

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING ANGAMI INDIGENOUS RELIGION

2.1 Introduction

Religious beliefs and practices have been a central feature of human society. They occupy an integral part in influencing the cognitive, conative and volitional aspect of most people (Imchen, 1993). Religion is universal, yet it is expressed contextually according to the local culture. Due to the vast diversity of belief systems, each religion has its own ideas, values and principles to guide one's behaviour which are expressed through culture in society. Therefore, a religion cannot be identified by singling one of the aspects of religious behaviour. In a traditional society, the religious beliefs and its socio-cultural practices are intricately intertwined that it is not possible to fully comprehend without the other. Religion plays crucial role in human action as well as in people's comprehension of all realities and life. According to McGuire religion is one of the most powerful, deeply felt, and influential forces in human society. It has shaped people's relationship with each other, influencing family, community, economic, and political life. Religious beliefs and values motivate human action, and religious groups organize their collective religious expressions. Religion is a significant aspect of social life, and the social dimension is an important part of religion (McGuire, 2012, p. 1).

The first part of this chapter will try to locate indigenous religion. The second part of the chapter deals with the religious beliefs and practices of the Angami to get a perspective on the Angami understanding of religion. Understanding the fundamental aspect of Angami religion in this chapter will give a better grasp of the succeeding chapters.

2.2 Defining Indigenous religion

2.2.1 Religion as a social construct

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the study of religion occupied the centre stage in the sociological and anthropological understanding of social and cultural life. This led to the formulation of theories in regard to the origin of religion in primitive society. Applying the evolutionist perspective to explain the religious beliefs in primitive society, E.B Tylor in his work, *Primitive Culture* (1920) propounded the term animism, the belief

in spirits, as the root of all religions. According to Tylor, a primitive society characterised by this belief is at the lowest scale of humanity. Subsequently, the idea of understanding modern religions and how it developed over the period of time by analysing the simplest and primitive religion was propagated by Emile Durkheim in his book, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912). Durkheim in his study on the Australian aborigines, the Arunta tribe of Central Australia, conceived totemism as the earliest form of religion. He emphasised on the social meaning of religion and showed how collective social totemic ritual developed into or resulted in a sacred society. While Malinowski (1948) carried out an in-depth study of the Trobriand Islanders and argued that religion arises out of basic human needs and predicaments. According to Malinowski, no matter how primitive the people are, no society is without religion and magic. Radcliff-Brown (1945) in his attempt to understand the religion of the Andaman Islanders, stressed on the social functions of rites and rituals. He propagated the view that rituals are the most important aspect of religion, next come beliefs.

The point to be stressed upon here is that this understanding of primitive religion have shown that religion prevailed in every culture where some societies are characterised by a higher while some a lower form of religion. And this conception of religion according to McGuire, was heavily influenced by the prevailing church-established definitions in Europe and the Americas. This conception insinuated a form of superior attitude to the Westerners as they carried an implicit cultural model of 'religion' with them even as they encountered 'Others' (McGuire, 2012, p. 14). This gave rise to the categorisation of two types based on the religiosity. They are official and nonofficial religion. The official religion is considered to be 'virtuso' religiosity characterised by sacred objectives such as holiness, spiritual blessings, and salvation. While the nonofficial religion as 'popular' religiosity regarded as profane is related to people's pragmatic everyday needs. Subsequently, the official religion - organized and coherent, comes to be associated with the social and religious elites and the non-official - unorganised, inconsistent, heterogeneous belief and customs with the uneducated and superstitious masses. Because of the absence of religious specialist in a separate organizational framework, the latter is regarded as the religion of ordinary people (McGuire, 2012, p. 113-114). According to McGuire, this establishment of 'official' religion by definition has led to the exclusion of non-official 'people's' religion, the religious expressions of various minorities and indigenous peoples in colonized lands. Therefore, any attempt to define religion must

remember that the very definition of religion is a social construction, with contested boundaries (2012, p. 114-115).

This Eurocentric definition of religion was questioned by scholars who found the universality of religion problematic (Asad, 1993; Nongbri, 2013; Fitzgerald, 2014). Talal Asad in his book, *Genealogies of Religion* argued that there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationship are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of 'discursive process' (Asad, 1993, p. 29). Similarly, Nongbri also stated that, the contemporary usage of the term 'religion' is associated with anything resembling modern protestant Christianity. He argued that the concept of religion was absent in the ancient world since the usage of the term religion is centred primarily on a western understanding of religion. Ancient people had words to describe proper reverence of the gods, but these terms were not what modern people would describe as strictly "religious" (Nongbri, 2013, p. 4). In the eyes of the westerners who were accustomed only to the concept of religion developed in the Judeo-Christian tradition, religion of the non-western did not appear to be a proper religion. Therefore, if a culture lacks the concept of religion, then it is inappropriate to use that concept when describing or analyzing it (cited in Schilbrack, 2012). Timothy Fitzgerald argued that it is not possible to separate religion and culture and for which he proposed to abandon the concept of religion because the modern western construction of religion is the construction of religion as private, and it is not meaningfully employable for other non-Christian context. However, this raises another problem since such claim blocks the academic study of culture which requires concepts not used by those. Religion is analytical and descriptively useful because there really are religion 'out there' (Schilbrack, 2012). If the concept of religion has to be used as an academic tool of analysis, it should be understood that there are two profoundly different meanings given to 'religion'. For this, Fitzgerald recommends the term 'encompassing religion' and 'privatised religion'. The first refers to religion as permeating the whole of life and there is no separation between religion and culture. The second conveys religion as privatized and essentially distinguished from an area of life defined in non-religious terms (Fitzgerald, 2014, p. 211). Fitzgerald's concept of encompassing religion showed the pervasiveness of religion in other cultures and that the concept of religion is analytically and descriptively useful.

There are parts of the world's population who have beliefs and rituals rooted in indigenous traditions that persist, sometimes openly and sometimes hidden beneath or synthesised into dominant tradition (Mitchell-Green & Kurtz, 2016, p 129).

2.2.2 The concept of indigenous

The word indigenous originates from the Latin *indu; endo*, meaning 'in or within'; and *gignere*, meaning to beget. *Indigen* may be defined as "produced, growing, living, or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment". Hence, the current usage of the term indigenous refers to the original inhabitants of specific places (Mitchell-Green & Kurtz, 2016, p. 131).

The usage of the word 'indigenous' has gain momentum only in recent years. It has been used especially in the context of the experience of the North America, Latin America, Africa, and Australia, where colonisation and immigration from European countries had resulted in large-scale deprivation, displacement and discrimination of native communities, institutions, cultures and languages. In regard to this, identity assertion as indigenous people, or first nation, began to gain recognition with the matter being brought at the forefront of the UN and other international organisations. However, there is no generally accepted definition on what constitute an indigenous identity. And in countries like India, the application of the concept indigenous has been debated (Xaxa, 1999; Karlsson, 2003). This is because in the Western context or countries like Australia, the first nation theory is applicable since there is no difficulty in distinguishing between the indigenous population and non-indigenous population. While for India it is not possible to identify the first settlers given that India being a vast country with a complex history there is no established chronology of settlement and migration (Xaxa, 1999). Therefore, the problem is that in India, the category of indigenous people tends to confuse issue of identity rather than clarify them.

Nevertheless, the political connotation of the term 'indigenous' extends to global contexts, since it is meaningless to speak of 'indigenous' without implying its counterpart 'non-indigenous', and the colonial history that produce both the categories. As Charles Long succinctly puts it "although the notion of the indigenous implies the identity and reality of a people prior to the impingement of the worlds of modernity, in point of fact the

‘indigenous’ has little meaning apart from the colonial and imperial cultures in the modern period” (cited in Cox, 2007, p. 2).

2.2.3 Defining indigenous religion

The religious beliefs rooted in indigenous tradition were constructed over the centuries by people living in a particular place or region. These complex sets of traditions encountered waves of external influences from traders, conquerors and proselytizers. Their beliefs were seen to be spiritually and morally inferior in comparison to Western belief and practices. In the context of Africa, pejorative terms like fetish, pagan, heathen, idolatry, magic, primitive, savage, native were used to refer to African religions (Pobee, 1976). These definitions of religion through the western lens were called out by scholars, drawing the attention to how these terminologies had a denigrating effect on the cultures and traditional beliefs of the indigenous people denying their flexibility and historicity, and a place among the modern religion (Platvoet, 1993; Harvey, 2006, cited in Cox, 2007). As a result, a globalising discourse on indigenous religion emerged which has shaped the indigenous tradition around the world (Johnson & Kraft, 2017). Scholars such as Cox and Tafjord have discussed how academia played a critical role in the re(creation) and dissemination of the emerging discourses and practices (ibid.).

To frame a working definition on what constitute an indigenous religion is not without complication given that scholars have deployed the term in their work in different ways. For this, Tafjord’s typology of academic usages of the term ‘indigenous religion’, help to clarify this highly diverse field. He suggests eight ‘language games’ or ‘types of uses’, specified as 1) a class of religions, 2) an ethno-political concept, 3) a theological concept, 4) and archaeological and evolutionary concept, 5) an aesthetic concept, 6) a geographical and historically contingent relational concept, 7) a discourse, 8) as material entities and lived religion (Tafjord, 2017).

Emphasising on type one, indigenous as a class of religion, the phrase is applied to all those religions or religion that does not fit into the world religions paradigm. The use of indigenous religions as a class of religion is most salient in the academic study of religions or religious studies. In line with this, James Cox draws attention to the usage of indigenous religion in place of concepts like ‘primal’ or ‘primitive religion’ (Cox, 2007).

Turner proposed the term 'primal' drawing from various cognate words such as primeval, primordial and primary as a religious model to those which have been ignored by the so called 'world religions'. While he also justifies the usage of the term on the ground that it conveys the idea that these religious system presents the most basic or fundamental religious forms in the overall religious history and that they have preceded and contributed to the other great religious systems (Turner, 1997, p. 28). However, Cox argues that the way it was employed was non-empirical rather it was used largely for theological purpose, as the foundation of the world religion. And this according to Peter Clark, gives the impression of a static, unchanging and primitive, or unsophisticated religions found in underdeveloped societies (cited in Cox, 2007, p. 56). Clark justified that 'primitive religion' instead should be used to refer to those religions which have always been an integral part of the culture of a society. However, Cox (2007, p. 27) goes beyond justification and opted to replace the term 'primal religion' with 'the religions of indigenous peoples', which also has to be accompanied by 'geographical, ethnic and linguistic qualifiers'. He is aware that replacing primal by indigenous is not as simply as it is and that it is accompanied by theoretical and methodological problem. Therefore, he critically examined the use of the term and developed a scientific definition of 'indigenous religion'. The work of J.G. Platvoet and Graham Harvey who wrote extensively on indigenous religions based on empirical studies have played a crucial role in developing a working definition on indigenous religion. To cite Cox:

In the writings of various scholars on this topic, the application of an inductive, scientific method for classifying the characteristics of an 'indigenous' religion seems consistently to produce a list, which at a minimum, comprises the following three features: (1) indigenous societies are local, or at least self-contained, and thus have no interest in extending their religious beliefs and practices beyond their limited environment; (2) they are based primarily on kinship relations, and hence usually have a strong emphasis on ancestors; (3) they transmit their traditions orally, resulting in a fundamentally different attitude towards beliefs and practices than is found amongst traditions derives from and based on authoritative written sources. (Cox, 2007, p. 61)

Subsequently, Cox proposes that the central characteristic of indigenous religions refers to it's being bound to a location; participants in the religion are native to a place, or they belong to it. The single and overriding belief shared amongst indigenous religions derives from a kinship-based world-view in which attention is directed towards ancestor spirits as

the central figures in religious life and practice (Cox, 2007, p. 69). This definition has enabled the empirical understanding of a religion originating in a region and identifies the religion of the indigenous people with its own values and ideas. Besides, the development of academic programmes in university and research on indigenous religions has supported the contention that the term 'indigenous' has now widely been accepted amongst scholars of religious studies as a preferred term to 'primal' (Cox, 2007, 9).

2.3 Colonial representation of the Naga religious belief

The colonial ethnographic material written in the nineteenth and twentieth century make up the major sources for our understanding of the Nagas in general and their religious beliefs per se. According to David Chidester, a historical inquiry into the colonial context of 'primitive' text is important because it affects our understanding of cultural, social and political history of the study of religion. And how to proceed, he raised three problems. Firstly, the problems of knowledge in asymmetrical relations of power. Characteristically, colonizers claim to know the colonized better than the colonized know themselves. Secondly, the problem of situating knowledge in historical time and space. Here, the colonizer employed evidence from the colonized peripheries of empire to assert that the colonizers were evidently superior and more advance in human progress than the colonized. Thirdly, the problem of understanding situational incongruity in colonial texts and contexts, that things must fit. Everything must find a place (Chidester, 2003, p. 277-278).

In the colonial era, the Naga people and their culture became a subject of interest to the administrators-cum-anthropologists, such that Nagas became 'a cradle of British social anthropology' (Wouters & Heneise, 2017, p. 3). Administrators, missionaries, travellers, curators, and trained anthropologists collected the rich accounts of Naga culture and lifeworld. Sanghamitra Misra (1998) highlighted the politics of representation of the Nagas which are found in official sources, colonial ethnographic and missionary writings and argued that the reason behind the successful strengthening of the colonial state is through a complex set of representations of the coloniser and the colonised. The Nagas were presented as excessively ignorant and savage in their habits and hence in need of colonial intervention. Misra argues that the projection of Nagas as bereft of any religion has given the image that Nagas are capable of receiving religion from the missionaries. For them it is to locate the strange within a familiar frame of reference.

So, when the colonial administrators try to describe the religious belief of the Nagas, the ‘animistic belief’ prevailing amongst the Naga tribes was seen against the great Aryan religion and in whatever form, be it shamanism, animism, or nature worship, the conclusion was that all the tribes practiced the same religion (Gait, 1891, cited in Elwin, 1969). Since, the Nagas, unlike the so called ‘major religion’ did not have an “established form of worship; they have no temples erected in honour of their deities, and no ministers peculiarly consecrated to their service” (Robinson, 1841, cited in Elwin, 1969, p. 502) appears to be an unorganised form of religion and the notion of religion seems rather perplex for the colonialist to comprehend leaving Davis to comment that ‘Angami practically do not have a religion’ (Davis, 1891, cited in Elwin, 1969, p. 505). John Butler in his work, *Rough Notes on the Angami Nagas and their Language* (1875) also stated that the Angami appears to have no definite ideas regarding the subject of religion and the future. Hutton who wrote a great deal and dedicated a chapter on religion in his account on *The Angami Nagas* (1969) said, one can find plenty of animatism where there is some sort of distinction between souls of the dead and deities.

They acknowledged that Nagas believed in a great spirit with divine power who is considered as the maker of the world, and the disposer of all events. But the ideas of this Great Spirit were faint and confused, and ignorant of his attributes (Robinson, 1841, cited in Elwin, 1969, p. 502). The Nagas were seen as worshipers of evil spirits and that “whatever may be their belief in a god or a future state, it is certain that they believe in infinity of evil spirits or demons” (Woodthorpe, 1882, p. 69). All his religious rites and ceremonies, his prayers, incantations, and sacrifices, are due to a trembling belief that he can thus avert some impending evil (Butler, 1875), which probably have originated to the worship of evil spirits who are believed to reside in every grove and streams (Robinson, 184, cited in Elwin, 1969).

One thing is clear that the colonial perceptions towards the Naga religion was all in a similar line. And since, the Nagas do not have a word for religion in the Western context, it was the colonial writers who first used the term ‘animism’ to identify their religion. In fact, the census report of 1901 defined tribes as those who practised animism (Chophy, 2019), and ever since the term has been used by outsiders as well as Naga scholars to describe the Naga religious belief without challenging the fallacy of its application. Shohe has argued that its usage continues to uphold the colonial legacy and promotes the

nomenclature to be used abundantly in literature and everyday parlance as well (Shohe, 2021).

2.4 Angami indigenous religion

The religious belief and practices of the Angami Nagas

Angami do not have a word for 'religion' in a strict sense, and they prefer to use the term *nanyü* which generally means 'ritual'. While it is used as a term for religion, it is also used for the performance of any ritual or rites, hence the people who follow the indigenous religion are also called *nanyümia* meaning 'people who perform ritual'.

Krüna is the indigenous religion of the Angami and its adherents are called *Krünamia*. The literal translation of *Krüna* is 'ancestor's religion' and *mia* means people. The religion is also called *Pfütsana* or *Tsana* meaning 'forefathers' religion'. These are different terms but all have the same meaning. In the course of discussion, the term *Krüna* and Angami indigenous religion is used interchangeably.

For the Angami Nagas, the so-called 'religion' was not a dogma or a set of established beliefs. Rather, it was a way of life. Life experience in its entirety was religious. Every traditional Naga was a deeply religious being and the thought of oneself as an atheist, agnostic, sceptic, non-believer or non-religious never existed. In other words, religion permeated all aspects of life. The concept of life as inseparably interwoven as a whole was a dominant unifying force that united the Nagas not only to the community, but also to the nature around human beings (Thong, 2012, p. 909).

2.4.1 The centrality of the notion *terhuomia* (supernatural beings)

The Angami Nagas acknowledgment of the existence of supernatural beings constituted an important aspect of their belief. They see their world as being inhabited by supernatural beings of different kinds. In a tribal society, people live in a greater society consisting of supernatural beings (Troisi, 1979, p. 71). Likewise, even for the Nagas, the notion of supernatural being is at the heart of people's belief and practices (Chophy, 2019, p. 26). The belief in supernatural beings permeates their beliefs and practices, and the rites and rituals (communal and personal) occur when the individual celebrates relationships with the supernatural beings.

The concept of *terhuomia* (supernatural beings) is central to Angami religious thought and it can be understood in multiple contexts. They believed in the existence of plethora of supernatural beings, which some are known by names and mostly unknown and all comes under the generic term *terhuomia*. ‘Terhoma’¹ are ‘deities’ and ‘vague spirits’ (Hutton, 1969, p. 178) and it was the Baptist missionaries who taught the Angami converts to regard all ‘terhoma’ as evil which is translated into English or Assamese as ‘satan’² (Hutton, 1969, p. 180). However, to comprehend *terhuomia* as just a mere spirit does not do justice to the generic term. The term *terhuo-mia* meaning ‘spirit’ and ‘people’ refers to a range of different kinds of spirits including *Ukepenuopfü*, the supreme creator in the Angami pantheon (Joshi, 2012, p. 53). It is not dissimilar to the Nuer concept of Kwoth, which Evans-Pritchard translates both as God and as refraction of such spirit (cited in Joshi, 2012, p. 53).

In Angami thought, anything which is beyond their comprehension is concluded as the work of *terhuomia*. This belief is in a way is connected to the naturalistic fallacy where the disorder of the nature is regarded as a mirror of the disorders of society. This is because disruption and threat to social order question the meaningful character of social action (Turner, 1991, p. x). Natural disasters such as earthquake, pestilence appears to be a major dislocation of social life which had to be reconciled with human interpretations of divine order. And for the Angami, whenever there is an eclipse or earthquake which are seen as unexplained phenomenon, the village priest will announce and declare, there will be *penie*,³ for the whole village to advert calamities believed to be caused by *terhuomia* and retract their actions if they have provoked *terhuomia*. In the case of illness, which is believed to be the handiwork of *terhuomia* they have their own ways of explanation and means to mitigate it (detailed discussion in the illness section).

¹ Same meaning with the term *terhuomia* but spelled as *terhoma* by Hutton.

² The usage of *terhuomia* among the Angami is same as the term *tsungrem* meaning spirit in Ao dialect which include the supreme deity, *lungkijingba* and the *lizaba*, the creator of the earth, the sky deities, house spirits and jungle ghost. However, unlike the translation of *terhuomia* as devil, the missionaries used the term *tsungrem* to fit into the Christian concept of God (Eaton, 1984).

³ *Penie* refers to prohibitions and rules which restrict or direct the physical movement of members of the social unit - the family, clan, *khel* or village - to which it is applied. Such prohibition is imposed at the time of funeral, epidemics, natural calamities, calendrical rituals and festivals, during which those observing a *penie* are *kenyü* to interact with outsiders, or leave their house or the village.

The everyday life of the Angami revolves around the regular appeasing and living in constant fear of *terhoumia* as they believe that *terhuomia* has the ability to influence their life and cause disruption. This relationship depicted the limited capabilities of the social group however, there is a clear-cut belief that the existence of the supernatural beings is not contingent on human actions rather the success and wellbeing of human depend on the relationship with the supernatural beings (Chophy, 2019, p. 86).

It is important to note that the *terhuomia* who is propitiated during the calendrical rituals is *Ukepenuopfü* and the lesser *terhuomia* are never held in equal reverence. Instead, such *terhuomia* has to be avoided or has to be propitiated only if a person is severely ill and his soul is believed to be possessed or held hostage by a *terhuomia*. If there is an unusual stone or a big tree, they believe that there are chances that it will be an abode of an unknown *terhuomia* and for which they have to avoid it. If they wish to use a stone or a gigantic tree, the concern person will cut off some shrubs and place it on the stone and say, ‘after *terhuomia* it will be mine’ as a gesture of acknowledging and not to provoke the *terhuomia*. The Angami say *themia nei kemo chülievi derei terhuomia nei kemo we chülie ya mo* (you can provoke human but not *terhuomia*) and that a man can survive human’s hatred but not *terhuomia*. For every work that he starts he will say *terhuomia a zhachücie*⁴ asking *terhuomia* to bless his work. Such is the prevalence of *terhuomia* in Angami thought that there is also a ritual call *rase*⁵ which is specifically ‘to reconcile with *terhuomia*’. There is also a day separately set aside as *terhuo tsiakrü* (seed sowing of *terhuomia*) and *terhuo liede* (harvest of *terhuomia*), both on the day before the village inauguration of seed sowing and harvest is started.

The Angami, unlike the Sumi⁶ do not attempt to classify the spirits according to the degree of their importance. Though, Joshi gave an Angami hierarchical ordering of spirits placing the souls of the dead, who are believed to become *terhuomia* at death, at the lowest level,

⁴ Equivalent to prayer.

⁵ In this ritual, two elders, one from *thevo* moiety and another from *thepa* moiety will take the initiative accompanied by all the men, especially the sickly people in the village. They will take two fowls and go outside the village gate and loosen them at the end of the village and two fowls at the hill top of the village. The elder will called out loudly ‘*terhuo vü-o* (spirit fowl), we were wondering where you were but here you are. We have come to solicit peace between man and spirit. Let there be no destruction and calamity, no death and disease and plague. Who is honest, you are honest. Who is honest, I am honest. We will compete with each other in honesty’. After the pronouncement the chickens will be released. On this day, all the villagers have to abstain from all field work.

⁶ Hutton (1921, p.191) classified the spirits into three types: *Alhou*, *Kungumi* and *Tugumi*.

followed by those *terhuomia* who trouble human beings by destroying crops, and killing domestic animals. Above them are placed *rodo*, evil spirits, who are capable of killing human beings upon meeting them. Above all these are the good spirits who help human beings (Joshi, 2012, p. 56).

2.4.1.1 Belief in Supreme Being

The Angami believed in the all good and divine Supreme Being called *Ukepenuopfü*, who is the giver and the creator of universe. Existing literature have suggested that the term *Ukepenuopfü* has a female connotation, *U* means ‘us’ or ‘our’ and *Kepenuopfü* which means ‘birth spirit’, the ancestress of men (Hutton, 1969, p. 180) and that the Angami are the only group among the Nagas who’s Supreme Being is specifically female (Joshi, 2012, p. 54). But, if an Angami had been asked the question of who is *Ukepenuopfü*? What is his/her mental image of *Ukepenuopfü*? It is not incorrect of what Hutton said “so vague is his idea of the deities and spiritual beings in which he believes, that he makes no attempt whatever to reproduce in craving or in picture the mental image he forms of them, if indeed any clear formation takes place, it is in his mind”. On being asked, Vilezol Toso⁷, the *kemovo* of Viswema village replied, “no one have seen *Ukepenuopfü*, I only know that *Ukepenuopfü* is the creator of everything and I proclaimed the sky is my father, the earth is my mother”. Especially, whenever there is a heavy storm, he will stand on an alleviated stone, faced towards the sky and shout, ‘the sky is my father, the earth is my mother, do not lash out your anger on us, go away’. The connotation of *Ukepenuopfü* also appears to vary depending on personal experiences. Vilezol said that if a woman behaves femininely, people will say her *Ukepenuopfü* is the female version or if she behaves more masculine than her *Ukepenuopfü* is considered as a male. For the Angami, defining their supreme god is not without complexity, since without a proper definite notion the given narratives appear to be a conjecture. It can be comprehended in the line of the given opinion regarding the Supreme Being of African religion by Beyers (2010), who is of the view that to name someone is considered an act of control over the entity. The Africans by not giving God a specific name, maintained the dignity of God (cited in Beyers, 2010). Likewise, in Angami religious thought, *Ukepenuopfü* being the Supreme Being cannot simply deduce their

⁷ Vilezol Toso is 68 years old. He is the *kemovo* for 11 years. Interviewed on 11 march 2021, Viswema village.

Ukepenuopfü to a mere term of reference or category. Angami never tries to lay out a definition except that *Kepenuopfü* is the creator of every living being and non-living thing.

Ukepenuopfü is thought to be benevolent and remote, its dwelling place is believed to be located in the sky (Hutton 1969, p. 181) which appears to portray its character of being aloof and rarely interferes in human affairs. However, in Angami religious life, the usage of *terhuomia* is being more prevalent instead of *Ukepenuopfü*, because *Kepenuopfü* is propitiated as a major manifestation of *terhuomia*. The Angami directs their prayer to *Terhuo Ukepenuopfü* for a prosperous and well-being of the community. As an acknowledgment or giving a share to *terhuomia*, whenever they have meal, the mother of the family will keep two-three pieces of rice on the side of her platter. Before they start their work, they will say *Terhuomia a zha chü cie* asking *terhuomia* to bless his/her work.



Image 2.1: Vilezol Toso and his wife, the *Kemevo* of Viswema village
Source: Fieldwork, Viswema village



Image 2.2: *Kemevo badze*, an alleviation of stones for *Kemevo* to make announcement.
Source: Fieldwork, Viswema Village

2.4.1.2 The lesser *terhuomia*

The belief in the existence of *terhuomia* is usually corroborated with the popular Angami myth about the relationship between man, *terhuomia* and the tiger. According to the myth, man, *terhuomia* and tiger are believed to be siblings, progeny of one woman. The man ate

his food cooked, the tiger ate his food raw and *terhuomia* ate his food smoked dried. But the tiger always created trouble. One day the mother, tired of her children's squabbles, held a race between the man and the tiger: it was decided that the first to touch a grass mark in the forest could continue to live in the village while the loser would leave for the dark forest. The man won the race conspiring with *terhuomia* and the tiger thus left for the forest (see also Hutton, 1969, p. 261-62). In this way, the three came to be spatially distributed; the tiger lives in the forest, the man in the village and the spirit occupies both domains as well as the area between the village and the forest. This close relationship between them is perhaps reflected in the Angami belief in the spirits who help human beings, and the phenomenon of *tekhu-mevi* (man whose soul roam the forest in the form of a tiger). The relationship with tiger is also reflected when the Angami wish to establish a village and laid its foundation, he will pronounce "I shall not co-habit in the village with thief or leopard but the tiger is my elder brother, it is his wish".

The Angami believed there are *terhuomia* which has evil attributes and resides in deep jungles. The *terhuomia* named *rhuolo* is considered as the evillest of all. If a person gets sick suddenly with nose bleeding or high fever, then it is believed that the person is afflicted by a *rhuolo* which the Angami believed that there is no hope for him to recover even though the ritual of *u ruo chü* (substituting the soul) has been offered. Another *terhuomia* is known as *kesüdi* which is believed to have the ability to change shape which can appear as gigantic and small again. *Rouse* cannot be seen but can be heard which has the ability to imitate every type of sounds. *Temi* is a ghost and whenever a person detects a sense of being frightened then he will say *temi a kechü* meaning 'a ghost is frightening me' though he does not know whether it is really a ghost or not. The Angami do not hold any reverence or appease these *terhuomia* but are considered as mere ghosts who should not be provoked as well.

Hutton mentioned some *terhuomia* which the Angami were aware of. While, majority of *terhuomia* were unknown by name, unspecified, vague inhabitants of the invisible world (Hutton, 1969, p. 182). They were *Rutzeh*, the evil one. He was believed to be the giver of sudden death. *Maweno* was the Angami goddess of fruitfulness and those who saw *Maweno* were considered to be lucky. *Ayepi* was a fairy that lived in the house and brought prosperity. *Telepfü* was another female spirit and she was a mischievous being. She carried the people far away and makes them senseless, but allowed other people to find the person

again. Other spirits or like *Tsükho* and *Dzürawü* were two spirits - husband and wife. Another spirit *Metsimo* was a spirit who guarded the approach to paradise and *Tekhu-Rho* was the god of tigers. *Kechi-Kerho* is the spirit that inhabits stones.

There are places or stones which are believed to be inhabited by *terhuomia*. These places are called *thechü kerhu* meaning ‘unclean place’ and it is believed that people who have weak spirit becomes a victim of that place *ruo*. There are spirited stones which are believed to be an abode of *terhuomia*. These stones are called *ketsie puo ruo kenyi* meaning ‘stones which have spirit’. Stone like *ruopfü tsie* (spirited stone) in Mezoma village, which is believed to be a good stone and whenever the villagers see the stones and appears to be in burning flame then it is believed that the expedition villagers carry out will be in their favour, be it sports or war. *Tsie kharu* is a stone gate believed to have the ability to hypnotise people, which the victim tends to walk round the stone and lend up to the same spot where he had started. *Pera pikhe* means a ‘mortar stone for bird’. It is forbidden to touch the stone in the belief that there will be immediate storm or someone will die a tragic death.

2.4.1.3 Soul of the dead as *terhuomia*

The soul of the dead is sometime referred to as *terhuomia*. The Angami also holds on to the belief that if a woman died in childbirth, her *ruopfü* (spirit) will become an evil *terhuomia*, therefore, the body has to be taken out through the back wall of the house instead of the exit door, and buried without any ceremony. For the Angami, this kind of dead is seen as *kesia siasuo* meaning ‘bad death’. Besides, tragic death like *terhüthege* (war death), *tekhumite* (killed by tiger or wild animal), *kerüchakhri* (suicide), *dzü se* (drowning), *mi se* (burnt to death) are also considered as bad deaths and their dead body are not allowed to be buried inside the village but outside the village gate as an act of revoking such tragic death to happen again in the near future. It is believed that the soul of the person who have succumbed to *kesia siasuo* will hover around as ghost and becomes a *temi*. The Angami even have a ritual called *temi kevü* (beating the ghost) to prove their bravery. In this *temi kevü*⁸ ritual, the *temi* are referred to the spirit of the victim of *kesia siasuo*.

⁸ On the day of the ritual rase, two men, one from *thevo* moiety and another from *thepa* moiety will go to the jungle and collect a long *jüli* (bamboo) for the ritual of *temi kevü* and it is said that *terhuomia* will scare them on their way and even throw clot of blood at them. When the night comes, they will go outside the village gate on the way and make fire for each spirit who died from unnatural death: suicide, drowning, fire’s death,

2.4.2 Life after death

“It must be like when we see dead people in our dream, we just become a dream for others when we died” said Vilezol Toso, the *kemovo* of Viswema village, who is unbothered with what will happen in the afterlife. The average Angami trouble his head very little, as to what is in store for him after death. He looks on death as the abhorrent end of everything that interest him, and neither pretends to know nor gives what comes after (Hutton, 1969, p. 185). However, their vague idea of what becomes of their soul after death does not necessarily mean they will live an oblivious and irresponsible life. The Angami believe that if they led a good and worthy life upon this earth according to the given standards – observed the rituals diligently⁹, lived an honest and righteous life, will fly away into the realm above and become stars, otherwise their soul would have to pass through seven stages of spirit-life, and eventually transformed into bees, ants, butterfly, and that is why that particular year the relatives of the dead should be careful not to kill butterfly or eat bees. At the conclusion of the seventh existence, the soul becomes extinct, leaving his rib on the wall. In Angami dialect, *teigei* means ‘sky’ as well as ‘heaven’. For the Christian, *teigei* means ‘heaven’ when they say ‘the soul goes to *teigei* (heaven)’ but for the *Krīna* followers, they meant the sky when they say *puo ruopfū kho teigei themvū mevi ca te shie* (his soul has ascended to the sky and become a star). Such beliefs are asserted if they see a star shining brightly the night of the day a person died or if there is a huge crack in the graveyard.

2.4.3 The notion of spirit and soul

Hutton in his account appears rather confused stating that *ruopfū* is a female spirit having a mysterious spiritual force and attributes of a guardian angel which is attached to each man (Hutton, 1969, p. 183). In Angami thought, *ruopfū* is understood as a spirit as well as the soul of human rather than a female spirit. In the sense that, if a person gets lost

killed by wild animal, killed in war and come back home. At dawn when everyone is in deep sleep they will go back to the spot where they have made the fire with the bamboo stick. There they will see all sorts of spirit beside the fire. The man from *thevo* will hit the spirits with the bamboo and the spirits will grab it. The *thepa-u* will take out his machete and slide down the bamboo saying ‘take off your hand else will cut it’ and they will come to the village. Once they come inside the village gate they will announce ‘we have reached’ and their relatives who were waiting for them will immediately close the gate.

⁹ Include the taboo to eat unclean meat like the flesh of monkeys, dogs, frogs and unknown bird (Butler, 1875; Hutton, 1969, p. 185). But dog meat is considered as a nutritious meat and consumed in abundance during festivals.

mysteriously and return back, people will say *si kemo ruopfü puo puo kevü zetuote* (an unknown spirit had lured him away) or if a person gets sick after being to an unclean place, they will say *thechü cüu ruo dzülie te* (inflicted by that place's spirit). The usage of *ruopfü* appears to have a connection with unknown spirit and associated with peculiar places and unusual stones like the spirited stones in Mezoma village. On the other hand, it is also used when talked about luck, *ruopfü vi* literally means 'good spirit' but understood as good luck. When a person said *a ruopfü vi metsei ho, a mho suo mo mu* meaning 'I dreamt a good dream, I may have a good luck'. Good luck depends upon which *terhuo-mia- rodo* or *rotshe* - are able to influence the *ruopfü* of a person (Joshi, 2012, p. 64).

Ruopfü is used interchangeably for both spirit and soul. Angamis believe in the existence of *ruopfü* (soul) which is an intrinsic part of the body. There is a dichotomy of body and *ruopfü*, at the same time, the totality of an individual is thought to consist in its unity because each depended on the other for functionality and survival (Chophy, 2019, p. 91). This dichotomy of body and soul explain the concept of soul loss which is a popular belief among the Angami. The existence of body and *ruopfü* is also associated with the concept of necromancer. In Angami thought, it is believed that if the soul of the dead is not happy, it will come and possessed a necromancer to convey the message. It is said that if the spirit is a baby, the necromancer will cry or if it's a warrior he will come ululating.

2.4.4 The usage of ritual terms

Hutton defined the term *genna* as 'an acts of worship'. Derived from the Angami word, *kenyü* (spelled *kenna* in Hutton's) meaning 'forbidden', is used among the tribes "for the various incidents of various magico-religious rites" (Hutton 1969, p. 190). The term *genna* was used by Davis in census of India 1891 where he talks about the custom of *genna* found to be common to all the Naga and Kuki tribes (cited in Elwin, 1969). It is used in two ways: it may mean practically a holiday on occurrence of village festival or some unusual occurrence like earthquake, eclipse or burning of a village; *genna* means anything forbidden. Rowney in *The Wild Tribes of India* called *genna* as a chief religious festival, a Sabbath extended generally over two or three days and nights (cited in Elwin, 1969). The term *genna* was used by colonial ethnographers (Haimendrof, 1939; Hutton, 1969) in their writings interchangeably with the vernacular terms for ritual, prohibition and festival. Nowadays, the word *genna* became standardized and used by all the Naga groups.

Three terms – *kenyü*, *penie*, *nanyü* (Hutton spelled them as *kenna*, *penna* and *nanü*) were lumped together under the expression *genna*.

In Angami, the term *rüso* if translated is equivalent to English word ‘worship’. However, in Angami religious thought, the term *rüso* is never used when they talk about the rites and rituals they observed and performed. Instead, for every rite and ritual, the term *nanyü* is used exhaustively. A *nanyü* is performed on a variety of occasion, starting from the moment a child is born to his/her dead and ranging from an illness to the calendrical festivals. A *nanyü* may requires an imposition of certain prohibitions on the person or the social unit - a family, a clan, a *khel* or the whole village - that is performing it (Joshi, 2012, p. 83).

Understanding the working mechanism of *nanyü* in isolation is not possible without the two ritual terms *kenyü* and *penie*¹⁰ and vice versa, hence, these three ritual terms go hand in hand and at times overlapped. *Kenyü* and *penie* refers to a kind of prohibition which are seen as validating the *nanyü* since certain *kenyü* and *penie* has to be observed during the performance of *nanyü*.

Penie refers to prohibitions and rules which restrict or direct the physical movement of members of the social unit - the family, clan, *khel* or village - to which it is applied. Such prohibition is imposed at the times of funeral, epidemics, natural calamities, calendrical rituals and festivals, during which those observing a *penie* are *kenyü* (forbidden) to interact with outsiders, or leave their house or the village. This practice of isolation is labelled as ‘cloistering’ (cited in Joshi 2012, p. 83). It involves a break from daily work, abstinence from basic human needs like food and sex, and assuming a distinctive state of mind where the community involved in the ritual takes a break from the monotonous cycle of daily existence (Chophy 2019, p. 96-97). It also involves observances and meeting the conditions of the commonly held beliefs pertaining to the supernatural agents towards which the entire ritual is directed (ibid.). On the other hand, any forbidden act or taboo is termed as *kenyü*. It entails consequences if there is a breach of its principles by an individual or community.

¹⁰ The term *mena* used in Viswema village has the same meaning with *penie*.

In Angami calendrical ritual, there are a number of *penie* the community have to observe. *Teitho penie* observed for a good weather which is considered important for the Angami. This *nanyü* (ritual) is for thirty days and once the *penie* is announced by the village priest, it is *kenyü* for the community to dry clothes, especially white, else the breach of taboo will usher in heavy storm and destroy the paddies. However, it is believed that if they dry clothes which are dark shade in colour, they still have to clip a leaf along with the cloth. This act signifies diverting the attention of the *terhuomia* at the same time fulfil the condition of the ritual.

Another important *penie* observed by the Angami is *mi penie* (fire). In this *mi penie*, it is *kenyü* to make fire before the sunrise. One should not be careless with fire on that day. Care should be taken not to let the cooking curry overflows and subdue the burning fireplace else there is fear that there will be calamities associated with fire. On this *penie* day, it is *rüsuo rüshü kenyü* (taboo to talk to any outsider) and outsiders are forbidden to come inside the village gate, hence, a stick or a grass mark will be put up on the gate and when the outsiders passed by, they will know that there is a *penie* in the village and the villagers are observing *kenyü*, seeing the stick or grass mark, outsiders will dare not to enter the village. For the Angami there can be *penie* for any natural calamities: storm, torrential rainfall, earthquake, eclipse, landslides. Whenever there is an eclipse or earthquake, which are seen as unexplained phenomenon and beyond their comprehension, villagers will shout as an act of repelling and the village priest stands on an alleviated stones and announce there will be *penie*. Observing the *penie*, it is *kenyü* to go to the field and do physical work and *kenyü* to even fetch water. There are consequences for not complying with the *kenyü*. Ketsulhoulie Yhome¹¹ narrated,

There was an earthquake and *phichümia* (village priest) announce there will be *penie*, so we were told not to go to field. But a person among the villagers did not comply and went to the field. In turn his mouth became misalign. He confessed his action to the village priest after which the priest did *mha kevi cha* (literally mean asking good thing), an act of revoking his action and seek blessing from *terhuomia* saying ‘the sky is our father, the earth is our mother, god forbid this should not happen again’. After this, another day was assigned for the violator to observe *kenyü* again.

¹¹ Ketsulhoulie Yhome is 68 years old. Converted to Christianity in 1996. Interviewed on 13 February 2022, Kohima Village.

It is evident that the functioning of *penie* and *kenyü* goes hand in hand. While, the word *kenyü* also functions separately without being attached to *penie*. Hutton commented that “so loose is the use of the word ‘kenna’ that it may refer not only to the breach of the strict rule of a magico-religious observance or to the breach of a social law, theft for example, but to the most trivial matter of pure utility” (Hutton 1969, p. 190). The concept of *chini* in Sumi word, equivalent to *kenyü*, entails a moral and ethical responsibility; it binds the community into some sort of a moral community. It influenced the behaviour of the individual and their relationship with each other, the environment, and with spirits (Chophy 2012, p. 97). For instance, it is *kenyü* for a pregnant woman to eat monkey lest her child will grow up to be naughty; it is *kenyü* for a woman to eat the carcass of a wild animal lest there will be an escalate consumption of food in her family; it is *kenyü* for a man to touch woman’s weaving tools lest he will stumble when his enemy chase him in times of war; it is *kenyü* to sleep with one’s spouse during *penie* lest the act defile the observance; it is *kenyü* to bring home a plantain for his child birth ritual without asking the owner lest the child will grow up to be a thief . The infraction of taboo or prohibition associated with the ritual complex entails ill-luck and misfortune in this life and not so much in the next, which Chophy highlighted that the concept of *chini* changed when the Sumi embraced Christianity, it has come to be associated with malicious magic and witchcraft (ibid.). Likewise, for the Angami, the principles of *kenyü* are imparted to lead an unblemished and favoured life but with the coming of Christianity, the notion of *kenyü* is associated with concept of salvation, which they teach and profess on that it is *kenyü* to commit sins else indulging in sinful activities comes with the grave consequences in the eternal life. Another notable development is that with the embracing of new religious belief, the adherent of *Krüna* have to negotiate with the Christians regarding the imposition of *penie* and *kenyü* upon the villagers (detailed discussion in chapter 3).

2.4.5 Ritual and sacrifices concerning illness

In a world where sickness is being a part of survival, the Angami have their own explanation of physical exhaustion, nose bleeding, headache, diarrhoea, stomach ache, sudden fever and prolong sickness. They believe that illness is the handiwork of *terhuomia*, which is inflicted upon man as a result of the *terhuomia* being provoked.

If a person gets sick and his condition worsens, the family members will trace back to the places he went to before he got sick and will be suspicious that he must have been to an

unclean place. The Angami believe that it is beyond their mortal capacity to commute with the spirits and hence, they consult the *themoumia* (diviner) what they need to do in order to revoke their action.

One of the family members will take a little bit of *zu* (rice beer) and visit the diviner for *themou rüsa* (consulting the diviner). The *themoumia* will take the *zu* and say I will *a mho rünyu* (listening to my dream) and tell you tomorrow morning. So, the person will go back in the morning and ask the diviner what her dream tells her. After listening to her dream, the diviner will tell the family what they need to do.

One type is *u ruopfü kie* meaning ‘calling back the spirit’. In this type of illness, the spirit of the patient is believed to be held hostage by *terhuomia*. She will say *puo ruopfü puo zetuo mote le ha* ‘his spirit is not with him’, the patient visited an unclean place and the spirit of that place has held his spirit hostage. According to her advice, an offering called *usieshü* comprising of a chick, a piece of iron and tassels from the patient’s shawl and let the patient touched them. When the night comes, two persons will take this offering to *kharü sie* (outside or behind village gate). They will face towards the direction of the place where the patient last visited and call out his name three times *hatsie la vorlie* (come back to this way). They will say out *vor di relie* (come and go ahead) and return to the patient’s house. Once they reached his house, they will say *puo ze lavorshü te ho* (we have brought him back) and his family will replied *o vorlie vorlie* (okay, come, come). They are not allowed to come inside the house and one of the family members will bring a burning firewood and place it round under their foot as a sign of driving away the evil spirit that could have been following them. It is said that sometimes, the patient gets better before these two messengers returns home.

Another ritual called *Puo ruo chü* (substituting the patient’s spirit) is performed if *terhoumia* is believed to take away his/her spirit. According to the advice given by the diviner, one of the patient’s family member or usually the father in the family will take a chicken and go outside the *kharü*. He will let loose the chicken and say *terhuomia ha lielie di a ruopfü kela shi* (*terhuomia* you take this and spare my spirit). It is believed if the ritual

chicken is taken away by someone before *terhuomia* accept it, the patient will not recover. Seyeineino Kehie¹² narrated,

Once, my grandmother got sick, so my family took a bottle of *zu* and went to consult the diviner. The diviner told us ‘My grandmother’s father is going to take her away’ and asked us to bring a chicken to her to ask back my grandmother’s life. The diviner took the chicken, went to the jungle and gave it away to *terhuomia*. She asked back my grandmother’s life from *terhuomia* and add more days to her life. This is called *puo kelhou cha* (asking life).

The ritual of *u ruo chü* is also performed if a person gets sick suddenly or get high fever believed to be *terhuo dzülie* (afflicted by *terhuomia*) from his venture to a jungle or a place. For this, three or five or seven pieces of iron, (should be odd number), wash with water and let the patient touch the iron. The person who is initiating the ritual will make sure his garments are worn in the right order, hold his spear or dao and say the ritual word as the patient touched the iron *kechü kenyü, kesia kejü liekemvü lanu, kehourapuo nu terhuo dzüpfü vor ba shierie, thegei kemesa kevi n phouyie kezie ha pie n phousou chü sevo terhuomia tsüwa di n bu vi shürhuolie tuowe* (if you have been inflicted by a *terhuomia*, this clean iron will substitute you and you shall regain your health). After the completion of the ritual, it is taboo for the family to eat food. But if a bead from the patient’s necklace or tassels from the patient’s shawl is given away along with the pieces of iron then it is no longer taboo for family to eat and drink.

2.4.6 Religious specialists and the ritual position of the lineages

The rituals in an Angami village are conducted by certain religious specialist and they are considered important to the community. N.K. Das (1993) said that the holders of these offices are commonly called *pithimi* and in the past, they have remained in the centre of organisation of military operation and inter-village friendship alliances. The distribution of religious offices amongst several lineage groups has been of great help in re-enforcing the moral unity of the village. These officials are generally called *Nanyü keseko*.

¹² Seyienieno Kehie, interviewed on 12 April 2020, Mezoma village. She is 54 years old.

- I. *Zievo* - Hutton highlighted the variation found from village to village (Hutton, 1969, p. 187). The local term of village priest is called *Kemevo* in Viswema village, *Phichü-u* in Kohima village and *Zievo* in Khonoma and Mezoma village.

N.K. Das in his study on the Zounuo-Keyhonuo shows how the ritual sphere of the society is seen as a mechanism to make peaceful cooperation within a clan. Each clan in Viswema consists of several *sarra* (lineage) groups (however, it has been contested that an equivalent of clan is *sarra*), where some of which have specific ritual duties to perform through their 'genna-buras' (religious specialists). Das further stated that the ritual distinctions are maintained on the account of a prevalent myth system. Therefore, succession to the office of the *Kemovo* is considered as the highest honour and the *Zaphu* lineage of *Pavoma khel*, which provides the *Kemovo* is regarded as one of the most significant lineages in the village ritually.

In Kohima village, there should be two *Phichü* in the village, one from Tsiaramia clan of Lhisemia *khel* and the other from Pfüchatsumia *khel*. Between these two *Phichü*, it is the Tsiara *Phichü* that occupies a higher position because the Tsiara clan is regarded as the founder of the village hence, the Pfüchatsumia *Phichü* cannot carry on with the responsibility unless he gets the confirmation and blessing from the Tsiara *Phichü*.

While in Mezoma and Khonoma village, there is no particular clan designated to hold the position, instead the position is determined whether the person belong to *Thepa* or *Thevo* moiety.

With the reputation and honour that has been given to the position, it also come with huge responsibility and the successor has to undergo rigorous rituals. These rituals last for five days and a separate room is arranged for him and a young man called 'the helper' is to assist him. As the ritual starts, he will take his spear, go to the river to bathe. While returning he will bring back two stones. For the five days his foot is not supposed to touch the ground and he has to walk putting the two stones beneath his feet. He has to fast for the given five days, do his needs inside the room and not allow to talk to anyone.

As the village priest, he had to observe *genna* for all the dead in the village, initiate the offering and sacrifices on auspicious occasion on behalf of the village, initiate communal feast, scheduled all the festival days, announce the time of sowing and harvesting. Therefore, he is considered as the sacred head of the village and the repository of knowledge of the community.

- II. *Tsiakro*, called the First Sower is hold by an elderly man whose chief duty is to begin the sowing. Until he has formally inaugurated the sowing of the crop, it is taboo for any one from the entire village to sow. He comes from Tsükrü lineage of Zherima *khel* (written as clan in N.K. Das book) of Viswema. *Tsiakro* is generally chosen from amongst the intelligent men of the lineage (spelled as *Tsakro* in Viswema, Das, 1993, p. 148). In Kohima village, the position of the First Sower can be appointed either from the Kire or Keretsü clan of Dapfüsumia *khel*. If a person from a clan died as a First Sower, then the role will be given to the other and vice-versa. In Khonoma and Mezoma village, there is no play of clan or lineage in the selection process of *Tsiakro*. For the First Sower, two young boys who are still considered as chaste will be entrusted to inaugurate the sowing, therefore the *Tsiakro* can be a different person with every new given year (detailed discussion in chapter 4).
- III. *Liedepfü* (*Nousuopfü* in Viswema village and *Bilipfü* in Khonoma and Mezoma village) is an old woman who inaugurates the reaping of the crop. She may therefore be called as the First Reaper of the village. She is highly respected for her service and provided with a sort of payment in paddy by the villagers (Das, 1993, p. 148). In Kohima village, *Liedepfü* should be from the Theünuomia clan of Pfüchatsumia *khel*. It is said that if the First Reaper is from this clan, there will be a good harvest (detailed discussion in chapter 4).
- IV. *Kiso-pithi* is the caretaker of village gate¹³. Next to *Zaphu* lineage, *Kiso* is regarded as a superior lineage in the order (Das, 1993, p. 149). Traditionally the men of *Kiso* lineage of Pavo *khel* have been responsible for protection and ritual maintenance of the village gate. There is a ritual called *terhuo kikha* (closest translation will be closing the spirits door) for the *Kiso-pithi* to observe for the village. This ritual is observed at night when everyone in the village is asleep. For this he goes to the

¹³ This religious office is not seen among the Kohima, Khonoma and Mezoma village.

four gates of Pavo *khel*, placed a wormwood branch and does the same at his house entrance after which he walks backward and enter his house. The main purpose of this ritual is to prohibit the spirits from entering the village.

- V. *Liva-u*, is not the grave digger but he is assigned to do the funeral rites for the deceased and the deceased family. In Kohima village, the role of *Liva-u* can be taken up by a person who is either from the Tsiaramia clan of Lhisemia *khel* or Pfüchatsumia *khel*. Besides the funeral rites, he is also responsible to collect the fees for the priest, First Sower and First Reaper and give blessing to the new born. In Mezoma village, the person who occupies the office of the *Liva-u* is not permanent, in the sense that the deceased family can chose any person to initiate the funeral rites as long as he is not from the *khel* they belong to (detailed discussion in chapter 4).

2.4.7 Ritual position of women and the providential abundance of food

Malinowski observed that in an agricultural society, “there is a general emotional tension attached with the procuring of food” (Malinowski, 1948, p. 24). In the context of Angami, most of the rituals though not directly related to agriculture is associated with *mha cü pulie ketuo* (a frugal consumption of food). And since, it is the woman who oversee the functioning of a household: who look after the family’s granaries and keep track of everyday consumption of food in the kitchen, there are number of taboos which shape her life as a woman being the caretaker of family’s kitchen affairs. The taboo imposed on her life is not to restraint her but it is believed that if she breaks a taboo because of her negligence, there will not be enough food for the year besides, ill luck will befall on her brother’s life when he goes out for war, hunting and sports.

The day a girl child is born, the mother and the child will strictly follow some *kenyü* (detailed discussion in chapter 4). Once she grew up and reached 4-5 years, her parents will do a ritual for her, called *seleli*. On the day of the ritual, her father will kill a chicken and observe the position of the dying fowl. The crossing of right leg over the left leg indicates good omen over her life. He will make fire by *seguomiki*¹⁴ and make a separate hearth to cook the chicken. The cooked chicken cannot be eaten by anyone in the family except the girl who is observing the ritual. She has to eat the meat on that day before the

¹⁴ A traditional method of making fire. Fire made from the friction of split bamboo against of wood.

sunset and if she cannot finish the meat the leftover will be thrown or buried including the leftover rice and *zu*. After the completion of the ritual, the girl is considered *puo kenyü kemesalie te* meaning “she is being sacralised and cleaned”. The ritual of *seleli* is observed with the belief that her family will not run out of food once she gets married and manage her own family. The ritual marks an important phase in her life as she will be now imposed by all the *kenyü* as a woman. Besides, this ritual is important for her to take part in the next ritual called *theyukhukhu* which marks her womanhood. Therefore, her parents should remember to initiate *seleli* for their daughter.

Theyukhukhu nyi literally means ‘toad food festival’. It is called *te-l khukhu* in Viswema village. This festival is for the unmarried shaven head girl and damsel. For the Angami, a shaven head signifies a woman’s purity and it is *kenyü* for a woman to grow her hair before marriage, it is called *kemetho tha* meaning ‘meaningless hair’. If she grew her hair before marriage, it is a sign that she is betrothed to be married soon, hence, she cannot part take in the *theyu khukhu nyi*. In this festival, all sorts of nutritious food called *theyu khukhu* will be cooked by the parents only for her unmarried daughters to eat. Man cannot take part or eat the food. *Theyu khukhu* comprises of nutritious food like millet, pork, carpenter worms, crab, frog, snail, etc. This festival is celebrated with the belief that if a girl taste *theyu khutie* (toad food), her hand grown food will multiply and her granaries will never get empty.

Women play a significant role in times of harvest. It is an elderly woman who will inaugurate the harvest and along with the ritual associated to harvest she has to observe *penie* strictly for thirty days. In this duration of time, it is *kenyü* for her to come outside of her house and she is forbidden to talk to anyone. Within the family, it is the mother who will do the inauguration ritual and she is the first to taste the first harvest. It is her duty to do the ritual of sacralising the granaries (see also chapter 4). As a part of ritual, she has to cook frog and eat it, frog being known for its hibernation nature. Among the Angami, for every *nanyü* (ritual) to be started, it is the mother in the family who initiated the ritual with the ritual called *kijie*¹⁵. In case of a widower, he will invite an unmarried girl to do the

¹⁵ Pouring a little bit of *zu* (rice beer) in a cone shape plantain and fixed it to the main post of the house, this process of the ritual is called *kijie*.

ritual for him. The belief is that the family household is under the care of a woman, hence, women are associated with the ritual *kijie*.

It is taboo for woman to eat the carcass of domestic or wild animal killed by wild animal or tiger. It is a belief that the consumption of such meat by a woman will influence her to become a glutton and there will be *puo kitie kinu mha cü rüzie* (food depletes at faster rate), it will exhilarate the consumption of food in her family. It is also a taboo for woman to eat the meat of tiger, jackal, and fox. These animals are considered being wild in nature and kills whatever comes its way, hence, it is a taboo especially for woman to eat.

2.4.8 Veneration of ancestor spirit: Monolith of the death

In African religion, the ancestors hold an important place in their belief. They believe that human relationships are of paramount importance and these relationships continue with those who live beyond the grave. This whole fellowship between living and dead is called ‘the whole community’ (Shorter, 1978, p. 429). The ancestors are regarded as the symbols of a society’s moral ideals. To become an ancestor, one should have completed their course in the land of living and gone to the place of the dead while a man of moral bankrupt or who dies tragically cannot become an ancestor.

Likewise, the Angami also believe in the existence of soul after death and that it can continue to influence the living. And it is the duty of the living to do a ritual in name of the dead in every festival. Besides there is a particular ritual for the dead called *kesia mero*, the closest translation will be ‘pleasing the dead’. In this ritual, ‘monoliths are erected to perpetuate the memory of the dead’, but the ‘*genna* stones are not cenotaph’ (Hutton, 1969, p. 233). The whole process of the ritual and erecting the monolith for the death is known as *kesia mero*. Unlike the monolith of *cha* or *zhachü* (feast of merit), it has nothing to do with elevating the status. In Angami thought, *Cha* (feast of merit) is a *genna* a person voluntarily opted to do it but for *kesia mero* there is no personal gain but one does because he is obliged to do it. It is believed that if this *kesia mero*, the erection of stone and giving a feast to the community in the name of the death ones, is not done by the living (alive family members or relatives of the dead), there is a fear that life will come to a death end of sorrows and unsuccessful existence to the present and coming generations.

This ritual is observed according to different circumstances and also varies from village to village. In Kohima village, it is only the children of the person who has given a feast of merit can do this ritual. Neilakuolie Yiese¹⁶ narrated that there was once a person who have a good number of cattle but gradually, he became sick and his health deteriorated and so was his cattle. He went to the diviner to ask the reason and the diviner questioned him if he has any ancestor who had performed feast of merit, and so he asked around elders and find out it to be true. He was asked to do a *kesia mero* saying that *kesiamia n we bate* (the dead are luring around him) and that could be the reason why his health condition was deteriorating and so he did what the diviner had told him to do. The moment he began the ritual preparation wrapping rice with yeast, he gradually started to regain his health.

While in Khonoma and Mezoma village, any person who feel the need should observe the ritual. If a person wants to give feast of merit, he first has to do *kesia mero* for the dead in his family. It has to be done before any ritual for feast of merit starts, else it will bring misfortune instead of blessing. There were also cases if the generation of a lineage is not increasing or the line of descent is carried on by the only son in the family, he has to perform the ritual in his ancestor's name. This is because the Angami believe that if the living does not acknowledge the good deeds of his ancestors, his action will take a toll on his descendant to the extinction of his descent line. Casielie Casavi¹⁷ said his grandfather did *kesia mero* for thirteenth generation and erected thirteenth stones for each person. Another case is when a person got to inherit the properties of his relatives who passed away without any heir, it is said that he has to perform *kesia mero* and give a feast in his name. The Angami believe that it is not good for the person to inherit so many properties and hence, he has to do this ritual as an act of giving a share to the dead.

For this ritual, a sacred cow is killed. If the ritual is given in name of two persons, then two cows will be killed. Proper care should be taken in selecting the cow. The cow used for the ritual should be an unblemished one. The cow should not have a defected tail, ears and eyes. The fur should be in one colour or should not have grey stripes or patches which gives an unclean appearance. They will cook the meat and take it to the place where the

¹⁶ Neilakuolie Yiese, interviewed on 6th February 2022, Kohima village. He is 65 years old and got converted at the age of 45, in 2002. He is a retired govt. employee and a former deacon.

¹⁷ Casielie Casavi, interviewed on 7th October 2020. He is from Mezoma village. He is 54 years old and got converted at the age of 32. He is a govt. employee and a former pastor.

monolith is going to be erected for the feast. The skull of the cow is kept separately for the ritual.

The village priest will direct the ritual. He will pour a little bit of *zu* and say the blessing words calling out the name of the dead *no n chü n ba jütuo derie Dovizo*¹⁸ *no kimia n chü nba chü ntsü ya ho* (if you do not have a place to reside, Dovizo's wife have given you a place to sit). After pronouncing the blessing words, the priest will place the cow's skull on the erected monolith.

The feast will proceed at that very place and lots of meat will be distributed among the clan members. This meat is called *morhu*. The clan member will feast on this meat which has to be eaten on that day itself. It is a taboo to keep the meat for the next day so they have to give out the leftover meat to their relatives from different *khel*. If he could not complete the meat, he will again give it to his next relative and it passes on till the meat is over. The intention behind this *morhu* is to enable all the people especially the widow and orphan to get a taste of meat.

The ritual of *kesia mero* is initiated as a way of acknowledging and seek blessing from their ancestors. Acknowledging the good works of their ancestors; defended the community from war, constructed houses, field, village gate, bridge. If the dead souls are not given the due share of acknowledgement the Angami fears that their descendants will cease to exist and will not be able to produce sufficient food for the family.

¹⁸ Pseudo name. The name of the person giving the feast is call out.



Image 2.3: Monolith of the dead at Dzülubu in Mezoma village

Source: Fieldwork

2.4.9 *Kharu* (village gate) as a sacred gate

On entering an Angami village, the first thing one notices is the *kharu*, or village gate. It is not a mere wooden structure but *kharu* retains a prime ritual position in the traditional set-up (Joshi (2012, p. 62). It served as the entry and exit point of each *khel* (or clan) and village. As the only entrance to the *khel*, the *kharu* also served as the point outside which the ‘other world’ begins. It separates the outside from the inside, enemy from friendliness, and illness from prosperity.

It is believed that a successful construction of *kharu* will result in the increase of their progeny, decelerate consumption of paddies, prosperity of cattle and community, successful expedition in war, ensure honesty, cooperation and peace, and keep away sickness and death. Therefore, every minute detail from selection to the erection of *kharu* should not be taken as a trivial activity. The whole process of constructing and pulling of *kharu* shows that man can use and does use almost everything for religious purpose which can be understood in the line of the notion of sacred and profane given by Mircea Eliade

(1959). Eliade said that the sacred can manifest itself through different parts of the physical world such as trees, stones, etc. The sacred tree is not adored as a tree, instead they are worshipped because they show something that is no longer a stone or tree but sacred (Eliade, 1959, p. 12).

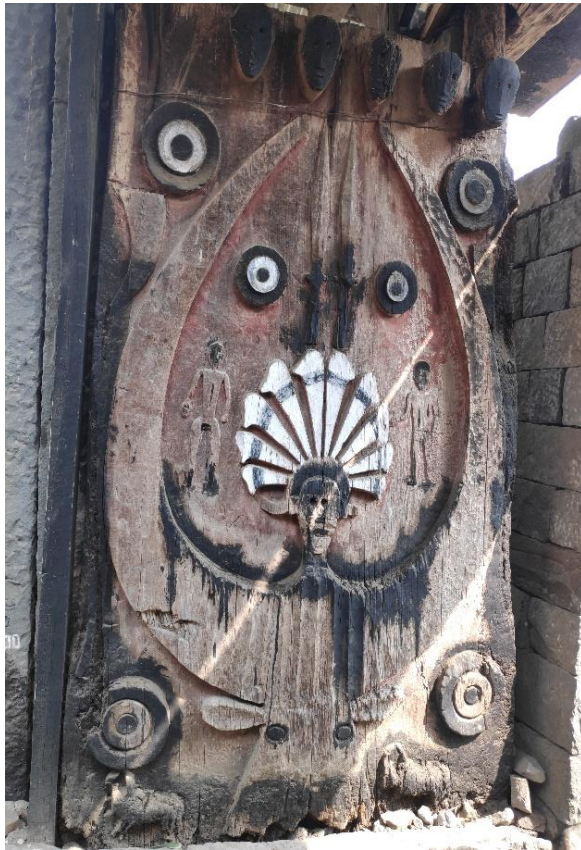


Image 2.4: Kharu of Khonoma village
Source: Fieldwork



Image 2.5: Kharu of Kohima village
Source: Fieldwork

Selection of the tree is done with proper care and examination for which certain criteria is needed to be taken into consideration. A tree which has a hollow and with broken branches are to be avoided as the Angami fear that making use of such tree with deformities will usher in chaos, disunity and poverty among the community. However, the physical fitness of a tree does not qualify its selection as *kharu* wood, unless supernatural sanction is conveyed through the medium of dreams. *Kharu* is simply not a massive plank of wood but adorned with motifs which are elegantly and elaborately curved and arranged. Every motif has a meaning: the central importance in a gate is allocated to the warrior. He is a head-hunter and saves the *khel* people from the threats of enemies and social calamities. The gate is both a symbol of *khel* unity and is also a description of the rituals and other

achievement of a *khel* (Marwah & Srivastava, 1986). There is a slight variation from village to village. The bulk of the gate is occupied by a Mithun head, which occupies an important position in the Angami social system and it signifies prosperity. The sun and moon signify a favourable weather for their crop, rice panicle implies a good harvest and the woman breast signifies fertility.

The Angami consider *kharu* as sacred. One of the respondents said *kharu* is like a prayer centre for the *Kriina* adherent. It delineates the sacred world from the profane world, thus locates the *axis mundi* as centre (Eliade, 1959). It regulates the routine life of the village and all the rituals are observed in alliance with the gate: starting from the moment a child is born, the incorporation of the child into the clan is not completed until the ritual of passing through the gate is done; the priest has to initiate offering in name of new born at *kharu sie* (backside or outside of the gate); the ritual of sanctification of body is not completed unless they go outside the gate and pronounce the blessing words; a marriage is not completed until the newly married couple pass through the gate; all the ritual for illness has to be observed at *kharu sie* (outside or backside of the gate); a spinster who does not see a possible marriage prospect can get married to the man figure on the gate and start growing her hair; in times of village *genna* a grass mark on the gate is a sign that outsiders are not allowed to enter the gate; in time of village *genna* if a person has to go outside the village, will placed two eggs at the gate step out. Therefore, *kharu* as a sacred gate plays an integrative role in the religious life of the Angami.

2.4.10 Festivals and agricultural cycle

In the traditional times, there was no such thing as beginning of the year or ending of the year, the year is counted basing on the seasons with the agricultural activities they have round the year. And the inauguration of the agricultural activities is announced with the completion of every festival. Hence the social life of the Nagas is also closely intertwined with their religious life, and their religion and religious festivals are in perfect harmony with the agricultural seasons (Linyü, 2004, p. 17). The reckoning of time is determined by the social activities. Similar case has been put up by Newell (1975), who observed that the traditional African 'time' does not really exist apart from human activity; time is created by human beings. Evan-Pritchard says of the Nuer:

Nuer do not to any great extent use the names of the months to indicate the time of an event, but generally refer instead to some outstanding activity in process at the time of its occurrence, e.g. at the time of early camps, at the time of weeding, at the time of harvesting, and it is easily understandable that they do so, since time is to them a relation between activities. During the rains the stages in the growth of millet and the steps taken in its culture are often used as points of reference. Pastoral activities, being largely undifferentiated throughout the months and seasons, do not provide suitable points. (Evans-Pritchard, 1940, p.100)

Likewise, for the Angami, time is a relation between activities. The calendric calibration based on agricultural cycle or what Hutton called 'Angami year' differs from village to village. The *Kemovo* takes cue from the Mekhrora (the place where the Tenyimia migrated from) where the ritual of *titho* (a rain making ritual) has to be initiated from there, followed by the preparation of festival *genna* in the southern region of Angami, like Viswema village. Therefore, the festivals following the inauguration of agricultural activity are always a few days ahead in the southern region in comparison to the western and northern region. In the calendric calibration the Angami also have the notion of *Nosü* (leap year). In this case, when the religious priest noticed that the sowing of seeds appears to be in advance as per the seasonal cycle, an adjustment will be made and a month called *keno* is added between January and February that very year, so that the sowing and harvest of crop will not get disrupted.

The 'Angami year' is a composition of *khriüphrü* meaning 'reading of moon' in which, each *khriüphrü* is consisted of twenty-nine days, a complete lunation. The counting starts from full moon to the night before new moon (new moon night is excluded in the count). In similar line with the Nuer, there is no precision unit of time but when they wish to define an occurrence of an event several days in advance, such as fixation of wedding date, they do so by reference to the phases of the moon, and precaution is taken to avoid the *khrijü* (new moon) literally meaning 'disappearance of moon'.



Image 2.6: Encryption of Visewma’s festivals and rituals on a monolith.

Source: Fieldwork

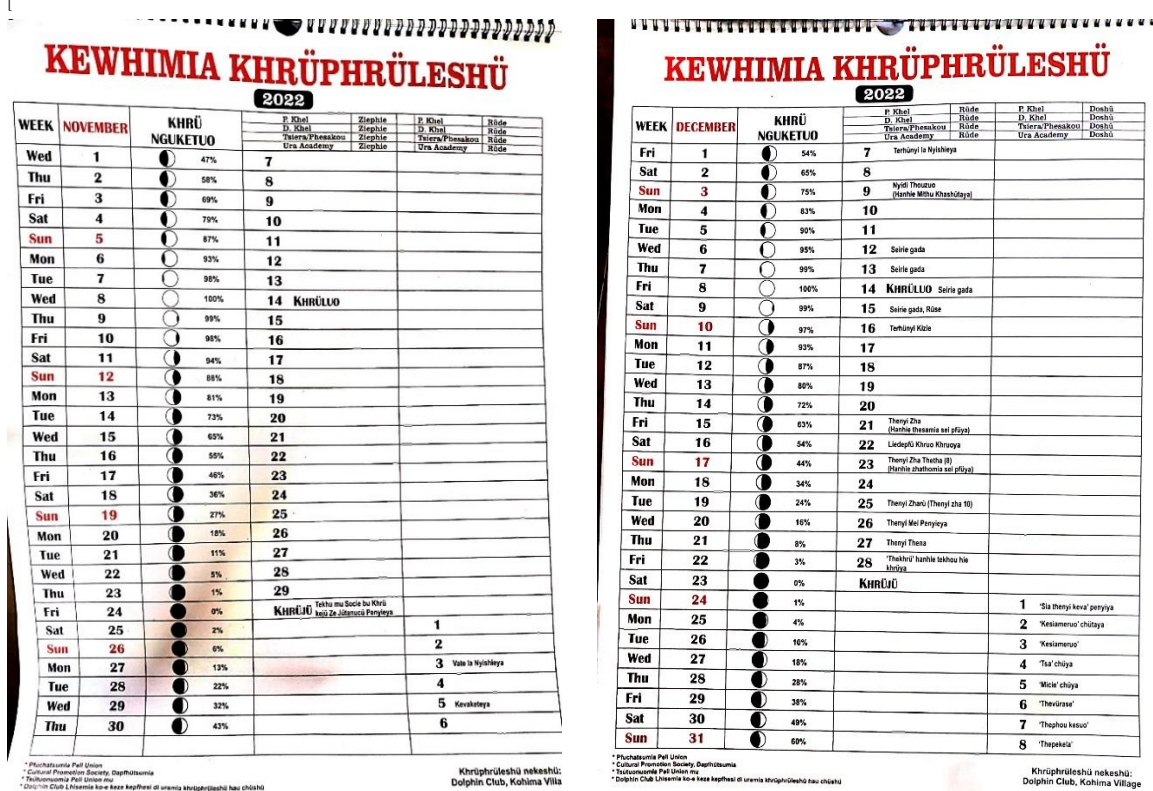


Image 2.7: The calendar of Kohima village depicting the differences of a traditional and Gregorian calendar.

Source: Fieldwork

The reckoning of time and its relation with the agricultural activities will be better explained with the festivals celebrated by the Angami. For the Angami, the festivals are not just a mere merry-making event, but there is a deeper meaning behind the celebration. Every festival is an announcement of an agricultural activity associated with sacred religious rituals. It should be noted that for the ease of general understanding the given festivals and gennas are used as a point of reference. As mentioned above every village has their own different ‘Angami year’ therefore, the following discussion will focus on Kohima village and the other villages will be mention if necessary.

1. *Terhünyi*: The festival of *terhünyi* corresponds to the month of November for Viswema village and in December for Kohima, Khonoma, and Mezoma village. After the harvest is completed and the paddies are accumulated in the barn, there is a ritual called *kevakete* (asking for a frugal consumption of food). In this ritual it is forbidden to eat rice before sunset so the person has to survive on yam, moong beans, sweet potato and rice beer. While observing this *genna* it is a taboo to talk to outsiders. Two days after this ritual is completed, the priest will announce the

festival of *terhünyi* after which the villagers have to observe *genna* without going to the field. On the same day the cows will be freed to roam around for some months and in this duration even if the cow damages the crops, none has the right to lodge complain against the cattle owner. Only after this the villagers can start the preparation for *terhünyi*. The festival starts with the mother performing the ritual *kijie* which last for ten days. It is in this duration the fees of *liedepfü* have to be collected. The festival end with a ritual called *thenyi thena*¹⁹ (it can be loosely understood as asking for forgiveness if their merry making has provoked the spirits). The completion of this festival marks the inauguration of ploughing and comes the beginning of a new lunar cycle.

Excluding the new moon, the villagers will start with their counting from the next day. As shown in the image 2.7, this new lunar cycle begins at the last week of December, however it will change again the next year. Now with the completion of *terhünyi* the villagers can proceed with the ritual of *kesia mero* (to appease the dead spirit). A day is fixed for the ritual of *thevü rase*, in this ritual two or three people will hold a rooster and let the villagers touch it pronouncing ‘may all my suffering and sickness pass to this rooster’ after which they will go behind the village gate and release it.

2. *Sekrenyi*: In Kohima village this lunar cycle coincides with the month of February which is called *Kezei* meaning *darkness*. According to the connotation given, the villagers avoid this month for the fixation of wedding date as there is fear that the married couple will get into depression and hamper their marriage. At the beginning of this lunar cycle, a day is fixed for millet *genna* which also marks the inauguration of seeds sowing, specifically for millet. The lunar cycle ends in the middle of February. With a new lunar cycle, the priest will announce the festival of *Sekrenyi*, the festival for the sanctification of body. This festival last for ten days (detailed discussion in chapter 4). With the completion of this festival, the *tsiakro* (first sower) will start the preparation for seeds sowing.
3. *Ngonyi*: This festival corresponds to the month of April. It is considered as one of the important festivals, because it marks the completion of sowing and the rituals are directed towards a healthy sprouting of the saplings. A day will be kept for the

¹⁹ This ritual has to be strictly observed on the last day of every festival.

women folk to catch fish and for the men to go for hunting and that night will be a time of feasting on their catch. On the sixth day, there will be a *genna* for millet and a *genna* for the animals, insects in the name that they will not destroy the growing seeds. For these *genna*, the villagers have to abstain from work.

4. *Kirunyi*: This festival corresponds to the month of May and the celebration last for five days. On the second day of the new lunar cycle, an elder from the Lhisemia *khel* of Kohima village will give the announcement for this festival. The next day he will inaugurate paddy transplantation and on account of this *genna* it is taboo for the villagers to engage in any field work. The inauguration of transplantation is followed by a *genna* for the owners of the cattle, this is because only cow is used in important rites like funeral and for a family who does not own cattle has to exchange their paddy with a cow. After the completion of the festival, the people will get ready for paddy transplantation. The transplantation month corresponds to the month of June.
5. *Chadanyi*: This festival falls in the month of August in Kohima village and it last for five days. With the announcement given by the priest, the villager will prepare for this festival meanwhile the next day is fixed for the villager's blacksmith to observe a *genna*. This *genna* is observed to avoid conflagration in the future. The festival starts with the ritual *kijie*. The next day, the whole village will clean the community path leading to their paddy field. In Mezoma village during *chadanyi*, there is a ritual call *thezukepu*²⁰ (rat ritual) which is observed to prohibit the destruction of crops by rodent. This ritual is initiated only by the male members of the assign Nyisenomia *khel*. Besides, it is also to put a check on the encroachment of the main path as one does not have any say if his property has been damaged by the group of people who are in charge of the ritual.
6. *Theyukhouphünyi* (toad festival): This festival is celebrated only for the young unmarried girls where all sorts of nutritious food will be cook by the parents only for the unmarried daughters to eat. This festival is important as it is celebrated with the believe that if a girl taste *theyu khutie* (toad food), her family will not run out of food once she gets married and manage her own family. Besides, in this

²⁰ This ritual is observed in naked hence take place at night. In this *thezukepu* ritual, the male members of Nyisenomia *khel* will catch a rat and taking the route of the main village foot path will come shouting passing through the other two *khels* till they reach the opposite end and release the rat outside the village gate. And as they pass through the *khels* it is taboo for anyone to take a look at this group.

lunar cycle, a *genna* day is fixed specifically to prohibit the withering of paddies. Another *genna* day is fixed to repel the rodent from damaging the crops and a day to cast away the possible storms. With the completion of these *gennas*, the *liedepfü* will inaugurate the harvest.

A new lunar cycle which coincided with the month of October, an important ritual called *teitho tei* is observed. This ritual is for thirty days and after every five days there will be a ritual. Though this ritual is initiated in Mekhrora everyone has to strictly adhere to the *genna* principles for which it is taboo to wash clothes and abstain from field work.

If there is anyone who wish to give feast of merit, it is in this lunation, they start the preparation by brewing rice beer and collecting firewood. The work is collectively carried out by the village youths. For the preparation of the feast, the men with a good physique will be selected to pound the rice and on the other hand the young maidens will come in their best traditional attire. Therefore, it is also a time for the youths to select their partner for marriage.

It is apparent that there is no fixated months or year for the Angami. For them, time exist only in relation with their activities.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed *Krüna* as the indigenous religion of the Angami Nagas. It examined the Angami religious universe, the belief in the existence of supernatural beings and how they manifest themselves and change the course of nature and of human events. Their beliefs are manifested in their gender relation, clan and lineage structure, community feast, festivals and agricultural cycle. It has shown that the Angami are not just mere worshipper of *terhuomia* or evil spirits as branded by colonial official and missionaries. And that a single aspect of religious belief cannot generalised their religion. It shows that for a better understanding of religion it is important to include insights from an Angami point of view.

References

- Asad, T. (1993). *Genealogies of religion: Discipline and reasons of power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Beyers, J. (2010). What is religion? An African understanding. *Theological Studies*, 66(1), 1-8.
- Booth, N. S. (1975). Time and change in African traditional thought. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 7(2), 81-91.
- Butler, J. (1875). Rough notes on the Angami Nagas and their language. *Asiatic Society of Bengal*, XLIV(4), 309-346.
- Chidester, D. (2003). Primitive texts, savage context: Contextualizing the study of religion in colonial situations. *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, 15(3), 272-283.
- Chophy, G. K. (2019). *Constructing the divine: Religion and world view of a Naga tribe in North-East India*. New Delhi: Monahar Publisher and Distributors.
- Cox, L. J. (2007). *From primitive to indigenous: The academic study of indigenous religion*. England: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Das, N. K. (1993). *Kinship politics and law in Naga society*. Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India.
- Durkheim, E. (1912). *The elementary forms of religious life*. London: G. Allen & Unwin.
- Eliade, M. (1959). *The sacred and the profane: The nature of religion*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Elwin, V. (Ed.). (1969). *The Nagas in the nineteenth century*. Bombay: Oxford University Press.
- Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (1940). *The Nuer*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Fitzgerald, T. (2014). Encompassing religion, privatized religions and the invention of modern politics. In T. Fitzgerald (Ed.), *Religion and the secular: Historical and colonial formation* (pp. 211-240). New York: Routledge.
- Furer-Haimendorf, C. V. (1939). *The naked Nagas*. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd.

- Hutton, J. H. (1969). *The Angami Nagas* (2nd ed.). Bombay: Oxford University Press.
- Johnson, G., & Kraft, S. E. (Eds.). (2017). Introduction. In *Handbook of Indigenous Religion(s)* (pp. 1-24). Boston: Brill.
- Joshi, V. (2012). *A matter of belief: Christian conversion and healing in North-East India*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Karlsson, G. B. (2003). Anthropology and the 'indigenous slot' claims to and debates about indigenous peoples' status in India. *Critique of Anthropology*, 23(4), 403-423.
- Malinowski, B. (1948). *Magic, science and religion and other essays*. USA: Kessinger Publishing.
- McGuire, M. B. (2012). *Sociology of religion* (5th ed.). New Delhi: Rawat Publications.
- Misra, S. (1998). The nature of colonial intervention in the Naga Hills, 1840-80. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 33(51), 3273-3279.
- Mitchell-Green, B. L., & Kurtz, L. R. (2016). Indigenous religions. In L. R. Kurtz (Ed.), *Gods in the global village: The world's religions in sociological perspective* (pp. 129-150). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Nongbri, B. (2013). *Before religion: A history of a modern concept*. London: Yale University Press.
- Plavoet, J. G. (1993). African traditional religions in the religious history of humankind. *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 6(2), 29-48.
- Pobee, J. (1976). Aspects of African traditional religion. *Sociological Analysis*, 37(1), 1-18.
- Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. (1945). Religion and society. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 75(1/2), 33-43.
- Schilbrack, K. (2012). The social construction of "religion" and its limits: A critical reading of Timothy Fitzgerald. *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, 24(2), 97-117.
- Shohe, L. (2021). *A study of socio-cultural impact of Christianity in Naga society* [Doctoral dissertation, Nagaland University].

- Shorter, A. (1978). African traditional religion: Its relevance in the contemporary world. *28(4)*, 421-431.
- Tafjord, B. O. (2017). Towards a typology of academic uses of 'indigenous religion(s), or eight (or nine) language games that scholars play with this phrase. In G. Johnson & S. E. Kraft (Eds.), *Handbook of Indigenous Religion(s)* (pp. 25-51). Boston: Brill.
- Thong, T. (2012). 'To raise the savage to a higher level': The Westernization of Nagas and their culture. *Modern Asian Studies*, *46(4)*, 893-918.
- Turner, H. (1977). The primal religions of the world and their study. In V. C. Hayes (Ed.), *Australian essays in world religions* (pp. 27-37). Australia: Lutheran Publishing House.
- Turner, S. B. (1991). *Religion and social theory* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Tylor, E. B. (1920). *Primitive culture* (6th ed.). London: Murray.
- Woodthorpe, R. G. (1882). Notes on the wild tribes inhabiting the so-called Naga Hills, on our North-east Frontier of India. *Part 1. The Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, *XI*, 57-59.
- Wouters, J. J. P., & Heneise, M. (Eds.). (2017). Introduction. In *Nagas in the 21st century* (pp. 1-11). Kohima: Thimphu: Edinburgh: The Highlander.
- Xaxa, V. (1999). Tribes as indigenous people of India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, *34(51)*, 3589-3595.