig'. The festival lasts for 3 to 6 days.

The traditional attires and ornaments worn by the Khamniungans during folk performances are:

Male- 1) *Thsoshu* (Headgear) 2) *Khaoniuh* (Necklace) 3) *Khiaplaim* (Armlet) 4) *Phukou* (wristlet) 5) *Susobbioh* (waist belt) 6) *Hokhukh* (Ankle sock) 7) *Lai* (spear)

Female- 1) *Tsapsiukoi* (Headgear made of porcupine quill) 2) *Lak* (Necklace) 3) *Phashang Tao* (Armlet) 4) *PhatapKhiap* (wristlet) 5) *Oumkiao* (blouse/chest cloth) 6) *Najam* (Mekhala) 7) *Hokning* (Leg attire)

KhiolakTsuhan (Folk Dance Carrying a Skull)

This dance is unique in that it is not performed frequently. The village only organizes this dance during epidemics, poor harvest, when there is no blessing in the village and when mentally ill and dumb people increase in number. Two men are selected to carry the best two skulls during the dance, wearing round canes around their neck. This dance is performed invoking the blessings of the Almighty for the entire village. After the khiolak dance is performed, it is believed that the village live with blessings. Those men who carried the skull cannot eat foods like watermelon, mushroom, pumpkin and burnt maize for the rest of their lives.

Shekou (War Dance)

This dance is performed by males only. It is a replication of war with the warriors holding shields, dao's (machete) and spears, shouting war cries like a lion and wild pig, wandering fearlessly. This dance also signifies that they have enemies to overcome. This ritual dance is performed to keep the village safe

from the attack of the enemies. Carrying shields, daos and spears, all able bodied men go dancing round the village raising up their weapons, giving out fierce battle cry. Then, gathering at the morung compound, they continue dancing vigorously, intermittently shouting and declaring that enemies intending to attack the village will be defeated. The dance ends with the performers giving out victorious war cries.

There is also a Pre-war Dance called Tsouchong. This dance is performed by every able-bodied man, preparing to go for war. Here, their movements depict the fierce behavior of tigers, bears and other wild animals when roused to anger. Giving out high pitched shouts and yells, they psych themselves up for the battle ahead.

ElieZuihang (victory Dance)

This dance signifies victory and strength. During the head hunting days, cutting of an enemy's head was considered an important trophy of war and proof of bravery. On returning to the village after a successful war raid, the enemy's head is taken to the morung and the ElieZuihang dance is performed with vigor, thereby their resolve to strengthen and defend their village is renewed.

KhaozaosieDance (Dance of Merry Making)

This dance is performed during the Khaozaosie-Hok-Ah festival as an expression of gratitude to the Almighty God for all the blessings bestowed upon the people. The festival is celebrated in the month of January before the new agricultural cycle begins. The food grains stored in the granaries are used in rituals to thank the Gods and also for feasting. The song accompanying the dance translates as *'Come great Barbet bird, let us rejoice together. The mountains are clad in snow which signifies the abundant blessings bestowed upon us.'*

3. FOLK SONGS

KhaozaosieFolk song (Festival folk song)

Khaozaosie-Hok-Ah is an important festival of the Khamniungan Nagas celebrated in the month of January, marking the end of all agricultural activities for the year, a time to rest and give thanks to God for the bountiful harvest and triumph over adversities all throughout the year. During the festival they sing folk songs amidst merry making and dancing.

- a. They sing to their beautiful place with rich oriental dresses.
- b. They sing for the crops to be bountiful throughout the year.
- c. They sing to the snow falling on the high mountains which signifies that they live a pleasurable and free life uncontrolled by other kingdom.
- d. They sing to the large white flowers blooming in the big trees which signify that they enjoy like the flowers covering the whole mountain and compare themselves to the flowers.

Jamhang (Folk Song sung during Feast of Merit)

Jamhang is the richest festival sponsored by one rich man for the whole village for 10 (ten) days in the month of February. He leads the villagers in asking their Deity to give blessings to the village by sacrificing his domestic animals. On the first day only the male members' dance in his house and from the next day the females join them holding pork (meat) and oxen meat.

- a. They sing to the big house and the owner of the house for sharing his riches to the whole village by preparing feast with the pigs and oxen meat.
- b. Men sing to the women by asking who is the purest among them and the women sing to the men, who are the purest that invites the female to enjoy there. They also sing to their tasty rice beer (wine) which could not be finished even after feasting for ten days.
- c. In the evenings they sing departing songs depicting that they don't want to leave the gathering. The men sing songs that they should not be sad and while on their way home they should remember each other and think for another day to come.

Yelim ye zui hang (Cotton thread making song)

In the summer season during a full moon night, a group of men and women sit in one place in the village. The women use to make thread out of cotton and men use to make basket with bamboo splits. To enliven their task they sing songs, one is about imagining how the night eagle sings the sweetest of songs throughout the night.

Oh 'Kong Kong Tso' (Oh squirrel squirrel)
'Kong Kong Tso'

Uh 'VemLutse Tso' (Uh Midnight eagle)

They also sing that without the moon light it is discomforting but with the full moon the stars also shine and twinkle. The moon comes down to watch and dance with them, therefore they must dance and sing with joy with the moon.

Hoi –ye zui (Harvest song)

Hoi-ye zui folk song is sung at the end of the year, when harvest is done and all field work is completed for the year. Some days are set aside where Jam kam (Assembling together) is observed. Here, villagers invite each other including guests and friends from the neighboring villages to their homes to share food and wine. This may prolong for several days. The Hoi-ye zui song is sung with the intention to deepen friendship and also make new friends. Hosts and guests respond to each other singing, “Hoi-ye...Hoi-ye...” Beginning from the hearth, they sing this and go up to the roof and ends back at the fireplace.

Ho-e Tsu (Emotional Folk Song)

This is an emotional folk song sung during ‘shai’ (a feast organized by a rich man). During the summer when the field works are heavy, the wealthy take the help of the village people to finish the field works. After the harvest, in the following year in the month of March, he organizes a grand feast for all those who helped him. During this time the village men gather to feast and sing the Ho-e tsu folk song inside the house of the host. They sing in praise of all the house from the roof to the floor and for the feast giver. They sing for abundant blessings to be bestowed upon the host and for the good of the people.

4. RITUALS

Phyiniu lo amkham (Rituals for Selection and carving of a new log drum)

In olden times, a strict set of rules and rituals were observed before carving a log drum. Three persons are entrusted for the task of selecting a tree. The selected persons are supposed to refrain from speaking out unnecessary words, lest it invited bad omen. A tree is carefully selected for the new log drum in the month of January. The tree must be without any blemish or scar and of good wood quality. From amongst the three person a lot is cast, and a member is selected to pronounce the following, “*O great tree, you shall be the keeper of my village, keep yourself clean. O great tree, you shall be the keeper of my compound, keep yourself on guard.*” After this prayer, he delivers the first cut. The log drum is then carved continuously without any break. A folk song and dance called *Phen Lou* is performed during the selection of a new log. The log drum is hollowed by the one whose parents are both alive. The log drum beaters is carved by the one possessing a good and clear voice. After completion, ropes for pulling are arranged securely round the log drum and covered with leaves, ready to be pulled by the villagers the next day.

Jamtsouchong (Feast-of-merit)

‘Jamtsouchong’ refers to the feast-of-merit given by a rich man to the whole village in order to showcase his wealth and status. On this day the feast giver and his family, dressed in their fineries welcome the villagers and guests from the neighboring areas. Guests utter glowing eulogies, dance and sings endless praise about the feast giver’s achievements. A plethora of delicacies are served to all.

Usually held in the month of January, it lasts for 6 long days. The process begins early in the year, with the feast-giver announcing his intentions of throwing a merit-feast. Over the months, the villagers assist him in weeding the field, harvesting and carrying food grains to his granary, all the while singing merry folk songs.

On the first day of the merit feast, sufficient grains to last through out the festival are laid out in 6 huge bamboo mats to dry in the sun. In the evening, the women gather and pound the grains. The animals to be consumed for the feasting are provided by the feast-giver which are slaughtered, cleaned and kept ready by members of the morung. The next day, the menfolk gather at the feast-giver’s house to dance and sing eulogies of him. The following day, carrying pork and mithun meat, women join the menfolk and proceed to the feast-giver’s home. The Feast giver then invokes God’s blessing upon the village. This is also an opportunity for him to flaunt his impressive wealth as people from neighboring villages take part in the festivities.

On the final day, they sing songs of deep regret having to part so soon, but draws a measure of comfort by singing songs of a new tomorrow with exciting opportunities ahead. Thus, days of feasting, dancing, singing, playing various games, and interaction draws to a close with a final grand feast.

Liam keh (Peace Treaty)

Liam Keh is a traditional treaty observed by our ancestors to mark peace between villages post the headhunting period. It marks the end of hostility and the beginning of friendship between two groups. The parties meet at a pre-arranged spot. When treaties are drawn and agreed upon, the clause usually contains that the parties shall agree to help each other in times of need; declare to maintain peace and welcome each other into their communities. The treaty talk ends by sharing a meal together and exchanging shields and daos, which is preserved as a bond of their agreement.

This treaty is conducted only during the *Hok-ah* festival in the month of January. During *liamkeh*, they dance and sing “*khaopou oh liamsha, Ousa uh liamsha*” which means, “*welcoming with the fiercest tooth*”. They exchange Dao (machete) and shawl as a sign of peaceful treaty and pray for each other. The successful treaty is followed by Singing, dancing and merry making.

Paosopohiliam (Traditional Marriage)

The principle of marriage among the Khamniungans is monogamous and exogamous. Intra clan marriage is considered taboo and strictly prohibited by customary law. The traditional marriage season starts right after the Tsokum festival (festival of harvest) in the month of Tsokumlih (October) till Chikhaikanlih (May). It is believed that the couple is destined for each other by the God of heaven and earth even before they were born.

Since ancient times, only 2 clans— the ‘Lam’ and ‘Shiu’, exists among the Khamniungans. As already mentioned, marriages can take place only between these two clans. It is a taboo for a couple to marry within the clan – an offence called for excommunication from the village. It is a common practice for parents, relatives or friends to arrange marriages. However, young people are also allowed to marry person of their choice. Each year, boys and girls of similar age group work in each other’s field on rotation, enabling them to have an insight to each other’s character, mannerisms, temper and habits. As such, attractions develop and persuasive courtship ensues. If the boy wants to take this relationship to the next level, at an appointed time at nightfall the boy and his friends go to the girl’s house and calls her out. As she comes out, the group escorts her to the boy’s house and rests for a time at the pounding table. After which some rituals are performed by the boy’s bossom friend. The girl is then asked to pound some grains. If she refuses, it means that she is unwilling to marry the boy, and is allowed to head back home. If she agrees to pound the grains, it means she is willing to marry the boy.

The Marriage ceremony is held only at night. After the sun sets, the Groom’s parents, sends the Groom’s best men to bring the Bride home. The Bride is adorned in her beautiful traditional attire. Meanwhile the Groom’s family arranges all necessities for the Marriage ceremony. A cock/hen is killed and its blood is collected in a plaintain leaf. The marriage vow is taken by dipping the bride’s right thumb into the blood. Once the bride touches the bride, she is considered a married woman. The ritual of the blood is similar to the wearing of a wedding ring.

Khiolak-am (Worship of enemy's head)

During the head hunting days, 'Khiolak-am' meaning 'Worship of the enemy's head' is observed for seven days by the Khamniungans. It was believed that this would bring victory in war and an abundant harvest. It was observed in July, after a gap of every 6-8 years. Six members known as Khiolak hoi, are selected for the ceremony. To qualify one had to be young, energetic, smart, intelligent and pure in all respect. They were assisted by two men called Aaou. Some of the following activities are carried out in preparation of observing Khiolak-am:

(a) *Paipui* (carrying wood): All menfolk goes to the jungle to collect wood. The Khiolak-hoi carries oak wood which is put around the morung. The remaining collected wood are to be used during the seven days feast.

(b) *Woasi* (Preparation of wine): Rice is collected from the homes of Khiolak hoi and taken to the nearby spring for rinsing. Bringing it back to jamnio (mother house), they grind and brew rice wine which is done only by the menfolk.

(c) *Yuhpui* (Carrying pig): Chu is a traditional trap for catching pigs. The Khiolak hoi along with Aaou hoi and some villagers trap pigs from the jungle using Chu, an indigenous trap. They then bring the pigs to the morung. With one voice they shout 'wohoi' three times, and proceed to the log drum while the others kill and cook the pigs.

(d) *Jam kam* (Assembling together): Here the Khiolak hoi, accompanied by the Aaou hoigo to their respective homes where they kill a cock and let the blood drip onto a small drum near the fire place. They cook and feast on the bird and drink wine. They then shout 'wohoi' three times then go to the jamnio (mother house) which is the main place of worship.

(e) *Neitap* (Distribution of meat): Pieces of meat wrapped in banana leaves are placed in the log drum for the Khiolak hoi. However, they do not eat it but gives it to the eldest in the family.

(f) *Ahang* (Dance): A group of people called 'Mehu' is given the task of smearing the Khiolak hoi with pig's fat, after which they dance and sing songs.

KONYAK TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS & DEMONSTRATION ETC.

Huh tupu (Tattooing)

Konyak tribe is one of the most populous and major tribe among the Nagas. They are mostly found in Mon district of Nagaland as well as in Arunachal Pradesh, Myanmar and Assam and are known by their practice of head hunting and facial tattoos. However, this practice is no longer prevalent among them due to their conversion to Christianity, exposure to modern education and modernization. Their faith in Christianity had played a major role in transforming their age-old beliefs and traditions; they tattooed their face and other parts of the body as only when they attain certain criteria or fulfil certain norms of the society. According to the cultural norms' boys have to attain an age of 8 years and girls have to attain an age of 11 years for tattooing on their body parts. Different designs signify different social status such as Ahng (King), Pin (Commoner) and the warriors.

Facial tattoos are mostly done by an adult male when they come back from the war after head hunting expedition. Tattoo on the body signifies different symbols and meanings and there is a significant difference between the tattoos of men and women. Tattoo on the calf of a girl's leg signifies she is matured to perform any activities in the society. Tattoo on her arm signifies she has engaged for marriage. Tattoo on a boy's chest, arm and face signifies that he is a matured man and right to perform and participate in the activities of the society. A man is regarded as a warrior when he brings the head of his enemy to the village and gets a distinctive and dignified facial tattoo. He is respected by all; he is also invited for feast in different houses in the village. During rituals or celebration, he will raise the slogan of peace, war and victory.

However, the unique facial tattoo and in other parts of the body tattoo is declining very fast in the Konyak community, within the span of 10 years the speculation of facial tattooed man will be extinct from the face of the earth forever. Once upon a time facial tattoo was a form of social status and achievement among the older generations of the Konyak society but now it is a form of fashion and styles with modern images and individual artistic expression.

Ghat lingpu (Making of an indigenous gun powder)

The Konyaks are blessed with creativity and well known for various unique practices and customs. One significant practice was and is the making

and using of gun powder. Even before the arrival of the British, the use of guns and gun powder was widely prevalent among the Konyaks. At one point of time the Britishers were surprised to see the indigenous people using muzzle loading gun because it was spectacular and very uncommon for them to see the advancement of making such gun and powder in the remote areas. Gun powder is widely used in different occasions such as in war, hunting, festivals, and during the death of a person. The materials used for gun powder are charcoal derived from Omah wood (*Trema orientalis*) and a salt, 'potassium nitrate'. The components in gun powder are simple and its preparation decides the quality of the gun powder. First, the wood (Omah) is burned down completely and the charcoal obtained from it is kept separately to cool down, it is then pounded and grind into powder using special tool like pestle. The unwanted particles are separated from charcoal powder and add a salt in the ratio of 3:10. The mixture is then heated again and again until it is dried up; the end product is kept in a dry and warm place which is free from dust or any other particles that could lower the potential and the quality of the gun powder.

Kumdük yaopu (Pottery making)

Traditionally in Konyak society, women folks were responsible for making an earthen pot. When there were no steel and aluminium pots women folk make an earthen pot to cook and feed warriors who guard the village or when they go to confront the enemies. Some kind of sticky black soil is collected from a particular place and is made into powder, mixed with water and thoroughly kneaded and shaped to various sizes of pots. A huge pit is dug on the ground where resources like water, fire wood is available abundantly. The desired shaped pots are carefully placed into the huge pit under the ground. Rigorous and strong fire is burnt on it for three to four days after which it is taken out. The burning of rigorous and strong fire is very important as it define the quality of the pot. If the fire is not heated thoroughly during the process of making the pots the chances of forming cracks is eminent. Different varieties of pots are being made for different purposes like for storing water, cooking utensils etc., but as in the case of sticky rice pot, it has few holes at the bottom of the pot so as to pass the hot steam which is significantly different from the rest of the pots. It is frequently used in various festivals and occasions of Konyak community. During the process of pot making and at the end of the completion of pottery is marked by singing and dancing.

Ghüm shui pu (Pulling of log-drum)

Log drum is an integral part of the Konyak community. In olden times, it was considered as a living deity. Log drum is carved out of a tree called Lanyang (*Michelia champaca*). The tree for log drum is carefully selected from

well-developed trees, a place that is free from any disputes, where no evil remarks were uttered. It has to be a healthy tree with a sizable trunk and considerable length. Great attention is paid to the way the log is pulled, if it moves smoothly in the right direction, a blessed year ahead is predicted, but if the log does not move when it is pulled, it is considered a bad omen for the village.

There were some strict rules to be adhered to: The first-cut upon the log had to be delivered by a person who came from a renowned and wealthy family, with both parents and wife alive, having children and a male child compulsorily. Initially, he is assisted by 2 persons where the same rules apply for them as well. Before the first cut is made, the eldest in the group addresses the tree - *“Ahaha- huwaeh! “Think not who we are! We are the unbeaten warriors.”* Then the person who is to deliver the first cut takes an egg and throws it at the trunk as part of the rituals. Then the other 2 follow suit, after which, the rest helps by cutting the tree down.

Immediately, the villagers pour rice beer, food and meat lavishly on the fallen trunk. Male youth spent days and nights hollowing out and carving the log drum until it is completed. To begin the pulling of the completed log drum to the village, the children and women accompanying those singing praises to the log for it was once a beautiful tree sheltering a variety of birds and animals and they also comfort the log by singing songs. The eldest man utters these parting words to the log drum: *“Under your shelter, wild boars, lions and tigers bred, upon your branches, hornbills and eagles nested and gave birth, upon your trunk melodious crickets sang unceasingly, your bark sheltered varieties of insects. For all these, we say, “Have no regrets; Think not about them from today; from today, bid farewell to all. You will be going to the safest place between the earth and the sky; To a place where you will be happy day and night; Fed on meat acquired from the enemies of north and south; Your left and right hand shall hold the meat of the east and west enemy. Let’s go now, to the best ever place on earth.”*

On reaching the village, they continue to pour and offer rice beer, food and meat to the log-drum. When they reach the *Morung*, the person who made the first cut to the tree, chooses a *Dao* kept in a row, and cuts away the cane tied to the log drum that was used for pulling it. The person is entitled to keep that *Dao*, and the expense of the *Dao* is borne by the *Morung*. After the final touch-up is completed, dedication of the log drum is done the next day, after community hunting. Different beats are drummed for different occasions.

Following are some of the occasions:

1. When enemies' heads are brought into the village.
2. While leaving for battle.
3. Death of a warrior.
4. Invasion by the enemy.
5. During harvest.
6. During Aoleang festival.

Yeangnyu hah pu (Traditional community fishing)

Yeangnyu hahpu is a traditional method of community fishing. When the winter season comes, information is given out to the neighbouring villages inviting them for fishing including women and children to the river which runs parallel to their boundary. Young men collect Wühnyu (*Diospyros lanceifolia*, a poisonous wild fruit) from the jungle on their way to the river, the wild fruit which is collected in a bamboo basket is grind it to pulp by the river side by a group of four or five people using a pestle at different locations of the river. The juice of Wühnyu kills or paralyses the fish because it de-oxygenates the water. This type of community fishing does not harm or pollute the eco system of the river as well as the surrounding environment. At the certain end point of the river they built a bamboo fence so that the fish does not escape. All the fishes that caught are distributed equally among the villagers. The biggest fish which is caught that day is given to the Ahng (King) or the eldest among the community. They also sing which expresses the wish for peaceful co-existence with its neighbouring villages by sharing each other's catch.

2. FOLK DANCE

Peeilok (Bamboo dance)

Bamboo dance is characterised by the use of bamboo staves, kept in cross-horizontal forms on the ground. While some of the performers tap the bamboo staves in rhythmic beats, which also forms the rhythm of the dance, the dancers move with a perfect sense of timing, by stepping in between the gaps created while striking the bamboos. It is done as a part of physical training imparted to the youngsters. The co-ordination and accuracy in their steps determine their physical and mental fitness.

Nyahlip pu (Fish dance)

This folk dance is performed by a group of men acting like a group of fishes swimming in the river. The dance is accompanied with a rhythmic song, sung only by the smartest men of the village during the Aoleang festival.

Yan-po lok (Farewell dance)

This farewell song is sung on the last day of the Aoleang festival. Here, they request the day to remain longer so that celebrations may stretch on. But the end will surely come, therefore, they ask god to bless the year ahead and hasten its return. They go to different morungs singing and dancing this farewell performance. While dancing they avoid making any mistake in the stepping. Thus, a line is strictly maintained and only the leader's footstep is followed by all.

Aoleang mo (Aoleang dance)

The Konyak observe the Aoleang Monyu festival in the first week of April every year for seven days to celebrate the completion of sowing seeds in the field. It also mark the end of old year and welcomes the New Year beginning with spring when a riot of flowers in every hue starts to bloom and invoke the blessing of the almighty for a beautiful harvest and to renew their strength to successfully meet the challenging year ahead. On the first day the head of the family goes to the field to sacrifice a chicken and sprinkle its blood on the "Wümjong" (altar) with a prayer; *"Oh! Spirit of the land, great and mighty, this day I call upon thee to bless us and prosper our crops. Accept our blood offering and bless us and keep us from evil"*. Every men and women wear beautiful attires and ornaments and spend the days feasting, dancing and merry making.

Wehok okpu (Victory dance)

Victory dance is usually performed after the head hunting expedition. While preparing for a war, every male member who has a tattoo on their face would be trained, well equipped with weapons like gun, spear, dao (machete) etc. and the female would pack their meals and drinks. Before leaving for the head hunting, they would gather and sing war songs and make war cry as, *"Oh! The great sons of the enemy, here I come, we face this day for the event to be spoken of, for the generations to come, of your fall into the hands of the warrior superior to you"*. Some of the selected male members would be held back to guard the village while the other members would go and attack their enemies especially during the times of cultivation of field. After the war is over, they

bring back the heads of the enemies and celebrate their victory the whole night with songs and dances in the morung and served with the best-preserved rice beer. After the celebrations are done, those warriors who have taken the heads of the enemies will be honoured by the entire village and as a sign of being a brave warrior of the war, his face will be tattooed so that his legacy remains forever. The weapons used during the head hunting are yang (dao), ngou (spear), yansheng (gun), doo (basket, use to carry their meals or drinks and also to carry back the heads of their enemy), ree (shield).

3. FOLK SONG

Moiman yupu hem (Seeking of blessing during aoleang festival)

We welcome you oh! Great festival
Bring along all the fortunes of victories and good health.
Let our harvest be productive and plenty
Let our land and forest be fertile
And be our cattle numbered.
Let not diseases and death come near us
As we work with our implements,
Hold them that they may not hurt us
Let not our people be defeated by the enemies.
Let not our land be exhausted,
Let not the water dry from our rivers.
Dear Almighty, make our land prosperous
That all the nations gather here
They may enjoy your blessings...

Kahwang te minyong phahah (Let us thank god)

Let us thank God
For this privilege to be one Nation,
Let us thank all the founders of Naga Nation,
May our Leaders live long!
Oh! Naga leaders, let us move forward supporting one another
Let us work hand in hand and be united for a better land
Let us all rise together supporting one another
Oh! Let us stand together to move forward
Sisters, let us gather and do good deeds,
Unlike the horns of the Mithun.
But like the upright horns of the Roan Antelope,
We will surely reach our goal.

Unlike the crippled vein of a Diaspora Bulbiferous,
Let us straight forward and whole heartedly plead our Creator.

Naoü-pu hem (Lullaby)

Ü-yü-wa.....	How sweet a newly born child!
Ü-yü-wa.....	I will not let the child weep
Ü-yü-wa.....	I will not let the child shiver of cold
Ü-yü-wa.....	I will carry you on my back
Ü-yü-wa.....	I will hold you on my lap
Ü-yü-wa.....	Let all the first fruits and flowers that bloom are yours
Ü-yü-wa.....	Let the sun shine on you and raindrops fall on you
Ü-yü-wa.....	After your education, may you be well placed?
Ü-yü-wa.....	If you go hunting, may you be successful
Ü-yü-wa.....	If you go for headhunting, may you bring the enemy's head
Ü-yü-wa.....	May you live in beautiful houses?
Ü-yü-wa.....	This is how I bless you, my child.

Shümshu pu (Rice pounding song)

Let the grains increase in number
Grains are cut with sickle
The cut grains are carried in a bamboo basket
Then dried in a cane mat
Once dried, the grain is stored in a granary.

The grain is then taken out for pounding
After winnowing, the rice is kept in an earthen container
Then the rice is cooked in an earthen pot
And it is stirred by a bamboo spoon.

The cooked rice is taken out onto a banana leaf
The rice is wrapped and given to the men folk
Who have to disperse to perform various tasks?
Like fishing, hunting, pulling log drums And head hunting too.

4. RITUALS

Mangmupu (Burial ceremony)

Mangmupu is a burial ceremony practiced by Konyaks. When a person dies the dead body is wrapped in a bamboo mat and kept on a tree branch till the

tissues is decomposed. For the first three nights the relatives guard the grave site yelling and making noises. It is done so to give company to the dead soul as well as to scare away scavengers from feeding on the corpse. After a year or two, the relatives gather at the place to mark the last funeral day called “Taitumpu”. On this day, they perform the burial rituals by collecting the remains of the dead such as skulls and bones, then relatives say their last farewell to it. They select a fine stone which is chiselled out to form a pot shaped receptacle into which the remains are placed, it is then covered and buried.

Dak meitampu (Rituals for healing)

When a person is sick, a diviner ‘Phongpa’ is called to identify the kind of sickness and also another person ‘Gampa’ to perform the rituals on the sick person. The gampa goes to the sick person’s house, performs the required rituals and a mark of ritualistic performance kills a pig, chicken or dog according to the diviner’s counsel. Holding the blood of the animal, he shouts and murmurs some utterances to cast out the spirit of illness. In this way persons suffering from certain ailments are being cured and go back to his or her normal life.

Shaotan itpu (prediction)

Shaotanitpu is the traditional act of prediction using an egg. Piercing the apical end of an egg with a needle and the opposite end of an egg is heated over a hot charcoal. The white fluid that oozes out of an egg is keenly observed and the diviner makes his predictions. This method of divination was practiced specially in relation to hunting, fishing, war, natural calamities, weather forecast etc. and was usually done during annual harvest festival which falls in the month of October every year.

Ahngnokjao-e tampu (Dedication of ahng’s house)

Traditionally, it was believed that once the Ahng’s (Chief of the village) house was constructed, the village was under supernatural protection. After completion of the new house, animals were killed and its blood spilled all around the house. This ritual is carried out at night, before the dawn and the priest chant ritualistic verses in the process as they performed. He invoked the spirit to bless the house and its dwellers. In this way the villagers are protected when the chief Ahng’s house is protected by the supernatural powers.

Wümjong me toidopu (Sacrifices at the altar)

Animal's sacrifices were performed as a ritual offering to the supernatural gods, seeking their blessings for wealth, health, land, agriculture, etc. A person was specifically assigned to carry out this ritual. The animals such as pig or chicken were killed at the altar, and the blood had to spill over the erected stone altar. After this, prediction is made depending upon the direction of the flow of the blood.

KUKI TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS & DEMONSTRATION ETC.

Goshem lam (Wind instrument)

Goshem is a very popular musical instrument of the Kukis. It is a wind instrument, made of dried gourd, fitted with seven small bamboo-pipes, held together with indigenous glue obtained by mixing various plants. Goshem produces a subdued but harmonious sound and can exactly replicate the sound of hornbill wings flapping overhead. Origin of Goshem: Once upon a time, there lived on a hill, a devilish man who played Goshem. His name was Ngalgum. He had three foot long face with a single eye on his fore-head. His mouth was so big that he could fit in seven small bamboo pipes and blow it at a go. The village damsels used to go up the hill where Ngalgum lived, to collect firewood. On one occasion, one of the girls' suggested that they all compete in collecting firewood; the last one to complete would be caught by Ngalgum. It so happened that the girl who gave the idea was the last. That very night, Ngalgum came to the village and staked his claim to take her away. Having no option, the village damsels demanded that he leave his Goshem in exchange of the girl. Later, the villagers modified his Goshem by fitting it on to a dried gourd with glue. That is how the Goshem originated.

Jangcha lam (Warrior's son)

Jangcha was a great warrior well acclaimed for his strength and skills. It is said that Jangcha's father who was also a great hunter was murdered by men from the neighboring village out of sheer jealousy. The story has it that, Jangcha one day disguised him and went to the village of his father's murderer. He challenged the villagers to a wrestling bout and eventually defeated them all. The chief of the village impressed by the strength of Jangcha poured Vaiju (Rice beer) on him and threw a party. Jangcha took the opportunity and demanded for a machete to dance with as he flirted with the ladies. In the meantime, while all the villagers were preoccupied with the songs and dances, Jangcha spotted his father's murderer and killed him thus avenging his father's death.

Suhta lam (Hard wooden pestles)

Suhta lam refers to a hard wood used as a pounding pestle. The origin of the dance goes back to an endearing love story of a beautiful daughter of a village chief and a boy from a poor family, whose parents were dead. The village Chief was adamantly opposed to their love affair but could do nothing to

stop them meeting frequently. He plotted to maim the boy in order to confine him to the house and restrict his movement so that he is fit only to guard the chickens. The Chief decreed that if the boy really loved his daughter, he must undergo a test. On the appointed day, four Suhta (pounding poles) were laid horizontally in pairs with four strong individuals selected by the chief, holding the ends of the poles and striking them together. The boy's test was to jump in and out of the ensuing gaps successfully to the measure of speed and time by the drum. Knowing the evil plan of the Chief, the boy's friends warned him through song by singing "Chom chom doh in", which means "Jump in, jump out". Guided by their song, he was able to come out of the test successfully. Thus, Suhta lam became a popular traditional dance. Today bamboo poles have replaced wooden pestles.

Vakol lam (Vakol flocking)

Vakol lam means 'flying motion of the Vakol bird flocking together'. On bright sunny days, flocks of Vakol can be seen flying in the air, following down river courses, sometimes remaining motionless then steadily gliding up and down in unison. The charming motion of 'Vakol' is interpreted as 'Vakol lam'. The dancers interpret the motion of the bird in rhythm with the beat of the drum and song.

Khulkon lam (Chin-Kuki-Mizo ethnic group dance)

Khulkon lam is associated with the origin of Chin-Kuki-Mizo ethnic group from the subterranean under world called 'Khul' or 'Sinlung' in another dialect of the same ethnic group. The Khulkon lam dance depicts the journey undertaken by the Kuki fore-fathers from their subterranean under the world Khul, to the upper world in search of good land. The dance signifies and relates the plight and penury of the Kukis while making their way over ground. It can be called a '*journey from darkness to light*'. The dance also reveals obedience to the leader and how they cautiously and skillfully moved about in the treacherous jungles ridden with poisonous reptiles, insects, and ferocious animals and also against the natives of the upper world. Like a well-organized army, the troupe march in tune with the beating of the drum. There are rears and vanguards, women, children and the aged are kept between them. The brave men and leaders are ready to lay down their lives defending them. Legend has it that the chief commanders were Pu Chongthu and Pu Chongja. With keen eyes, they watch every movement in the jungle, looking out for dangers ahead. The rear guards follow their movement, in case of attack from behind. Most times, they walk backwards. Even the women and children make noise to scare and drive away wild beasts and when compelled to, they fight the enemies with their bare hands.

2. FOLK DANCE

Lom lam (Traditional age-wise working groups)

Lom lam is the most popular dance of Lom (traditional age-wise working groups) which was the apex social institution of every Kuki village in the past. It occupies a unique and central place in all social and cultural activities in the village under the leadership of Lom Upa (Lom Elder). He is assisted by some other member's in-charge of different aspects. Almost all villagers, excluding old folk and dependent children, are members of the Lom. Even the head of village acknowledged and helps to their needs for the welfare of the village. Lom has a by-law of its own and is strictly adhered to, though Lom has lost its intrinsic values, its social formation is so deep rooted; it penetrates even to the present day society. It comes alive in any joyful occasion like Mimkut festival or while giving honor to someone for great achievement they make or in any auspicious occasions. The dancers divide themselves in two groups and sing by turn. The male dancer swaying his dao above, exchanging places now and then reveals the responsibility of men to safeguard women and children or the weaker section. A gong and drum are beaten to add to their delight and merry-making, blowing of Mithun horns add to the festive occasion. Songs with different lyrics are sung in accordance with the occasion while performing the Lom lam dance. A common Lom lam Song reads:

*“Birds are dancing high above
And young ones are sprightly dancing below.
Birds they celebrate and dance with my feats,
Do not leave till we could talk to each other”*

This song is associated with the celebration of the great feat of Dapa, whose harvest was bountiful compared with the others in the village. The overwhelming delightful song and dance is a combination of love, affection and unity. It challenges and beckons one and all to join hands as our great fore-fathers did in the past to build a strong and steadfast society.

Sagolphei khai (Moves like wild-pigs)

Sagolphei Khai is a popular dance associated with Savailhun (reception of a game). It is the imitation of the movement of marching of wild-pigs or sows. The young piglets scatter and loiter around in search of food however, when the mother gives a call, they dash towards her and march where ever she leads them without hesitation. In like manner, the dancers listen intently to the beat of the drummer, their leader. As he beats his drum, they are automatically

aware that they are being called action. It signifies obedience to a leader and unity. The Savailhun troupe consists of dancers with different roles.

They are:

1. Gamlengpa - The hunter
2. Khonupi - Elderly village women
3. Khongchoi - Drum-bearer/Drummer
4. Dahchoi - Gong-bearer/ beater
5. Alamho - Dancers

Saipi khupsuh (Elephants movement)

Saipi khupsuh is a popular folk dance of the Kukis. This dance is originated when forefathers of the Kukis were living in Chin Hills in Burma (Myanmar). A certain village was stomped by hordes of furious wild elephants. They pulled down the houses, rampaged through the village, killing the hapless villagers randomly. The elephants did not stop at this. They dragged and piled the corpses in one place. They then moved around marched around it and at times, bent their knees. A small boy, who escaped the carnage by hiding under the thick foliage had witnessed the scene, narrated the whole story to some of his villagers on their return from their field in the evening. The agony and sorrow were indescribable and unbearable at the same time. They took a solemn vow to avenge the crime committed by the elephants. They massacred the elephants and piled up the corpses. Then they imitated the elephants' movement; circling round and bending their knees at times. This dance was performed after a war victory or in honor of a hunter who brought home a big game.

Vaphol lam (Hornbill dance)

Vaphol refer to the 'Hornbill'. Vaphol lam thus means 'Hornbill dance' which is an imitation of the graceful movements of the Hornbill in the sky which hovers around in groups during the autumn season.

Lenkhom lam (Folk dance)

Lenkhom lam is a social gathering dance. The dance is performed by two to four couples facing each other. Men spread their arms and wave sideways bending their knees as they dance continuously while the women, resting their hands on their hips also bend their knees and move together with their male counter-part. A drum, a gong and a guitar are used by the singers to add harmony and rhythm to the song and dance. Besides the dancers, elders and youth also participate by cheerfully singing the song.

3. FOLK SONG

Lakoila (Lady who admires a young man)

Singing folklore is a rich cultural heritage of the Kukis, their forefathers sang at any given appropriate opportunity. Folk-lore songs incorporate deep emotions and wisdom of old. The theme varies from love, war, peace, victory, reconciliation, patriotism and many others. Thus, these songs give vent to their state of emotion and lighten their hearts. Lakoila is very popular song among young boys and girls. It talks about a lady who admires a handsome young man and conveys the message of her love and admiration. She says he is more handsome than the beautiful celosia flower usually grown around a small shed or inn in the field. The young man replies to her message comparing her beauty to a Marigold flower that is also grown in the same spot.

Buhtol joujam (Love song)

This is a folk-love song where the young boy says, “If I wear this new shirt and go to woo my beloved Lhingkho, she will compare me with a Buhtol Joujam (flower). And if she calls me Buhtol Joujam, then I will call her the Songlhan genu (Marigold flower) of my youth.”

Sim lakoi la (Folk song)

Sim Lakoi La is a folksong. A young boy wanted to court a lady who was much older to him. The lady taunted him by calling him a noisy chick, not fit enough to have a conversation with. The young boy was so hurt that he told her she would never find a suitable match. To this she replied that only those who dared to raise the ‘Dao’ (machete) can walk around at night, implying that the boy should stay home as he was too young to be out courting.

Lamkai them la (Song on exalting leaders)

This song is a Latah which according to Kuki classification, is a song based on facts and not just an expression of ideas and emotions. This song is sung exalting a leader. It speaks of the ideal qualities of a leader under whose leadership there is unity, progress and development.

Insah chahpi (Love song)

This is a love song between two lovers. The boy says, *“I shall climb up the pine tree beside the house and shout aloud to win the heart of the one whom I love since my youth.”*

4. RITUALS

Savailhun (Reception of a big game)

The Kukis have innumerable folk-lore, folk dances and traditional and cultural practices. Savailhun is one such practice and it means reception of a big game like tiger, leopard, elephant or a ferocious beast, which is killed and brought home by a hunter. The Savailhun ceremony is performed in acknowledgement of the hunter's valor, bravery and feat. A grand feast is held in his honor. All village folks, even the head of the village pay due honor and hail him as the 'Great Hunter'. A day or more is set aside for feasting, singing and dancing. The village women-folk bring their highly fermented rice-beer to honor the hunter.

Naosen pengthah lhandoh na (Rituals of birth)

The birth of a boy child is thought to be more auspicious than that of a girl-child because the continuance of the clan or sub-clan depends on the male progeny. If an infant of either gender dies, and if it is the first death in the family, it is regarded as the share due to Chungmangpa, the creator-God, by way of appeasement. The bereaved family is consoled by the belief that the family will receive future blessings, in the same way fruit bearing tree sheds off the first fruit in order to bear more and better fruit in future.

Louma muchi chivo phathei na dia lhandohna (Rituals of agriculture)

Forefathers of the Kukis did not plainly choose any place for cultivation, but precisely decide on a particular place and then try to identify whether it can be cultivated. Father in a family is responsible for the selection of agriculture field. The Chief has no right and power in this matter. They usually choose the sunward side of a mountain as they believe that it will have better yield than the leeward side. After selecting a particular place for cultivation they again try to ascertain whether they are allowed for cultivation by the gods as they believe in the presence of unseen gods. Accordingly they went to the heart of the field, beneath a big tree, clear the place and keep it neat and clean. They keep three rice seeds linking their tips and cover them with tree branches and then left them to evaluate how much size has to be cultivated and then clear the margins. They come back in the afternoon to make out what has happened to the rice seeds and if there is prohibition to cultivate the area, the rice seeds were spread and spaced out from each other. In such cases they abandon the place and choose another place. But if the rice seeds did not change their position it is taken as good omen and they are allowed to cultivate. The next day the whole family and some neighbours

started clearing trees and grasses. Some trees and swampy areas were considered as bad omens and therefore they leave swampy places and restrained themselves from cutting such trees. After five or six days or a week, when trees become dry, they burn them and give offering to the gods with white cock and dogs to please them. Thempu (priest) dig out those bad trees from the roots and burn them down, and then offer white cock for trees and dogs for marshy places. This is called Loulut in Kuki language, mainly performed only by the village Thempu. Sometimes they offer mithuns, coins and many precious things as they believe that the unseen gods like them.

Kichen (Marriage)

Marriage is one of the universal social institutions which upholds customs and traditions of society. Though universal institutions, it varies from one society to another in the form of rules and practices. To the Kuki marriage is known as Kichen which occupies an important place in their society. Traditionally among the Kuki marriage is deeply associated with family which is relentlessly considered to be its affairs. Thus in selecting a life partner, rights of individual concern were subjugated and alienated as the choice was made by parents with an intention of avoiding impurity of lineage as they believe in existence of Kaose (a family or lineage which posses evil spirits which can harm fellow human being) in society, for they seek only Lubuhtheng (purity of lineage from Kaose) as a result Neinu (mother's brother's daughter) is first choice of the parents. However, today such rule is no longer followed by the youths.

Mimkut (Harvest festival)

Mimkut is the harvest festival of the Kukis. Kukis of Nagaland celebrate this festival on the 17th Kuki month of Tolbol (January) every year. The celebration lasts for one week. It is believed that Mimkut and other festivals came into being from the fact that, in order to appease Thilha (Demon). The people offered sacrifices and at the same time they also believed in the existence of a Supreme God whom they called "Chung Pathen" (Heavenly God). To get the blessings of such gods, the village Medicine man (Thempu) would sacrifice fowls to propitiate the spirit of the Demon-god by performing a series of rituals and prayer.

LOTHA TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS & DEMONSTRATIONS

Mhorü hata (Community Rounding of Tiger)

Mhorü Hata is one of the oldest and the most effective method of hunting tigers among the Kyong or the Lotha Nagas. It is mostly organized/undertaken when a tiger troubles the village. After a tiger has devoured an animal, he walks a few miles and falls fast asleep. The experts then trace the tiger's footprints and ascertain the area he is asleep in. Then, a small portion of the jungle around him is cleared and made sure that there are no footprints outside the cleared jungle. After which, the tiger is ascertained to be rounded up. The whole village is then notified and the preparation begins.

One of the most important preparation is the construction of a fence. The fence is constructed at the lowest point of the area with a kennel-like structure attached to it, where the tiger is enticed to enter and cornered. Thereafter, a brave old man is invited to perform the ceremonial rites of hypnotizing the tiger by placing an Egg on the ground. He then puts thorn barrier around the place to prevent the tiger from escaping. Then the tiger is chased by all the capable youths of the village from the highest point of the area, clearing the jungle till the tiger is cornered to the fence. Then the bravest men of the village enter and fight the tiger with spears and daos. After the tiger is killed, he is taken to the village by the youths and is being exhibited on a tree. His mouth is kept wide open and is stuffed with a particular leaf, which is believed to prevent the tiger from telling his friends the names of those who killed him.

Erüjothokutsükonatsolan phyolan (Rain compelling Ceremonies)

Before the advent of Christianity, the Lotha Nagas practiced rain compelling ceremonies to induce rainfall during the drought season. In villages where there is no rainfall for a long period of time, a group of people come together and tie their shawls. After which, they follow the Pigs path and shout like pigs with great hope to receive rainfall.

Another method is, the elders in the village led by the priest go to the field-path. Even the oldest male in the village who cannot walk is also carried by the male members and along with them a small pig and earthen pots are carried to perform the ceremony. The pig is killed after observing necessary rituals, cooked and ate by all. A bed made with leaves collected from the jungle is prepared on the ground on which the oldest man in the village is made to lay down (sleep). On top of his body all the male members place their shawls and

cover his body, and the rest of the members return to the village. They believe that by performing this ceremony heavy clouds would appear and rainfall will start. After which, the old man is carried back to the village.

Ronsüetsa (Beseeching the Gods for a bountiful harvest)

The first duty of the new '*Pvuti*' (village chief) is to invoke God's blessings for a bountiful harvest throughout the period of his reign. The new *Pvuti* would take all the villagers to the outskirts of the village and there, facing east, they offer prayers to the Gods. The villagers then wave their shawls in the air and act like they are collecting blessings from the Gods and fill up their bamboo rice baskets with it. They carry the baskets back home and pretend to store the blessings inside the granaries or oaken vats. They believe this act will bring them good luck and a bountiful harvest.

Nirü (Community Fishing)

The Lotha Nagas are considered keen fishermen and swimmers. In the past, community fishing was very common among them. It is mainly carried out in the month of April and May. The date is decided by the elders of the village and is being notified to the villagers by the '*Pvuti*' (village chief).

Certain rules and regulations are carried out during the time of fishing. Killing and consuming the meat of an animal is considered taboo. Only vegetarian meals are allowed. Sexual intercourse, straining and collecting of blood from the patients for medical purpose is forbidden. Women folk are not allowed to participate in the Community Fishing.

Poisoning is by far the most effective method of fishing. Before fishing is carried out, the roots of certain plants poisonous to the fishes are collected. Some of the poisonous plants used are, (1) *Niro* (juice of a creeper), (2) *Cheti* (the berries of a tree), (3) *Pitsü* (a creeper with small leaves), (4) *Opyak* and *Achak* (the bark of two species of trees), (5) *Mvethi* (Berries used in small streams), (6) *Mozi* (a creeper). On the day of fishing, the members participating must remain chaste and no animals are to be killed. Each man brings with him a bunch of poisonous creeper which is then thoroughly crushed and pounded with much shouting and chanting, adding to the uniqueness of community fishing.

Everyone takes turn to dip the crushed roots into the river, and collecting of the fish is left for the next day. With the breaking of dawn, all members scatter along the river and start collecting the dead fish. Catfish is considered a prized catch, and the person who lands a catfish is awarded a big portion from it. The fish found in the stomach of bigger fish are eaten only by the old people.

The day's catch is divided among the members according to their age and status in the village. A portion of the catch is gifted to the Pvuti.

Spinning of Cotton (Khonko Eyen)

In the olden days, Cotton was an important element in the lives of the Lothas, as they were dependent on it for their clothing. It was cultivated individually or as a clan. The women folk spin and weave together singing songs to entertain themselves. They pluck the flowering cotton from the fields and collect it in large heaps. After the cotton is collected and brought to the village, the seeds are first removed or rolled out then the spinning of cotton begins. After the cotton is converted into threads, it is then dyed. The leaves of a particular plant is crushed and boiled in a clay pot. The cotton threads are then soaked in the prepared dye for coloring purpose as per one's need or requirement. The dyed cotton threads are put on bamboo sticks and sundried after which it is used for weaving cloth.

The materials and implements used for the spinning and weaving are; *Khonko*(cotton), *Lo-ko* (string to tie the bow), *Humtsu* (spindle), *Tsirocholong*(Heddle), *Tsikum* (bamboo beam), *Tsizu* (loops), *Ncho* (Bar), *Ephi* (weaving belt), *Tsitam* (sword), *Ena* (heedle loops).

2. FOLK DANCES

MyingthungSharü (Dance of Praise)

On the day of coronation of the New *Pvuti* (village chief), the entire village congregates at *Menkitong* (Head Tree) to welcome their new chief. Then All the Warriors and the Chumpho (Dormitory) Boys, led by the Chumpho Leader perform this dance day and night. It is a dance of celebration and praise to the new village chief. The villagers feast and indulge in merry making.

Through this dance, a message is conveyed to the new chief that “*you have sufficient warriors and brave young men at your command, ready to sacrifice their lives to save the village from all dangers. So be brave and lead us to victory.*”

The traditional attires and ornaments worn by the Lotha Male and Female during the folk performances are:

Male- 1) *Dünkho* (Head Gear) 2) *Yeko* (necklace made of cowrie shells)

3) *Khoro* (armlet) 4) *Khekap* (wristlet) 5) *lakhiip* (Kilt designed of cowrie shells) 6) *Lijüp* (Dao holder) 7) *Rhukhung* (waist belt) 8) *Chorhü* (Ankle sock).

Female- 1) *Diinkho* (Head Gear) 2) *Yeko* (necklace) 3) *Tiyü* (armlet) 4) *Süingsürümbüm* (wristlet) 5) *EtsokSü* (Chest cloth/Sash) 6) *Etsok Sürium* (Mekhala)

EkhyoSharü (Victory dance)

In the past Hunting down an enemy's head was considered a sign of victory, an important trophy of war, and a proof of bravery. It was also believed to bring good fortune to the village. Among the Lothas, when a man reaches a certain age where he is deemed capable to practice head hunting, he must proof his ability by taking the head of an enemy. Only after which he is allowed to put on the warriors ornaments like Hornbill feathers in his bearskin wig, boar's tusk necklace, red fringed gauntlets, red Dao-belt and dark blue lengta with red lines.

After attaining victory from a war, the warriors while returning to their village begins chanting, "*Oh we have killed an enemy*". The whole village beams with excitement on hearing this war cry from a distance. On reaching the village, the warriors are greatly honored. The woman folks serve exquisite food and rice beers. After the feast, the selected group of people perform the *Ekhyosharu* (victory dance) with much excitement and the heads taken are exhibited at the *Menkitong* (head tree). All villagers led by the '*pvuti*' gather around and celebrate by singing and dancing.

Shanta (Preventing enemy's intrusion dance)

Shanta signifies the chasing away and preventing of enemies intrusion. During the head- hunting days the never-ending state of war affected every man, woman and child in their daily lives. This dance is performed by a band of brave warrior as they guard the village boundary/fence called *Pikhvu*. They inspect and report if any enemy is around, before any women and children step outside the boundary of the village fence.

This dance demonstrates some of the skills and tactics used by the energetic armed young male members who chase and prevents enemies from intruding into their area. The *Shanta* dance is also performed after a victorious war, as they retreat back to the village they make sure that they are not being followed by the enemies. They diverge their footprints to different direction to confuse the enemy by enacting the *Shanta* dance. This part of the dance is also called *Tssok-cho*.

RitssoSharü (War dance)

War dance illustrates the stories of bravery, power, courage and strength. A symbol of victory. The most important aspect about the war Dance is that it demonstrates war skills. After returning from a victorious war, the warriors nail the enemy's heads in the village Chumpo (dormitory) or the Head Tree (Menkitong). The next morning, the villagers gather around the Chumpo with much joy and excitement, and perform the war dance accompanied with singing. Two persons dance in unison indicating that they will take up the dao(machete) and spear to protect their village. War dance is performed even today during the Tokhu Emong festival.

3. FOLK SONGS

Mhujonlichonkhen (The farmer's song)

Music plays a very important part in the farmer's life. During the time of cultivation, every Lotha male and female group together according to their age and work in the Jhum fields. As they work they sing and chant beautiful work songs, giving rhythm to their work which makes it seem easier for them to accomplish more. Through the songs they encourage each other to work hard, serving as a means to vent out the feeling of tiredness as they toil hard for their sustenance. They head out very early to the fields and all along the way they sing and chant beautiful songs in unison. Food is cooked for the whole group and is carried in baskets.

Lojü-longatakhen (A song about Courtship)

This song is sung during the sowing season. The song speaks of the wooing of a girl by a boy, with the consent of her parents. The girl's father asks the boy to clear his field for sowing by cutting down the trees. He then sends his daughter with food and drinks for the boy. She waits for a long time for him to come down from the tree but instead he keeps on cutting down trees, jumping from one branch to another. Saddened by this, she sings a song expressing her love for him and her shyness which had so far deterred her from expressing her feelings. When the boy hears the song, he jumps down from the tree shouting with joy and the two of them have their lunch together. The girl's father observing them discreetly, is also filled with joy and goes back to the village to prepare for their marriage.

Chumphokhen (Morungsong)

This song speaks about a young priest (pvuti), who took charge of the village affairs at a very young age. He was very fond of beautifying everything around his village. One such venture was to build a *Chumpho* (dormitory for young unmarried man).

He collected the best species of logs and other construction materials, ordered the best ornaments from outside the village for beautifying the *Chumpho*, reserved the best and healthy animals to be slaughtered during the feast, and ordered the best brew to be served. When the *Chumpho* was finally completed it was indeed one of the finest *Chumpho* of his time, and his pride knew no bounds. He began celebrating by singing songs and dancing around the village in jubilation. But his pride devoured his achievement as a great lightning struck the beautiful *Chumpho* and destroyed it. He was devastated and he mourned for many days. This song is still sung today as a reminder of how pride can in an instant destroy something that is beautifully constructed.

Tsoktsükhen (A folk song sung when grinding)

Smoke across the stars,
All come out, watch the wonders unfolding,
Elders and priest in the village,
Smoke across the stars,
Evoke wonders in all men and women,
Evoke wonders in all boys and girls.
Smoke across the star,
Wonders happening all over the earth
As it may die as fallen leaves in autumn.

Eran LijonKhen(The weeding song)

Yonjakejumenya.....
Ohoho.....oho....ho..... (3 times)
Enongiyutsoro, owolelle to
Ohoho.....oho....ho..... (3 times)
Ohoho.....oho....ho.....
Etsen Jana thungEkyio
YariKiroaKalo
Ohoho.....oho....ho..... (3 times)
NshijanathungEkiwoYari
YariKiroaKalo
Ohoho.....oho....ho..... (3 times)

English Translation:-

*It's time to start weeding in the field otherwise we will gate late,
In the forest the leaves are drying out and if we don't work fast,
We will not be able to complete our task,
Time is nearing for tea break, so work fast
Forest flower are fading so work fast before they fade away,
Time is nearing for Lunch break so work fast before it's too late
Before all the flowers fade away.*

4. RITUALS

Montsai (Ritual for healing/soul catcher)

In the past, any kind of illness was attributed to the actions of the evil spirits, even believed to catch human souls and keeping it in his captivity. In such cases, the soul catcher called 'Montsai' locates the dwelling place of the evil spirits and tries to rescue the soul. He performs some rituals to appease the spirits. To show off his superiority over the spirits, he scolds them and issues threats of bringing warriors to destroy him if the soul of the victim is not released. After all the warnings he calls out the victim's name and tells him to follow him home. Along the way he stops frequently and calls his name again, making sure that the soul does not wander off in the wrong direction. Once in the village he leads the soul to be re-united with the body.

Yanpiyanthan (Traditional marriage)

Among the Kyongs, it is considered a taboo to marry members of the same sub-clan. Cross-cousin marriage and parallel cousin marriage is also strictly prohibited. When a man attains a marriageable age, usually the boy's mother or some elderly female relative is entrusted with taking the marriage proposal to the girl's parents. If the girl and her parents agree, the bride price (hanlam) is settled. It is customary for the boy to prepare the food for the engagement party. The boy's family will prepare the food and wrap it in a plaintain leaf called hantsen, and take it to the girl's house for the engagement party called, "Tsoyuta" (eating & drinking fellowship), also called "Poklumta" or "Pokrohan" (Belly warming food).

After the engagement, the boy would have to work in his father-in-law's house for a year. When the time approaches for the marriage, a certain day is fixed to perform the Hanlam ceremony, where the bride price is paid in the form of pigs. Having performed the marriage rites, the bride's father would pronounce

a prayer of blessing for the newlywedded couple. After which they would then head to their new home accompanied by the groom's family and relatives carrying with them whatever gifts they received from the girl's family, before the setting of the sun. After the procession reaches the entrance of the house, the leader of the group strikes the door with a stick which symbolizes the chasing of evil spirits out of the house. He pronounces the words, "*now we are going to stay in this house, go away evil spirit*". Thereafter, the leader throws a piece of meat to the crowd, the children rush to get it as that piece of meat is considered to bring good luck. All the villagers return to their homes happily leaving the bride and groom alone.

MmhoruEha (Tiger hunting)

When tigers attack and kill humans or other domestic animals, the villagers get into action to take stock of the situation. The Pvuti (village chief) summons a meeting with the elders and warriors on how to tackle the situation, then it is decided to kill the tiger.

Expert hunters both male and female are selected to carry on the tasks. Before the hunt, a dedication ceremony is performed by the Pvuti. Food and drinks are sufficiently stocked for the hunt. The hunters surround the tiger's hideout and cautiously approach the spot cutting down the bushes and shrubs around it. A narrow opening is enclosed with sturdy wooden fencing and a trap called *Vevung* which is made of cane and bamboo is placed there. The women participating in the hunt keep themselves busy supplying the required food and drinks and throwing sticks (*Jaklho*) at the tiger to deter it from attacking the men. The tiger while trying to escape is ensnared in the trap and eventually killed by the hunters.

The Pvuti prays to the Almighty God and sprinkle rice beer on the body and pour some into the mouth of the dead tiger, thanking God for his protection upon the hunters. After the prayers the Pvuti permits the male elders to carry the tiger's carcass to a place where it is displayed for all to see. When the hunters return home the family members throw ash on them which is believed to purify and protect them from bad omens and misfortune.

MotchüKhorüm (Agricultural ritual)

As the sowing season arrives, certain rituals are followed for a bountiful harvest. The first sowing of paddy seeds for the year cannot be sown by any ordinary person. The ritual Motchü Khorüm is performed by the Pvüti with prayers to the Almighty God. No one sows seeds before this ritual. On the day the ritual is to be performed, the Pvüti rise up early before dawn and head out to

the fields. As he sows the first seeds, He chants prayers for the successful sowing of the seeds and for a bountiful harvest. There is a believe that this ritual must take place early in the morning before the birds and animals of the earth wake up to prevent them from scattering or displacing the seeds that the Pvüti has sown. After the ritual is performed, the rest of the villagers goes ahead and sow their seeds for the agricultural year.

TsopokNipok (Birth Ritual)

Certain rituals are performed after the birth of a baby. The child is not named right after its birth. The baby naming ceremony called Mochok is performed on the sixth Day in the case of a boy. A girl-child is named on the fifth day after her birth. After the birth of the child, the umbilical cord is put into a bamboo cup called rhumpvuro and carefully kept in the house. The placenta (oshang) is wrapped in a cloth by the oshangessi or mid wife and is tied on a Mhechü tree. The parents after the birth of the child send meat (ohantsseniyenala) to the midwife as a thankyou gesture for the successful delivery of the child.

PHOM TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Shem Shüpü (Pulling of log drum)

Shem meaning ‘Log drum’ also called *Lannyang*, played a very significant role in the cultural and traditional life of the PhomNagas. It primarily served the purpose of communication. The variant beat of the log drum conveyed different messages and news, and by listening to the beat, villagers could figure out whether it is a happy or a sad news or a matter of urgency or alarm.

Felling of tree for the carving of the log drum was carried out adhering to strict rituals. The biggest, tallest and healthiest of tree with sufficient leaves without any broken branches, hole or mark was selected and felled. The most preferable type of trees was vanyang or lanyang in Phom, hollong, and mikkai. A separate day was set aside for the ceremonious pulling of the log drum. All men and women, both young and old in their best traditional attires would join the event. Before the pulling starts, the priest would sacrifice a cock for the drum. Four long canes were tied on the head of the drum. The inner two lines for women and children and outer two for men and invitees from other khels. Holding on to the canes in long lines they would pull the drum, while singing folk songs. It is believed that unless a *Hamba* (warrior) sits atop, the log would not move an inch.

While the activity goes on, Rice, meat and rice beer is served simultaneously. As soon as the log drum reaches the village, it is pulled and installed in a place near the *Bang* (Morung). Then the *Mongmei Shem* beat, signifying thanksgiving and gratitude is drummed out of the newly installed log drum.

Shem Vüngpü (Log drum beating)

The Log drum (Shem) is an important instrument of communication and proclamation for the PhomNagas. In any occasion, menfolk would stand in two rows facing each other holding drum strikers. Strikers are of different sizes. Bigger the striker in size, the louder and lower the sound it produces and smaller the striker in size the higher the sound it produces. Some villages had four different sizes while others had three sizes of drum strikers in order to produce different sounds.

1). *Tungpü*: bass sound produced by the biggest striker

- 2). *Vengpü*: soprano sound produced by the medium striker
- 3). *Khokpü*: alto sound produced by the medium striker
- 4). *Jahpü*: tenor sound produced by the smallest striker

During the times of our ancestors, log drum beating conveyed different messages such as celebrations, victory, danger etc. differentiated by the beats.

Some of the important occasions when log-drums were sounded are:-

- *Molok/monyüshem*: The sounding of the log drum announces the dawn of the *Monyu* festival of the Phom Nagas. It is sounded to let the neighboring villages know that the festival is being observed.
- *Bangmoshem*: Rhythms during post-harvest feast.
- *Vebaongshem*: In the event of an enemy attack or when the village is on fire, a particular beat was drummed.
- *Shahbaong*: Rhythms alarming the fire or other mishaps.
- *Hampashem*: To announce the death of a renowned warrior (Hamba) or important personalities of the village.
- *Veleishem*: To announce the return of victorious warriors after a successful head-hunting raid, thereby informing the villagers to come out and welcome the warriors (Hamba).
- *Mongmeishem*: rhythms of excitement after finishing the works
- *Lukketshem*: rhythms during the lunar eclipse
- *Monglongshem*: rhythms by women stirring menfolk on war to fight bravely.

Ashakdakpü (Traditional weaving)

In the olden days, the Phom Nagas made yarns by themselves for weaving clothes. Both men and women labored hard to make yarns out of cotton, although it was the women folk who mostly spent their time in this occupation. Cotton was largely grown and used to enhance the art of weaving.

Our ancestors wore clothes woven by the women of the village using the back- strap loom (the loin-loom). Young girls were taught this art in the 'morung' (dormitory). Back-strap loom weaving is still being practiced in the Phom villages to this day, and the women folk weave various articles such as shawls, skirts (mekhalas), mufflers, bags and waist coats. The He-Pho-Pang-Pho refers to the rich and varied textile of the Phom community. It narrates the symbolical patterns woven in their textiles, where each pattern has a unique meaning and idea attached to it.

0w leünpü (Traditional fire making)

This is a demonstration on the traditional method of fire making. In olden times, before the introduction of matchsticks and lighters, our ancestors used traditional methods to make fire. One method was to use bamboo wool from a well dried bamboo and two hard stones. Holding one stone against this tinder of bamboo wool, another stone would be struck against it. Then a little spark of fire would catch on the bamboo wool and fire was made. Another method of fire making is to use a piece of well dried wood which is split into two halves and bamboo fire-slips. This forked wood would be kept on another small piece of wood or flat stone. Holding firmly on to it with a foot, the operator would slip a bamboo fire-thong in between this forked wood and holding one end in either hand, pulls it backward and forward rapidly. In less than a minute, the fire- thong would catch fire.

Ham Teük (Pottery making)

Ham Teük is the art of making traditional earthen pots. In the past, being able to produce fine outstanding pots was a woman's pride. It was a form of expression of one's creativity and individuality through the various shapes, size and designs of the earthen pots. The potters would collect the suitable mud and proportionately mix it with water, beat it nicely and finally shape it according to one's desired design. They would then take these shaped pots to the jungle for the process of heating. The pots would be heated for hours in a discreet manner without letting others know or see. Certain taboos were strictly observed during the heating. It was believed that the presence of even a small grain of sand in the mud would cause the pot to break while heating.

Rice, curry and arums cooked in earthen pots are tastier than when cooked in modern utensil. A kind of pot punctured at the bottom for steaming sticky rice was also made and is still in use.

2. FOLK DANCES

Nok-phat (Warrior's Dance)

Traditionally, this dance was performed only by the warriors. The song accompanying the dance recounts historical events of war, peace, defeat, victory and their relationship with various neighbouring villages. This dance is performed by donning the shield, dao, spear and headgear.

The traditional attires and ornaments worn by the PhomNagas during Folk performances and festivals are:

Male- 1) *HomluAthen* (Headgear) 2) *MeilaBhahYiük* (Necklace) 3) *Henyüand Nyo-am* (Shawl) 4) *Bhakshep* (Armlet) 5) *Yanpi Shong Mong* (Dao holder) 6) *Lakshep* (Ankle Sock) 7) *Phong* (Spear)

Female- 1) *Mükhen* and *Langnyü* (Headgears) 2) *Lakshong* (Shawl) 3) *Lak Ngeih* and *Bhakshep* (Wristlet) 4) *Shaka Shiingnang* (Mekhala)

Monyiüvangngaichingpü (Festival dance)

This dance is performed during the *Monyiü* festival, which is the major festival of the Phom Nagas. *Monyiümo* is a time for praising God, inviting and feasting with friends and relatives, singing and dancing etc. On the first day, the dance group go around the village proclaiming the onset of the festival and on the last day, before the sunrise young man will gather in the Morung to proceed for the dance on the street to bid farewell to the festival. The song goes: “*HahoshaidangmoodangShaing*” which means ‘*The Fest is over; all the misfortune and evil go away from the village*’.

Vesholeijüowpü (Victory dance)

Vesholeijüowpü is a victory dance of the Phom Nagas. It is performed to celebrate victory over the battle against the enemies. The warriors after returning from a victorious war, would showcase the hunted enemy’s heads throughout the village and share the victorious moment with their wife and children. During such occasions the women folk would affront over the hunted heads of the enemies.

Lüingshat (Bamboo Dance)

Among the Phom Folk Dances, the *Lüingshat* was a very rare form of performance. This dance was performed in times of bringing enemy’s head, during festivals and while killing big animals liker tiger, lion and elephant.

During the dance, the young girls would sit face to face in two lines holding on to the both ends of the bamboos and would play. The young boys would jump in between these moving bamboos meticulously not to clip their legs in between.

LaakshoAsho (Recital Dance)

‘LaakshoAsho’ is a recital dance calling the names of all the neighboring villages and tribes. During the dance, the elders narrate the story to their young folks about the cordial relationship with the neighboring communities and invoke God’s blessings to maintain peace and tranquility among the people.

3. FOLK SONGS

Monyiü Asho (Festival Folk Song)

Monyiümo is the most important festival celebrated by the Phom Nagas. It is observed for a period of six days, from the 1st to the 6th of April, right after the sowing is completed. This festival is held, seeking blessings for the newly sown seeds and for a bountiful harvest. It is therefore a time for the yokels to break away from the toil and disillusionment of working in the fields. A time of rest and merry making. At dusk, all near and dear ones gather and sing songs all through the night praying for their wellbeing and especially for sprouting crops to give them good harvest. The dawn of the festival is usually announced by the beating of the log drum by a group of ten to fifteen men. The MonyiüAsho narrates the activities of the villagers in the preparation of the Monyiü festival. A translation of the song goes as follows:

*‘The seeds are sown, we seek thy blessing for a bountiful harvest.
The fattest and finest herds are slaughtered for the feast.
We invite our in-laws to the feast;
Family, relatives, friends all join in the merry making. It is time to love and
share one’s blessings; it is time for merriment.’*

AümoMü Mai Asho (Lover’s song)

In olden days, every Phom village had a *Bang* (Male dormitory) and *Yuo* (Female dormitory). It was a tradition for every young unmarried male and female to spend the night in their respective dormitories. As night falls, young men visit the female dormitories and sit beside their lovers, communicating their feelings through expressive songs.

Aümo is an indigenous musical instrument of the Phom Nagas, made of bamboo with a string attached to it. Hence, ‘*aümo mü mai ashö*’ translates as ‘*a lover expressing his love to his beloved through song with the accompaniment of the Aümo*’.

The song goes-

*Oh...Uamow please narrate to me your thoughts,
You are the best among many,
No lightning should strike my lovers bed,
No rainbow should stand in her way,
We are flowers alike in bloom, oh my sweetheart,
We go to field together, oh my sweetheart,
We don't want to part, oh my sweetheart.*

Kahsho Asho (Folk song sung while weeding)

Kahsho Asho is a Folk song which is sung while cleaning the weeds in the field.

*Ohannyukaonyiemvangphak I shonglang shih
Apmavangketpemathunglongkujuma
PhomjatPhomlishumkaoyanyuklemongpha
Shümlaklang-I phi-eihepongvongkaoyem
Pai-shih vangmangphüjaoyuh yang khoyempeih
Pongmoihevongküjaodaphoyeanglingpeih
Shi-yongnyionyulenskaoshu-eiyunglentyeih
Nyü-ü man vaipayüpfungshushelainyeh
An-aongeimameipüphunyülok.
Heyoipongmashemlaklangnyaihupümong.*

English Translation;-

*May we be protected from the scourging sun!
May we be sheltered with the nyamvang leaves!
If the year brings stiff weeds to our left and right,
The farming youth of Phom land give them stiff fight in group;
We pluck weeds and uproot shrubs and dry them in the sun,
When heavy rain and storm assail us,
We defend ourselves with balm leaf shields.
We protect ourselves from the scourging sun with our cane shields,
Though ShiyongNyionyü (June and July) bring us starvation,
Our mothers solace us with songs;
Our fathers feed us with the roots and fruits from the wood.
When the farmers work in company, even when sunset peep in,
The farmers decline to depart from the field!*

Nau-ü Asho (Lullaby of the Babysitters)

The Nau-ü BūAsho is a lullaby generally sung by mothers of the PhomNagas. This song is a dedication for the unfailing love of the mothers towards their child, the bond that binds humanity. This is the chant of the women to sooth their babies to sleep while expressing the pride that they derive from their children.

“Get me a strap peeled out of a bark from the aromatic Agur tree to make a baby carrier.

Baby be calm and quiet, let your mum hearken to the mooing of the mithun.

Baby, be calm and quiet, if you want to sleep, fall asleep in comfort and ease.

Other babies may be large and plump, yet they are like quick rotting arum stalks.

Let our baby be like a rooster adorned with superb feathers and tail.

Let our baby be like a mithun embellished with splendid teeth and elongated bipolar horns.

If our baby were a fish, my baby is like a fish that keeps deep waters under her domain.

If our baby were bamboo straps, my baby is like a tender, flexible and gentle strap that binds things tightly.

If our baby were a flower, my baby is like budding orchids that adorns the sagging branches of trees in serene woods.

If our baby were a singing beetle, my baby is like a beetle that sings yearning tunes while clamping on to the tree.

Let the beetles err and bemoan, rather than you cry, oh baby.

We would rather for sake acquaintances than make you cry.

Hasei Bu Bu-ow (seed sowing song)

Hasei Bu Bu-ow is a Folk song which is sung while sowing the seeds in the fields.

OH... olabaü ü YingliPhomjatlabau ü

OH.... obüdenkaaivangbü hi ba den ka bb

OH..... lemphü om ngoihanshingmetpaiphonglingpeih

OH..... Ketnyülenvamküjüka hdüshaphamnyieh

OH..... Yimnyüowhaploihan tap ve-eitounhyeh

OH..... Hah li dongle mükohongjükshei-ei tem

OH..... Vonglivanlangshemtupanglohongma bam

OH..... Vangngaihan long man vaivangyubu den ka

OH..... Pungmeileknungpha-shei man vaivangyiunhyeh

OH..... Hepongvongnyehdungbuponglienhyushong

OH..... Nukoinuhembeyuvei-yongphamnyülak
OH..... Manvaikahsho lei-aovamnyaïyiuying
OH..... Nulenbukahshoyupanglaklanginon
OH..... Odaimaonyahumlongnyungaudaimaonya
OH..... Phongjantapnyunongmahumlongnyungaumei
humlongnyungaumei

English Translation:-

Oh we are the damsels of YingliPhom tribe
Oh please pause for a moment, lend us your ears,
Even as we unfold to you the song of joy and woes of the farmers;
Come Ketnyiü month (December), it's time to fell our forest and
Clear the shrubs to prepare for the new jhum land.
We erect altar and call the name of God, for we want good harvest!
When our field is burnt, we know it's time to build our farm house,
Then we prepare the seeds of paddy, yam, maize, cucumber and pumpkin.
Ceremonial bamboos are to be erected and prayers are to be offered invoking
bountiful harvest;
To beat the heat of the sun we shelter ourselves with bamboo shields;
Like the creeping cane and huge banyan,
We stand firm to Cultivate and nurture our fields.
We relish ourselves with best rice brew;
We sing as we fight with the weeds;
The songs of happy maidens are heard even from distant land;
The beautiful song from the farm hearths enchants even over yonder land.

4. RITUALS

Laiyoupu (Sanctification and offering)

Laiyoupu is an act of sanctification and offering to the Gods after a bountiful harvest. The village priest is invited by the rich and wealthy families into their homes. As the priest enters the house, the family members are all seated in a row, awaiting the ritual to begin. The priest will kill a chicken and sprinkle hot blood on leaves called *Laimei*, reciting ritual verses upon them. He will ask the family to spit on the leaves and throw the leaves beyond the village gate, signifying that the family is now protected from unclean evil spirits throughout the year.

Din jingpü (Healing ritual)

This is a demonstration of traditional healing practiced by the Phom Nagas. In the Past, the healers were few and lived in far places, so the sick had to be brought to them. They walked long distances through the rain and sun, day and night and across mountains and streams carrying the sick on their shoulders or stretchers made of bamboo shafts. After examining the patient, the *Din jingpü* (healer) would ask for the items required for the ritual. It required a meal, tea leaves and rice beer. No other person other than the *Din jingpü* (healer) should consume the eatables used for the rituals, as it is believed that any other person apart from the healer who eats the food will have the sickness transpired into their body through the eatables.

The ritual is usually performed with the white feathered chicken. If the patient is a male, the healer would circle the chicken around him six times and for the females five times, (number six is considered as male number and the number five is considered as female number). If the patient cannot be cured with the first ritual, it is followed by the next ritual using a black feathered chicken. If the diseases or illness still prevails, the healer would order for a four legged animal, a male goat for the third ritual. After the rites are performed, the animal is kept under observation for as many days as he would prescribe. Even after the third ritual if the diseases refuse to leave the body he orders for a final ritual with a black colored dog which would decide the fate of the patient whether he/she would be healed or left to die.

Bang vepü (Construction of a new Morung)

The Morung, which is called *Bang* in Phom, is considered not only as the center for human dwellings but also of the wild creatures, the birds and animals. The construction of a *bang* was ceremonial in nature despite heavy manual labors involved. Certain rituals are performed by the '*Panghpa*' the main priest of the Morung, announcing the message of demolition of the old Morung to the ghosts, tigers, lions, pythons, cobras and the eagles. All of these creatures are considered to have nested with them in the morung. After the demolition of the Morung, the whole community divides the work amongst themselves to have a new one raised. With the collection of raw materials such as pillars, king posts, posts, beams, bamboos, bamboo slips, canes slips, palm leaves etc, the Morung is set to be build. The largest and the hardest wood is used for the log drum to be placed in the morung. Sexual abstinence is strictly observed starting from the day of the construction of morung till it is over. They had to be cautious in words, deeds and the food they eat. The tree for the main pillar is chosen very carefully. The motifs on the main pillars is carved by the skilled carvers.

The PhomNagas are an artistic tribe, which can be seen in their village Morungs. In most villages, the following animals and reptiles were carved on the main pillar. Firstly, Python and above it elephant and then lion. On the other pillars and overhead cross beams, hornbills and chain of human statues were carved. Even on the roof top other motifs such as swords, brass plates, hornbills, hoopoes and swallows were decorated. The elephant signifies strength and richness, the tiger signifies bravery, the monkey stands for friendship, the python signifies ownership, the hornbill signifies beauty/ grandeur and the drongo signifies smartness. The area within the boundaries of the morung is believed to ensure long and blissful life. It is considered a revered place where no lies are tolerated and he who disrespects the ideals of truth are believed to receive the wrath of nature.

Vangnyukpu (Ritual for calling the Rain Gods)

This ritual is carried out to relief the land and its dwellers from drought. When there is an abnormally long dry season without rain and it is pass the sowing season, the community prepares to call the rain. On the chosen day the village people assemble to witness the rain ritual performed only by certain selected clansman from amongst the villagers. It is carried out by using a special instrument called *Humbin*, so named from the sound it makes while it is swung in the air. A single stick with strings attached to it is rotated in a circular manner with regular rhythms one after the other. Usually two or more men handle the *Humbin* and this act is accompanied by song and dance from the villagers while calling for rain. The sound from the ritual is believed to reach the heavens and awaken the thunder and storm resulting in rainfall that quenches the thirst of Mother Nature.

NyiüOngpü (Birth Ritual)

When a baby is born, the family had to observe some rules till the naming of the child. They would not entertain any guest and would hang a branch of a banyan tree containing five leaves in case of a baby girl and six leaves in case of a baby boy in front of their house. However, it would be removed during the naming day.

In the olden days, the Baby Naming ceremony was a simple event. A baby boy is named on the sixth day after birth and on the fifth day in the case of a baby girl. The family would kill chicken or a pig. Only close relatives attend the event. On the naming day, the baby's hair would be pared off, the ear lobe pierced and black threads are tied around the waist, wrist and ankles. The name of the baby is not selected randomly. Whether it be a boy or a girl, the name had to be from paternal genealogical lineage on the basis of achievements in the past

or present. However, the name could be given from maternal side also. The name itself could identify the clan that one belongs to.

The placenta of the baby had to be cleaned properly, put in a punctured container wrapped by cloth or leaves and disposed of in an isolated place where men or animals would not trample over it. It is believed that the constant cry and ailing of the baby is due to random disposal of placenta.

POCHURY TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS & DEMONSTRATION ETC.

Lüleyphu tsha (Earthenware of Pochury)

Before metal was introduced, the only available utensils were the earthenware. Special type of soil is collected from different places to make earthenware. The names of the places are:

1. Rowti
2. Küsükhong
3. Lüley müjing
4. Xetripe
5. Sheyti.

The soil is collected from these places and dried in the sun separately. It is pounded into fine powder with a pestle which is filtered with a sieve. The fine powder is mixed with water and kneaded into clay using a pestle and pounding tray. The clay is taken out and beaten with a bat (phutüm) and a stone (mütsülung). Thus, the clay is moulded into the desired earthenware. The pot is dried in the sun to make it firm. Then it is burnt using dried grass and a particular wood known as Thümasing. Nalüley, a particular soft stone, is powdered and mixed with the clay so that the cooked rice comes off the pot smoothly and easily. Different designs are made for different purposes. For storing bones of the dead, the designs depend upon the sex and age of the person. The different types of pots are:

- | | | |
|-----------------|---|-------------------|
| 1. Na phu | - | Rice pot. |
| 2. Sha Lüküphu | - | Meat pot. |
| 3. Ledi Lüküphu | - | Curry pot. |
| 4. Yowkam | - | Storage pot. |
| 5. Ri Phu | - | Bone storage pot. |
| 6. Pusü | - | Water pot. |
| 7. Laünpaün | - | Rice storage pot. |

Zakhongji (Banana tree)

In olden days, the rich man gives feast of merit to the whole village and also the neighbouring villages. On the night of the feast the 'Zakhongji' which means banana tree is planted in the village. The brave men dance around the banana tree at mid-night and try to cut off the tree at one go in the right direction which was believed to bring good fortune to the brave dancer. If he

fails to cut off the tree then the host would be the recipient of the good fortune. This dance is performed fearfully as it is believed to have implications for one's future and usually only the brave participated in this dance.

Alawia küka (Archery)

Crossbow was used as a weapon for attacking enemies as well as for hunting. It is the most feared weapon during olden days as the enemies can be attacked from a long distance and also the arrow head once entered in the body cannot be removed easily as it will lead to more damage to the wound. The materials used for making the crossbow are:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Bow (Adung) | - Laksing (Wood) |
| 2. Bar (Apang) | - Jinaksing (Wood) |
| 3. Arrow (Priü) | - Xa (Bamboo)/feather |
| 4. Rope (Arü) | - Lükhrüprü/ Ladong rü/Lüzow (Fibers) |
| 5. Arrowhead (Mürünatsha) | - Pure iron. |
| 6. Trigger | - Rü (Bone). |

Atsüna (Marriage proposal)

Traditionally, arranged marriage was the norm; it is a big step in a person's life, thus choosing the right life partner had to be done carefully after much thought and observation. The boy's parent takes full responsibility of choosing their daughter-in-law, after consulting their son and they personally approach the girl and her parents. Food and wine are offered to the boy's parent. However, they do not accept the food offered so long as the girl keeps her response in abeyance or refuses the offer of marriage. It is only after the pros and cons are thoroughly weighed that they arrive to a final agreement. The boy's family then offers a spade as a sign of agreement marking the beginning of the two families entering into a deeper relationship. Although unmarried as yet, they begin addressing each other's family and relatives using the appropriate term according to custom and helping out in each other's field. It is only in the next Chanyathakhu festival, that the couple gets married.

Atütü kükhu (Blowing of wind instrument)

Atütü is an indigenous wind instrument carved out of a special variety of bamboo. It is blown mainly on three occasions.

1. In the latter part of February, when heralding the advent of Nazhu festival, Atütü is blown every evening till the end of the festival from the men's dormitory.

2. It is also blown in the fields to ward off wild animals from destroying paddy fields and other plants.
3. During the head-hunting days Atütü was blown as a declaration of war against enemies and was also blown to alert villagers of eminent attack by enemies.

2. FOLK DANCE

Hitse hitse (Welcoming of the Nazhu festival)

Nazhu is one of the main annual festivals of the Pochury tribe celebrated in the month of February and lasts for 10 days. Throughout the festival, different dances are performed by all age groups and people wear their best traditional attire and exchange food, wine etc. throughout the festival. The Hitse Hitse dance, performed by womenfolk, heralds the coming of Nazhu festival. It is a combination of merry making dance moves and religious rituals.

Kuzikhwi (Old men dance)

This dance is normally performed by old men of the village. The song is accompanied by synchronized dance which is led by the chief's clan followed by the other clans. Many new songs reflecting their youth, romance and valour are composed during this time. The songs reflect their yearning of old bygone days of their youthful life.

Eza eza (My mother, my mother)

In this folk dance, the performers clap their hands as they move around in a synchronized manner. It is accompanied by singing a patriotic song about a warrior who says to his mother that he is not afraid to die in warfare and other adverse eventuality that may come his way. The song also alludes to a warrior, who returns from war victorious and gives his lady love wild flowers he plucked from the fields.

Awi kükhu nü (Dawning or cock crows)

In olden times, village folks performed this dance to wake up lazy people and those that were habitually late for cultivation works and other activities in the village. It was an attempt to alert them to wake up and go to field early with the rest of the village people. It was believed that those that ventured late to their fields, are met by spirits of still born babies who, it was believed, were seeking humans to be their wives or husbands.

Muzushukhu (Thanksgiving festival)

The Muzushukhu folk dance is performed towards the end of November soon after harvest. This is a thanksgiving festival. It is believed that the souls of those departed go to the land of the dead soon after celebrating this festival. The womenfolk, in their full traditional attires line up and dance for the departed souls. Some rituals are also performed by the village chief during this festival.

3. FOLK SONG

Ma yekhrii tha miishakwi (Dedication song to his old birth village)

Mother tongue	: Ma yisi nyu si ho
English	: We yisi, girls are coming
Mother tongue	: Ma thaghakwi liiwe ta si ho
English	: To visit our sweet birth place
Mother tongue	: Ma yekhrii liiwe ta si ho ya miiluche ta khwii
English	: To see our old village with sorrow
Mother tongue	: Gha wuzu shi zhii Ia tsi-gha ra ghaho shi zhe Ia tsi
English	: We reached Wuzu, we reached Ghaho (Hill)
Mother tongue	: Ah zhefu tha si tsi
English	: With full of courage
Mother tongue	: Chu tisu rai-Ah kiiwe si tsi
English	: Oh! Why so in angry mood
Mother tongue	: A liikhri kiita khwi a kiiwe si tsi
English	: Because of their health and smartness
Mother tongue	: Shu ye ah miicji shiizho.
English	: No one can stop them
Mother tongue	: Ya a tavi ye a zii a zigho ra a fu a khu we
English	: You there, dear ones please go and pick them up
Mother tongue	: Ya phoyisha ghra yakha ra a khri rai
English	: My beloved Phoyisha let us rise up.

Badey badey sow low-o (Folk song)

This song is sung during the feast, marking the happy occasion of cementing relationship with neighbouring villages. The song translates as

*“Be ready with your wine, as per your invitation we are here Man of the east,
man of the west, hailing from the gigantic forest
For your wine we came from the forest
With traditional attires jingling, we dance and chant before you
This is our tradition, this is our identity
The sun is setting, we bid adieu to you.”*

Rüla waye (Oh! Beautiful damsel)

This folk song is sung by women folk exalting the good qualities and beauty of women in the village. The leader of the group urges the young ladies to dine together at the girl’s dormitory (Alashie). When they gather at the Alashie, their beauty is hailed as most beautiful of all creation.

Kiishukhwi (Expressing her love through her tune to her lover)

We are the women..
But then, but then,
Without we, without we,
Can't we, can't we?
We are lovers, lovers
Our lovers are blooming like a Pochuries choice flower,
Our guys are blooming, our girls are blooming
We have come we have come,
Let's talk, let's talk,
A romantic tale, A romantic song,
The story of a wild flower,
Song of a beautiful bird,
Our lovers are like a flower
We are the girls, we are the girls, and we are the girls,
Our lovers are wonderful,
That’s my flower, that’s mine,
Bring your cups, bring your wine,
Oh! Your wine is pouring down,
Oh! This is the way of the Pochuries life
Oh! Yisi flower, yisi bird, we are the girls of yisi.

4. RITUALS

Kujeacheoye (Prayer for sunshine)

When heavy rains continue unabated for many days disrupting normal life and causing destruction, they call on the gods for sunshine. A date is fixed for the purpose and all the men folk proceed to a particular place called 'Yisi Khuyi Ni-pro'. There is a special white stone which is inserted between split pieces of stick. The stick is hoisted as they sing a song translated as "*Stop the rain and let there be sunshine.*"

Tsinnek (Rituals for rain)

'Tsünnek' means rain less or drought. When such conditions prevail, the (Apoksah, Pochury) people perform this ritual with sincerity and dedication as they depended on agriculture for their livelihood. This ritual was usually performed at a place called 'Mavezhem' where there was a big sacred stone in the stream about 6 Kms away from the village. All the unmarried boys, 15 years and above, march to the stream and collect fish and leaves. They tie a rope across their path to the sacred stone. The ritual begins by offering the fish to the sacred stone and splashing water on it. The oldest among the boys cut the rope across the path proclaiming that the rain was blocked by this rope and now it starts to rain again. On their way back they offer fishes with leaves and pour water on it in every junction. Thereafter the fish head is strung in front of the morung.

Seuchiye (Rituals for healing)

In the past when a person suffered from prolonged ailments, it was believed that the patient was cursed or possessed by evil spirits. In order to get rid of such spirits and to regain health 'Seuchiye' a ritual is performed by male relatives. The ritual is conducted on the outskirts of the village where a piglet or cock is sacrificed. A special dish is prepared out of the sacrificed animal and consumed to satisfaction but it is strictly forbidden to bring back the left over.

Küriatsei hirilia-ha (Exalting war cries)

Küriatsei is a form of exalting pronouncements made before performing folk songs, dances, tug-of-war and at the outskirts of the village. Hirilia-Ha is a song sung during war and head hunting days. When the enemy's head is brought to the village, the warrior sings this song. Many legends are told of the heroic deeds and war victories of the Pochuries.

Khaloli-küne (Rituals on Tug-of-war rope)

During Nazhu festival, every young man goes to the jungle to fetch khaloli creeper for tug-of-war rope. They bring the rope by singing melodious songs which is then kept outside of the village for the night. On the second day, young men keep guard and take care of the rope. Early the third day, the creeper is brought to the village ground and kept ready for the game. In the evening, all the youth including male and female in the village participates in tug-of-war with full vigour and great enthusiasm. In the end, the khaloli creeper is tears apart and snaps. An experienced village elder takes a close look at the way the creeper broke and reveals the fortunes of the village for the coming New Year.

RENGMA TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Aghi kuho (Spearing of the captives)

Traditionally, extension of territory and dispute over land demarcation was one cause for war to break out. During such times, if a guilty person from within the tribe was caught, he was brought to the village and kept in the Morung (known as *Azughu* and *Rensi*, in the Northern and Southern Rengma) under the watchful guard of the village youth. After prolonged negotiations and heavy penalty, he is escorted back to his village.

However, if a person from another tribe is caught alive while at war, he is kept in the Morung under heavy guard. After a few days, a general meeting is held, and a date is fixed to kill the enemy at the outskirts of the village in the presence of the villagers. On the appointed day at the appointed hour, the prisoner is brought to the appointed place. The villagers surround him, and sing the *Mejanwa* song, their spears poised at him. At the conclusion of this song, the village Chief gives a war cry and pronounces, "*liVhe, liVhe, liVhe, Pvii.chele*" and spear the enemy. The villagers also respond singing, "*O, ho,ho,ho,ho, whe,whe,whe, Pvii.chele*" .. And throws in their spears one after another.

Kaghalah Men Keya (Female youth price)

Keghalah Men Keya is the traditional practice of taking a Female Youth Price after her marriage by her age group members. During the Ngada Festival season, the unmarried youth goes out in a procession collecting the Female Youth Price from every newly married couple. The group sing songs and visit all the newly married households. Various gifts are given to the visitors as the price of one's youth. The group would relate the past story of their times spent together when she was unmarried. And the lady would give them either chicken, rice, meat or rice beer in gratitude of the good company she enjoyed during her youth days with her friends. The materials collected are brought in the Morung and they cook a meal. The chicken is given away to the old people in the village. Unless a woman pays off her Youth Price, she is not regarded as a full-fledged mother.

Amoho kedün kechüna (Purification ceremony)

Amoho Kedün is a purification ceremony performed by a household when faced with serious illness, adversities or hardships. The ritual is performed by an elderly, respectable man in the village.

On the eve of observing *Amoho Kedün*, the household keeps aside a piglet. At the breaking of dawn, the householder goes and fetches uncontaminated water from the well. As the sun rises, the elderly man comes with an assistant. He washes the mouth and limbs of the pig with the fresh water. Then holding the pig and facing east, he calls out three times, *“O spirit of the rising sun! I bring you this offer; a fine pig with white hoofs, white stripped tail, a broad nose, large ears with white stripped limbs that burrowed and scavenged the mountains and terrain. Your command we await!”* Then the spirit of the rising sun asks him to consult the spirit of the setting sun. At this, the elderly man utters the same offer to the setting sun and asks if it is enough. However, the spirit replies that in order to make the offer complete, spices like ginger, garlic and sour berries are required.

On finally getting approval from the spirits, the man takes a sharp bamboo stick and in turn, points it to the nose, neck, limb, stomach, tail, etc., and utters, *“If I stab here, it will pierce the nose, ...neck, ...limb.”* etc. Then finally pointing to the heart, he says, *“Oh! My ancestors told us to pierce here!”* then plunges the stick deep through the heart, killing the pig instantaneously. The piglet is burnt with dry thatch and cleaned thoroughly with water. The neck portion is cut and given to the ritual performer and the forelimb goes to his assistant. The remaining portion is cooked and all clansmen are invited to the grand feast.

Makeli (Traditional fire making)

In olden times when there were no matches, fire was lit using items provided by nature. It was a laborious and time consuming process. First, a piece of dry soft wood is split at one end and wedged apart placing a small stone. Fine shavings of dry bamboo are loosely bunched and placed between the wedged wood. A sizeable length of bamboo string is placed beneath the wood and swiftly drawn. This vigorous friction produces spark which transfers to the bamboo shavings. Blowing gently on it, the fire catches on. In olden days this was the only method of lighting a fire.

Tefü Kesü (Cotton Spinning)

In olden times, all the clothing worn by the old and young were made of cotton. In every family, Cotton spinning and weaving was done by the women. Women who were skilled at spinning and weaving were respected and honored in the community. During the flowering season, cotton is collected and dried in the sun while the seeds are carefully separated from the fibre, a process called Ginning. Cotton thread is made by carefully twirling the fiber with one hand and spinning the wooden spindle against the lap with the other hand. Different colored dyes were obtained from different plants. The black colored dye was obtained from the leaves of a tree called Nyitsetsü.

2. FOLK DANCES

Ngada Dance (Festival dance)

This folk dance is performed during *Ngada* festival on the 5th day. Attired in their full traditional dress, the Ngada dance is performed with chanting, yelling and giving out war cries and also accompanied with folk songs. Specialized dancers take part in this dance as it requires perfect skills to showcase different dance movements like stamping on the ground, jumping, zig-zag movements, holding and waving each other's hands with synchronizing rhythms.

A day ahead of the dance, every adult man goes to the spring well and take bath, wash clothes and sharpen their spears and daos for use during the dance procession. Young men continue singing, dancing and feasting till the next day. In the olden days, war heroes in their full attire came out to show off their achievements, status and wealth through their exotic dresses and ornaments. Only those who had taken an enemy's head could wear them. Thus, folk dances of the Rengmas are not only for entertainment but also a display of one's strength and wealth in society. The traditional attires worn by the Male and Female during the folk performances are: - **Male-** 1).The head gear (*Thyügwevü*) made of bear's hide adorned with hornbill feather signified his control over creatures on land and air. 2). the waist belt (*Tesüphi senkephin*) and loin guard adorned with cowrie shells indicated his conquest over sea creatures. 3). the casket (*Tekhi*) decorated with enemy's hair signified the enemy's head. 4). the embroidered Sash (*Kerha*) on his shoulders signified bravery and victory over his enemies. 5). Ivory armlet (*Bentse*) 6). Wrist band (*Ben kekhin*) for defence purpose 7). Shield made of animal hide (*Gida*) 8). Shin guard (*Phakejyü*) 9). Dao (*jen*) 10). Kilt decorated with cowries (*Nyakeka*) and 10. Spear (*Mi*).

Female- 1). Earing (*Tebinyen*) 2). Necklace (*Tezü*) 3). Waist belt (*Senkuran*) 4). Mekhala (*Nyakencha*) 5). Armlet (*Gie*) 6). Wristlet (*Pensen*).

Alami kelashii (Dance of joy and merry making)

Alami Kelashii, is a folk dance which is an expression of Joy and merry making. This dance is performed mostly during '*Akhu*' or '*Ngada*' (a postharvest festival), traditionally observed from the last week of November till the second week of December. The dance is performed in full traditional attire with dao, spear, embroidered sash, apron, ivory amulets, skin guards, caskets decorated with dyed goat's hair, carefully assembled necklaces and headgears decorated with hornbill feathers symbolizing their wealth and status. Different movements like stamping, jumping and moving in unison are incorporated in the dance, reflecting the strength, flexibility and smartness of the group. The dance is also accompanied with chanting of folk tune and yelling, expressing their delight, excitement and joy at their bountiful harvest.

Aghale (Victory Dance)

Aghale is a skillful and lively folk dance which is usually performed by the men folk in full traditional attire to celebrate a war victory. After returning from a victorious war, the warriors are greatly honored for their victory. The whole village is filled with joy and excitement. The enemy's head is hung in the Morung, and all the villagers gather around and dance alongside the warriors amidst feasting and merry-making. This dance is also performed during the Feast of Merit and other important festivals.

Teri nga (War Dance)

Teri Nga is usually performed by the menfolk only. After a successful head-hunting expedition, the warriors perform this dance with much chanting and giving out of war cries. This dance demonstrates war skills and battle tactics. The movement and footwork of the dancers mimic the bravery, strength and agility of the village braves while facing the enemy. This dance is also performed during festivals and during important feasts.

3. FOLK SONGS

Lokegvü lü (Harvest Song)

This song is sung after harvest, when villagers rejoice over the crops and fruits they harvested. With thankful hearts they give glory and honor to the Almighty.

*This is the day we long for,
This is the time to gather all the fruits.
Let us give thanks to our Almighty Father,
For blessing us with a bountiful harvest of rice and fruits.
Let us rejoice, our tiredness is gone,
Come friends; share the good news with our beloved villagers.*

Ntsi keshü lü (Seed Sowing Song)

This is a folk prayer-song sung while sowing seed seeking god's blessing on their crops and vegetables.

*Let there be plenty of crops and vegetables in the field.
Don't let any seed spoil without growing, without bearing fruit.
We would rather see a bearing fruit in our field.
Don't let any wild animals destroy the crops and vegetables.
Oh! The unseen Almighty Father!
We depend on you for everything.
This is our prayer.*

Lo keron lü (The Weeding Song)

This folk song is usually sung by younger ladies while weeding the fields.

*Eshe, Ketsin hi se a tsego no
Ketsin ajuü a logwa
Keshvü le nthu hi sele
Logwa lünyu ajuü hyüdyü thyü
Eshe ajuÜ no a-kenyü kon thyü
Eshe, nmhu a lo kensu shülo
Logwa lünyu rhenkelu nyule*

English translation-

*Surely, it is going to happen,
Yes, my working mates to help my mother and I.
Yes, my working mates will come to my field today,
My love, let my mother admire you.
And let my mother favor you,
Oh! Shout and sing to honor my field.
My highly regarded love.*

Tefü kethyü lü (Cotton Spinning Song)

In olden days, cotton spinning was done manually by women folk using simple tools. While engaged in the task of spinning cotton, young girls sing romantic songs, remembering their boyfriends.

*Eshe, Tsangkegwa kale
Logwa ponyu le
Logwa Lunyu zeng
Lo lomvü ketsü le
Eshe, Lükegwe thyüpe
Nzen tile
Eshe, gungü npvü njvü nyu
Khoka le zo keja le
ninyü-o a kazoo
Logwa Lünyu le
Teronyu tson sha mvü-o
Njün hon sele
Eshe nyu holo*

English translation:-

*A fine sunny day, a handsome boy with a beautiful girl
In a solitary field, singing a joyful song for you
Return home to loving father and mother, Shy to tell them
Here, come tell me again Oh! My beautiful girl
Lost away from heavenly abode
Feeling sad, my beautiful girl
Missing you dear*

Nyuhonyu kehu lü (Lullaby)

This lullaby is sung when putting their babies to sleep:

*Good night, good night, little baby,
Good night it's time to rest,
Dream of all the things you've seen all day long.
Little baby, make new memories, sweet dreams,
Fall asleep, fall asleep,
Sweet dreams, sweet dreams,
I will work for you, sweet baby.*

4. RITUALS

Awüghüghatsü ketun (Exchange of egg ritual)

Awüghüghatsü Ketün means ‘exchange of egg’ with the spirits for good yield of crops. It is a ritual performed by farmers in certain Rengma villages to please the spirits. Hen’s egg is used to perform the ritual and is usually performed in the month of June, when the paddy plants are slowly starting to grow.

Articles needed for the ritual are procured the day before and the farmers go to their respective field to perform the rites. Firstly, a hole is dug and an egg wrapped in hanna leaf is put inside the hole. A stone is used to cover the hole so that rodents and animals do not eat it up. Locally available tall grass is then cut from its stem and is being thrust at three places around the buried egg. The long leaves of the grass are then ripped off and in the process the performer chants that unwanted weeds and pests disappear along with it so that it does not destroy the standing crops. A charcoal is then tied in one of the ripped leaves. The charcoal signifies black fertile soil. The leaf of a particular species of a plant is brought home and stuck at the main entrance of the house. This signifies that the household is performing certain ritual and do not expect to entertain any visitors. Hence, Guests are not entertained during such occasions for fear of offending the spirit which would result in poor harvest at the end of the year.

Atsong ketun (Self-purification ritual)

This is one of the most important rituals performed every year for self-purification. It falls in the month of August when the crops in the field have started bearing fruit. The village announcer notifies two days before the commencement of the Day of the ritual. On this day no one is allowed to lit fire

in the fire place. Only the male members take part in the ritual. They clean and sharpen their Daos and Spears and all the implements used for various purposes in their daily activities. Both the youth and the elderly people carry out the rite. They wear new shawls, carry the implements on their shoulder and move out in a queue to a particular destination outside the village called 'Athunthun'.

While marching to the set destination no one is allowed to interact with each other. Immense Care is taken so that the implements they carry on their shoulder do not clash with other persons' implements. Such mistake would result into poor harvest of crops with empty pods.

As they reach the destination, the eldest person leading the march makes a loud cry, making sure everyone has arrived. When everyone has reached the place, the last person makes a loud cry signaling that all had come. The leader yells again and everyone puts down their implements on the ground and shake off the dust on their shawl. A moment of silence is maintained to invoke the blessing of the good spirit to bless them with good luck. After this, they return home in silent procession. As they reach home, the four edge of their shawl is taken together and cleaned with water. After which, the wife would lit the fire and start cooking.

Anenkesasha (The weeding ritual)

Anenkesasha is an important ritual performed in the month of June. During this month, paddy saplings and weeds are at its peak of growth in the fields. Weeding of unwanted grass was the daily activity of a farmer during this month.

This ritual is performed to invoke the spirit to control the excessive growth of weeds and infestation of pests on the standing crops. Before the commencement of this ritual, the whole village observes a day of genna. Thereafter, a farmer can perform this rite at his convenient time.

To perform the rite, each farmer goes to its respective field. He would carry lunch wrapped in banana leaf, and other supplies such as rice beer, ginger, meat and rice cooked in bamboo. Small pieces of cooked meat, ginger and grains of cooked rice are offered to the spirit to gain its favor. Pieces of food offering, numbering 11,10,9 respectively are laid on three leaves. Bone and lunch packet are tied on the ritual plant in order to attract pests toward it and cause least damage to the standing crops.

Aketsunkedong (Ritual for healing sickness)

'Aketsunkedong' is a popular ritual observed among the Rengmas, annually in the month of July for healing sicknesses. On the eve of 'Aketsunkedong', every male member prepares himself by cleaning and polishing his tools and weapons like daos, spears, axe, guns etc.

Before the breaking of dawn, every male member in the village carry whatever weapons they possess, put on new clean clothes and gather at the specified place before sunrise. They are forbidden to talk until the ritual is completed. The eldest man in the village leads the group in a procession, and casts out the evil spirits with his weapons, and guides the group to a particular place. The eldest amongst them solemnly observe the rising of the sun. He then lays down his weapons to the ground and the rest follow suit. This act of laying down of weapons signifies healing. After observing the necessary formalities and rituals, the eldest man pick up his weapons followed by the other members. After which, everyone proceeds back to their respective homes. On reaching their homes every member sips a cup of rice beer and sprinkles it at the racks. With this 'Aketsunkedong' comes to an end.

Avüghü za kekevü (Chick sacrifice)

Avüghü za kekevü is a ritual performed by a priest, on the tenth day following a baby's birth seeking god's blessing so that the child may live a wealthy, healthy, a long and a fulfilled life.

When the priest arrives at the house to perform the ceremony, a chick is handed to him by the child's family. After which the mother holds the baby and stands before the priest to receive his blessings.

The priest holds the chick and says,

"I am offering you this fine chick with perfect beak, wings, and legs. Accept this offering and let the child have a long and healthy life. Let the life of the child be like a huge stone and a tall tree so that people rests beneath its shadow. Let this offspring crawl like the baby crab and spider. Let its voice be like the thunder, smart and clever as the lightening. Let its harvest be like plucking the fruits of athonsen & atemo (variety of fruit) and its wealth like the flow of water in the ocean and like sands in the great desert.

If any sickness befalls the child, let the chick protect with its wings, let the chick peck the disease with its beak and may its leg scatter it."

After the blessing is pronounced, the priest calls the evil spirit away from the house saying, “*Let only the good prevail upon the child. Bad spirit, come away; I will take you to your place.*” This is how the chick sacrifice is performed to bless the newly born baby.

SANGTAM TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS & DEMONSTRATION ETC.

Meh kih külüpeheh yangthsa (Demonstration of salt processing)

Method of extraction: There are two methods of salt harvesting which are extracted from the natural springs. Firstly, channelling the water underground and depositing the salt on the wall. The second method is by digging a well and separating the salt from the water using a contraption made of bamboo straw and leaves. To produce salt cakes, six traditional earthen pots are used, locally known as alaphihare placed on the hearth in the kitchen. The salt water is boiled till the water evaporates and left with salt residue.

Types of salt: There are 3 varieties of salt- amalakpe for commercial purpose, kala for friendship and tere for specific occasions like gifts and treaties.

Rituals: Only male members are involved in the rituals of salt extraction. To begin the process, a pig is slaughtered at the source of the spring. Parts of the animal like the heart, liver and feet are skewered on bamboo spikes and placed near the spring source. As an offering, a cock is sacrificed at the spot, the process lasts for a few days and on the final day all the food is cooked with the salt water.

Hunapongpi (Traditional observing cock day)

‘Hunapongpi’ is observed in the month of August annually. It begins with an elder announcing that ‘Hunapongpi’ will be celebrated therefore, all related field works should be ceased on ‘zangtu’ (usually the 4th day). On the appointed day, parents tie a big cock to a stalk of a plant and let the children carry and play the whole day. In the evening, the same cock is cooked by their parents. Along with other delicacies, two pieces of chicken are arranged in plantain leaves for the children to enjoy. This festival is meant especially for the children and also for farmers to enjoy a day of rest from their hard labour.

Jümü yah müxingdapa (Traditional sangtam engagement)

Traditionally, among the Sangtams, marriages culminated after a series of respectful meetings and delicate negotiations. Usually, marriages were arranged between families known to each other. In the first place, the boy’s father communicates their wish to the girl’s family, for their children to marry. In response, the girl’s parents say that their daughter is not smart enough to marry

their son. At which the boy's parents reply that it is their honoured responsibility to guide her. After the girl gives her assent, a broker from the boy's family approaches her parents to discuss about the marriage dowry. After the matter is settled amicably, they are betrothed to each other. Thenceforth, the girl goes to the boy's house to work but refrains from eating meals until the broker pounds a ginger. With his permission, she starts taking her meals there – a subtle announcement that the couple is ready to take the next step. The boy's parents then take the dowry to the girl's family where the wedding date is fixed. On the wedding day, the bride's parents shower their daughter with special gifts and send her off. An elder sister accompanies her, entering the groom's house ahead of the bride and formally gives her in marriage. The groom, his parents and relatives warmly welcome the bride to her new home.

Mungmung (Preparation for mungmung festival)

The 'Mungmung' festival celebrated by the Sangtam tribe lasts for six days. The first day is called 'Jangshika', when people stop going to their fields. The second day is known as 'Singkithsa', on that day men go for hunting and set traps to catch animals for the festival feast. The third day is known as 'Musuyangtup' which means to worship the three hearth stones. The fourth day is known as 'KikhaLangpi' when the path leading to the village well is cleaned. The fifth day is known as 'Aka Singkithsa', where people go to their old field to collect food. On the sixth day the people gather the collected foodstuffs from their old fields and offer it to the spirits of the dead and also to ward off diseases and misfortunes.

Anyitsi/yongdi (Feast of merit)

In order to enhance their status in society, and earn certain privileges, wealthy Sangtams gave 'anyitsi/yongdi' (feast of merit). Beginning of the year, rich individuals inform the khel elders or the priest of their intention to give anyitsi/yongdi. His feast, usually given in the month of December, entails the feast-giver to provide adequate food, drinks and meat for the whole village. People from friendly neighbouring villages, men and women of all ages gather at the feast-giver's house to dance and sing songs in honour of him.

2. FOLK DANCE

Rothsa nyichi (War dance)

This dance is performed when the warriors prepare for battle. They sing this song as they dance.

Arise! Arise!
We shall march against the enemy
Sharpen the tools, comrades!
March against the enemy
We shall conquer the south
We shall conquer the north.

Thsahkuningnying nyingchi (Butterfly dance)

In the past men and women were not allowed to marry the one they loved, but had to settle for an arranged alliance. With the passage of time, they learned from the love shown by the butterfly to its mate. From then on, they had the freedom to marry the one they loved.

Hao (Praise toward deity in the form of songs)

This folk dance is performed during the Mungmung festival. During this festival the god of the house and the three hearth stones are honoured. All the people of the village attired in their colourful costumes gather together in the open field to sing and dance.

Jümü nyichi (Folk dance)

This dance is performed during the Mungmung festival of the Sangtams. It is a time of festivity to unwind and celebrate with feasting, dancing and singing because the harvest is completed and the granaries are full. The beauty of this dance lies in the rhythmic footsteps of the dancers synchronizing perfectly with the chants.

This dance incorporates three types of footsteps:

- a. Learning and imitating the footsteps of the crow
- b. High Jumping of the legs as compared to other forms of dance.
- c. Imitating in thumping of a Buffalo feet.

3. FOLK SONG

Lu yuthsah khidong (Hoeing song)

This song is sung by the farmers while working in the field. They sing to encourage one another and to make the task more enjoyable.

*“Hello friends! Hello friends
Like the bird’s song
Like the Cicada’s cry
We shall chant
Until the sun sets.
Until we die
Orphan friends
We shall chant this way
We shall rejoice”.*

Kuh kangtpu nengdang khi (The song for the bride)

The song for the bride is sung by her friends as they escort her to the groom’s place. The song translates as:

*“Young girl, this is emotional but
You are getting married
This is emotional, but goes happily”.*

Lang phi khidong (Foot path paving song)

The foot path leading to the field is cleared and maintained by the people. When the agricultural season is approaching and it is time to clear and clean the path, the community get together to work. They sing this song in rhythmic unison as they work.

*May the granaries be filled with grains?
May the harvest be bountiful?
May this path bring forth rich harvest?
May the farmers rejoice walking the path?
May he become a person who can offer feast of merit?*

Chida Kyüda de thsaba khi (War Song)

Our ancestors were head-hunters, sometimes they retreat and sometimes they march forward. They climbed the highest cliff and jumped over the wildest

log chanting this song: “*Ih jing dumpi, ih long dumpi*” imploring their feet to drive them swifter.

4. RITUALS

Tsoshö thsuti (Rituals invoking god's blessing)

This ritual is performed before sowing of any seeds; a hut is constructed first usually in the month of March. During this occasion, a pig, a cow or a chicken is sacrificed in the field invoking god's blessing for a bountiful harvest. This ritual is considered very important to the Sangtam people because the harvest purely depends on how well they organize and make the god's happy.

Kangzah kanglongrü ihbehba thsüti (Rituals performed to eradicate insects/rodents from the field)

This is an important ritual performed to eradicate crop eating insects and rodents from destroying the fields causing crop damage and famine. This processional ceremony is performed by men. During the processional ritual undertaken along the length and breadth of the village, the men pull the traditional water container made of bamboo and dried gourd. The members taking part in the procession visit the residence of the village chief and then proceed towards the common resting place. They sing and march slowly along the path leading to the fields, asking the insects and rodents to move back to their abode. This was done with a strong belief that it will distract the insects from invading the crops.

Akhu kih khapa yangthsa (Fetching water)

Life in the village in the olden days was not equipped with the luxury of the modern day pipeline. The villagers depended on the village pond of water which they fetched by themselves. Accordingly, during the Mungmung festival, the village priest of the village first goes to the pond and fetch water placing green leaves on his head; after which the village folk follow suit.

Jümü yangtsa külüpsa (Peace treaty)

In the olden day's wars between villages occurred frequently so negotiations were held to restore peace by nominating ten (10) persons from the warring villages. When war breaks out between villages it only brings tragedy, hardship and heartbreak. Acknowledging that only peace can stop the bloodshed our ancestors decided to initiate a peace treaty. As they did so, they

sang the song, '*Hangtu, Hangtu*' to mark the peace treaty between the two rival villages. The peace deal was cemented through feasting and drinking.

SÜMI TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS & DEMONSTRATION ETC.

Ashi kuchu (Meat eating)

In Sümi custom, to test the worth and manliness of a suitor for a marriage, the man was offered large strips of pork fat which is deliciously prepared. One who could consume substantial amount was considered a suitable son-in-law. The reason behind this unique practice of eating meat was a luxury where only the wealthy could afford regularly. Therefore, a man who could eat much implied that he was habituated to eating meat often, indicating that he hails from a wealthy family. Secondly, one who could eat well was also indicative of physical prowess. This ensured that the bride, the precious daughter of the house, was given to a strong husband who could protect her against any eventuality and also provide a comfortable life. Therefore, selection of a good husband for the daughter was like insurance.

Ayichi kuvu (Traditional community fishing)

Traditional community fishing has always been a community affair. The villagers during the past did not apply any modern-day fishing techniques since half of the area was covered with wild vegetation people learned how to use the vegetation and forest products for hunting and fishing. The traditional community fishing can be organized within a single village or with other neighbouring villages sharing a similar course of river. In preparation, a day before, all men folk go to the jungle and collect ‘ayichi’ (a poisonous and very bitter creeper plant). The reason for using this ayichi plant is because it lasts for a short period of time in water and it does not pollute the whole water body. The used of ayichi plant also added a taste to the fish thus, it is clear that the fish poison was safe for human consumption.

On fishing day, when command is made, big logs are placed across the river and all villagers start beating on their bundle of ayichi placed on the log in the flowing river. The extracts of the root affects the nervous system of the fish, thereby rendering it immobile momentarily and makes it easier for the people to catch the fish by hand. People carry a basket made of bamboo to put the fish they catch which they carry it around their torso. This method of fishing is eco-friendly and it is believed to have a positive impact on the environment by not polluting the river system. They also built a bamboo fence so that fish does not escape beyond a certain point in the flowing river.

Traditional community fishing was held for the following reasons:

- a. Re-strengthening of friendship ties
- b. For families and friends to enjoy
- c. To show the population and strength of the village
- d. To attract rain so that seeds sowed in fields grow on time

Kugha kichi tsa (Folklore of daughter and her step mother)

Once upon a time, there lived a happily married couple. While giving birth to their daughter the wife passed away. Soon after, the man took another wife who gave birth to a daughter. The two girls grew up together while the younger daughter lead a life of ease and kept away from doing any work and was given only the best portion of any food, the step mother ill- treated the elder daughter, giving her cold rotting food, letting her do all household chores, throwing on her the water she fetched from way off village well, beating her with the firewood she collected from the jungle, and was made to carry heavy loads from their field. Thus, the elder daughter lived a tortured life, recollecting this; the Sümi women have made the unfortunate experiences of the stepdaughter into narrative folk skit.

Tusu tixe (Engagement demonstration)

When a man attains a marriageable age, he looks out for a girl then he approaches his parents first and expresses his desire to marry. If the parents think that the girl is suitable, they prepare to approach her parents. A person usually a close friend is sent to the girl's parents with the proposal. If accepted, preparations for the marriage begin. The groom's parents pay the bride price in the form of domestic animals, land and other properties in the presence of the mediator. Once the bride price is settled the marriage date is fixed which is usually after the harvest.

Amikukula (Fire making)

In olden days when modern forms of igniting and making fire were not available, our forefathers had to make used of articles that nature provided. Making fire was a laborious and time-consuming process. To make fire three objects were mainly used:

- a. Akikhi - Rope made out of bamboo strips.
- b. Amilakishu - A small wooden shaft made out of a particular tree.
- c. Qhupteni - Bamboo shavings used as tinder.

The wooden shaft is placed on the ground horizontally and kept in place with one foot. The tinder is placed within the shaft and the rope is rapidly pulled from side to side to create friction. The sparks from the friction ignite the tinder to produce fire.

2. FOLK DANCE

Kipitimi aphilo kuwo (Traditional folk dance)

Folk Dance is an important form of art especially for the men folk, who takes the opportunity as a rehearsal and preparation for war and also to display their skills and bravery. This dance was originated from Chisholimi village which is about 800 years old. It is said that the dance was revealed through the spirit to a girl name Ili, daughter of Khumtsa. One day, as the father and daughter went to the jungle; a storm suddenly came and uprooted a tall tree that fell between them. Ili was taken away by the spirits, Khumtsa made all possible attempts to locate his daughter but to no avail. For days he and his wife wept and mourned inconsolably. One night their daughter appeared in a dream and told them that it was not possible for her to come back to life. However, they were told to host a dancing party in her memory. She revealed all the details of the ceremony and rituals to be conducted. On the day appointed, the spirits came in their colourful attires and danced. After their performance they lined up and headed towards the “Kuchohu” river, which translates as ‘lined up’. This river lies in the land of ‘Kilomi’ (Mudutsugho village). The people learned to follow the dance steps of the spirits and thus the Aphilo Kuwo dance originated. On such occasions, the dancers, decked in full traditional attire, dance to the tune of folk songs. There are varieties of dances led by Ammiheu (Leaders). Traditional attires worn during the dance are:

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|------------------------------|
| a. Avabo | - | Head gear made of bear's fur |
| b. Aghachomihi | - | Hornbill feathers |
| c. Amulakuxa | - | Sash made of goat's hair |
| d. Angu sakumughu | - | Decorative spear |
| e. Azuta | - | Dao |
| f. Aqhumiphi | - | Shawl |
| g. Asakhi | - | Dao box |
| h. Asaphu | - | Female's hair |
| i. Amini hu | - | Wild boar's tusk |
| j. Aukukha | - | Wristband |
| k. Akuhaghi | - | Elephant tusk (Ivory) |
| l. Azuto | - | Shield |
| m. Apukhu kukha | - | Leg cover |

n. Asholha - Apron

Totimi aphilo kuwo (Women folk dance)

In olden times, the Sümi had the knack for humouring, entertaining and amusing their chiefs, warriors and men of wealth. When a rich individual held a feast for the village, all men and women of the village surrounded the feast giver's house singing folk songs and danced. On such an occasion, it was an accepted tradition for the host to kill a big healthy Mithun (avitsu) and a healthy huge male pig (awoli) for the feast.

Shichu–shisho (Folk dance)

Rich and wealthy Sümi individuals distinguished themselves by throwing feast of merit to the entire village. Offering this feast qualified the host a special social status. This ceremonial fulfilment enabled the person to wear traditional cloth of exceptional honour. The traditional feast of merit consisted of seven round of feast and the same number of dances in one day. The dance began at sunrise and ended with the setting sun. This folk dance is also performed during Aphiküsha, Suquni and Tuluni festival.

Aghukutsu kuqo (Warriors dance)

In olden days, taking head was considered as a mark of a true warrior. When they bring their enemy's head, it is placed at the village gate where warriors surrounded the head and chanted war cries and performed warrior dance. And finally, in unison, they cursed the enemy's head to make sure that no evil omen remains in the village.

3. FOLK SONG

Ghixule (Seed sowing)

Seed sowing practice and process has been handed down from one generation to the next. An area demarcated for cultivation is cleared of trees and shrubs, it is then burnt and the soil is prepared for cultivation. While sowing, the women sing the following translated song:

*“May all lads and damsels learn to work, only then eat?
Everyone anxiously awaits harvest;
Because when it is done, men and women – Both young and old have
their baskets filled with newly harvested grain.
And look! How joyfully they carry their load, singing, as they head for
home.”*

Liphi le (Folk song)

Liphi le is a folk song that is sung when the people go back to cultivate the same field for the second time. The song invokes the spirit of the field to protect the crops from the harsh climate and other natural disasters. It also helps them to forget the long hard labour and speed up the field works.

Akikini lejoleh (Farewell song)

This is a kind of folk song which is normally sung at the end of any big festival or ceremony. This folk song is a thanksgiving as well as a farewell song. In this folk song the host or the feast giver or promoters are praised and thanked. The patrons are thanked for allowing them to participate in the grand festival. In this song prayer is made to god to bless each and every one present and to lead them wherever they go. This song is also an emotional farewell song-bidding adieu to each and every one.

Ayuküzüle (Cotton spinning song)

In olden times, Sümi people choose a particular soil which is suitable for cotton cultivation; usually women are involved in sowing cotton, harvest it and produced colourful clothes for the family. The process of spinning cotton for weaving was taught by the older women to the younger ones. While engaged in this work, women sang the Ayuküzüle which means ‘the process that leads to producing one’s own clothes.

Lejoleh (Folk song)

Sümi folk songs tell stories of their rich cultural heritage, passed down through generations. The words have profound meanings and connotations which are poetic and lyrical in nature and are usually in ballad form. Their forefathers sang a variety of songs relating to various occasions and situations, festive or otherwise. It is also sung by young folks to convey the message of love and admiration for a boy or a girl in a proverbial form and the same is reciprocated by the others. It is sung to honour and praise the village chief for his statesmanship, generosity and love for his subjects. War heroes are also

honoured with folk songs (Lejoleh) extolling their courage and bravery in the battle field. These meaningful songs are sung during engagement ceremonies and have a special significance as it is an official indication of betrothal. The singers are divided into two groups and sing responsively by turns. These songs are usually sung with three parts - soprano, alto, and bass. There are various themes for 'Lejoleh' songs such as:

- a. Songs of great warriors and hunters
- b. Song for natural beauties (Flora and Fauna)
- c. Love song (betrothal and engagement)
- d. Songs of bereavement
- e. Song for the rich and of social status
- f. Song for rulers
- g. Song for the poor
- h. Song for the victory, success, etc.

4. RITUALS

Awuphe chine (Reading of omens for the current year)

In these ceremony two young boys whose parents are both alive, catches a young unblemished cock. Another person locates a stalk, with a perfect V-shaped upper end and observes the way it is cut. The eldest member in the village then puts the fowl into a bamboo cage and is followed by the stalk cutter and then the villagers to the village outskirts and performs the ceremony.

He utters the following words, *"May there be power and strength of the soul. May this be a blessed year? May our paddy and millet yield abundantly? Let no death or injury occur amongst us. Oh! Spirit of benevolence, we offer this fowl so that our rice and meat is blessed. Oh! May it be that this fowl will show what lies in store for us."* When the fowl is released, he studies and interprets its movements and predicts the events to come.

Ghile tusho (Harvesting crop)

When the paddy crop is ripened in the field, preparations are made for the harvest. Each family goes to their own field carrying a cock which is killed as an offering for a good harvest. The cock is killed by calling all the names of the crops and prayers invoking for an abundant harvest. The cock is later cooked and consumed by the family. After the meal, arrangements are made like cleaning of the hut and its surrounding and prepare for space to keep the harvested crop. Once it is done the family begins to bring the harvested crops and store in the hut.

Ghixu chine (Paddy sowing ritual)

In olden times, there were two types of sowing; one is done by digging hole with Hango (small hoe) and putting in seeds. The other is lightly throwing seeds on the cleared field and levelling it with Akuphu (small spade). When the time approaches for sowing of seeds, a live rooster, rice beer, cooked rice and a meat is offered to the spirit for favourable rainfall and bountiful harvest. The workers sing different folksongs according to the time of the day and situations.

Aqhe kishi (Brave warrior's prance)

Sümi forefathers were head hunters and any person who has taken their enemies head were held in high esteemed and recognized as a true warrior. Aqhe Kishi is performed to re-enact the gallant acts of a brave warrior invading fortified enemy's village. The performer prances, jumps and kicks in spirited manner demonstrating his agility and skill in the art of warfare. Giving a war cry, he leaps up high over the watch tower, kills and behead the enemies by shouting victorious war cries, returns home leading other warriors. This action cannot be performed by an ordinary person but only by brave and fierce warriors.

YIMCHUNGRÜ TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS & DEMONSTRATION ETC.

Kholar yangkhi tüsho yimlukhi (Kholar sowing & harvesting)

‘Kholar’, is a major pulse crop belonging to the pea family and a major source of protein, is grown substantially by the Yimchungrü. Kholar has the advantage of staying longer period of time even after its harvest. In one calendar year, Kholar can be sown and harvested twice. Those sown in March/April are harvested in June/July and seeds sown in the month of August/September are gathered in by November/December. Using a small spade, a shallow hole is dug where 3 to 4 seeds are planted, maintaining a distance of 1 or 2 feet. Singing folk songs, weeding is done at regular intervals until the harvest. Traditionally, Yimchungrü present kholar to the wife’s family during festivals.

Shing (Ginger)

In olden days people believed that the soul/spirit of man was linked to a tiger. Any sickness was attributed to the tiger when sick or injured. In such cases a witch doctor is called to the sick person’s bedside and he will determine if the sick person’s soul is linked to a tiger by using the branch of a specific tree known as *Azan Sang*. The witch doctor has to perform a ritual to determine if the person can be cured. He takes a bunch of ginger and slices it into five pieces for a female and six for a male. He takes it to his house and the night he is expected to dream about the tiger. Early in the morning he reports about the condition of the tiger that he dreamt last night to the sick person. He reveals his secret for survival, and generally it is believed that the sick person gets healed.

Chi tongsah khi (Demonstration of Mithun sacrifice)

Mithun is coveted as a status symbol for the rich signifying a person’s great wealth. During winter festival, the wealthy, host the feast and killing mithun is an integral part of the festivity. It gives an opportunity to the host to share and display his wealth with his fellow villagers. Preparations for the festival begin with the mithun caught deep in the jungle and led to the village. Before the sacrifice, the people take the mithun round the village then it is brought back and tied to the post in front of the house of the host. Then it is brought down and killed.

Mongtsü thsükhî (Peace treaty)

The Yimchungrü upheld the principle of peacekeeping by entering into peace treaty with conflicting neighbouring villages. Amidst the head-hunting culture, misunderstandings often arose with other villages. In order to resolve the issue, a messenger is sent and he negotiates a convenient date for the two warring sides to meet. On the appointed day the two sides meet at the designated place carrying with them, rice, meat and rice beer. The parties come to an amicable solution and agree to forgive one another. They seal the treaty by licking the dao that was placed on fire. The treaty culminates with sharing the food amidst promises of maintaining peace.

Mükhünam hüt khi (Shaving of beard)

An aesthetic sense persists since olden days, it is quite interesting that the young and adult male members shaved their beard using traditional basin made from bamboo/matured dry gourd which is filled to the brim with crystal clear water as mirror and use sharp dao as razor whereby they shave the beard by looking at the water which is filled in basin.

2. FOLK DANCE

Akukkhi tsün (Victory dance)

The victory dance of the warriors of the Yimchungrü Naga is an overwhelming and awesome sight performed after successful head-hunting raids. It is a blend of mixture of artistic dance steps and harmonious folk tunes speaking of the bravery and courage of the warriors. The warrior song is sung only on three other occasions viz, post construction of morung, dedication ceremony of shields and during the peace treaty ceremonies.

Tsüngkamneo (Winter festival)

This dance is performed during the Tsüngkamneo festival considered as the most important festival of the Yimchungrü. The festival is celebrated in the month of January after the harvest. The people sing and dance thanking the almighty for a good harvest; it is also a time for forgiveness and forging new friendships with neighbouring villages.

Metümneo (Harvest festival)

Traditionally, the Yimchungrü celebrated ‘Metümneo’ (a harvest festival), for six days. While the meat is cut to consume during the festival, six pieces of the meat for the baby boy and five pieces for the baby girl are set aside in banana leaves as an offering. This popular dance performed during Metümneo, talks about newly harvested millet being pounded, brewed and dwells at length and in the joy of sharing it with good friends.

Tsün khün (Folk dance)

The song of Metümneo is accompanied by this particular dance. The Metümneo celebrated after the harvest of millet is one of the most important festivals of the Yimchungrü Naga. This festival honour’s the dead and wishes for the well-being of those yet to perish.

3. FOLK SONG

Jipü Khün (Warrior’s Song of bravery and courage)

This song is sung after the completion of morung construction. A dedication ceremony is held post construction, whereby, the morung is dedicated along with some agricultural tools meant to be used in the next cultivation. The song eulogises the bravery and courage of the great warriors of the past and present with a promise that the heads of enemies will be adorn in the morung.

Danji yimlu khün (Millet harvest song)

Millet was an important crop cultivated by our forefathers before paddy. It is considered as a special food and the person who harvests it bountifully was considered wealthy. Much attention was given to the cultivation of millet because of its early harvest and prolonged storage. A beautiful song ‘*Oh lo oh hei...oh, ho lo hai*’ is sung during the harvest. A major festival ‘Metümneo’ falls right after the millet harvest, it is cooked in a careful manner and placed it in a basket with an axe, dao and a spade during the festival time. Prayerfully, a handful of rice is kept on the hearth and rice beer is poured on the floor beside the hearth uttering the words, “*we offer it to you first in order that you may eat and drink first.*” Right after this the ashes are swept out of the hearth in a symbolic gesture of sweeping away the old and ushering in the new harvest.

Müyamberü müyampuhrü jiyuk achihkhün (Song of feast)

In olden days, showcase of one's credibility, possession, wealth and popularity and to gain higher social status, a feast is organised. Prior to the proclamation of the feast, the host has to undertake all the logical arrangement for the grand celebration. The host at the appointed time shall invite his close associates, friends, neighbours, village elders and all folks to the feast. The invitees and guests are offered the special rice beer and food followed by merry making. The gathering will enchant song acknowledging the phenomenal gesture of the host and invoke their blessing upon the host family.

Fürum shuwong (Song of Mt. Saramati)

This song speaks of the beautiful Saramati peak which stands majestically in the land of the Yimchungrü Naga. The song marvels at the luscious flora and fauna, the perennial stream and the scenic beauty of Saramati. The song also tells of the gratitude of the Yimchungrü Naga to the almighty God for the rare and precious gift of nature in the form of Saramati Mountain which is the highest peak of Nagaland.

Lünso khün (Folk song)

This folk song speak of the “Yimchungrü the brave, mighty warrior tribe, victory and triumph is its identity, lion of the east who's offspring sprout, as stars sparkling across the universe, true blood of the Naga, armour to the Naga, perch at Mt. Saramati, sing joyously, sweet as the Hornbill, sooth a million hearts, we land here to make known our unique traditions and celebrate the diverse culture of the Nagas”

4. RITUALS

Nuku phit khi (Piercing the ear)

The real essence of piercing the ear is to symbolically display the transition of a young boy to a warrior. The head of an enemy that has been brought to the village is used for young boys to learn the art of head hunting. Before the head is strung up on a post called “Mekudung” (a place where enemy head is hung), young boys are given the privilege of symbolically cutting the head to experience the brave deeds of a warrior. After that act one must get his ear pierced to mark his transition to a warrior. It is also believed that parents have to pierce their children's ear to ensure their obedience and respect to elders and parents alike.

Khalak-a-pakhhi (Rituals of cleaning and sanctification of tools)

Khalak-a-pakhhi is a ritual celebrated and conducted to cleanse farmers and warriors' tools and sanctify it for the next year. It is celebrated in the month of October, when the full moon can be seen at daylight and all crops are in full bloom. The rituals begin with a cock sacrifice; the best cock is selected for the purpose and two members of the village go and fetch water from the natural water source at mid-night, when all creatures are in complete rest. When the duo reaches the village the water pots are handed over to the priest for conducting the rituals. The priest washes the right leg of the cock and the blood is collected in a bowl of pure water and mixed with a slice of ginger and some rice beer. All the men attending the ceremony wash their right hand only. The priest then sprinkles the blood water over all the weapons and tools. Three pieces of the cooked chicken is wrapped in banana leave with three slices of ginger and placed in a bowl of water. The priest says a prayer and blows on the curry in the bowl, signifying the end of the sanctification rituals. The oldest man in the group tastes the food and drinks first before the others. All leftover food and the venue of the ritual is neatly swept, collected and dumped on the outskirts of the village.

Ani kingaün khi (Worshiping the sun)

The worship of the sun god involves an elaborate ritual which begins with the public announcement in the village that starting today and the following two days every household must prepare domestic essentials required for the feast. Thereafter every household kills a pig for the feast. The branches of a tree called 'Müktong sang' are placed on the roof of the house to hang up meat and other ritual articles. Some pieces of intestine, pork meat, and ginger wrapped together along with rice beer is tied to the 'Müktong sang' as a sign of offering to the sun god. Thereafter, the elder person calls on the sun god to grant them a nice day in order to enable them to perform their festival rituals.

Metüm khi (Wrapping the soul)

The Yimchungrü believe that a man has six souls or spirits and a woman five. Each soul signifies different meanings. The word 'Me' means spirit and 'Dum' means wrap, therefore 'Metüm khi' means to wrap the soul.

It is during the festival called 'Metümneo' that every new born child's soul is dedicated to the gods by offering and performing certain rituals. For the male child, the parents have to wrap up six pieces of meat and for the girl child five pieces of meat in green banana leaves which is shared with the neighbours

to seek blessings and prayer for the child. When this ritual is performed it is believed that the child grows up healthy and rich.

Trang trang thsün pah khi (Rituals after the festival)

The rituals called “Trang Trang thsün Pah khi” are performed mainly after the ‘Metümneo’ festival is over. It is believed that through these rituals one can predict which side of the field would produce more crops. The preparation starts with an announcement made by an elder male from the village. Every household would catch a chicken (cock) for the ritual and feast, the next day the cock is killed in preparation for the ritual. Six pieces of meat and a part of the head are wrapped in banana leaves. The ginger and rice-beer which are considered as sacred articles during the rituals are also brought together. The eldest male child of the family takes all the articles arranged at home and join the group of people set for this ritual performance. When the designated group reach the ritual site, the leader (senior) brief them about the ritual process. He climbed up a tree and cut off branches for each member. Bundles of broom stick (Trang Trang) tied together is strung up on the tree. The food that they brought is eaten together with the leader offered the biggest chicken head as a sign of respect. The rice-beer is not only meant for drinking but is poured out on the ground and the side where the rice beer flows is believed to indicate which part of the field would produce more crops. At the end of the ritual, the leader directs the group towards the village with a warning that the last person would be named as thief of the village. Though there is a warning the leader is the last person to follow the group and ensure that no one is left behind.

ZELIANG TRIBE

1. FOLK DRAMAS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

HelangKetei (Spinning of cotton)

In the past, the ZeliangNagas depended on the spinning of cotton to meet their demands for making shawls, waist belts, garments and other traditional apparels. Except for the collection of cotton balls from the fields, the womenfolk performed the entire process of spinning and weaving. After the harvest, the cotton is exposed to the scorching sunlight before ginning. The cotton is further softened by the bow and string before it is rolled into small bundles with tender care. The cotton balls are then spun into threads/yarn. The womenfolk use the threads to weave different types of cloth. Since they have to work in the field during the daytime, spinning is usually done at night. The spinning was therefore, an aura of songs and toil. The womenfolk sing songs to their spinning machine to let the cotton run smoothly so that their sleep will not be delayed by the work.

HeruiTeu (Traditional yelling/howling)

HeruiTeu is a cry given out only by the men folk on important occasions. It is believed that even the heavens open up while this event takes place. The womenfolk dance on the side encouraging the men-Folk. It is performed during the following occasions:-

- Performed by the headman at the inauguration of a new village to keep evil away.
- When a rich individual gives feast of merit.
- Before the commencement of competitive sports and games during major festivals.
- On killing of a wild animal, villagers give out this cry before entering the village.

Nrabung (Indigenous Musical Instrument)

Nrabung is an indigenous musical instrument of the ZeliangNagas resembling a modern Violin. It is one of the oldest instruments used as an accompaniment while singing. It is crafted with a hollow/cured bottle gourd and a fretless wooden neck of about 12 inches long. The Nrabung is played with a bowstring made of horse tail, the pipes have six bamboo tubes of different lengths with a flexible copper tongue with three holes that can be controlled by the fingers. It is played during merry-making in social gatherings and festivals

where men and women congregate. The boys play the instrument and sing romantic songs to the girls in the dormitory/ Morung, often the girls also reply in song. When the girls spin cotton, the boys entertain them by playing this instrument accompanied by songs.

Hegut (A Demonstration of Cultivation)

Hegut refers to a group of people who work in one another's field by rotation till all the member's fields are covered. While going about their work the owner of the field offers them delicious food. The workers sing songs in rhythm with their work, encouraging each other and also making the task more enjoyable. Boys and girls work together in the sowing season.

The Zeme practice both shifting cultivation and terrace cultivation. Their staple crops are maize, rice, Job's tears, millet, potatoes, yam, pumpkin, sweet potatoes and other vegetables. Before any agricultural work commences, the woman of the house takes some seed-grains and plants them outside her field shed saying: 'May my paddy grow up well'. This initiatory ritual is performed to help the seed-grain to grow abundantly. No agricultural work begins before this ritual.

2. FOLK DANCES

Herielim (Hornbill Dance)

Herie Lim is possibly the most popular dance of the Zeliang Nagas. It is a dance in tribute to the majestic Hornbill bird. It attempts to capture the movements and steps of the bird as the dancers dance like the flight of a Hornbill. It is performed by four male dancers and four female dancers. The dance is accompanied by a band of singers and a drummer and cymbalist. The song of the dance *Ingaumerai* invites the young boys and girls to be dressed in their best attires and costumes and dance like the Hornbill which hover and circle round the canopy of the high trees. It is said that in ancient times, a man transformed himself into a hornbill bird. Therefore, this dance is a tribute to the transformation. Performed on important occasions like *Mileinyi* and *Hegafestivals*, it attempts to capture the dignified movements of the hornbill and depicts through it the admiration and respect it commands.

Hecaliem (Python Dance)

After closely observing the graceful movements and magnificent colors of the python, the elders created this dance. Attired in their traditional

best, young boys and girls perform this dance on special occasions like *Hega* and *Hwakpo* festivals. They re-enact the movements of the python, drawing the onlooker's attention with its magical charm. The young and old support the dancers by singing on the sidelines.

Hekaliem (Fish dance)

The Heka Lim, meaning the 'Fish Dance' attempts to capture the nature and movement of fishes during its hatching season. This is the only time we see the school of fishes swim up to the surface of water in huge numbers and moves in synchrony, indeed! A sight of beauty. This dance is performed during the inauguration of a new village or on particular religious occasions and festivals. Young women recreate the graceful movements of fishes swimming gently in swift flowing rivers, giving thanks to god for his wondrous creations and also honoring the founders of the new village. Young boys and girls also stand on the side and dance likewise.

Hegiliem (Star dance)

On full moon nights, dressed in their ceremonial fineries the young and old dance under the night sky as a form of worship and praise to God for his love and care, seeking his continued presence and blessings. The dancers imagine themselves as star lighting up the night sky, emitting rays of light spreading joy and love to those around them.

Ting geunelim (Honey Bee Dance)

Tinggeunelim means the dance of the honeybees. With gay abandon and exuberance the honeybees leave their combs and play around the beehive during the day. Similarly the free spirited youngsters, attired in their traditional best enthusiastically dance in celebration of their youth. As the queen bee moves out of the old hive in search of a new place, the colony of worker bees show great loyalty and commitment in protecting its queen. This dance imitates the protective nature of the worker bees.

This dance has two interpretations- in the first the queen bee is likened to a beautiful lady who the drones or men are not attracted to. The queen bee would sadly turn back and fly away aimlessly. In the second interpretation, the man wants to marry a girl whose parents wanted land and ornaments in lieu of the girl. The man came with silver coins but the girl refused his proposal. He was even willing to pay six Mithuns (Gaur) as bride price, implying that he was ready to sacrifice whatever it took for the sake of love.

3. FOLK SONGS

Tintienlui (Seed Sowing song)

This song is sung during the sowing of paddy seeds, which is a very important season for the cultivators. Young boys and girls of similar age-group from different clans, go and work in each other's field. Traditionally, this was how they met- toiling the fields together, getting to know each other's personalities and usually end up choosing a life partner. During the sowing season, young boys in a row dig up holes on the ground for the girl they fancy, and the girls follow behind systematically popping in the seeds, singing along as they work.

Helimleu (Dance song)

Helim Leu is a folk song which is accompanied by a folk dance. It is performed in groups by women as well as men. This dance song is performed in a synchronized manner depending on the type of dance and performed in religious occasions and festivals.

The Zeliangs use various indigenous musical instruments like Nrabung, Nsum (drum), Ntoi (cymbals) and Ntiam as an accompaniment to their folk songs and folk dances.

Heneileu (war song)

Heneileu is a war song which is sung only by the menfolk. It is sung in the Morung during festivals and other occasions. This war song signifies and tells the stories of patriotic ancestors during the head hunting days. It also signifies the stories of bravery, power, courage and strength.

Hegutleu (Agricultural/work songs)

Hegutleu is an agricultural folk song sung at the time of sowing or harvesting/ threshing of paddy in the Jhum fields. Work songs plays a very important role in the Farmer's life. The villagers usually gather to form a group of about 30-40. It may be a group of elderly women/men or youths. This song is sung during such operation or mass work to encourage and motivate the menfolk/womenfolk to work harder and better and to complete their task in their best way they can with unity. This song as such awakes the team spirit of the weary and tired workers, and enlightens them.

4. RITUALS

Tingkummelei (A ritual to invoke blessings)

This ritual is performed by the Tingkupui/priest in the beginning of the New Year to invoke blessings for the yearlong activities. A Male pig is usually chosen as a sacrificial animal. The slaughtered meat of the pig is distributed equally to the entire household while only the heart of the pig is used to perform the ritual by the priest. The priest would then invoke blessings for the land, the people and the animals of the village.

Hapnei (Death ritual)

This ritual is performed on the death of the first person from the village in the beginning of the year so that death will not recur among the villagers throughout the year. At death, adults are bathed, clothed in their best and buried with the rituals performed by the Tingkupeu. A man is buried with a spear and a dao.

Women are buried with a dao, a basket, an axe and carefully wrapped seed grains. All those who meet with apotia deaths are buried beyond the village gate. A genna day is observed after every apotia death, so that it will not recur.

Hekak (A ritual of remembrance)

Hekak is a ritual of remembrance for the deceased, usually observed on the 31st of December before the onset of New Year. It is performed by the members of the bereaved family. The members of the family do not cut their hair or groom themselves for an entire year. They also refrain from singing songs. In a final ceremony of remembrance, a pig is killed, cooked and ate in remembrance of the dead. On the last day of the one year following their family members' death, the relatives finally cut their hair and groom themselves to participate in communal events.

Mitik (Agricultural ritual)

Mitik is an agricultural ritual performed around the months of August-September after the paddy has sprouted. It is performed with a hen that is completely black in color, kept aside by all families along with a stalk of paddy. It is performed at the water source used for drinking water. These sacrifices are made to ask for blessings, good health and prevention of bad harvest. The person performing the ritual declares: 'May my paddy bear

abundant grain'. After this proclamation, the performer plants the paddy and comes back home, kills and cooks the hen, and all the members eat it together. In this ritual, if the hen crosses its right leg over the left in death, it is considered a good omen. The hen sacrifice builds a close relationship between man and spirit.

Nlau (Birth ritual)

After the birth of a child, it is followed by the naming ceremony which is held after five days. On the naming ceremony, the parents offer thanks to the god of fertility with a ritual called Nlau. A fowl is sacrificed after which blessings are pronounced upon the child to grow up healthy and obedient. The meat of the sacrificed animal is to be eaten only by the mother. After the woman has given birth, she is not allowed to lie on the bed. A bed is made for her on the floor with dry matting and bed cloths. She sleeps there with her baby until the Nlau ritual is performed for the child. The Baby naming ceremony is a ceremony only for the family. The child maybe named by its mother, father, aunt or uncle. While choosing names, people avoid the names of those who died unnatural deaths.