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Editorial Note

Research is a crucial component in our lives that permeates through the realms of higher education. It aids in the advancement of knowledge, improved pedagogy, the enhancement of institutional reputation, and promotes funding which are crucial to the overall growth of an institution. Within the experience of empirical studies, the researcher, be it student or teacher, finds better scope to hone a wide spectrum of skills. The immense benefits of a consistent and vibrant research environment are the impetus behind the publication of the annual multidisciplinary Dimapur Government College Journal.

Providing a wide platform for the avid scholar, this issue contains twelve papers ranging from topics as diverse as food crops, pre-colonial Naga society, issues of identity, midwives, gender, role of media, different aspects of literature, sexual health of students and the implementation of the NEP 2020 and FYUGP. They have been written by writers across academia. We are confident that readers will find these papers relevant, thought-provoking and practical.

The papers have been thoroughly assessed by qualified reviewers for whose contributions the editorial board remains grateful.

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CONTENTS

Editorial Note

List of Reviewers

1. **Transitioning to FYUGP and the Challenges of Multidisciplinary Approach: Perceptions of College Teachers in Nagaland** **1-24**
   – Prof. Buno Liegise, Narola Chuba & Katikala

2. **Implementation of NEP 2020 in Higher Education: A Review** **25-44**
   – Narotila Imchen

3. **Evolving perspectives in North-Eastern literature: An Analysis of Two Works by Dhruba Hazarika** **45-53**
   – Alemtula & Washitemjen Jamir

4. **Pre-Colonial Society of Nagas: The Socio-Economic, Cultural and Political Uniqueness** **54-71**
   – Dr. G. Phukato Sema

5. **The Chakhesang Nagas of Manipur: Identity Issues and Hazy Boundaries in the Post-Colonial Era** **72-89**
   – Lerete-u Khutsoh

6. **Gothic Echoes in Rebecca's Tale and Wide Sargasso Sea** **90-106**
   – Dr. Maongkala Longchar & Tolino Yeptho

7. **The Role of Indigenous Kepvugha-kenoncawa (traditional midwives) among the Rengma Nagas** **107-120**
   – Neisenuo Apon Rengma

8. **Understanding the Treasures of Wisdom: Analysis of the Liangmai Folktales** **121-139**
– Wingamlubou Newmai & Dr. Ngutoli Y Swu

9. **Tenyimia Kelhouzho Kevi (Tenyimia Cultural Values)** **140-153**
– Dziesevituo Sachü

10. **Examining Media's role as a Change Agent in the Age of Information Explosion** **154-168**
– Neiketu Siam

11. **Sexual Health Awareness among Post Graduate Students of Nagaland University** **169-198**
– Yooluti Suchiang & Dr. Neizo-ü Mero

12. **Dimensions of taro (colocasia esculenta) as a food crop in social ties among Konyak and Phom Nagas** **199-208**
– R. Arangba Pongener

8. Understanding the Treasures of Wisdom: Analysis of the Liangmai Folktales

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Abstract:

The Naga tribes inhabit the Indian State of Nagaland and other Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur and the neighbouring country like Myanmar. They have a rich tapestry of cultural heritage that has been passed down orally over the centuries. Among the oral tradition, the folktales of each Naga tribes not only forms a basis of understanding the Naga society as it existed in the past but also the religious beliefs, traditional practices and teaches moral lessons.

The Liangmai Nagais a sub-tribe of the Zeliangrong tribe that primarily resides in the Tamenglong district and Senapati districts in Manipur and Peren district in Nagaland. There are 36 native villages in Manipur and 5 native villages in Nagaland. Like all other Naga tribes, the Liangmai Naga has a rich cultural heritage and when we glean the oral tradition, the folktales are embedded

in the very essence of the being of the Liangmai people. With the view that Naga folktales were always the first means of fostering knowledge in a child's mind about the culture by the elders during the forefathers' time, this case study aims to explore the treasures of our ancestor's knowledge through the folktales that was passed down to the generations orally. This research work also makes an attempt at reconstructing the past of the ancestors through documentation and analysis of the folktales.

Keywords: Naga, Liangmai, Folktale, Tangible, Intangible

INTRODUCTION

Among the Naga tribes, Zeliangrong is a complex community for the other tribes to comprehend sometimes. The term 'Zeliangrong' means the three brothers namely Zeme, Liangmai and Rongmai. Usually, the word 'Zeliangrong' is often used by the resident of those in Manipur state. In Nagaland the only word recognized by the people is Zeliang.

The Zeliangrong tribe is spread across three states of the North-East India namely Assam, Nagaland and Manipur. Though these three brothers are separated by geographical and political demarcation the Zeliangrong community from the state of Manipur and Assam are also recognised as the Naga tribe.

The Liangmai Naga is a sub-tribe of the Zeliangrong tribe that primarily reside in the regions of Tamenglong district and, Senapati district of Manipur. They are also found in

the Peren district of Nagaland. There are 36 native villages in Manipur and 5 native villages in Nagaland excluding the new sub-villages. Majority of the population belong to Christianity few people from Tening village under Peren district in Nagaland that practices Heraka cult (Ancestral worship practice). The Liangmais has celebrated 100 years of Christianity from 15th - 17th of 2023 at Tamei, Manipur.

The Liangmai Naga has a slight variation in terms of language/accent, traditional attires, folk dance, folklores and customs. However, Liangmai people celebrate their common festival every year on 30th October (Chaga Hiu) known as '*Chaga Ngee*' or '*Chaga Gadi*' which is a celebration of post-harvest festival seeking blessing, sanctification and purification from Tingwang (god).

The Liangmai also has a rich cultural heritage which has been passed down from their forefathers as a source of their identity. Among the numerous oral tradition that reverberates in the hearts of the Liangmais, this paper looks at the documentation of the folktales and analyzing their significance.

Methodology

For this research qualitative method was used. Qualitative methods include ethnography, grounded theory, discourse analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis. As said, this study primarily employed the Ethnographic method of interview such as collecting audio recording, video recording and photographs.

The data collections of the primary process were telephonic conversation, audio recording first-hand written notes, raw materials which was previously interviewed and stored in a free website, first-hand materials questionnaire to the elders through telephonic calls to understand certain phrase and resort to translating each data in details as provided.

In the same manner, the analysis and the interpretation of each content were precisely harmonized to create and conclude this work.

Liangmai Naga Folktales

Folktales are collection of traditional stories that has been narrated orally from one generation. The narrations are closely related to storytelling and folksongs. There are difference between folktales and folklores though they are tied together. Folklore is a broader term that encompasses various cultural expressions, while Folktales are a specific type of Folklore that focuses solely on narratives which is characterized by their transmission across generation, generally containing the elements of moral lessons.

Emphasizing on the close relation on the context given, Phurailatpam Jayalaxmi has clearly mentioned in his/her article, 'Folklore Study And Its Importance', "*The term 'Folk' suggest people belonging to different groups which shared a common factor, language, religion, culture and traditions. The knowledge of such kind of traditions and culture is known as folklores. The very notion of FOLK conjures up the feeling that it belongs to the field of illiterate and marginalized people. It is a fact that the oral tradition, on which the folklore*

is based, is often used as a tool by the subaltern groups as a voice to their predicaments" (Jayalaxmi, 2010, para 5)

Folktales are also a significant aspect of the oral traditions that shape the cultural identity of the indigenous communities which serve as a vehicle for communicating shared values, moral lessons and cultural heritage.

Originating from the collective experiences of a society, folktales often reflect the customs, beliefs, historical background and norms of the culture existed today. Folktales transcend geographical boundaries, appearing in myriad forms across different and similar cultures featuring both animal and human protagonists engaged in trials and tribulations.

The themes of the Folktales are often about the nature of men and the struggle between the good and the bad. Therefore, it serves not only as an entertainment but also educational-tools to impart wisdom and moral guidance. Therefore, through the folktales one gain insight into the cultural tapestry of humanity, where each tale contributes to the rich narrative of the shared experiences and existence of a community.

Types of Folktales

Folktales can be classified into various types based on their themes, structures and narrative elements. It can be broadly categorized into several main types such as:

Myths & Creation Stories/ Creation Myths:

This genre are sacred accounts that are believed to be

true, often about Gods, supernatural heroes or natural phenomenon, tied to belief system and does not have roots in real people or events, it explains why the world is the way it is; The Liangmais also have folktales that come under this category relating to creation myths that attempt to explain the origins of the world, human beings, animals and various phenomena in folktales such as 'Bamkala & Nsokliu', 'The Origin of The Zeliangrong Naga', 'The Cave of Thalon' and 'The Early Life of Human', etc.

The Cave of Thalon

Long time ago, there was a cave in the village of Thalon near Tamenglong. It is believed that it was created long time ago by Puichamiu, the brother of god, Charahwang. The cave had eight entrances. Tradition has it that the northern entrance was located in the village of Magulong which is close to the border of Nagaland. The southern entrance is at the foot of mountain Liangkhonkhoukha (Cliff range in Magulong village). If one entered the cave from the south, it was only a short distance to its centre. At the centre of the cave, there was a rock in the shape of a seated elephant. The elephant was believed to be Puichamiu himself (lord Vishnu/Ganesha-one of the god of Hinduism)

In the course of time, the cave became the home of thousands of bats. Young boys and girls would go there to catch bats. The largest of the bats in the cave was completely white, and it was forbidden to harm it because it was believed to be the spirit of the cave. Once, a pair of

lovers made this cave their secret meeting place. During one of their rendezvous in the cave, they were throwing a stone at the bats for fun and one which was thrown by the boy accidentally hit the white bat. All of a sudden, the cave started shaking violently. The girl ran out in panic, but the moment she was outside, the entrance was blocked completely by a big boulder imprisoning her lover inside. Suddenly, Tanghotpiu, the village fool, appeared near her, and she begged him to do something to rescue her lover. Tanghotpiu agreed but warned her not to laugh at the method he was going to use. He began striking the stone with his elongated manhood creating a small hole, the girl could not contain her laughter for long. Tanghotpiu became offended and stopped immediately and left her. Utterly disappointed, the girl came home and took the food back for her beloved, whom she fed through the small hole. every day. One day the boy told her not to come anymore because he had heard of the mountain gods plotting to eat him on the great feast the next day. The girl defied the request and went again the next day but she found the entrance to the cave was opened but her lover was missing. She also saw the tell-tale signs of a big feast, which must have taken place only a little while ago. She wept bitterly and returned home in great despair.

Even today, every prospective bride from the village is required to visit the cave accompanied by the villagers. Inside the cave, she must shed tears in memory of the girl who had lost her beloved. Then the villagers sing and dance. A hollow boulder is used as a drum. After a great deal of merrymaking, they return home to perform the marriage rites.



Figure 1: The Cave Of Thalon

Legends:

This genre is about the past human life ; often based on some form of fact, events designed to portray about historical account and life of the people. The record talks about the hero's journey, challenges and triumphs. Examples are the tales of 'Chiunuibou', 'Hungenang The Warrior' and so on.

Hungenang The Warrior

The legendary story from the village of Sinkara, in present Tamenglong District, is about the great warrior named Hungenang, who was famous for his great valour and strength during the period of head hunting. Once a horde of raiders were harassing innocent villagers. The

people came seeking for his help and protection. Always eager to help the needy, Hungenang gave them protection and later, he married and settled in their village. In course of time, he became the father of four sons and two daughters. Hungenang's fame as a man of immense courage and great kindness continued to spread.

There are heroic story of Hungenang rescuing an orphan from a hoard of head hunters. Despite his ill health, at the desperate request of the poor widow, Hungenang ran after the raiders – with a machete in hand and saved the orphan from the head-hunters.

Another time, as he was walking along the Biuki (Barak river), he stopped to see a large crowd gathered on the banks helplessly watching the horrifying scene of a young girl being dragged into the river by a huge python. Hungenang pulled his dao out and jumped into the river and rescued the girl from the big python.

Back in the village, Hungenang built a strong high wall around his house, for he had learnt that his old enemies were still lusting for his blood. One day his house was attacked by the enemies. While he was fighting against the enemies his eldest son came to his rescue and killed a great many of the enemies, however, the enemies were too great in number and his son was killed right at the entrance to the house. Hungenang realizing that he would be overpowered very soon by the enemies told to his wife and children:

'*You are the wife of a great warrior; the time has come for you to show courage befitting such a wife: It cannot be that*

the enemies would collect the heads of the ones dear to me. We must protect our honour. I shall kill you all but the youngest – who will live one day to take revenge on my enemies. So, prepare yourself for what must be'.

The wife then craned her neck out with great fortitude, and the children followed – all but the youngest. Overcome though he was with grief, Hungenang quickly buried the dead ones and prepared himself for the next move. He took his son and tied it securely around his chest. To distract his enemies, he took the *mariukuang* (bamboo basket used for keeping rice), put the heavy wet shawl in it, and flung it out across the ground outside as far as possible. As the raiders rushed at the mariukuang he jumped over the wall and managed to lose himself in the surrounding jungle.

Hungenang, with the help of his son inflicted pain and suffering on the enemies. He did not spare even women and children as revenge for his wife and children. Thus, the Liangmai warrior's code was changed by Hungenang in pursuit of his revenge; if not, normally a Liangmai warrior would never hurt a woman or a child. Hungenang, as long as he was young and strong, no one dared to come near him, but later old age caught up with him. One day the sons of his vanquished enemies raided his house and killed him. "*So, killing leads to more killing and it takes an eternity for the cycle of killing to end.*"

Hungenang was a great warrior, and his intention was to save the people from enemies. Due to such selfless nature, he was known as a *liangtuong*, which means a selfless human who is a liberator or an ideal human being giving

his/her life for others.Hungenang is not just a selfless hero but a saviour of his people, his family and their dignity. When we observe Hungenang according to his own perspective, his actions of killing his own wife and children was justified since he did it so that his enemies would not gloat that they just did not kill a legendary warrior but also his entire family.

Fables & Trickster:

They are short stories that typically convey a moral lesson, often featuring animals; Trickster focuses on clever characters who use their wits to overcome challenges, such as "How the Fox fooled the Tiger" from the 'Stories And Legends Of The Liangmai Nagas' by Sujata Miri and example of fablesinclude "The deal between Man and the Rat" from the 'Stories And Legends Of The Liangmai Nagas' by Sujata Miri.

Many folktales were documented through this research and an analysis is made in order to substantiate how folktales play a very important role for the indigenous communities like the Liangmai to understand their culture and derive a sense of identity from the stories that have been passed down over the generation. An interesting side of the Liangmai folktales is that most of these stories are substantiated by places, trees, animals and others in nature. Many of the belief systems of the Liangmai are also derived from such folktales for instance, there is a massive pond called 'Chiang-Jai' on top of a hill of the Chiang's village, Tamei Area; Tamenglong Discrtict, Manipur. This pond was not man-made but a natural gift

from mother nature. Its length goes up to 320 ft. and 220 ft in its breadth. It is tsaid that the British built a bungalow on the side of the pond during the British rule in India, attracting many tourists and the Bungalow served as their lodging place. However many people did not know about the existence of the pond. The significance of the pond lies on fact that the pond which is located on top of the hill above ground water level never runs dry. If the water runs dry or its water level decreases, it was believed to be a bad omen and something bad would happen to the villagers.

In the village of Kuilong, Tamenglong Disctrict, Manipur. There is a place called '*Phelaung*' where all the deaths gather together and the spirit ntupui was also believed to be present. There was also a mirror (*chahiu kuang*) and *Chakaduidi,* as told by the elders.

There is a belief that the spirit of the death has to cross a river to enter the world of the deaths or hades (*Charuidi*).

In the village of '*Nkou*', there is a Phallus of the spirit. If there is no rain for days (*Tingteng Metheng*), someone from the village has to turn the Phallus up-side down. After that rain occurs which continues to be a wondrous sight.

Summary Conclusion

An overview of this study explores the genres of Myths & Creation myths and legends, though all the stories couldn't be elaborated, a short summary is provided on some of the folktales in order to understand the significance and

the connection of each to the present cultural heritage of the Liangmais.

The Origin Of The Zeliangrong Naga enables us to understand how Nagas were divided, furthermore it throws light on how the brothers of Zeliangrong were sub-divided into sub-tribes of Zeliangrong Naga and from explain the roots of migration and spreading into different regions (Nampibou Marinmai IIS).

*The Early Life Of Human*tells us about how the humans, spirits/ghost and wild animals were once brothers but circumstances surrounding their innate nature stopped them from living together resulting in the humanssettling on the hilly and mountainous area. Most importantly it reveals the presence of mother goddess and supreme god which shows that the forefathers believed in gods, keeping in mind that we were the children of gods since time immemorial.

Bamkala & Nsokliu is the most interesting tale as it explores the practices and culture of family life, the role of both men and women, the significance of medicinal black turmeric, Hoopoe(*chapaung rui reng* which is believed to have medicinal properties in its feathers), banana plants, relation with Python, the explanation of the sudden earthquakes and the common phrase which we usually shout during the earthquakes, "*Chamai Bamme, Chamai Bamme*" (Ramkiudinbo Ziunamai, pastor of Liangmai Baptist Phumling New Jalukie).

Becoming The Wife Of A Python was originally called '*Tasen Nou Kathiubo Racham*'. It reflects to some extend on the

daily life of a young virgin and shows the power of decision making of the mother in the Liangmai community since the forefathers' times, it also reveals the patriarchal system through the role of a greedy father, the system of messenger, the way the man and woman maintain their relationship status during those days. Perhaps, the question of whether Pythons are related to the god of wateror not could be seen, it also points toward the relation of Pythonwith indigenous Liangmai and teaches us the lesson to not be envious of other's success without knowing the real depth of struggle they might faced to acquired such achievements (Ramkiudinbo Ziunamai, pastor of Liangmai Baptist Phumling New Jalukie).

The Cave Of Thalon tells us to respect the beliefs of cultural importance connected with the spirits. It is about the young lovers who were separated because of their action by attempting to hurt the peculiar white bat which is believed to have connection with the spirit. The young man tried to hurt the bat because his lover likes the bat which resulted in the tragedy of their love story. It also revealed the character of Ganesha a Hindu god which may arouse the curiosity why the traditional religion of the forefathers 'Heraka' is so much connected with the Hinduism today (Dr. M. Maisaungdibou And Mrs. Kichangdinliu).

As discussed, through the study of Liangmai's folktales, there is a better understanding and broader sense on how significant and interesting it is to explore the theme of traditional folktales which though this research is

referred to as a "Treasure of Wisdoms from our ancestor" as it has been passed down from one generation to the other over many centuries. The motive behind the theme is a clear stated intentions of folktales that does not just provide information but lead to something beyond that which could be applied practically in the social set up. However, it is also to be noted that such perspective does not aim at reviving the superstitious outlook and ritual practices of the past but focusing on the importance of preserving the culture and identity that one derives from understanding such narratives.

This study mainly emphasized on the genre of myths and legends. Through the study of the folktales of the Liangmai, it is understood that folktales are one of the key and primary elements in unlocking the potential truth in the fields of History, Archaeology, Anthropology, Sociology and Linguistic study because the Naga history or tribal history and their evidences are, primarily, deeply rooted in the folktales rather than any other sources. Besides, folktales may not be the purest evidence due to the verbal transmission of information yet it is the living evidence through which one may find the old century truths.

Another aspect of folktales is that folksongs were usually composed after the folktales and those important cultural heritage sites or geographical features are usually connected to folktales which may prove that folktales are the basic knowledge in understanding the tribal culture and history. Moreover, these folktales are interesting subject to hold a discussion with people of all ages. Be it

friends, elders and most interestingly with the children. Discussing and narrating folktales empowers and enlightens both the narrator and the listeners, boosting moral and ethical values, cultural identity awareness and appreciation for other culture, manners and worldview.

Folk tales connects to a cultural heritage through songs, tales, sites and traditions. Folktales cover a very wide range of cultural topics and identities, finding significance in nature which can be either a banana plants, banyan tree or old age tree, rivers, python, weaving clothes, ring-well, flora and fauna, spirits, earthquakes, even akhuni (fermented soyabean paste) and so on. From the folktales, one may recognize the role of both men & women; a mother's role, a daughter's role, a father's role, a lover's role, a brother's role, etc. Likewise, one may picture the practices, rituals and lifestyle of our ancestors like daily chores, festivals, the struggle of an orphan during those days, social interaction, glory and praise of the warriors and their struggles, etc.

A very interesting fact about the folktales is that, it does not confine to just high social class people but it is connected to everyone and the common people usually remain the main subject. One constraint about the folktales is its reliance of course from the narration of a family or group of people, therefore the truths that we observed may be just from the view of the window or an open door. Inspite of the limitations, there is no doubt that for indigenous communities, folktales serve as a very important source of understanding one's culture and identity deeper.

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