

CHAPTER 2
LAND AND PEOPLE

2.1 Maps

Map of Nagaland in India



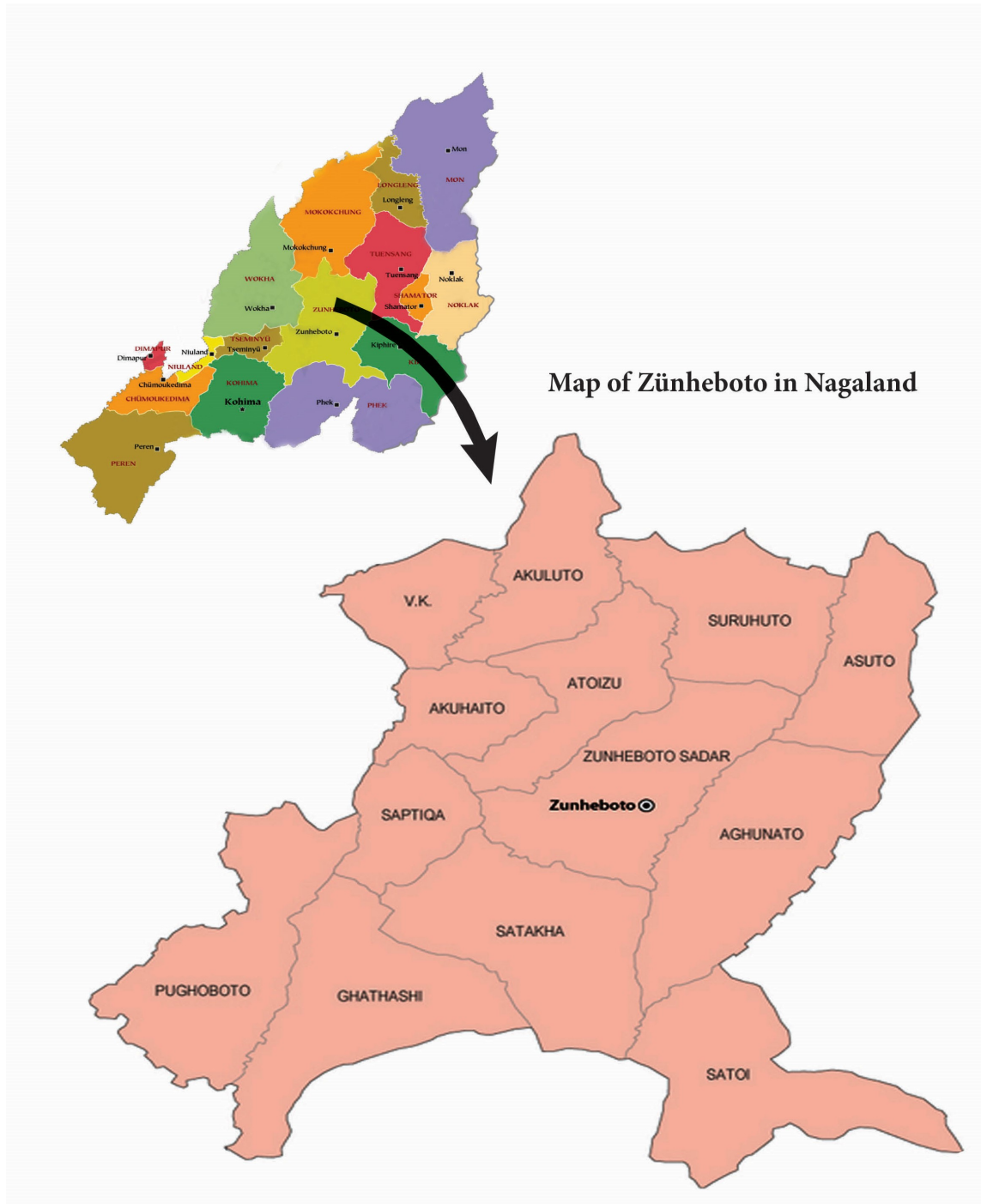
Source: www.freeworldmaps.net

Map of Nagaland



Source: www.burningcompass.com

Map of Zünheboto



Source: www.mapsofindia.com

Map of Assam in India



Source: www.alamy.com

Map of Margherita Sub-Division in Assam



Margherita Sub-division in Tinsukia district of Assam

Location of Sümi Villages in Tinsukia District



Source: Google Maps

2.2. INTRODUCTION TO THE NAGAS

Nagaland which became the 16th State of India on 1st December 1963 is located in the North Eastern part of India. It covers an area of 16,579 square Kilometres and is bounded by Assam in the West, Arunachal Pradesh in the North, Manipur in the South and Myanmar in the East. It is land locked but it enjoys rich flora and fauna. Kohima is the capital of Nagaland and for administrative purpose, Nagaland is divided into 16 Districts each headed by a Deputy Commissioner. Nagaland has its own Legislative Assembly and Council of Ministers and a Governor. There are 16 major tribes and a number of sub tribes within the state of Nagaland. Each of these tribes has their own distinct dialect and rich culture and traditions. Naga society is patriarchal in nature and the descent is always traced from the Father's side.

Nagaland lies between 25°6' – 27°4' North latitude and 93°20' to 95°15' E longitude. The whole of the state is hilly with the capital Kohima standing at 4800 feet above sea level. Dimapur district located near the Assam border is a plain area. Nagaland is covered by three parallel mountain ranges namely the Patkai, Naga and Barrail running from North-East to South-West. The altitude ranges between 194 metres to 3048 metres with the highest mountain peak Mt. Saramati standing at the height of 12,598 feet in the Patkai mountain range in Kiphire district followed by Mt. Japfu (9800 feet) in Kohima district.

The Nagas are Tibeto-Burman speaking people of Mongoloid race settled in the North Eastern State of India and are composed of many tribes settled in the state of Nagaland, the hilly tracts of Manipur, the North Cachar and Mikhir Hills as well as Lakhimpur, Sibsagar and Nagaon districts of Assam, North Eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh and Somra tracts and its contiguous areas of North West Myanmar.⁷ This fragmentation occurred when British left the Nagas in the hands of the Indians when India was granted freedom from the British rule on 15th August 1947. The British had brought the Nagas under their administration by making it a part of Assam and North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). It became a district under Assam and was called the Naga Hills and Tuensang Area.

⁷ Charles Chasie. (2000), The Naga Imbroglia (A Personal Perspective), Kohima: Standard Printers and Publishers, Page 21.

Prior to the coming of the British, for thousands of years, the Nagas remained an isolated group of people with no contact with the outside world. They lived as free people engaged in inter-village feuds. For them, the clan and village were very important, so much that, there were no such thing as inter-tribal wars but it was always inter-village wars and they prided themselves in taking heads of their enemies. What may look like an inter-tribal war was usually war that took place between two different tribes belonging to two warring villages sharing a boundary. The reason for the widespread practise of headhunting can be attributed to both social and religious. Socially a man proved his 'Manhood' by taking an enemy's head and he would be recognised not only as a brave warrior but also it made him eligible to wear certain shawls and also the most eligible in the marriage market. Religious significance was attributed to the belief that by taking an enemy's head, the village would have a bountiful harvest and prosperity. Headhunting was also one reason they were feared by outsiders. Kibangwar Jamir mentions that "Before the advent of the British, the foothill plains of the Naga country all along its border with India and Burma were full of impregnable forests, thorny plants and nettles, poisonous snakes and blood sucking leeches and various carnivorous animals. Above these foothill forests, there were steep slopes and rocky cliffs. These were the natural barriers between the Nagas and their neighbouring countries. And as such, the invaders had never tried to enter the Naga country."⁸ Due to this isolation not only from the outsiders but also among themselves, the Nagas did not have a common language or a common name. The reason being each Naga tribe had their distinct dialect and even within one tribe, there were numerous sub dialects and in many cases it was impossible to understand each other though they may belong to the same tribe. The name 'Naga' itself is shrouded in mystery with many theories surrounding its origin. But it is certain that this name was not a creation of the Naga people but by the outsiders as can be gleaned by various theories. The earliest reference to the word 'Naga' is said to have been made by Claudius Ptolemy in 150 AD in his Geographia in which he referred to the Naga area as 'The Realm of the Naked'.⁹ The Ahoms who were the closest neighbour of the Nagas are believed to have referred to the Nagas as '*Noga*' meaning 'Naked' the Burmese are believed to have referred to these group of people as '*Noka*' meaning 'people with perforated ears' and it is assumed that when the British came to this part of the world they might have heard these two names and while they

⁸ Kibangwar Jamir. (2016), Preface to The Nagas with Three Great Nations.

⁹ V K Nuh. (2006), 165 Years History of Naga Baptist Churches, Kohima: MEK Computer. Page 16

might not have come across completely naked people, they sure must have encountered men with holes in their ears decorated with ornaments. The Kacharis are believed to have referred to the Hill people as '*Nahungra*' meaning 'Warrior' or 'fighter'. While V Elwin was of the view that the term 'Naga' must have come from the word '*Nok*' or people. In the Ao Naga dialect, the word '*Nok*' refers to machete, therefore some people are of the view that the word 'Naga' must have been derived from the word '*No-Ka*' meaning a man with a machete. The Burmese word '*Noka*' and its meaning seems to have some similarity with the elderly Khuzhami people who is believed to have referred to themselves as '*Nigyami*' meaning people who cut their ears. The Konyaks are also believed to have referred to themselves as '*Na-Kha*' literally translated as 'ear-hole' and it is believed to mean people with holes in their ears.¹⁰

The British Administrator J P Mills opined that 'Naga' is a corruption of the Assamese word '*Nanga*' which is pronounced as Noga meaning Mountaineer. He believes that this is further derived from the Sanskrit word '*Nog*' meaning 'a mountain' or 'inaccessible'. While J H Hutton was of the view that 'Naga' was derived from the Hindustani word 'Nanga' meaning 'Naked'. It is said that the Burmese theory is supported by the historical background of a group of people having holes in their ears at one time leaving Chiang Mai area in Thailand and having gone towards Burma in the remote past. These people were known as '*Nakari*' which in Thai means 'people with holes in their ears'. Ultimately, when this group of people passed through Burma, they were known as '*Na Ka*' meaning people with pierced ears.¹¹

Chandrika Singh wrote "In the writings of Ptolemy, the Greek Writer, we find that Ptolemy had heard the word 'Noglok' speaking among the Hindus which means the land of the naked people. W C Smith viewed that the root word of 'Naga' which is derived from the word '*Nok*' meaning people. It was the term '*Nok*' which first appeared as 'Noga' and then became 'Naga'. E A Gait also agrees to the same view and takes '*Nok*' as the original term of the Naga. Captain Butler and Hutton related the term Naga to the Hindi word '*Nanga*' meaning 'Naked' or the Bengali word '*Nangta*' which also means 'Naked'. The term 'Naga' in Cachari dialect means a

¹⁰ From Darkness to Light (A publication of the Nagaland Baptist Churches Council on the occasion of the celebration of 125 years of Christianity in Nagaland) 1997, page 4.

¹¹ Murkot Ramunny, The World of Nagas, 1988, page 4-33

young man and hence a warrior. Elwin traces the term 'Naga' from the word 'Nok' (people) which is similar in Tibeto-Burman languages. Owen and Rowney are of the view that the word 'Naga' is more related to the Sanskrit word 'Snake'. But this view is objected by the Naga people on the ground that they had never been snake worshippers. A Z Phizo, the most popular Naga leader maintained that the Burmese word 'Naka' was the origin of the word 'Naga'.¹²

Rev. V K Nuh, the former Secretary of Nagaland Baptist Churches Council refers to the view of Mowu Gwizan according to which the word 'Naga' is derived from the Chinese word '*Natcha*' because the Chinese called the Nagas as '*Natcharemi*' meaning Naga people.¹³ Dr S K Chatterjee and B S Guha were of the view that the Nagas of North East India belong to the Kiratas of India who were Indo-Mongoloid. But Professor Gangmumei and Professor Horam of Manipur University refuted this claim on the ground that the Nagas had never identified with the Indian population traditionally.¹⁴

However, till today there has been no conclusive theory about the origin of the word 'Naga'. The reason behind this inconclusiveness is due to the Nagas not possessing a written record about their past. The Nagas like other tribals are an oral society dependent on the knowledge about their history from the oral tradition that has been passed on through the ages from one generation to the next. It is said that when the Nagas first came to settle at their present location, it was a no man's land covered with thick forests. They had to clear up these wild jungles and shrubs and fight against the wild animals and overcome all kinds of natural hindrances in order to make their home.¹⁵

George A Grierson was of the view that the Nagas were among those who came down through Tibet to the Brahmaputra valley and the valleys of Chindwin, Irrawady, Salwin, Mekong, etc but were forced out of there by successive Tibeto-Chinese invaders and driven into the mountains

¹² Singh, Chandrika (2004), *Naga Politics: A Critical Account*, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, page 4.

¹³ Nuh, V K (2006), *165 Years of Naga Baptist Churches*, Kohima: MEK Computers, page 17.

¹⁴ Dozo, Dr. Rev. Phuyevi (2011), *The Nagas: A Valid reason to live together with a vision*, Dimapur: SP Printers, page 27.

¹⁵ Jamir, Kibangwar (2016) *The Nagas with the Three Great Nations*, Dimapur: Famous Print, page 4.

where they eventually settled down.¹⁶ Aosenba mentions that the Nagas were subjected to at least three immigrations of races from different directions. The first wave of migrants were the Maos, Angamis, Semas, Rengmas, Rongmei and Lothas who moved from the South through the mountain fringes touching the valley of Manipur to the North, reached Mao area and settled at Kekruma, then moved North-Eastward to Kezakenoma where they spread to different areas. The second wave of immigrants comprised the Aos, Changs, Khiamnungans, Sangtams, Yimchungers and Tangkhuls. This group is believed to have migrated from Thangdt near Chindwin River in Burma by a different route to the present hills. The third group of immigrants were the Konyak Nagas who came to their present settlement from the North-East of Burma and trace their origin to Burma.¹⁷

The tracing of the origin of the Sema, Lotha, and Angami to the Kezami village of Khezakenoma village in Chakesang area surrounds the legendary story of a magical stone slab. It is believed that three brothers lived with their old parents at Khezakenoma and everyday they would spread paddy to dry on the stone slab and at the end of the day when the time to collect the paddy came, it would double up. This was because the stone slab was magical and had a spirit. The three sons used to take turns to dry paddy on this magical stone slab but one day they quarrelled bitterly about whose turn it was to dry paddy on the stone. Their parents fearing bloodshed performed a ritual by breaking eggs on the stone and covered it with brushwood, laid faggots about it and set the stone on fire. As a result of this, the stone slab burst with a crack like thunder and the spirit left in a cloud of smoke and departed. It is believed that the three sons separated and became the ancestors of Angami, Lotha and Sema tribes. While from the parents who remained at Khezakeno descended the seven Kezami villages.¹⁸

2.3. ORIGIN OF THE SÜMI NAGA

Amongst the various tribes of Nagaland, the Sümi Naga is one of the major tribe with the second largest population inhabiting the districts of Zunheboto, Niuland and Dimapur and

¹⁶ Grierson, A George (1847), Linguistic Survey of India, Vol 1, Part 1, Tibeto Burman Family, Calcutta. Page 42.

¹⁷ Aosenba (2016), The Naga Resistance Movement Prospect of Peace and Armed Conflict, New Delhi: Astral International Pvt Ltd, page 5-6

¹⁸ J H Hutton quoted by V K Nuh in 'The Origin of Naga' (2015), Kohima: Vision Press, page (v)

concentrations in almost all the districts of Nagaland. In the past they were called “Sema” but it was changed to “Sümi” by a resolution of the Sümi Hoho, the apex body of the Sümis and subsequently approved and officially adopted by the Government of Nagaland on 13th September 1994. The language spoken by them is Sümi and so the tribe is known by the name of their language.

Zunheboto is the district headquarter and the district lies between 26°01’N 94° 31’E Latitude and 26.017°N 94.517°E Longitude¹⁹. It is located 150 km away from the state capital Kohima and the district covers an area of 1255 sq.km. The district is very hilly and the hills varies from 1000 to 2500 meters. The group of Sümi called the Western Sümi inhabiting the district of Dimapur lives in the plain areas while those Sümi in Eastern Nagaland in Kiphire district also lives in Hilly terrain. Zunheboto district has six sub-divisions namely Akuluto, Aghunato, Satakha, Atoizü, Süruhuto and Pughoboto.

Zunheboto district occupies the central part of Nagaland and is bounded by the districts of Tuensang on the East, Wokha in the West, Mokokchung on the North and Phek in the South. while the Sümis living in the Dimapur district shares their boundaries with Assam.

When it comes to the origin and migration of the Sümi to their present location, there are lots of variations and versions which have created a lot of problems leading to verbal wars in local dailies too. The reason behind this kind of fiascos is due to the fact that like other tribal and indigenous people of the world, the Sümi doesn’t have any written record and is completely dependent on oral history to trace their history. Since generations have been transmitting such knowledge orally and in some cases due to gaps arising out of interventions as well as generational gaps, many problems have been and is being encountered especially when it comes to the migration theory of the Sümi people. In order to avoid escalations of issues between different Sümi villages, the Sümi Hoho, the apex body of the Sümi people brought out a book on the Sümi migration which has tried to systematically document the Sümi migration to a certain extent.

¹⁹ Government of India MSME Brief Industrial Report of Zunheboto District, Nagaland State

According to oral history, it is believed that the Nagas had come from Samsok in Burma and then arrived at Maikhel. And from Maikhel they moved in three different routes, one group having taken the Khezakeno route. The Sümis, the Angamis and the Chakesangs came through the same route and it is believed that they were from the same family. Sümi in the Chakesang language stands for “the third one” and in Angami language it is referred to as “*Semia*” which also stands for “the third one”. Among the three of them, it is believed that Sümi was the third and the youngest. But they weren’t born at Khezakeno.

According to the legend Khephio is believed to be the grandfather of the Sümis. While traveling from place to place in search of fertile lands, his wife gave birth to a baby son under the shade of a big tree. Khephiu named his son “*Süpu*”. The term “*Sü*” stands for “tree” and “*Pu*” stands for “father”, thus he named his son as “Man of Tree”. Another well-nigh Sümi narrative pertaining to nomenclature “Sümi” is that “Süpu” is the eldest son of Khepiu who is believed to be the patriarch of Naga tribes. “Süpu” is a combination of two words “Sü” (Asü) meaning “tree” and “Pu” (Apu) meaning “Son”. Thus, the name “Sümi” is a combination of two words “Sü” meaning “tree” and “Mi” meaning “people”, thus, rendering the connotation “people of tree”. The key ground for slight variation in these two narratives is the heteronym “Pu” which is a condensed version of the word “Apu”. In Sümi both son and father are spelled “Apu”, however pronounced with different tones. For son it is low tone “Àpù” but for father it ends in high tone “Àpú”. Irrespective of this slight variation in narratives both words are directed towards the lineage of Sümi Naga.

The forefathers of most of the Naga tribes lived at Khezhakeno. A legendary story about the magical stone which is still there at Khezhakeno is told with slight variations by different tribes. According to oral tradition, there was a man who lived at Khezhakeno with three sons. While he was still young and strong, he married off the two older sons but before he could marry off the younger son, he was already on his dead bed. Therefore, he told his two older sons that since he couldn’t marry off the younger son, the magical stone which had the ability to double the paddy was to be given to the younger son and then the father passed away. The youngest son used to live with his old mother. In spite of what was told by the Father, the wives of the older sons never

gave a chance to the youngest brother to dry paddy on the magical stone. Out of anger, the youngest son would gather the hay and akini teni and stack it up at home. One day he placed all these on the magical stone and covered it completely and set it on fire. While the magical stone was being burnt, from the flames something that looked like a rooster came out and flew down the Yeti river. The mother told her youngest son that his blessings had flown down the Yeti river so to follow it and when he found the spirit it had turned into a stone and taking some wild leaves he beat on the stone and it would walk. While on the way, he met some people so he turned towards them to speak to them and when he turned back and beat the stone to make it walk, it stopped and when he checked he saw that the stone had taken root. To this, he concluded that it was a sign for him to set up a village here. Therefore he established a village at this spot and called it Ghathusami. This is the place where Chisho also used to prepare a spot for attacking his enemies and sleep here that is why it was also called Chishozu by the Sümi while the Angamis call this place Chesezu. The Lazami legendary story about migration is similar and connected with the legendary magical stone story. In Lazami version, the youngest son is called Lozu and the slight variation here is that Lozu is said to have gathered the hay with the help of his sister while in the other version no mention is made of a sister. When Lozu set the magical stone on fire, it is said that the whole world became dark but he saw the spirit leaving and decided to chase it. He was told that the real spirit of the magical stone would turn into a stone so he should cut the *Amtsusuni* leaves and beat on the stone, if it is the spirit of the stone it would surely move but while walking with the stone he was asked not to talk to anyone. After finding the stone he beat it with the leaves and truly the stone started walking but on the way he met three people and forgetting the advice given to him, he spoke to them and when he turned towards the stone, he found that it had rooted itself deeply into the ground. He didn't want to leave the stone and so stayed there for some time and the place where he cultivated was called Lozu luqa. This must be the same place at Chesezu where the Sümi tu or Sümi stone is found²⁰.

The other group from Khezhakeno who is believed to have left before the magical stone fire incident were that of Igha group. Ghathu, Vethu, Igha, Hebo, Chisho and Chishi were brothers who lived at Khezakeno with their father Holo and mother Hili. Before they set out to set up

²⁰ Sümi Phuthekuwo Xulhe (2021) , KP Printing Press, Dimapur, Page 30-31

their village, their father Holo told his sons to sing “*Ishe, Holo, Hoiye, Hiyelo, Hili.....Lino, Zulo Ishe Zulo Ho...*” whenever they sang. This was because Holo wanted the future generations to know about them – i.e. Holo and Hili (husband and wife). As a result in all the folk songs, these lines are sung even to this day. Having heard that Ghatu and Vethu were about to migrate to other places, Igha also sought the permission of his father Holo to establish his own village. His request was granted with a blessing. Holo said to Igha “I have no other heirloom to give you, but I will bless you as you establish your own village”. His father had arranged a fetish stone, a white rooster and three pieces of thong, a Rhus wood and the wool bamboos. The stone was carried with a wild leaf called “*ayephani*” as carrying strap. The fetish stone and rooster were meant to indicate a place where he was to establish. He was advised not to break his journey till the stone fell off the strap and the rooster crowed. On the way Igha and his group came across two villages – Cheswezu and Thenezu established by Ghatu and Vethu respectively but they didn’t stop here. Finally when they reached the present village, the fetish stone fell and the cock crowed. The significance of the fetish stone was that it was used for seeking omen on defeat or victory in war, to show signs of prosperity or adversity in the village, and to know success or failure in hunting. The significance of the white rooster is that it signified honesty and chastity of the people and a courageous and benevolent spirit.

The first group to migrate from Khezhakeno must be the Igha group, followed by the Lozu group and the third the Hebo, Chisho and Chishi group.²¹ According to oral history Hebo, Chisho, and Chishi also took the same route as Igha via Vethukusami (Thenezumi) and Ghathukusami (Cheswezu). There is a consistent story that tells that as the group of Hebo, Chisho and Chishi came to a rugged cliff, the fetish stone fell off the carrier supposedly indicating their place of settlement. That cliff is known as “Aghungu Tuxu”. Since the fetish stone fell at this place, they had to settle here but since it was too steep, they moved further eastward and found that Ighanumi was already a settled village²². Therefore they didn’t settle here and moved here and there before finally settling at the present location.

²¹ Ibid. Page 32

²² *SABAK Xulhe* (Sümi Christian Centenary), 2004, Page 9

The fourth group of Sümi who migrated from Khezhakeno are those who migrated to Kizari, Khuzami, Suthozu, Ahephu, Kuchokhune, Sohemi, Mutsale and Ketsapo.

The fifth Sümi group also called the Tuku group are those who migrated to Mutsale, Sukumvo (Pighiva), Soshu Ghoki (between Kivikhu and Vishepu), Kire (Ghokhuvi), Yetshumi (Yangphire), Khughu (Pighiva), Satami. From Satami, the Sümi migrated to Kiphire, Tuensang, Satoi and Aghunato area.

Most of the Sümi villages of today migrated from the first Sümi villages namely Ighanumi, Laza Fuyeqa, Hebolimi, Chisholimi, Chishilimi, Hephonumi (Iphonumi).

Like the other Naga tribes, the Sümis also base their history on the oral source which has long been passed on from one generation to the next. In the foregone days, the *Morungs* or the *Apuki/Iliki* as it was known in the Sümi language were the venues where such interactions took place. These *Morungs* were the cultural centres of the Sümis as the elements of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage were prominently displayed in such settings.

The tangible cultural heritage of the Sümi are composed of the colourful traditional clothes, ornaments, crafts like woodcarving, weaving, stone carving, basketry, utensils, pottery, agricultural tools and implements, traditional architecture, ritual practices like stone pulling, musical instruments, art of cutting trees, cuisine, traditional games and sports, weaponry, etc. Among the tangible cultural heritage of the Sümi, the *Morung* or the *Apuki/Iliki* played a very prominent role in displaying the inter-connectedness as well as the inter-dependence of the tangible on the intangible and *vice versa*. Young boys and girls were admitted into their respective *Morung* after attaining puberty and while living in the *Apuki/Iliki*, they go through various ranks till their adulthood. Women were forbidden to enter the *Apuki* and men were forbidden to enter the *Iliki*. As a result of this, the elderly women well versed in the art of weaving, folk song, folk dance, social skills, manners, etc teaches the young maidens in the *Iliki* and in the same way elderly men well versed in the art of handicrafts, warfare, sports and oral tradition imparted such knowledge to the young men. The *Apuki* also served as meeting halls,

guest house, guard house of the village and also an armoury for the village. In spite of having played such an important role, with the arrival of outsiders like the British colonisers, American Missionaries and the Indian Army operation, such centres of learning slowly lost its central position and at present in the Sümi community, there is no trace of *Apuki/Iliki* and rarely does it get mentioned in all the deliberations of the past except for minuscule references here and there. The intangible cultural heritage of the Sümi on the other hand are composed of oral traditions (folktales, legends, proverbs, sayings and taboos on marriage, women, nature, men, war), myths, folk poetry, knowledge of performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts. Language is also a very important component which has been carrying the intangible cultural heritage from one generation to the other and with the coming of the British administrators and the Western Christian Missionaries, the Sümi saw their language in the written form for the first time.

To assume that without the encounters with the people from the outside world, the Sümi tradition and culture would have been preserved in its entirety and the oral history would have remained intact as it was in our forefathers' days would be a utopia. But it is also without a doubt that such encounters though had positive aspects to its credit also contributed a great deal towards the disappearance of many cultural practices of the Sümi.

2.4. THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION AND ITS IMPACT

Until the mid 19th century, the Nagas in general were unadulterated by any outside influence as they were very proud and so remained isolated. It was only in 1832 that the Nagas came into direct contact with the British when they came on an expedition to survey the hills. R R Shimray points out that it was only at the show of gun and might that their pride was brought down but that was after inflicting losses to the lives of the British soldiers.²³ The British spent the years from 1832-1850 on expedition across the Naga Hills and they started their non intervention policy from 1851 which lasted till 1865. But they had to abandon this policy due to the incessant attack of the Nagas on the neighbouring villages and even on the British.

²³ Quoted by Inato Yekheto Shikhu, *A Rediscovery and Rebuilding of Naga Cultural Values* (Regency Publication, New Delhi), p 45

From 1866 onwards on the pretext of ‘civilizing’ the Nagas, they annexed the Naga Hills. After this, the Naga Hills was divided into two – British Subject Nagas and Free Nagas. Among the British Subject Nagas the Sümis were put under three groups:

1. Kohima Elaka – villages under Pughoboto area and Satakha area, Shoixe, Kiyekhu, Zungti, Xukhepu.
2. Mokokchung Elaka – from Yemishe, Sukhalu, Sheyipu to Tichiphami down to Mukhami
3. Western Sümi villages²⁴

The Sümi of Eastern region went under the Free Nagas group. With the division of the Sümis into different regions, there arose differences in the long run. The British brought about many changes like the introduction of Dobashis who were given the judicial right along with the Village Chief to settle the disputes in the village customarily but the Deputy Commissioner and his assistants always interfered which resulted in the overlapping of powers. This ultimately led to the destruction of the traditional system of administering the village. This is just one instance of the destruction of the Sümi cultural practices.

2.5 THE COMING OF THE AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSIONARIES AND ITS IMPACT

Rev C D King was the first Missionary to come to the Kohima field in 1881. Within four years, four people changed their hearts and got baptised namely Lhousietsu, Lhousiele, Siehliezu and the identity of the fourth one cannot be ascertained. Among them, Siehliezu was the first among the Angami to be ordained as an Evangelist and through him, the word of God spread among the Chakhesang and the Southern Sümi.

Siehliezu came preaching to Chozuba which was a close neighbour of the Sema village of Ighanumi and three Chakhesangs converted to Christianity namely Ngakhra, Huluyi and Shwuzumo. The good news they heard was that when they started believing in the Jehovah and take baptism, they will go to heaven and there they wdnt work anymore because in heaven there was abundance of food and they would never grow old. If they lived a holy life, they would

²⁴ Dr V Hokuto Jimomi, *Sümi no Naga Ghoshika Ghenguno Mulakeu*, 2008, page 3

surely go to heaven. In 1895, these three Chakhesangs got baptised. In 1914, Suluho became the first among the Chakesangs to be ordained as an Evangelist. Suluho and Lhwutsuve were responsible for sowing the seed of the word of God in the Eastern Angami (Chakhesang) and Southern Sema region. During those days, there was a person from Ghokimi village who was working as a labourer in the road construction project at Assam. One day while working, he dropped down some stones unknowingly which hit his superior. Out of fear, he couldn't live in Assam anymore and he reached Kohima where he met Rev Rivenburg. Rivenburg made him study and in the process he heard the good news and decided to convert to Christianity and was baptised on 19th October 1906 by Rev H B Dickson. After becoming a Christian he went back to his village as he had a great desire for his villagers to hear the good news and change their lives. At his village, when he shared the good news and asked his villagers to give up their old religion, they started disliking him. Those were headhunting days and one day when the warriors returned home with the enemies' heads and put it up on the head stick, Ivulho cut it down. This action displeased the villagers greatly and they chased him out of the village. During that time, there was no one to lead the newly converted Christians at Ighanumi, therefore Rev H B Dickson made him the Pastor of Ighanumi Church in 1908.

When Ivulho came to Ighanumi Village, the Chief Ghopuna Kibalimi adopted him as his son. Ivulho worked as the Pastor and Ghopuna as the Deacon and Treasurer. During the early days, the missionaries didn't strictly enforce Christian principles as they feared that asking them to give up their old life completely would scare them away. Therefore, the newly converts would attend church service while drinking rice beer. When the service was about to start, the Pastor would ask them to keep their drinking cup aside so that they could start the service. Drinking rice beer was a part and parcel of their life.

In 1911, the first Kohima Field Baptist Association was held at Kohima and the second Association was held at Ighanumi village in 1912 and was hosted by Chief Ghopuna. It is said that to host the Association, they prepared lots of rice beer. 120 people is said to have attended this Association.

While the work of God was happening at Ighanumi village, another young Sema man while studying at Kohima heard about the new religion. His name was Yemhi from Lazami village and while studying in class IV at Kohima, he heard the good news from Rev HB Dickson, Missionary of Kohima Field Baptist Churches in 1908. He decided to convert to Christianity. But it was only in 1920 that Yemhi along with his wife and daughters got baptised by Rev Zapuzalie Angami but even before taking baptism he was actively engaged in the mission work. Yemhi worked as an interpreter for the Missionaries. Till 1919 there was no church at Lazami but after he took baptism, he started a Church outside his house and Kiyevi of Ighanumi village served as the Pastor for a short time. In 1926, when the Kohima Field Baptist Churches' Annual Session was held at Chisholi, Yemhi became the first among the Semas to be ordained as the Reverend by Rev J E Tanquist.

During those days, in Mokokchung Elaka at the Sema village of ShitSümi, Zhekiqhe is said to have converted to Christianity and baptised in 1920. Ivulho of Ghokimi village and Zhekiqhe proved to be powerful Evangelists. Despite resistance, threats, persecutions and fines imposed on them, the Semas kept coming forward and converting to Christianity. In 1913, a full time Evangelist was appointed for the Semas. Two boys from Emolomi village studied at Kohima and in 1914 a flourishing Church was established at Emolomi due to the work of these boys.²⁵

In this way, Christianity spread across different parts of the Sümi region and in its wake it brought about lots of positive changes which have left a deep impact on the life of the Sümi in every aspect. It is without doubt that the early Christians had to undergo a lot of hardships and persecutions in the hands of the non Christians who were called 'Jishomi' literally meaning 'the people who drink',²⁶ as can be gleaned from the field work. For instance in the year 1924, Christianity came to the Surumi village through the Aos. But there were lots of hardships for the newly converted. The Village Chiefs were very strict and took strong measures against the Christian converts. When 4 or 5 villagers of Surumi converted to Christianity, the elders of the village took them to Kiyexu Gaonbura's house and the Gaonbura made the newly converts dig

²⁵ SABAK Xulhe (Sümi Christian Centenary 1904 – 2002, pages 41-45

²⁶ Ngutoli Y Swu & Juri Gogoi Konwar, 'Degeneration of Memory: the Case of Sümi Naga', *Journal of Indian Anthropological Society*, Soc 56(2): 138-153 (2021)

up the site for his house. This site was divided into different parts and only the newly converts were made to work here as punishment.

Christianity changed the people from head hunters to the people of God teaching them love and unity and this laid the foundation of a strong society. But it led to the destruction of many cultural materials and practices which was a source of identity to the Sümi people. The most important centre of the cultural life of the Sümi like any other Naga tribes was the practise of *Morung* or *Apuki/Iliki* as it was called in the Sümi dialect. The *Apuki* was the dormitory for boys/men where all the male above the age of 10 years would live together till they got married. Boys below 10 years could not join the *Apuki*.²⁷

According to Yekamu Sheqi of Mishilimi in the past there were mostly non Christians. The Christians used to live under the non Christians and follow all the societal rules and norms made by the *jishomi*. The men would construct the *Apuki* and sleep together in two lines. For the girls, they would live in *Iliki*. *Iliki* would be in the house which was in a good location as well as a house which was big. Women would clean the cotton, spin the cotton and weave. In the evening after coming back from the field, the women would bring the cotton and would clean the cotton and then some would spin it into a thread. They would make a huge fire and sit nearby and do their work. They would make thread from cotton and with this they would dye it and weave clothes using this thread. *Achepu*, *aghuka*, *aghupu*, *aghini*, and *aghipi kixi* were the tools used for weaving. *Abophi*, *Aqhumphi*, *Xenaphi*, *Amihiphi*, and *Avikiyiphi* were the various type of shawl that were made. In the *Apuki* they would be taught all the sports of men as well as trained in the art of fighting, making weapons, setting traps for the animals, and all forms of handicrafts.

When a boy reaches the age of 10, they can start sleeping at the *Apuki*. While at the *Apuki* the boys would visit the *iliki* and when the women are done with their work, they would tell the boys to go back to their *apuki* and sleep as they would also sleep. After coming back to their *Apuki*, the men would gather outside their *apuki* while everyone is asleep in the village and they would shout *ooo he he* and sing '*aliki kuhole ku*'. The song goes like this '*o Iliki ho ili ho ili o ilimi na*

²⁷ Interview with Yekamu Sheqi (92 years), Pughoboto, date of Interview – February 2021

zu uve aye ho timi qona zuhu ve ani’ and after this they would go to sleep. At the *iliki* women would sing in two groups while spinning the cotton. They would sing the ‘*hoye hoye ye hoye hoye apu aghau kupu cheni puto atu na veqhi tsulo hoye hoye ye hoye suwo mbabu ngu sho pulo ye hoye hoye ye hoye hoye o*’ (the hornbill is flying around, so you kill it with a stone and take its feather to adorn your avabu/headgear). This is an instance of how the young people were engaged in conveying messages to each other through songs. The *morungs* were the venues of singing, dancing and a place of learning not only from each other but specially from the elders who would teach the young people about the various crafts and songs and oral tradition.

In the later years when Christianity was getting popular and the *Apuki/Iliki* were almost diminishing from the scene, Yekamu Sheqi who lived at the *Apuki* said that during his time at the *Apuki*, they would teach each other languages too. Those who knew *kholatsa* (hindi/assamese) would teach that to others, those who knew other Naga dialects would do the same. But with the coming of Christianity and its growing popularity among the people, the Morung slowly lost its significance and it came to be replaced by the Church which became the centre of all the religious and social activities of the people. With this, the cultural activities that centred around the *Morung* started declining as the American Baptist Missionaries declared all things connected with the animist life as ‘devilish’ and those converting to Christianity had to destroy everything that had to do with their old way of life and put on a new identity of a Christian which was fully based on the Western way of life. This total bifurcation of the new way of life and the old ways of life created a huge gap as well as destroyed the cultural heritage especially the tangible cultural heritage of the Sümi.

One of the most important components of the social life of the Nagas in general and the Sümis in particular was the drinking of rice beer. During the course of the field work it has been observed that irrespective of the Sümi region that one belongs to, the common practise was the use of rice beer on a daily basis whether it was while relaxing at home after a long day’s work at the field or gathering at the *Apuki/ Iliki* in the evening, while going to the field, while working at the field and feasts were incomplete without making and drinking the rice beer. This drink brought camaraderie, merriment and made the hard life bearable. As people depended on agriculture

which had to be cleaned and taken care of from the time of sowing till the time of harvest and in the absence of good trading system wherein whatever shortages one faced could be bought, many people in the villages had to go through periods of near starvation between the time of harvest and the period after sowing. In such scenarios it was the rice beer that made their life bearable. According to Alu from Ighanumi village²⁸, whenever they went to field in their hey days they would be served only a palm full of rice for lunch and rice beer would be served upto 5 times and this gave them the strength. It seems that plain water couldn't quench their thirst. During the feasts, the most important component was preparing rice beer and this was served endlessly to the villagers. Such was its importance that there were cultural materials attached to the rice beer, for instance, a particular basket which were woven so strongly that no water could seep out where the pounded rice was kept and rice beer was prepared, cups for serving rice beer were also carved beautifully and for men of high social status their cups would be decorated with threads from the cane and adorned with beautifully carved designs, there were special spoons for scooping and serving rice beer, containers for carrying rice beer both big and small to and from the field, etc. Understanding the significance of the rice beer, the Christian Missionaries at first didn't totally prohibit the use of rice beer as can be observed from instances narrated by Hekiye Awomi of Surumi village; 'my father was also a Christian convert but even after their conversion, they would still prepare rice beer at home and drink it. The preachers also did not stop them from doing that.'²⁹ But with the passage of time drinking of rice beer was totally prohibited when people began to become familiar with the way of life of Christianity and many people started converting to Christianity. With this, the cultural materials connected with the usage of rice beer as well as the cultural and social life surrounding the usage of rice beer dwindled.

Before the coming of Christianity feasts were important occasions in the village which gave rich men opportunity to rise to higher status in the society by feeding the villagers with rice beer and meat which lasted sometimes upto 7 days. But these feasts were replete with various rites and rituals connected with animism, therefore the Christian Missionaries prohibited the newly converted Christians from taking part in such feasts. This was problematic in the beginning when

²⁸ Interview with Alu (82 years), Ighanumi Village, Date of interview - 18th December 2020

²⁹ Interview with Hekiye Awomi, (86 years), Surumi village, Date of interview: 17th December 2020

Christians were a minority in the village but with the passage of time when most of the people started converting to Christianity, they started adopting the Christian ways of life and forsaking their old practices. This brought about an astonishing change as the very structure and essence of the Sümi way of life and belief system was shaken to the core.

During the pre Christian Sümi society, the houses of the rich people especially the feast giver's house would be adorned with the Ahutsu which would have traditional carvings of Mithun's head, women's breasts, sun, moon, stars, machete and spear with each having a significant symbolic meaning. Even the top of the house would have certain hanging designs. The feast giver's house would have posts in Y shape where they would tie the animals to be killed before the feast after performing certain rituals. But with the coming of Christianity, all these were considered to be devilish and they were asked to destroy it and burn it. The beautiful ornaments with cowries and various shells, scarlet hair of the enemies, hornbill feathers, etc were also destroyed. Even the dyeing and making colourful clothes for religious purposes were prohibited. Then in the later years when there was the rise of a new sect of Christianity known as the Nagaland Christian Revival Church (NCRC) who believed that the holy spirit restricted the use of '*Tughuna*' (the dress and ornaments used when performing the folk dance). According to the interview with Mr Hekiye Awomi who belonged to this sect, this was clearly directed from the holy spirit and from his own experience. They believe that these are from the devil and not from god, therefore they are not supposed to wear or use it or even keep it at their homes. At Suruhuto area, they usually hold folk dance competitions during the Students' Union annual meet. But with the NCRC restricting the use of '*Tughuna*', the students belonging to NCRC did not want to take part in this competition anymore. The Students' Union on their part were of the view that they should take part because we are all Nagas and this is part and parcel of our culture, therefore this should continue. This resulted in conflict in the village around the year 1990. Mr Hekiye joined NCRC in 1984. The restriction of using '*Tughuna*' by the NCRC from the holy spirit as this was from the devil and not from god and it was not the will of god as it was the work of the devil was issued by the NCRC Prayer Centre, Pughoboto around 1986/1987 but the Surumi NCRC were unable to follow it. In 1988 due to the NCRC refusing to take part in the folk dance competition and the Students' Union adamant stand of not giving up this cultural practise,

conflict came up and the issue was brought before the Village Council. The NCRC were of the belief that everyone believed in Jesus Christ and want to go to heaven, therefore they wanted to obey God and not participate though it may be our culture. They were of the view that stories of these practises can be written and kept but due to the NCRC refusing to practise it, they should not be blamed. All these practices were from the days when no one knew about Christ. The Council resolved the conflict by asking the Students' Union to allow NCRC not to participate in the folk song, dance and cultural activity and allow them to help out in other activities during their annual session. Since then till date the NCRC doesn't take part in any of the activities. Even among the NCRC some people do wear traditional ornaments though majority doesn't use it. Except for clothes and ornaments used during folk dance, other traditional clothes are not restricted from being used.³⁰

Singing of traditional songs and dances which were cultural markers of the Sümi but even the singing of traditional songs and performing dances were considered to be animistic and devilish and so the Sümi converts started despising their own cultural practices. With these changes the beautiful art and culture almost fully disappeared. Haimendorf observed, "in these villages the hard toils on the fields remained, while much of the bright side of village life, the great annual feasts, the dancing and singing, the happy community life in the *Morung* and last but not least, the gay parties, round pots of sparkling rice beer had disappeared".³¹

Therefore they strictly enforced prohibition and destruction of every practice and cultural materials that appeared 'unchristian' in their eyes which left an irreparable loss to the cultural heritage of the Sümi. Inato Yekhetto Shikhu, in his book 'Rediscovery and Rebuilding of Naga Cultural Values, observed 'These removals without replacements have created a huge cultural crisis and vacuum for the present generation'.³²

³⁰ Interview with Mr Hekiye Awomi (82 years), Surumi Village, date of interview 17th December 2020

³¹ Quoted by Subhadra Mitra Channa in the article "*The Classical Ethnographies*" edited by SubhadraMitraChanna "Nagaland: A Contemporary Ethnography" (Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1992) p 17

³² Shikhu, Inato Yekhetto, A Rediscovery and Rebuilding of Naga Cultural Values, 2008: Regency Publications, page 78

2.6. THE INDIAN ARMY OPERATION AND ITS IMPACT

The next encounter occurred when the British left India in 1947. The Nagas declared their independence ahead of India on August 14, 1947 and informed the United Nations as per their submission of memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1929. The refusal of Naga Hills to be a part Indian union led to many negotiations between the Indian Government and Naga people for some years after August 15, 1947. However, the Indian Government betrayed the Naga people by announcing that there was no agreement made with Naga people or that the agreement was no longer considered to exist by the Indian Government. Consequently, the armed conflicts erupted and the Naga Hills was annexed to be a part of Indian union.

Nagas were never under India even before the arrival of the British and for time immemorial. It was only for their administrative convenience that they brought the Naga areas and divided them without their consent into “Naga Hills”, NEFA and “Free Nagas”. After they left, Nagas were scattered due to the occupation of the Naga territory by the Indian and Burmese forces as a result of which some Naga tribes went under the Burmese and within India, the Nagas were divided by the boundary demarcations made by the Indians which resulted in the various Naga tribes going under different Indian states like Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur. When the Indian Government was set up, they introduced the sixth schedule of the constitution but the Nagas did not accept it and the Naga National Council (NNC) decided that the Nagas will not send their representative to the Indian Parliament and Assam Assembly. On May 16, 1951, the NNC started the Naga Plebiscite election where the representative of NNC travelled all throughout the villages in Naga territories and both male and female of 15 years and above were asked to cast their vote as to whether they want to have a separate Naga government or accept Indian government. At the end of this exercise it was found that 99.9% voted in favour of the Naga government. This was compiled as a book and was sent to the President of India, INC and the Secretary General of the United Nations. The Free Nagas did not take part in this exercise. After this the Nagas stopped paying tax to the Indian government and even did not conduct the election in their territory. When the Nagas learned that the Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the Burmese Prime Minister Thakin U-Nu was coming on a visit, the NNC decided not to cooperate but because of some NNC leaders, this decision was changed and on 28th March 1953,

it was decided in the Naga Club that they would receive the Prime Ministers of India and Burma according to the Naga customs and traditions and would submit a memorandum to Jawaharlal Nehru to give compensation for the damages of war. But on 30th March 1953, the then Deputy Commissioner of Kohima, Borkotaki took the memorandum and told the NNC that they should not ask for compensation and he also did not give permission to any of the Nagas to speak saying that whoever disobeys would be heavily punished.

When the two Prime Ministers arrived, the Naga public were not aware about what took place with the DC and had gathered in large number to meet the Prime Ministers who were accompanied by Indira Gandhi. When they were informed about what Borkotaki had done, the entire Naga public left the meeting place leaving behind only the visitors. The same day Borkotaki ordered the arrest of the Nagas and imposed the Assam Maintenance of Public Order Act, 1953. With this, the arrest of all members and leaders of NNC started and so they all went underground and ran away to the Free Naga areas to hide. The Sümi also went hiding in the Free Naga region and from here they decided to join with the Sangtams and Yimchungers to fight against the Indians. During this time some Assam Rifles came to the Yimchunger village called Huker and their actions displeased the Nagas greatly as they did everything that was against the Naga culture like chopping down the bamboo without the permission of the Chief, searching for women to sleep, etc. Out of anger, on 15th March 1955, the villagers killed three Assam Rifles with their daos. With this, on 18th April 1955, the Assam Rifles came back to Huker village and burned down the village and their granaries and killed all their animals. The Huker villagers ran away to Sümi Ngozübomi village. On hearing this, the Assam Rifles arrived at this village and burnt down the village. This was the beginning of the Indian Army operation across the Sümi region where many people were killed, villages were burnt down, women irrespective of their age were raped including the ones pregnant, men were gathered together in groups and tortured to death. The Assam Rifles even desecrated the church. And so began many wars between the Indian soldiers and the Sümi like the battle of Satakha, Tichipa battle, Sathazü battle, etc. Among the Nagas, the Indians wanted to specifically punish the Sümi due to which between a distance of 5-6 km army post was opened in the Sümi territory³³. With the constant battles and burning

³³ Dr V Hokuto Jimomi, *Sümi Naga Ghoshika Ghenguno Mulakeu*, Dimapur: self published , page 90-91

down of villages, lives were lost on both the sides and with it the most important asset of any society especially for people, who rely on oral history, they lost a generation of bearers of history, material cultural artifacts were lost which could not be revived.

During the course of the field work, every village recalled the Indian Army operation as most of the people interviewed were in their 80's and had lived through the Indian Army operation. Some villages were burnt multiple times while others escaped this fate. Some of the incidents documented during the course of the field work have been discussed village wise in order to get a clear idea about the level of destruction not only on the cultural materials but the most valuable asset for any society - human lives.

Indian Army Operation at Hebolimi village³⁴

Hebolimi village located in the Southern Sümi region was burnt twice in 1957 and 1959. On 16th October 1959, grouping started. On 17th/18th October 1959, none of the villagers were in the village as they had all been taken for grouping, therefore the Indian Army burnt down the village. In the grouping of 1959, the villagers hardly escaped with their clothes on their body. It was in the middle of the harvest season. General Dusai told General Zuheto 'Zuheto do some work and bring some materials to my children too' (meaning the Chakesangs. The place where Dusai asked Zuheto to bring the materials is at present known as Sukrezu. There were lots of paths in this area. Zuheto ambushed 28 vehicles near Sathazu post (there was a battalion headquarter here), only 2 people is said to have survived this ambush. The ambush started around 4 am and lasted till around 5 am (sunrise). They couldn't take all the gun materials as they were afraid that the Army would come from Sathazu. In spite of that they were able to procure more guns. They brought the guns and gave it to General Dusai. But the Chakesangs were surrounded by the Indian Army who threatened them that they would be grouped if they didn't reveal the truth. Out of fear they informed the Indian Army that it was the Sümi who had ambushed the Indian Army and while the KT Area (Sümi region) had provided food, the Sümi had ambushed the Indian Army. After this information was given to the Indian Army, the whole of KT Area, Mukali, Shesuli, Heboli, Iphonumi (all Southern Sümi villages) were kept under

³⁴ Interview with Mighishe Swu Gaonbura, (85 years), Hebolimi Village, date of interview – 19th March 2021

operation of the Indian Army. They captured all the people working in the field and brought them to the village and locked them up in the church and then asked if everyone had come back from the field. But it wasn't possible for the villagers to know exactly as to if everyone was there. That same evening, by 3pm everyone was asked to leave for Kilomi. Hearing this, everyone hurried home and packed what they could and by the time they reached Zulhami, it was already late, therefore they thought that they would rest there for the night so many of them kept their stuffs at their relatives' home. Suddenly, they were informed that they have to reach Kilomi that night itself. Many of them couldn't take their stuff as they had to rush off. Even Mighishe had left his stuff at his relative's house and so with just his clothes on his back, he had to go to Kilomi. Because of this, he developed body lice. They were made to work when they were at Kilomi. As early as 6am they were checked and then sent to work and by the time they came back it was 4/5 pm and then they were checked again. With so much work, they didn't have time to take bath nor had any change of clothes. According to him, the operation at Kilomi was the hardest. There were people from Heboli, Chisholi, Chishili, Khughuto and Kilo in the same grouping. For the people of Kilomi and Khughuto, they could go to their fields but the rest whose villages were far away, they were made to work in gardens as punishment. When the villages were burnt down, all the cultural materials also got lost. When they were released from Kilomi grouping, they came back empty handed to their village which was also empty as there was nothing left in their village.

After coming back from Kilomi grouping they found their village like a huge jungle. Before they left there were 67 houses in their village but all these were burnt down. 278 people went to Kilomi post for grouping. On their return from Kilomi post there were 5/6 babies born while at Kilomi post, 13 people died at Kilomi post due to the beatings inflicted on them by the Indian Army. 3 people namely Nihoje, Nihovi, Kihoje were killed with machete by the Indian Army. On the day that the Indian Army had taken the villagers for grouping, Kihoje was not aware and as he was coming back from his paddy field, he heard someone saying that there was going to be a grouping. When he came towards the village, he was pierced with his own spear and was killed by the Indian Army. After some years they found his skeleton and buried it.

Gaonbura Gholumo had gone to the paddy field and came back home unaware that his villagers were already taken for grouping and he slept at his house. The next day, the Indian Army came. On seeing them, he raised his hands and said 'I am Gaonbura' repeatedly but they shot him in his head. This incident was told to the Hebolimi at Kilomi camp by the Nepalese soldiers in the Indian Army. Most of the soldiers were Sikhs. The Nepalese soldiers told them that one of your villager who said he was Gaonbura raised his hands and kept shouting that he was Gaonbura but one Sikh/Punjabi (those people with turban are generally called Punjabi by the Nagas in general) soldier shot him in the head and killed him.

Nihovi couldn't keep up with the others as they were on their way to Kilomi. While climbing the *Azho Ghunaqa*, he was killed with machete. Apüza Hezuli was locked in her house and burnt to death.

While at Kilomi post, 2 children died and 18 elders died due to starvation. They were taken to Kilomi in October and for three months, they were not given any ration. They survived by buying from the Kilomi villagers. It seems the Kilomi villagers used to sell one piece of corn for 50 paise to the Hebolimi (a huge sum during the 50's). They didn't treat the people of Heboli and Chishilimi well.

When they reached their village, the first three months were the hardest as they had no ration. They had no seeds for cultivation also. Since the villages like Mishilimi, Asukiqa, Lazami, Ighanumi did not go for grouping during that time therefore some of their villagers went to Ighanumi, some to Mishilimi, some to Kitami and brought grains to cultivate in the field. Before leaving for Kilomi post, all the houses including their Church were made of Thatch. They had cut down wood to build their church but before they could carry out the construction, they were taken to Kilomi Post for grouping.

Indian Army Operation at Ighanumi Village³⁵

During the Indian Army operation, Ighanumi village (located at Southern Sümi, the first Sümi village) was burnt 7 times from 1954 to 1956 and they lived in the jungle. The Indian Army burnt down the whole village. Whenever they rebuilt their village, the Indian Army would again burn it down, therefore they would live in their fields in their *Axapiki* (small thatch house that is found in all the fields). While hiding in this way, many people who got bitten by mosquitoes and insects got sick and died. Many people died while living in the jungle. They survived on jungle leaves and they also ate the leftover grains that were burnt (leftover from the granaries burnt by the Indian Army). When they ate this, they died due to diarrhoea of bloody stool. They were in a situation where if they don't eat, they wouldn't survive and even if they eat, their health would get affected. In their dialect, they call this as *Ajichu*. Apart from this, since they were living in the jungle, they were bitten by mosquitoes and insects and leech and even the water they used for drinking were unclean.

For those who were captured by the Indian Army, the ordinary villagers were sometimes beaten up but there no known incidents of them being killed. But it was different for those belonging to the Underground. When they were captured, they would be killed, punished by hanging them upside down and making fire under them. The people of the narrator's age group were greatly punished. Because of the immense torture, even though they survived the Indian Army operation, many of them didn't live long due to the sickness that resulted due to the beatings and torture.

In the beginning, General Kaito brought his soldiers and stayed at Ighanumi therefore they were reprimanded but many people from Ighanumi joined the Underground. Therefore, the Indian Army started coming in search of the Underground and captured the parents, siblings, grandparents and spouse.

General Kaito stayed with his soldiers and they planned to ambush the Indian Army. The Ighanumi villagers brought the *Api Ashupu*. They planned to attack the Indian Army and destroy them but the plan was not properly executed and ended in failure which resulted in the burning of Ighanumi village in 1955. They had planted *Ashu* on the ground, therefore when the Indian

³⁵ Interview with Muthsalho (82 years), Ighanumi Village. Date of interview – 18th December 2020

Army reached the spot, they had planned to shoot at them so that the Indian Army would stop and while alighting from their vehicle they would fall on the *Ashu* and then they could easily ambush them. But those who were waiting on the wayside got engrossed in playing some games and didn't realise that the Indian Army had reached the spot. On seeing the arrival of the Indian Army, they got scared and fled from the scene. While running away, they came across the Ighanumi farmers were returning back from their field. Seeing the scared underground running, they shouted at them saying 'give us your guns, we will do it. Why are you scared and running off?' But when they reached their village, they saw that their village was being burnt by the Indian Army. The Indian Army captured all the male and they were made to hold their ears in between their legs. They were made to go through a lot of hardships. This was during the monsoon season and there were lots of mosquitoes, therefore when they got bitten and they tried to scratch themselves, they were beaten up. Because of all these beatings, though they did not die instantly, later they succumbed to their injuries and died. All the male of the narrator's age group went underground. Therefore, though in other villages there may have been many elderly men, for Ighanumi village because of the Indian Army operation, most of them passed away years after the operation.

Indian Army Operation at Surumi³⁶

In the Suruhuto area (Central Sümi), when the people heard about the arrival of the Indian Army, at Sapotimi the Naga Army guarded the path and at Saghemi, the locals guarded the path, thus blocking the entry of the Indian Army for a year. But when the Army took the Zunheboto-Yingli path, the Naga Army could not block the Indian Army. The Naga Army entered the village, therefore the Indian Army while chasing them threw bombs and 4 range mortars were also used to attack the Naga Army. The Naga Army got scared and fled and in this way, the Indian Army covered the Suruhuto area. This happened in the year 1956 and grouping started in 1957. The people of Suruhuto town were grouped together with the people of Surumi village. The Surumi villagers had to leave everything behind in their village as the Indian Army locked up the village. While at Suruhuto grouping, one boy from Kholeboto took away guns from the Indian Army camp at Suruhuto. Therefore, the Indian Army started grouping the people and Surumi village

³⁶ Interview with Hekiye Awomi (82 years), Surumi village, Date of Interview – 17th December 2020

was burnt and people lost their houses. Due to this, the people of Suruhuto area suffered greatly and the Indian Army shot dead 2 or 3 people. For a year the people of Suruhuto were locked up together and went through untold miseries and pain. During that period, since they lived in an area that was new to them, more than 30 people passed away. While at Suruhuto grouping, a disease broke out. During the same time, the Army set fire not only to Surumi village but also the adjoining areas which increased the hardships of the people. Therefore, the people spoke with the Naga Army and brought back the stolen guns. This ended the Indian Army operation. During this period, Mr Hekiye was studying at a Government School at Mokokchung. Many villagers died due to the diseases and some were shot dead by the Indian Army though they were mere villagers and not a part of the Naga Army.

The villagers would be captured and beaten up until they revealed the whereabouts of the members of the Naga Army. Some would lead the Indian Army to the Naga Army camp out of fear and the Indian Army would destroy the camp.

Two Surumi villagers were captured by the Indian Army and taken to the Army headquarter located at Lumami. It is believed that the Indian Army placed these two in rice sacks and killed them by hitting them with logs of wood as if they were beating the corn. Their dead body was brought back to the village.

Since the village was burnt down, all the granaries were also destroyed, therefore there was scarcity of food. The people as a result depended on the wild leaves and also from time to time the Indian Army would drop food grain from the helicopters, therefore though these grains were old and not edible under normal circumstances, they would eat this in order to survive.

The present ground at Suruhuto Town was barricaded and the people were allowed to go to the field by issuing a pass in the form of a piece of paper with the person's name and the signature of the in charge on it. While coming back from the field, this pass was to be produced at the gate again before entering. With the whole village in grouping and the burning of granaries, the Naga Army lost their supply chain of food. Therefore, at night though the Indian Army would guard

the gate, the Naga Army would stealthily go towards the corners of the barricade where the villagers would supply them with food.

Due to the lack of food, the Naga Army started rearing Mithun in the jungle and they would survive by eating the meat along with the wild leaves and fruits. During the operation, the villagers brought the resources they had with them but when the village was burnt down, the granaries were all burnt down. After they were released from the grouping, they would rebuild their village by cutting down the long grasses (aghiyi) and make thatch for the houses. In this way, the houses were rebuilt after which the Surumi villagers resettled at their village.

Indian Army Operation at Chisholimi Village³⁷

In 1957, the first grouping happened at Chisholimi village. All the villagers were gathered together at the playground and the houses were set on fire, after which they were taken to Kilomi. At Kilomi, two layers of *Aghutu* was made and the Indian Army guarded it. They supplied them with ration, ghee, oil.

It seems one Brigadier asked Hoshiqhe Yephthomi, Dobashi of Sukhalu Village to give him an idea as to how to wipe out the Nagas. Then Hoshiqhe told this Brigadier to lock up all the public and let government provide food and drink and burn down all their granaries. Then with nothing to eat, they will come out of hiding. Because of this, the grouping started and the whole of Ghathashi area were taken to Kilomi for grouping. They used to supply ration through helicopter and vehicles. But sometimes the underground would cut up the roads and in intersections they would ambush and kill the Indian Army.

The last grouping was on 7th September 1959. People from around 67 houses were taken to Kilomi. Before the village was about to be burned, one ustad told him and other villagers that the government had given order to burn down the village, therefore if he wants, he can take out important stuff from his house and save it. He took out bed and *Aposhu* and some other stuffs outside and then the houses were burnt. They left all the animals behind and sometimes they

³⁷ Interview with Mr Heqhezu Zhimomi (95 years), Chisholimi village. Date of interview – 20th March 2021

would hidingly come down to the village and check on their livestock. For nearly one year they stayed at Kilomi grouping.

When they came back, they had nothing to eat as everything was burnt and the government relief materials were also not edible. Therefore one of their villager went to dig up the wild potato (commonly found in their area). But digging this out needs lots of strength as it is usually found deep inside the earth. But since he didn't eat properly, he fell into the pit and died. His body was recovered only 3 days later by his brother.

Around 30 or 40 people died during the grouping because of starvation. They had hidden grains in their fields, though some were damaged, the ones that still survived were used as seeds and they could restart their cultivation.

Indian Army Operation at Awotsakilimi³⁸

Awotsakilimi was razed to ashes twice during the army operation and the whole population was sent to concentration camp after that. In 1957 the Assam Police battalion stationed at Awotsakilimi village, set fire to all the houses after one of their service rifles went missing. Except for the church building all the houses were burnt down. Many precious cultural artefacts, granaries, and a huge amount of money belonging to Yekhetto's family were damaged rendering it unusable.

Ahutsü, a house decorative artefact was status symbol in our society. It got burnt along with the house. Since that ravaging day not a single *Ahutsü* is carved at Awotsakilimi village causing cultural disintegration. *Apilelipa*, a large bed carved out of a single log was charred. All the traditional clothes and ornaments were burnt. His father dug the ground and hid the money in two glass containers. After coming out of hiding in the jungle for some months he returned to village and attempted to retrieve the money. Unfortunately, the water entered one of the containers and a sum of Rupees two thousand was completely ruined. His father's had seven granaries and it burnt for more than three days leaving them without food.

³⁸ Interview with Yekhetto Shikhu (80 years), Date of interview – 1st October 2021

When the village was burnt down the villagers were scattered around the jungles. Many died of hunger and diseases. One old man named Lhokishe who has legendary status amongst the Sümi tribe owing to his proficient and witty dealings during his youthful days with legendary friend Yezütha, died during this time. Till today, no one knows where his mortal remains have been buried. He was a famous Jew's Harpist which in Sümi is called *Aheo*.

These are just few instances of the hardships that the Sümi people went through during the Indian Army operation and the common pattern observed during the course of the field work is that the violence and torture both physically and mentally that the people had to go through left a deep seated hatred towards the idea of being called an 'Indian'. The killings, rape and torture were one side of the coin of the Indian Army operation while on the other side of the coin was the wiping out of the history of the villages which were burnt. Most of the tangible cultural heritage of the Sümi was lost when villages were burnt down and in villages which were not burnt, years of desertion led to the destruction of the cultural materials by natural forces. The houses with beautiful carvings and decorations, the varieties of handicrafts, ornaments, shawls, mekhalas, baskets, etc were all burned down. Along with these when men and women died either due to starvation or because of being beaten up by the Indian Army or because of sicknesses while hiding in the jungles created a huge gap in the passing on of the oral tradition and knowledge of the cultural heritage from one generation to the next. With the burning up of granaries, the varieties of grain, vegetables, crops etc that were passed down from generations were all lost never to be retrieved again.

These gaps have created problems in retrieving and recollecting and giving authentication to the cultural materials that have survived over the years and also with the loss of lives as well as cultural materials, there may have been many materials and practices that may have been burnt up in flames never to be acknowledged as belonging to the Sümi and being a source of identity marker for the Sümi people.

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