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Nagas in the 21st century

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The title of this special issue; 'Nagas in the 21st Century', is both an adaptation and a (modest) self-proclaimed sequel to Verrier Elwin's (1969) iconic *Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*. In this anthology, Elwin introduces and brings together a collection of administrative reports, tour diaries, and ethnographic descriptions on Naga tribes, all written in the 19th century. The book was first published in 1969, five years after Elwin's demise, and was made possible through the efforts of N.K. Rustomji (later author of *Enchanted Frontiers* 1971) who had been closely associated with Verrier Elwin and gladly accepted 'Mrs. Elwin's and the Oxford University Press' request to tie up the loose ends of the manuscript' and prepare it for publication' (Rustomji 1969: vi). Elwin's anthology soon turned into an important reference on Naga colonial history and society, and this status it has retained since.

Both during and after his life, Verrier Elwin had a prominent presence in debates about India's 'tribal question', and he has been variously celebrated and criticized for his writings, philosophy of NEFA (Elwin 1957), and lifestyle (Cf. Guha 1999). Subba and Som (2005: 1) write thus: 'The presence of Verrier Elwin in various academic fora, writings on tribes of India, and the writings on Northeast India in particular is heavy even about forty years after this death.' Much of what has been written about him, they continue, 'either eulogized him or was acrimoniously critical of him as a person and writer.' While Elwin did not have a formal degree in anthropology, his long and intimate knowledge of a number of tribes, both in Central and Northeast India, 'gave him the identity of an anthropologist that even his most staunch critic, Ghurye, did not contest' (Subba and Wouters 2013: 199).

But while this special issue takes Elwin's book as its point of departure, its contributors and contributions are not about Verrier Elwin. Rather, they are about the peoples that appeared in Elwin's anthology, and about some of the changes, continuities, and 'changing continuities' (Schulte-Nordholt 2005) that have taken place in Naga society since these early writings on Naga communities, cultures, and customs. That said, we nevertheless start with a few caveats Elwin (1969: 1) himself emphasized about the contents of the Naga colonial archive. 'This record', Elwin (1969: 1) wrote in his introduction, 'is not presented as a correct picture, but to illustrate how outsiders looked at the Nagas at the time. There are certainly many mistakes of fact, misunderstanding of custom and institutions; almost everything is very different now.' The 114 reports and accounts that appeared in the volume were also clearly written for European audiences and fellow administrators. They were never meant to be read in the light of post-colonialism or by Nagas themselves (Wouters 2012: 119). Elwin's volume was about Nagas, but with few, if any, Naga voices finding a place in it. Nagas have now long returned the gaze on these colonial writers, as well as on the people who wrote them (Thong 2012ab).

Elwin (1969: 2) further cautioned that 'none of the writers represented here were professional anthropologists', although he judged that 'some of them wrote better anthropology than many of the supposedly [anthropologically] "trained" young men of the present.' The ethnographic detail of early colonial writings was despite, Elwin stressed, the fact that most of them were written during trying circumstances, often under 'military escort' and amidst hostilities. Skirmishes along the way also meant that 'precious notes and documents were lost' (ibid.: 2), making Elwin insist that 'far from criticizing the nineteenth century men for their defects we should be astonished that, under the circumstances, they collected so much information and wrote as well as they did' (ibid.).

To be sure, this special issue does not offer a re-evaluation of the Naga colonial archive. Many have already done so (Subba and Wouters 2013; Thong 2012ab; Misra 2012; Rivzi 2012; Wouters 2012; Lotha 2007). Most contributors take Elwin's anthology, or other colonial sources, as a point of reference, and then link these texts to their own areas of research, offering critiques, comparisons, and contrasts as they proceed. Taken together, the articles aim to offer a set of insights and new departures into the study of contemporary Naga society.

A cradle of British social anthropology

As the colonial government expanded its sway across the Subcontinent, few communities drew as wide attention and scholarship as Nagas. While administrated 'lightly', Naga culture and customs were subjected to intense ethnological study and speculation, mostly by so-called 'administrator-anthropologists.' Nagas became an ethnological hotbed, arguably even a cradle of British Social Anthropology. British military and civil officers like Butler, David, Godden, Reid, Woodthorpe, Mills, and Hutton regularly

addressed gathering of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, and amongst whose audiences their ethnographic material incited lively, if at times fantastical, discussions. After retiring from the colonial Indian Civil Service Hutton and Mills were, based on their ethnological studies of Nagas, appointed as university professors at Cambridge University and the London School for Oriental and African Studies respectively.

Till date, most reputed university libraries, in places across the world, flaunt a shelf of Naga monographs, most of them bound in characteristic dark blue colour, and carrying such titles as *The Angami Nagas* (Hutton 1921a), *the Sema Nagas* (Hutton 1921b), *The Lhota* [later respelled as Lotha] *Nagas* (Mills 1922), *The Ao Nagas* (Smith 1925), another *The Ao Nagas* (Mills 1926), *The Rengma Nagas* (Mills 1937), *The Naked Nagas* (Fürer-Haimendorf 1939), *The Naga tribes of Manipur* (Hodson 1911), *Manipur and the Naga Hills* (Johnstone 1896) and *Naga Path* (Bower 1950). Ethnographic museums – be they in Oxford, Basel, or Berlin – too continue to showcase Naga skulls, spears, headgear, and a host of other artefacts. Reportedly, there are ‘over 12000 Naga artefacts in Britain alone’ (MacFarlane and Turin 2009: 370), all of which were variously confiscated, gifted, and procured by colonial administrators, missionaries, and curators, today spurring, besides a continuing popular interest in Naga history and culture, complicated debates on authenticity and ownership, including calls to have these artefacts returned to their places of origin.

In the heydays of colonial rule, administrators, missionaries, travellers, curators, and later also trained anthropologists, most notably Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, flocked to the Naga uplands and from where they returned with often rich accounts of Naga lifeworlds. Back then, writings on Nagas were varied and colourful, including detailed narrations of religious beliefs and rituals, origin and migration stories, headhunting, megalithic culture, *khel* (village ward) and clan set-ups, political structures and sentiments, ornaments and dress, architecture, tigermen, and feasts of merit. Of these ‘Naga headhunting’, as Venusa Tinyi in this issue illustrates, became seen as a defining Naga trait in popular discourse. In anthropological annals, it was the Naga feast of merit – a traditional complex combining redistribution, a prestige economy, and social stratification – that perhaps became most widely known, and referred to. The Naga feast of merit, alas, was amongst the first sacrifices mostly American and Welsh missionaries demanded from new Naga converts, interpreting them as an ostentatious wastage of wealth and its free flowing rice-beer as inducing immoralities (Wouters 2015a).

While colonial writings were certainly rich, not all early writers were, as noted by Elwin, equally careful in their gathering and interpretation of data. Most colonial writers themselves made confessional statements about the limitations of their research. They detailed the great difficulties they faced in obtaining information – often in their limited spare time – and they usually did not claim to offer definite conclusions. Paradoxically, perhaps, it was only during the post-colonial reading of these accounts that they became

ascribed with a more authoritative and definite character. This has led to a nascent trend of 'corrective anthropology' embarked upon by a number of Naga PhD students and scholars who now aim to 'set the record' straight by pointing towards inaccuracies and misrepresentations in colonial texts. But while such works offer important insights, this is perhaps not the most productive, or intellectually enriching, way to engage colonial writings, or to bridge the gap between those early publications and present-day Naga society, and the social changes that occurred along the way.

For one, colonial writings were guided by a now defunct ideological framework. British colonialists, after all, entered the hills with then dominant theories of evolution, utilitarianism, and race, taught to them in established universities in the United Kingdom. With evolutionary anthropologists as Tylor, Spencer, Morgan, and Frazer dominating much anthropological thought, it was inevitable that colonial writings reflected their evolutionary paradigms. With the advantage of hindsight we may now argue that the views advanced by colonial writers on Naga society were the product of British hegemony and suffered from multiple biases (cf. Asad 1973; Said 1978). However, this reflectivity, cannot be reasonably expected from the colonial authors themselves, who, after all, were products of their time. For another, the chapterisation and contents of these monographs were largely pre-set by the colonial government, which institutionalized the collection of ethnological data as part of an administrator's call to duty (Subba and Wouters 2013: 198). It was Bampfylde Fuller, then Chief Commissioner of Assam, who proposed that a series of monographs be prepared on the important castes and tribes the British governed in the region. About this series Balfour remarked:

It is of the utmost importance not only to the Science of Man, but also to responsible officialdom, since a just and enlightened administration of native affairs cannot be established and pursued without an intimate knowledge of and sympathetic interest in the natives themselves, their customs and their point of view (Balfour in Hutton 1921b: xv).

The collection of ethnological data, thence, was as much an exercise of 'applied anthropology', to effectuate administration, than it was a purely academic undertaking (Wouters 2012). To streamline research and publications the colonial government offered guidelines about the topics and chapters administrators were expected to cover. These invariably included 'compulsory' sections on domestic life, laws and customs, political organization, and folklore – irrespective of the community being studied. Any restudy of such texts by the letter today therefore risk the confinement to those areas then considered relevant, in the upshot precluding a fine-grained ethnographic engagement with topic, trends, and themes central to present-day Naga society.

The ethnographic richness produced during the colonial era, despite their obvious shortcomings, now exists in stark contrast with the scanty ethnographic material generated during the post-colonial period. This is to the extent that, in tracing social

change, contemporary scholars on Naga society grapple with a decades-wide ethnographic void. This is largely an immediate side-effect of the protracted Indo-Naga conflict which created hurdles for Naga scholars to carry out research and long made it virtually impossible for foreign scholars to enter the Naga uplands. The few efforts to enter and conduct fieldwork during this time, however, merit some mention, and the following is a brief summary of these, as well as mention important publications based on secondary sources that also emerged in this period. To be sure, what follows is not an exhaustive overview on postcolonial Naga studies, but serves to point to some important contributions and nascent themes and trends. In discussing these, we focus especially, though not exclusively, on those writings that have been informed by ethnographic research.

20th century Post-colonial research

From the time of British withdrawal in 1947 until the early '60s, little known fieldwork took place in the Naga areas. One notable exception is the work of Calcutta-based journalist Ashim Roy and his foray into Konyak country in 1949 (see Heneise 2013). Based on this fieldwork, and several later trips, Roy published the surprisingly rich *The Konyak Nagas: a socio-cultural profile* (2004). This early post-colonial period also saw a few Naga scholars producing the first locally published and disseminated studies, including Tajenyuba's *Ao Naga Customary Laws* (1957) and *A History of Anglo-Naga Affairs* (1958), and later on M. Alemchiba's *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland* (1970). Haimendorf's continued interest in the region merits mentions as well. After a twenty-six year 'pause', he obtains a permit to enter Nagaland in 1962, and then again in 1970 for brief visits to the Konyak area he knew well (Stockhausen 2013). This culminated in his *The Konyak Nagas* (1969), essentially an augmented reprint of his successful 1939 book *The Naked Nagas*, followed, in 1976, by *Return to the Naked Nagas: An Anthropologist's view of Nagaland 1936-1970*. In addition, Haimendorf produced one of the few full-length ethnographic films on the Naga, namely *The Men Who Hunted Heads* (1970). Worth mentioning, too, is the 1963 visit of Czech ethnologist Milada Ganguli (an Indian citizen through marriage), who upon gaining entry is 'escorted' by a company of 120 Indian military trucks traveling from Imphal to Kohima. Based on her week-long first visit, and several more extended visits over the course of twenty years (and considerable secondary research), Ganguli publishes the widely-read *Pilgrimage to the Nagas* (1984), which is prefaced by Haimendorf. Though lacking in ethnographic depth, it is encyclopaedic in nature, and remains an important link across an otherwise considerable chasm in fieldwork-based literature in the region in that period.

During the latter part of the 1960s, N.K. Das, of the Anthropological Survey of India (ASI), enters the Naga uplands and in 1980 carries out a total of eight months of fieldwork

in the southern Angami village of Viswema. While his subsequent write-up is originally conceived as an ASI report titled 'social organisation of a Naga tribe', Das later revises and submits it as a PhD thesis to Gauhati University where he is advised and later examined by Haimendorf, who remains closely attached to Naga society until long after his retirement from SOAS in 1976. Das eventually publishes *Kinship, Politics, and Law in Naga Society* (1993), a work clearly influenced by the structuralist tradition of Claude Lévi-Strauss (see also Das 1980, 1982a, 1982b, 1984, 1989a, 1989b, and 1994). The 1980s and 1990s is also the period Vibha Joshi begins fieldwork in Nagaland, mostly on the Angami Nagas, and dealing, among others, with material culture, Christian conversion, and traditional forms and practices of healing (Joshi 2007, 2012, 2013). It is also during this period that the Cambridge anthropologists Alan Macfarlane (Haimendorf's last student) begins compiling thousands of texts and images from colonial archives and collections across Britain, and which eventually culminate in the *Naga Videodisc* project, which has become a valuable resource for researchers. Drawing on this material, Julian Jacobs, with contributions from Macfarlane, Sarah Harrison and Anita Herle, published *The Nagas: Hill Peoples of Northeast India* (1990).

Important to mention, too, is the work of, then *New York Times* reporter (and now Professor at Jamia Millia Islamia) Sanjoy Hazarika. His *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India's Northeast* (1995), while not ethnographic, is based on in-depth investigative research and interviews with both over- and underground leaders across India's Northeast, including Nagas. Similar studies were conducted by Sanjib Baruah (1999, 2007), and which, while not exclusively dealing with Naga society, nevertheless offer a set of new political insights. This period also sees the publication of Charles Chasie's *Naga Imbroglia: A Personal Perspective* (1999) and Kaka Iralu's deeply provocative *Nagaland and India: The Blood and the Tears* (1999; then republished 2000, 2009). Though self-published and locally printed, Iralu's research is widely cited in contemporary Naga studies of the Indo-Naga conflict. Finally, we like to mention a few authors who researched the Indo-Naga conflict and wrote accounts based on secondary research or personal experiences. These are Horam (1988, 1975), Gundevia (1975), Haskar and Luithui (1984), Yonuo (1974), Maxwell (1980), Nibedon (1978), Anand (1980), Vashum (2000), Singh (2004, 2008), Shimray (2005), Nuh (1986, 2002), Misra (2000), Aosenba (2001), Ao (2002), Zhimomi (2004).

Fortunately, the Indo-Naga ceasefire in 1997 ushered in a new era of ethnographic and empirical research, and which was boosted further by the partial withdrawal of the Inner-Line in 2011. We now turn to a brief discussion on emergent topics and themes in contemporary studies on Naga society.

The 21st century: identity consciousness and reinvigorated archive

The gradual opening of the Naga areas from the 1997 ceasefire onward was accompanied by a concerted attempt by state planners to promote tourism in Nagaland.

At the centre of this effort was the 2000 launch of the Hornbill festival – a weeklong potpourri of traditional Naga ritual re-enactments, dances, handicrafts, and food traditions, and which inspired critical scholarship (e.g. Kikon 2005; Longkumer 2013; and Lotha 2016). This trend coincided with a wave of new discourses in museum studies, centred on the ethics of colonial acquisition (Thomas 1991), the politics of repatriation (especially of sacred objects), the contemporary relevance of ‘curiosity box’ curatorial practices, and perhaps more presciently, the cultural and historical relevance of indigenous material culture amid a worldwide re-genesis of indigenous cultural and identity politics (Arnold-de Simine 2013; Barrett 2011; and Bennet 2004). As colonial collections re-emerge, curators and scholars wrangle over correctly portraying continuities and discontinuities, but also, in a sense, seeking to educate visitors (and readers of associated write-ups) about the fraught history of orientalist portrayals (West 2011, 1999). The first significant impetus in terms of Naga collections is the already mentioned Digital Himalaya project developed by Alan Macfarlane and Mark Turin at Cambridge University.

Not surprisingly, European collections of Naga visual and material culture also see a resurgence. In 2009, for example, an exhibition titled ‘Material Culture, Oral Traditions and Identity Among the Nagas’ organised by Michael Oppitz and a team of researchers at the Ethnographic Museum of Zurich - which toured cities in Switzerland, Germany, and Austria - featured objects sourced by collectors Adolf Bastian, Lucian Scherman, and Hans-Eberhard Kauffman (Oppitz et al 2008). In its contemporary reification, these were accompanied by recent images and studies based on short visits to Naga areas, and subsequently published in the 2008 volume *Naga Identities: Changing Local Cultures in the Northeast of India* (Ibid). Explaining the rationale behind the project, one of the editors stated it was intended ‘to project today’s Nagas, which shall include the disillusioning or even the deconstruction of current exotic photograph books’ (Stockhausen in Oppitz 2008: 127). Chapters in Oppitz’ book include several prominent Naga scholars (e.g. Arkotong Longkumer and Dolly Kikon), and titles highlight the blatant omissions in much hitherto published ‘orientalising’ books on the Nagas. Two of these chapters are ‘Religion Today’ and ‘Fashion Trends in Contemporary Nagaland’, which include images of modern Naga fashion design, and Christian church buildings standing dominant in village and urban settings.

Whether such efforts succeed in steering the European imagination away from exoticising the Naga ‘Other’ is questionable. Especially in view of the ballooning of Naga ‘coffee-table’ books featuring the colourful portrayals of Nagas, their culture, dresses, and festivals, in the past decade. Here we might especially highlight the collaborative work of Vibha Joshi with Richard Kunz (2008), and with Aditya Arya (2004). Also worth mentioning is the collaborative work of photographer Peter van Ham and Aglaja Stirn (2003), and with Jamie Saul (2008). Describing the new genre of pictorial works (and

echoing the above-mentioned re-invigoration of European interest in the Nagas), Joshi (2012) writes:

While these coffee-table books do not purport to scholarly analysis, their pursuit of the exotic give us some idea of the continuity of some traditions and thus counter the pessimistically styled writings of some Western scholars who consider that Christianity has led to the destruction of a people's culture and a feeling of shame about past cultural practices. These books capture a resurgence of interest among the Europeans (p. 260).

Naga studies today and 'native anthropology'

Recent years also witnessed a new 'ethnographic turn' in research on Nagas, one that is facilitated by the ceasefire and freer access to the Naga uplands. Naga studies today encompass new areas of research such as Christianity, nationalism, gender, territorial politics, modernisation, oral and new literature. This is not to suggest a departure from colonial themes and categories, as much of this new scholarship begins with a critique of British administrator-ethnography. This is sure to continue for a while, as the colonial archive (which, as discussed already, is massive) simply towers over the few in-depth contemporary studies currently available to scholars. This is further exacerbated by the cumbersome pricing and distribution tactics of western academic publishers, juxtaposed with the freely accessible, and searchable online colonial archive (the Digital Himalaya project is a case in point)¹. As ethnographic methodologies in local higher education institutions in India improve, a shift will certainly be felt. However, much more difficult is the task of correcting the seemingly intractable 'orientalism' and 'home-grown orientalism' (Poddar and Subba 1992) continually articulated in western writing on the Nagas and increasingly from those belonging to India's caste Hindu societies (Subba and Wouters 2013). Moreover, 'colonial nostalgia' remains as much the brand language of local tour operators as with most former European colonies, and is also a residue that haunts Naga studies.

Long term anthropological engagement, although still limited, has now increased, and a few prominent themes, as touched on already, have emerged in the available published texts and articles, including: Christianity (especially Angelova 2014; Joshi 2013; Longkumer 2011, 2015, 2016; and Thomas 2016); and Christianity in relation to Naga nationalism, with Abraham Lotha (2014), and John Thomas (2016). We also have the rise of the 'Naga voice', or what is sometimes called 'native anthropology', most prominently Dolly Kikon (2005; 2015) and Arkotong Longkumer and his monograph on the Heraka Movement (2010), in addition to a host of articles (e.g. Longkumer 2016ab, 2015).

Other fields and trends include interest in territory, boundaries, and customary laws, as well as overlap with development studies in areas such as changes in agricultural

¹See <http://www.digitalhimalaya.com/>

patterns such as shifting cultivation, material, visual, and museum anthropology (especially Elliott 2014; Heneise and Moon-Little 2014; Stockhausen 2014; Wettstein 2014; and West 2011), Naga identity (especially Longkumer 2011, 2015; and Oppitz 2008); cosmology, dreams, and sentient landscapes (Heneise 2016, and this issue); governmentality, militarisation and political and gender violence (Kikon 2009, 2002); and democracy, elections, and political culture (Wouters 2015ab, 2014).

Finally, there is also an important and growing corpus of published articles and books (and hundreds of unpublished masters and doctoral dissertations in local college and university libraries) by upcoming (and established) Naga scholars (e.g. Jimo 2008; Kashena this issue; Kuotsu 2013; Mawon 2016 and this issue; Assumi 2009, Nshoga 2009; Ngully 2015; Pongener 2011, Ezung 2012, Ovung 2012, Yeptho 2011, Khamniungan 2014, Chophy 2015; Khamrang 2015, Venuh 2005, Tunyi 2016; among others). Regular workshops and conferences organised by the newly established Kohima Institute (2013); the Naga Scholars Association at Jawaharlal Nehru University; the Centre for Northeast Studies at Jamia Milia University; the Centre for Community Knowledge (CCK), and North East Forum (NEF) at Ambedkar University; the North East Social Research Centre (NESRC) in Guwahati; and the Department of Sociology at Japfü Christian College in Nagaland, among others, have energised a new generation of social scientists able to gain access to publications and archival materials now readily available online, and to engage in research activities that remain difficult for many foreign scholars. The growing capacity of young local scholars to publish, debate, and critique research on the Nagas in conjunction with scholars based in foreign institutions, has begun to re-assert Naga studies as an important anthropological focus area, perhaps in a sense also ensuring the further relevance and longevity of the old archive that began in the 1830s.

The articles

Angelova explores the substance of the contemporary Sumi identity by focusing on the continuities and discontinuities in terms of sociocultural customs. She concentrates on the legacies of missionaries and the social impact of Christian conversions, and argues how Christianity should not, or no longer, be viewed as a major agent of social change but as an intrinsic part of a new Sumi identity and tradition reinventing and reasserting itself, one which is 'creatively embedding Christianity within a solid substratum of cultural reproduction.'

Kashena's article offers an ethnography of victims of the Kuki-Naga conflict in the 1990s. Through the use of personal narratives, she illustrates vividly how Christian theology and prayer offers some comfort for victims of ethnic violence to cope with personal trauma and loss. This helped them to rationalize tragic events, and to pursue often painful and complex processes of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Heneise examines both what can be learned from the ethnographic study of dreams, and the kinds of cultural insights one gleans in comparing contemporary dream accounts in a community, with accounts collected a century earlier by British administrator-ethnographers, in this case J.H. Hutton, in the same community. Whereas Hutton raises questions about the relationship between seemingly quite different experiences, namely of ordinary dreams, and the dream-mediated practices of healers, sorcerers, and lycanthropes, Heneise finds ways of articulating a continuum.

Tinyi offers a reinterpretation of Naga headhunting by locating its practice within the normative structures of Naga society, rather than seeing it, as most colonial writers did, as symptomatic of a then flourishing 'culture of lawlessness.' In an attempt to read past headhunting from a modern liberal perspective, he relates its practice to core Naga traditional values and beliefs of equality, freedom, and justice.

Wouters engages historically and ethnographically the form and substance of the prototypical Naga 'village republic.' Even as the popular imagination of Naga villages as 'republics' has clear origins in early colonial writing, he illustrates the historical manifestation and remarkable resilience of the 'Naga village' as a political, partisan, self-protective, and affective unit. In discussing 'who is a Naga village?', he shows how a Naga village encompasses a moral community characterized by its temporal and spatial rootedness, and how its inhabitants orient their social relations through the conduit of historical memory – a nexus locally between history, locality, ancestral genealogy and identity.

Longvah's article contributes to our understanding of the complex linkages between Christianity, the rise of Naga nationalism, and Naga nationalist politics. She contrasts traditional Naga religion, which did not give rise to a larger Naga political consciousness, to Naga Christianity, which offered Nagas with a common denominator and so fostered Nagas self-awareness as a political community with a shared identity and political destiny.

Wilkinson explores modern constructions of masculinity in Nagaland. While he shows how contemporary ideas of Naga manhood and masculinity operate at multiple levels, and are therefore fluid and dynamic, popular images of the stereotypical 'Naga man' remain nevertheless shaped by 'externally informed' images of a 'pre-modern, warrior savage', an image that is variously reproduced and re-appropriated by the tourist industry and Indian mass media.

Mawon explores the impact of modernity on community life among the Hao (Tangkhol) Nagas of Manipur, through an ethnographic study of Hao festivals. Examining the *Laira* festival, the seed sowing festival, and considered the most important annual Hao festival, Mawon examines the ways in which Christianity, and the advent of education, created a disjuncture in community consciousness regarding the location of livelihood responsibility. Whereas pre-Christian practices predicated spirit-mediated

community provision; Christianity and education placed the community on an altogether different path: one of progress centred on human-initiative.

Douglas explores the linkages between identity, artistic expression and representation. This she does through the medium of animation, an art form not typically employed in indigenous art given its highly technical requirements. Nevertheless, animation is widely consumed on television, and thus constitutes a legitimate vocabulary with which to explore notions of identity and representation. Drawing on the animation project *Tales of the Tribes*, which involves narration by the animated figure of Verrier Elwin, Douglas challenges embedded notions that locate authenticity in traditional art.

Ngully engages in a comparative ethnographic study of Konyak Naga death rites - traditional and Christian - in this case performed following the deaths of two prominent Konyak kings (Anghs). Here, Ngully challenges the notion of ritual interruption with the advent of Christianity. She examines the ways in which specific practices and materialities in present-day ritual hybridities point to deeply held beliefs about the centrality of death in Naga conceptions of life and existence. In funeral rites, Ngully argues, one finds inscribed the appeals to an already present coextensive reality that extends beyond the grave.

Finally, Das examines the relationship between the medium of photography, the photographed subject, and the colonial ethnographer. Here, he observes a reification, and indeed crystallisation of the colonial gaze. Drawing on the photographic archive of Austrian anthropologist Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf and German ethnographer Hans Eberhard Kaufmann, in particular, Das illustrates the ways in which colonial photography among the Nagas offers the present-day analyst a critical medium to explore the subtle, and often not-so-subtle, ideological formations that sustained colonial structures of power. 🍌

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