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**A Study of the Immigration of Nagas to North-East India and their
Present location**
(With Special reference to Nagaland)

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ABSTRACT

“They are fine people,of whom their country is proud ,strong and self reliant with the free and independent outlook characteristics of high landers everywhere ,good to look at with and splendid dances and a love song “1

Here ,who are fine people ,who are good to look at and who are high landers ? Without fail they are Nagas. So Dr. Verrier Elwin commented on Nagas like this.And thus few people evoke such fascination as the high landers grouped under the named “Naga”.

Nagaland state was inaugurated as the sixteen state of India on 1st December 1963. The state consist of eleven administrative district inhabited by 16 (sixteen0 major tribes along with other sub tribes.

In India Naga tribes found Manipur ,Assam, Nagaland and the Tirup district of Arunachal Pradesh. The prominent Naga writer R.B. Thohe Pou commented on Nagas inhabit in four states in India and the Western parts of Myanmar. The various naga tribes are as follows:

Aao ,Angami,Anai,Chakhesang Heime, ,Konyak,,Kuki, lotha, Mao, Maram, Nokte,Pochuri, Rengma, sangtam ,Sema, , Sumi, Tangkhul, Thangal, Wancho, Yimchungir, zeliangrong and others.

It is therefore ,remarkable to know that nagas are notconfined only to the state of Nagaland , but are also found in their neighbor states as well as in the republic of Burma.

B.M.Das attempted about the route directions and different ethnic origins. According to das ,” They came from different directions and at different times by various routes of migration, namely the northern passes of Bhutan and Tibet ,Assam-Myanmar routes on the eastern side and the valleys on the western direction formed by the Ganges and the Brahmaputra”

R.B. Thohe Pou had attempted to study on naga culture and customs ,their origin, etymology of the word “ Naga” . many scholars also believed that Nagas came from Myanmar. The author R.B.Thohe Pou attempted to study exhaustively the possible route of nagas immigration from mainland of China tonaga Hills.

Objectives of present Study:

- 1: The present study is to know the Migration of nagas and their existence at present.
- 2: To focus the present location of various naga tribes in North-East india.
- 3: The present study is help us to know about demographic transformation their ethnic elements and how many tribe of Naga are found in North-east india.

Methodology:

In the present study I shall adopt both primary and secondary data consisting of ethnographic ,migration and demographic transformation records. While primary data shall be collected from investigation reports ,secondary source shall be

used from the published and unpublished materials ,books journals and articles.

1:Primary source

2: Secondary source

Hypothesis:

1: The Naga tribes are found only in Nagaland.

2: The folktale ,folksongs, and legends are only possible source to trace the route of migration and unveil the myth of origin.

3: The Nagas have written historical records about their origin and the route of migration to their present in habitation.

ZIntroduction:

North- East India comprises eight administrative states ,these are – Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim (1 Newly included) and Tipura. North-East India is surrounded on all sides by foreign countries. The Northern boundary is formed by Bhutan and China, the eastern by Myanmar, the Southern by Myanmar and Bangladesh, and Western by Bangladesh. The region mostly hilly area except the Brahmaputra valley.

The state (Nagaland) is bounded by the state of Assam on the West from North-West to South West and Manipur on the South ,Burma on the East and Arunachal Pradesh, the Union Territory (now a state)of India, on the Northern part of the Eastern border.

This state is situated approximately between 25.11'55'' and 27.2'10'' north latitude and between 93.10'20'' and 95.17'10'' East longitude. This the second smallest state of India covering an area of 16,527 square kilometers.

With the arrival of British East India Company in early 19th century followed by British Raj .Britain expanded its domain over entire South Asia including the Naga Hills. After the independence of India 1947 ,the Naga hills remained a part of the province of Assam. Nationalist activities arose amongst a section of the Naga .Nagaland attained statehood with the enactment of the state of Nagaland Act in 1962 by the Parliament. The interim body was dissolved on 30 November 1963 and the state of Nagaland was formally inaugurated on 1st December 1963 as the 16th state (as mentioned earlier) of the Indian Union and Kohima was declared as the state capital.

Origin of Naga:

At the outset ,it is very clear that the Naga have not its own written history about their origin. At the same time Naga history is shrouded its obscurity as there is no known evidence that it has a written history. Their history has been transferred orally from one generation to other since time immemorial, in the form of folk songs , folk stories and folk-lores. But the folksongs ,folk tale, and legends of different tribes of Naga are the sorts of Naga history that we can trace the origin of the Naga. According to an eminent Naga writer R.R. Shimray , the basic group of human race are Caucasoid ,Mongoloid and Negroid. The Naga belong to the Mongoloid group.

The Naga are a part of the wide scattering of Mongoloid people found in areas as diverse as China, the Arctic and Amazonia. They began to spread through South- East Asia approximately 12,000 years ago , possibly from Northern China and seem to have assimilated elements of Austroloid and Negrito populations. Some of the pioneer anthropologists had studied the tribe of Naga since ancient time and contributed their opinions about the origin of Naga . The different authorities trace the origin of Naga to the head hunters of Malay and races of Southern seas . but some authorities trace about the origin of Naga. As Naga scholar *Dr. M .Horam* also trace the Naga origin to the Southern Seas in his book "*Naga Polity*" . One of the Indian authorities on Nagas ,*Murrot Ramunny* writes – "*The original home of the Naga ,before the reached the areas they now occupy,is rather difficult to ascertain .Different authorities have connected them with headhunters of Malay , the races of the Southern seas ,while other trace them back even to China, 2*

The Naga tribes trace their origin to South-East and supported by folktale and folksongs does not trace their origin from Tibet . But all the stories of origin pointed to the South East

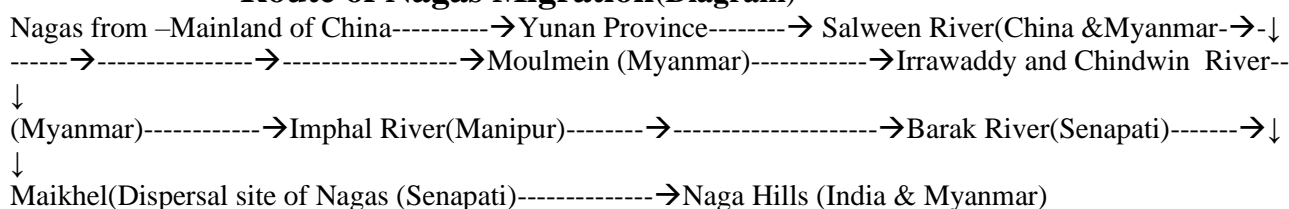
Immigration of Naga:

Some pioneer authorities and anthropologists stated that Nagacame from South-eastern region of Asia where the countries of Indonesia ,Thailand, Philipines and others.This is only the Naga look like the people of South- East Asia It is probable that the Naga migrated towards their present home from different directions after having crossed the mountain and rivers of South –East Asia .It can say that the Salween river originated from the mainland of China near Tanglha Range and follow to Southern seas in Moulmei(Southern Myanmar) and other tributaries near Bangkok . The Irrawaddy river and Chindwin river do not originate from mainland China.

It is remarkable that ,in ancient time , the migration took place mainly along the rivers and corridors . It is because , Naga migrated from mainland of China , followed the route along the river to Myanmar and retreated to Naga hills . but according to the folktale ,folklore etc. they did not migrate from Brahmaputra valley (Assam) to the Naga hills.

From the geographical perspective the route southward movement from mainland China is possible following along rivers like Salween (Nu-Jiang) Mekong and Irrawaddy river .

Route of Nagas Migration(Diagram)



The route of Southward movement from China by the Naga would be difficult to delineate due to lack of written history ,nevertheless it is believed that the Naga migrated from mainland of China .and follow the Southward movement along the route of Salween river . from a historical perspective , the Naga lived in periphery of Salween river . One of the tributaries of Irrawaddy river from Mandalay (Myanmar) also confluence with Salween river near Loi –Kaw (Myanmar) and it is possible to migrate through the river.

The movement of population have undoubtedly been first Southward from the Asiatic mainland from the Eastward to the pacific . So the Naga must have followed the Southward movement and perhaps after reaching the sea . From the view of Keane the Naga followed Westward movement , finally reaching Burma from where they came to the present Naga Hills.

From historical facts , it follows that the Naga passing through mainland China and Irrawaddy and Chindwin valley and the Padeolithic or Neolithic Age had gradually move up and finally settled at Hsawngsup . Thangdut in Burma from where where they finally migrated to the homeland they are occupied later period . The route of migration the Naga followed in the North-Westward movement is trace through legends , stories and folksongs.

A Naga Scholar says that about migration of Naga as follows: “ *We can conclude that ,the original stock starting from the centre of dispersion in Sikiang Province first moved westernly and upon reaching the head water of Irrawaddy and Chindwin rivers, bifurcated into several directions ,ultimately leading to Tibet ,to Assam ,to the hill ranges between Assam and Burma . That branch which came to the hill range moved further West and entered Naga Hills . Another wave from South East Island taking a North Westernly directions and entered Naga Hills using Burma as a corridor*”³

According to Burma Census Report, successive invasion of Tibeto-burman peoples came from the region of Western China , between the sources of the Yangtse-Kiang and Hoang-Ho rivers.⁴

S. D. Marshall says that “...the early home of the people of Eastern Asia was in the upper reaches of Hoang-Ho or the Yellow River of China and that from this centre the Tibetans moved westwards , the early tribes of Indo-China southwards . According to this view the progenitors of the Karen probably formed a part of their southwards migration.”⁵ According to him the

Karens of Burma are closely related to the Naga

Period or era of Nagas migration:

The Naga who settled in the Naga Hills have various theories of their migration, often recorded by foreign and Naga writers and scholars. However, the earliest specific reference to the Naga was made by Claudius Ptolemy in 150 A.D in the *Geographia* where he referred to the Naga country as "The Realm of the naked"⁶.

Huang Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim who visited Assam during Bhaskarvarman's rule in 645 A.D. according to him- " *...the east of this country is bounded by a line of hills, so that there is no great city to the Kingdom. The frontiers are contiguous to the barbarians of south-west china. These tribes are in fact akin to these of the Man people in their customs*"⁷ Ahom Buranjies, also recorded that by the time the

Ahoms came to Assam in thirteenth century, Nagas were already settled in Naga Hills. They wrote of Naga resistance to Sukapha, the founder of Ahom Kingdom⁸. Of course, the exact date of the arrival of the Naga into the Naga hills can not be established with precision, but at the same time their entrance before the Christian era cannot be ruled out.

Probable Reasons of Migration: It is difficult to delineate that why they migrated to Naga Hills and reason of their migration from the southern seas to the Naga Hills is still obscured. Some of the probable reasons for their retreating may be as follows:

1: The plain people who are more civilized with better equipment and warfare in Moulmein or near the sea coast might have pressed the Naga to push up to Irrawaddy valley.

2: There may be frequent waves, tornadoes and pestilence living near the sea coast

3: As they are basically from the mainland of China, they may not be acclimatized near the sea coast and wanting to have order occupation, like hunting, gathering fruits, cultivation etc. they might shift to the Naga Hills

Present Location of Various Naga Tribes:

Hence, the classification of tribal groups inevitably passed over many details even more so the term "Naga". In 1879 the Naga were estimated as 18 groups. A survey of 1895 listed merely 9 (nine). J. H. Hutton discerned 14 Naga groups as in Elwin's count (1961) but their groups differ. In the 1970's M. Horam listed 30 and Yunuo 38. These immense differences suggest the difficulties and the politicization any classification details.

The Naga are unconcentrated in the states of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh of India and Somra tract of upper Burma. The following Naga tribes have been identified and located.

(A) Arunachal Pradesh: Thangsa, Tutsa, Wancho, Nocte etc.

(B) Assam: Zeme, Rongme and Rengma

(C) Burma: Konyak, Tangkhul, Phom, and Yimchunger

(D) Manipur: Anal Marang, Moyon, Lamkang, Chothe, Tangkhul, Mao, Maram, Thangal, Zeliangrong, Puimei, Chiru, Kharam, Koreng, Tarao etc.

(E) Nagaland: Ao, Angami, Chang, Chakhesang, Khamnungan, Konyak, Kongnyu, Kalya, Lotha, Phom, Rengma, Sema, Sangtam, Zeliangrong (Zeme, Liangmei)

In general the Naga groups may be classified geographically in three groups Northern, Central and Southern.

Northern Group:

Tangsa: The Tangsa- meaning "hill men"-inhabit the slopes of the upper Patkai Range in both the Burmese and Indian Naga regions. The inhabitants of villages who move away from the valley 200 years ago are referred to by the Burmese Tangsa as "Pangsa". In Myanmar Tangsa were referred to as "ronpan".

Nocte or Hashik: The first Naga group Northern group is the Nocte or Hashik-terms that mean "village dweller". The chief habitat is the Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh, comprising approximately 85 villages with 30,000 inhabitants (it's not current record).

Tutsa: The Tutsa inhabit of the Changlang and Tirap area. Their Chief village kholam,

receives tributes from numerous smaller settlements.

Wancho: The Wancho inhabit the western part of the Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh beyond the Tisa river and were formerly called Konyak. The wancho fall into four groups relating the ancestral names of the villages from which they migrated north in the 16th century.

Lower Konyak: They inhabit in the Mon district of Nagaland. A few lower Konyak villages are found in Myanmar, where they blend into Wancho.

The Central Group:

Upper Konyak: The upper Konyak inhabit the southern part of Mon district to the northern to the northern part of the Tuensang. The upper Konyak home is in the hill ranges of the central Patkai Massif, starting the Tapi river and reaching into Western Myanmar and adjacent villages of the Lainong.

Khiamniungan: The Khiamniungan Naga group extend over a vast area between the Patkai and the Chindwin in the Nam Salein region as far down as the northern slopes of the sacred mount Saramati. Khiamniungan villages exist in Nagaland in an area consisting of six hill ranges whose peaks rise to 3900m. Another 15 or more Khiamniungan (known in Myanmar as Nokaw) villages are found in Myanmar.

Chang: The Chang inhabit 36 villages spread across three mountain ranges of Nagaland and the Chang are divided into four exogamous clans occupying different social positions in society.

Phom: This is a group between the Konyak in the north-east, the Ao in the western and the Chang in the south. The habitat of the Phom is approximately 15,000. The Phom inhabit 36 villages less between 650 and 2000m and is bordered towards the Ao by the Dikhu river and towards the Konyak by the Yangnon.

Sangtam: The Sangtam occupy a narrow strip on the west of the Tuensang district and Kiphire sub-district.

Yimchunger: The Yimchunger live south of the Khiamniungan and Chang and east of the Sangtam. They occupy a vast area divided into nine (9) zones of the Tuensang district. The Yimchunger inhabit 76 villages with some 86,000 inhabitants in Nagaland, main towns being Shamator and Kiphire.

THE SOUTHERN GROUP:

Sema: Their main habitat at present is the Zunheboto district lying at heights of between 1500 and 2000m feet approximately 75,000 Sema inhabit 145 villages

Ao: One of the major groups in Nagaland, the name means "those who came", referring to their migration across the Dikhu River. The Ao comprise three distinct language groups: Chongli, Mongsen and Chongki. The proximity to the Assam plains put them on generally friendly terms with the Ahom Kings of the Brahmaputra valley, though raids on the lowlands were numerous. Ao territory today is confined to the Mokukchung district of Nagaland. The important villages are Longkhum, Ungma and Impur, including Mopungchukit and Changtongya.

Lotha: The Lotha inhabit the Wokha district of Nagaland. The Lotha are said to have immigrated to their present habitat with the Angami, Rengma and Sema from Myanmar through south Nagaland and formed the village of Khezakenoma and were driven further north by Angami.

Rengma: The Rengma inhabit the Tsemnyu administrative district of the Kohima district. They are at present divided into northern and southern groups, their former eastern groups, formerly also called the "naked Rengma", having renamed itself as the Pochuri. Another division of the Rengma settled in the Karbi Anglong hills of Assam.

Pochuri or Para: All 27 Pochuri villages are in the Meluri administrative district of the Phek district of Nagaland. The approximately 10,000 Pochuri have always maintained strong relations with their relatives across the Burmese border, where they are known as Para.

Chakhesang: Phek is the home of the Chakhesang tribe. They inhabited in the southern part of Phek district. They are Indo-Mongoloid. According to J. H. Hutton regard them as eastern Angami.

Angami: The Angami community is made up of the present Kohima district which is

divided into three regions based on the three main Angami groups. The tengima group is in the west, the northern Angami in the north and the Zounokeyhouno in the south as Kohima, Khonoma, Kigwema and Vishewema etc. the Boda Basti is known as Angami village.

Zeliangrong : The Zeliangrong tribe inhabit in Nagaland, Manipur, and Assam. In Manipur the Rongmei division of the Zeliangrong are often called the Kabui Naga. Their vast territory ranges from the Harail range in the Western part of Manipur to the Imphal valley. The Zeme and Liangmei were formerly known as the Kacha Naga. They inhabit the hills west and north-west of the Imphal valley, with Tamenglong as their capital.

Mao: The Mao occupy the areas in Manipur directly adjacent to Nagaland. Their name is an abbreviation of Manipuri Maomei meaning the “people of the north” calling themselves Imeimei – they are distributed over 16 villages in the Senapati district.

Maram: The Maram inhabit 22 villages in the hills south of the Mao ranges.

Tangkhu: The Tangkhu inhabit eastern Manipur and the Somra tract of Myanmar.

Maring: The Maring are found mainly in Manipur only a few houses remain in Myanmar. Although generally accepted as Naga and linguistically related to the southern Tangkhu.

Findings and Conclusion:

Although there are no written history to construct the origin and migration of Naga nevertheless, from the oral history, may conclude that Naga moved from mainland of China who migrated to Myanmar along the rivers and corridors. They migrated to the southern seas of Myanmar along the rivers and lived near the sea coast of Moulmein (Myanmar) for generation before they retreated to Irrawaddy and Chindwin valley. The Naga migrated from Irrawaddy valley through Indo-Myanmar corridor and settled down at Makhel. From this place they (Naga) were dispersed to various parts of Naga Hills. Makhel is a historical place in Mao Maram.

At present Nagas are inhabited in eleven (11) district in Nagaland. Moreover, Naga are found in four district in Manipur (Tamenglong, Senapati or Mao-Maram, Ukhrul & Tengnoupal), one district in Assam (Sivasagar) and two district in Arunachal Pradesh. In addition to these many Naga inhabit in Western part of Myanmar (Burma)

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