

Chapter 4

MNEMONIC DEVICES IN THE MAO NAGA FOLK NARRATIVES

4.1 Introduction

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines mnemonics as a device that aids in remembering. It is derived from the ancient Greek word “mnemonikos” which is related to memory and is connected to a goddess of memory in Greek mythology. Mnemonic devices enable the past to continue to live in the present.

One needs to be attentive to the difficulties of using the same measure for the mnemonic devices for the written and oral narratives. The written narratives do not experience as wide a change in their expression as do the oral narratives. Besides, with regard to the written narrative, when a doubt arises, one can always refer to the original written narration. This is quite impossible when it comes to oral narratives. In an oral culture, folk narratives do not have regular or fixed patterns. They change unpredictably since they are orally transmitted. Therefore, one has to be lenient and open when speaking about the mnemonic devices of the oral narratives.

Dell Hymes, the well-known ethnographer, anthropologist and linguist developed the theory of the ethnography of speaking. It studies how people of a particular culture communicate their attitudes and knowledge among themselves as a community (Hymes 35-36). Language is the most important channel of communication which involves the addressee and the hearers or the audience. It serves as a bridge that connects an individual with other human beings and that which differentiates a group or an individual from the others. It is viewed as the first element of human actions. Language, or as Saussure would call it “parole”, refers to any meaningful utterance, spoken or written (Abrams and Harpham 195).

In this chapter, the research scholar attempts to analyse the Mao Naga folk narratives in the light of Hymes' mnemonic device –SPEAKING skills—an acronym which stands for a) setting, b) participants, c) ends, d) act sequences, e) keys, f) instrumentalities, g) norms, and h) genres (Hymes 59-65). Dell uses this acronym to put together the 16 components of speech. However, this acronym SPEAKING is not ethnocentric, since the 16 components can be similarly grouped together through the French acronym PARLANT. Though all these elements do not appear clearly in all the Mao Naga narratives, a few narratives will be specifically analysed based on Dell's mnemonic device or SPEAKING skills. These SPEAKING skills aim at bringing back the original context in which the narratives were told. The narratives are handed down through the medium of language, and language is a reflection of the culture of the people. Therefore, language and culture are interconnected, and the culture of the people can be analysed through it (Pishghadam et al. 2).

The Mao Naga folk narratives, both the prose and poetry genres, were in the oral form since the Mao Nagas were an oral community. Certain narratives are in prose as also in poetry, like *Kholiru Ko* (prose tale) (Salao 42-45). *Kholiru* is also known as *Asha* and *Mari Asha* (a poetry form which will be discussed below). The prose language is simple and easy to understand while the language of the poetry is classical and difficult to understand, as Dell Hymes said, “in our society sung and spoken communication intersects in song...” (Hymes 39). Since the narratives were transmitted orally, the narrator needed to create an impression on his audience. This is done by employing fantasy and imagination, familiar names of places and objects. This also means that the language changes with each narrator, though the central ideas remain the same. Since it is orally told, repetitions are used in abundance as a means to communicate effectively, though constructed in a flexible language form without losing the essence of the narratives. Even in this situation of flexibility of language, unlike the written accounts, the oral narratives are still relevant because of the value attached to them.

The mnemonic devices in the Mao Naga society could be grouped under two categories: a) the intangible - songs (verse), narratives (prose), proverbs, wise sayings, rhythm, repetition, sounds, and b) the tangible - monuments, dress, and objects. In the lyrical (poetic) oral narration, there is greater fidelity to the classical language, which is not the case with oral prose narratives. Moreover, the language of the forefathers (classical language) is dying out due to increased modernization and due to the passing away of the elders themselves who used or knew this language (Singh and Maheo 50). Though an oral society and its narratives do not have a fixed form, there is an unconscious use of literary devices such as alliteration, anadiplosis, anaphora, assonance, repetition and onomatopoeia in their narratives.

The past can be easily forgotten since it extends to thousands of years beyond the horizon of living memory; hence, it needs objects and topographical sites to help people remember (Erl 307). The past is most likely to be forgotten if it is not remembered or shared, especially since it was orally told. The preservation and transmission of the narratives are possible because of the mnemonic devices. These made it possible for one generation to pass on to the next their past without losing the essence of the narratives over time. This chapter will examine the different mnemonic devices and how they help to preserve the rich culture of the Mao Nagas in their narratives. It will also highlight how “SPEAKING” skills/elements/factors present in the Mao folk narratives help to preserve the past, fulfilling the function of mnemonics, or as Dell Hymes would call it, the end or the goal of the speakers (narrators).

4.2 Mnemonics: Meaning, Characteristics and Methods

Mnemonics refers to devices that help in remembering. The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory defines mnemonics as a “device in verse or prose”. It is derived from the Greek word ‘*mneme*’ which refers to memory (513). Mnemonics are aids to remember the past. In other words, it is with the help of mnemonic devices that the past is

preserved and handed over to the younger generations. Psycholinguistics opines that human memory works better when things are simplified and classified. The mnemonic acronym that is being used in this chapter is SPEAKING, developed by Dell Hymes, as an aid to examine the speech of a group or community (Hymes 59).

Among the many creative inventions introduced by the Greeks was the development of a memory technique that, like other artistic creations, eventually found its way to Rome and became ingrained in European customs. This unique art form focuses on the act of memorizing, using a technique that entails ingrainning certain "places" (*loci*) and "images" (*imagines*) into the mind. It is frequently called "mnemotechnics" (Yates xi).

The account of the Greek poet Simonides of Ceos in the sixth century BCE is where this method first appeared (refer to the introduction for the details) (Yates 1; Assmann 15). Places (*loci*) and "memory for things" (which might relate to a house or any other physical location) are well described in the novel, as are images (*imagines*) and "memory for words," which are symbols or forms that represent things that one wishes to remember (Yates 2).

In this story, localization is the pivotal element. The ability to remember places is crucial for place identification. Having things arranged neatly aids in memory retention. Mnemonics, or the skill of remembering, was centred on locations, pictures, and the speaker. The focus of the art of memory is on the capacity of an individual's memory in the sense of rhetoric, or the art of speech, which enables a person to take in, hold onto and communicate astonishing knowledge to an audience.

The art of memory essentially belongs to rhetoric as a technique that helps the orator to improve memory. According to Quintilian, to form a series of places in memory, a concrete place, like a building, can be remembered in all its aspects: location, rooms, and minute details of the in and out of the buildings. Then take it to your imagination while narrating an event or incident. Cicero explained that Simonides discovered not only the importance of

mnemotechnics- “*loci*” and “*imagines*” - but also the “sense of sight” (Yates 3-4) which may be classified under natural memory as a “nature gift”. Cicero further stated

...that the most complete pictures are formed in our minds of the things and have been conveyed to them and imprinted on them by the senses, but the keenest of all our senses is the sense of sight, and that consequently perception received by the ears or by reflection can be most easily retained if they are also conveyed to our minds by the mediations of the eyes (quoted in Yates 4).

The history of the Israelites of the Biblical period survived through mnemonics. Their exodus from Egypt, circa 1400 BCE, is full of “*loci*” and “*imagines*”. The setting in which the narratives are told and retold comprises the kingdom, the temple, and the territory or *lieux de memoire* (sites of memory). The mnemotechnics provided a basis for the people to remember Jerusalem when they were exiled (Assmann 191-192).

Cicero defined five parts of rhetoric, namely, *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria* and *pronuntiatio*. *Inventio* - invention - is the excogitation of true things or things similar to the truth that makes one believe; *dispositio* – disposition - refers to the orderly arrangement of things discovered; *elocutio*- elocution is the ability to speak correctly through the use of words; *memoria* - memory - is the ability to remember what is discovered and the words, while *pronuntiatio* - pronunciation - refers to how words or the language is spoken. Things (*res*) are the subject matter of the speech and words (*verba*) are the language (utterance) in which the subject matter is clothed. Cicero dwelt on the former to help remember through the use of images, though all images are not remembered (Yates 9). Images help in the process of memorization. The unknown author of *Ad Herennium*, a classical rhetoric, gives us a choice for mnemonic images.

...ordinary things easily slip from the memory while the striking and novel stay longer in the mind...we ought then, to set up images of a kind that can adhere longer in

memory. And if we shall do so, if we establish similitude as striking as possible; if we set up images that are not many or vague but active (imagines agentes); if we assign to them exceptional beauty or singular ugliness; if we ornament some of them, as with crowns or purple cloaks, so that the similitude may be more distinct to us; or if we somehow disfigure them, as by introducing one stained with blood or soiled with mud or smeared with red paint, so that its form is more striking, or by assigning certain comic effects to our images, for that, too, will ensure our remembering them more readily(quoted in Yates 9-10).

According to him, therefore, images that arouse emotions or are unusual, striking, beautiful, ugly, comic, or even obscene make memory longer and more lasting. Images that exist for a long period become cultural memories (often stored in narrative prose and verse, objects, monuments, or artefacts). They provide insight into the past and thus enable us to link the present and the past to construct identity.

Mnemotechnics has three basic processes, namely, storage, retrieval and communication of the meaning (Assmann 72). According to Renate Lachmann, one of the key concepts that helped to shape memory is the storing of knowledge (302). What is seen and heard is acquired, stored and retrieved when needed. The human brain acts as the storage of events and experiences of the past. The best example is Simonides, the great Greek poet. Based on this example Renate Lachmann says that “the art of *memoria* restores shape to the mutilated victims and makes them recognizable by establishing their place” (302).

Language is the most common means of communication among people. The theory of sociolinguistics mediates between linguistics and social life. It is concerned with the theory of interaction of language in social life. It aims to explain the meaning of language in actual human lives (Hymes 40-41).

Before writing came into existence, handing over the past was done orally. The participants in the events were the speakers and the audience (living memory); but with the passage of time and the death of members, these events were remembered, narrated and quoted by those who came after or by those whose duty it was to do so, as we find in some societies across the world. In other words, with their death, the first-hand information - "the living memory" - disappeared. This living memory is transformed into cultural memory using collective mnemonics. The oral repetitions of these events (texts) formed the basis of cultural memory. Unlike those in ancient Israel, most of the Greek speeches were oral. Forty years marked the span of a generation of eyewitnesses. Repetition is an important aspect of transmitting the past to the younger generations. Over time, through it, the living memory (communicative memory) is transformed into cultural memory (formed and supported by institutions) or mnemotechnics (Assmann 241, 195-196, 200).

The author of *Ad Herennium* says that the method of memorizing the verse will not work by itself; it has to be repeated till it is learned by heart and words are represented by images. Connect whatever you heard and place the record on what you know; for example, when we speak of courage and strength, place them on Mars and Achilles who were known for their courage and strength, fire to shine, virtue to valour, and vice to cowardice, images of gods and men with Mars, Achilles, Vulcan, Epeus and so forth. In the fragment known as the *Dialexeis*, which dates back to about 400 BCE, it is said that through repetitions of what one has learned memory is created; repeat what you hear so that it gets into the memory (Yates 14, 29-30).

In oral societies, traditions were transmitted from one generation to the next orally or through methods laid down for that purpose. Particular care was also taken to preserve and transmit traditions. For an effective transmission and continuation of traditions, mnemonic devices were often used. Different societies use different methods to preserve their traditions.

A few examples are given below. Objects were used as mnemonics to hand over the traditions with meanings attached to them, while in others it remained engraved in the memories of the people. The latter is most likely to be forgotten with time while the former lasts for a long time and is treated as a historical source. A prominent example is the *Quipa* (mentioned in the introduction) of the Incas who used “*iconographics*” too to preserve their traditions. The Polynesians used a stick as their mnemonic device; the Bono-Mansu used a pot called “*kuduo*”, while some societies used landscapes, both natural and man-made, and tombs as mnemonics. Besides these objects, other mnemonic devices are rhythmic songs and testimony (Vansina 36-39).

Halbwachs’ *La topographie legendaire* deals with collective memory which can be dated back thousands of years and so they needed places and objects to which narratives are constructed and reconstructed over time as aids to remember, recollect and transmit the past through the creation traditions (Erl 307). *La topographie legendaire* has places and names of persons that centre on Jesus and His activities. Localization in Halbwachs’ work refers to specific areas, places and names of persons and things like Jerusalem, Gethsemane, Galilee, Mount Olive and Jesus. The Holy Sites became important because they are imbued with the memories of Jesus and his activities. The images of the Holy Sites (topography of places) remained in the memory of the people and continue to be of prime importance in the belief of the Christians (Halbwachs 201-215). All these (mnemonics) were created into tradition and passed on in different forms of narratives with the help of the human memory.

People are the first mediators bringing the past to the present through narratives. For this reason, Halbwachs laid great emphasis on family as a mnemonic community. Family is an important mnemonic community with specific mnemonic practices like face-to-face interactions, social gatherings, etc., which mean broader interaction with others in society (Erl

308). They weave stories of the past and pass them on orally from one generation to the next in varied forms of narratives, objects and monuments.

Pierre Nora's *Lieux de Memoire* (sites of memory) lays great importance on sites (places) that contribute to remembering the past. Pierre's locations (sites) include buildings, monuments, works of art, historical persons, memorial days, philosophical and scientific texts, symbolic actions, etc. Sites of memory may thus refer to any cultural phenomenon that a society connects to the past and which forms part of their identity. They are mnemonics - objects that help to aid in remembering the past (Erl 309). The past is stored not only in human memory but also in material and non-material cultural artefacts. Mnemonics are the media through which the past is transmitted to the younger generations. It is possible that during the handing down of meanings throughout the generations, narratives can be altered or can undergo changes without losing their core. In short, the past is stored in non-material and material cultural artefacts and also symbols like stenography and shorthand as used by the Greeks (Yates 15). Vansina rightly argues that the past is disseminated through different forms of narratives and objects that memories have attached to them¹.

Memory is a gift of nature that enables one to recall the past, embrace the present and contemplate the future through their likeness to past things. Two types of memory need to be distinguished - natural memory and artificial memory. The former is a gift of nature and needs no other aids to remember the past, whereas the latter needs the assistance of natural memory. It is called 'artificial' from 'art' because it is artificially founded through the subtlety of mind". In *Ad Herennium*, natural memory is that which is engrafted in our minds, born simultaneously with thought while artificial memory is a memory strengthened or confirmed by training. The natural power or memory is helped by the training of artificial memory. Natural memory would be classified as communicative memory that spans for over 80 years or so and the artificial memory with cultural memory that needs assistance to remember the past and goes beyond the

communicative memory. The basis of artificial memory is places and images that will be repeated throughout the ages (Yates 5-6,58).

Ars memoire is the basis of artificial memory. It helps the individuals to absorb and retain an extraordinary amount of knowledge, for example, for rhetorical use ... remained effective until well into the 17th century (Assmann 1).

In this sense, *ars memoire* has to do more with individuals than with memory culture which is concerned with society and is linked to particular groups. Israel stands out in the history of memory culture just as the Greeks in art memory. Israel gave a new form to the classical art of memory. They preserved and were true to the following command, “keep and remember” (Holy Bible), and then handed it down from generation to generation. In this way, the Israelites developed an enhanced form of memory culture that corresponds to the artificial memory mentioned in *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (Assmann 16-17).

The art of memory (mnemonics) plays a very important role in keeping alive the past and through them passing on their past to the younger generations. The presence of mnemonics in every community/society made it possible for the younger generation to know the past, build up a connection with their origin and construct an identity. It will keep alive and strong the memory of the origins.

4.3 Literary-Mnemonic Devices in the Mao Folk Narratives

Literary-mnemonic devices help the readers and audience to focus on the narratives. They are tools used by authors and narrators to create a special effect in the minds of the readers and audience. In this way, they make a piece of art interesting and appealing to the readers. Literary devices deal mostly with sound, meaning, repetition and description of words and phrases; these devices can create a deeper connection between the audience and the story (Antony 3). In the written form, they are techniques that help to produce quality work.

These devices help to connect and understand the narratives or any piece of literary work. The devices act as a guide to the reader on how to read the piece. Sean Glatch defines literary devices as taking “writing beyond its literal meaning”. This is done by establishing a relationship between things. One of the most important elements in literary devices is a quality of connection in sounds, sense, emotion, narrative and meanings that go beyond the literal details. She further divided them into different categories in her work, “*112 Common literary devices: Definition, Examples, and Exercise*”, as common literary devices in poetry, prose, repetition literary devices, dialogue literary devices, wordplay literary devices, parallelism literary devices and rhetorical devices (2-3). We note that most of these characteristics apply mostly to the written narrative than the oral one.

It is not possible to make an elaborate study of mnemonics and their role in all the Mao folk narratives. Therefore, this study shall be limited to some of the most common mnemonic devices and terms that are found in the Mao Naga narratives. For example, repetition, landscape and settings in folk narratives enhance the emphasis, attention, significance and importance of words. They play the role of preserving the rich past through which the younger generations reconstruct identity.

4.3.1 The People (folk) as a Mnemonic Community

In ancient times, the people depended solely on orality to know their traditions and culture, since there were no written records. The family was an important mnemonic community with specific mnemonic practices like face-to-face interactions, social gatherings, etc. It is a collective memory where, through social interaction between inter-generational memories, the past is shared and communicated. The oral and repeated narration of the past among members who have no first-hand knowledge and experience is shared by those who have experienced. In this way, sharing of “living memory” takes place. Memory goes back as far as the oldest member can remember either from their experiences or those that they heard

from others (Erl 306, 308). Jan Vansina rightly pointed out that unwritten sources are embedded in the rich traditions of the past which have been transmitted orally from one generation to another. The preservation of it depended on the human memory through successive generations (Vansina 1). These have been transmitted through different means and forms. The non-literate society, to which the Mao Nagas once belonged, depended on the use of myths, legends, folksongs and folktales to maintain their ethnic identity (Elizabeth 44). According to Deep Punia, all literature, whether written or oral, springs from life but it is the oral transmission that expresses the socio-cultural life of a society with all its traditions, customs, values, etc., (qtd in Elizabeth 44) by people who share a common language, traditions and live within the same geographical locations. That is why Dell Hymes says that in speaking (narration), the speakers or the narrators associate particular ways of speaking with particular settings and activities (Hymes 36). It is the people who recall the past to us. The interaction of individuals with other individuals makes it possible to acquire knowledge about the events of the past. The family plays a major role in transmitting the past. The family is a mnemonic community. That is why Halbwachs opines that “Our kin communicate to us our things about people and things” (Erl 305).

The narrations are effectuated by the people themselves (mnemonic people) who received it from great storytellers or from some other elders who remembered them. To impress the audience, the narrators employed fantasy and imagination in the narratives without losing their essence. Since they are oral narrations, expressions, gestures and the use of repetitions served as useful means of communicating the narratives effectively (Thompson 4 - 5). These serve as mnemonic devices in an oral society. Thus, the people or the community can be considered as the primary mnemonic device in pre-literate communities.

4.3.2 Mnemonic Devices in Mao Narratives

Folklore includes myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles, chants, jokes, charms blessings, curses oaths, etc. It also includes costumes, folk dance, and folksongs (Bronner 55; Dundes 3). All these were handed down orally from one generation to the next, and are found in all societies across the globe. The past does not come to us only in one form as Thompson would opine,

...the traditional prose tale – the story which has been handed down from generation to generation either in writing or by word of mouth. Such tales are, of course only one of the many kinds of story material, for, in addition to them, narrative comes to us verse as ballads and epics, and in prose as histories, novels, dramas, and short stories (Thompson 4).

Like other oral communities across the globe, the Mao Naga narratives too have been preserved, communicated and disseminated through stories, songs, wise sayings and objects among the people from one generation to the next. These narratives can be grouped under many genres such as prose, poetry, proverbs, etc., that help to transmit their traditions to the younger and present generations. Most of the folksongs are very poetic while the folktales fall under the group of prose narratives. Being an oral community, everyone was a storyteller. There are also other forms such as “languages, oral traditions, customs, music, dance, rituals, festivals, traditional medicine, handicrafts, and traditional building skills”. According to Matsuura, these belong to “Intangible Cultural Heritage”. They are an important source of identity for many cultures, minorities and indigenous populations (quoted in Kire 60-61).

What makes these narratives memorable, lasting and educational to live on is the presence of everyday life and activities in it and more importantly, the values enshrined in it. Moreover, it is knowledge about their society. Good narratives can transcend the confines of space and time. Most of the narratives take place in familiar settings reflecting the way of life, concerns, heroic deeds, great personalities and cosmology. The narratives are based on natural

surroundings and deal with human life and activities. The names of the characters in the tales and most of the activities bear resemblance to the present day. Therefore, it depicts the lives of people of all ages and is relevant because of the value it contains. This renders the narratives lasting.

The activities, names and places in the narrations are familiar to the people and exist in reality. The Mao Naga narratives, being essentially oral, do not have the conventional style. Writing and preserving the narratives came much later, and that too by using the Roman script. A close analysis shows that there are several literary devices found in a single narrative. The songs are often repetitive. Mnemonics and literary devices as seen in select narratives will now be dealt with.

4.3.2.1 *Makhrii Pfii* (the place called Makhel)

Ochii ojiiphe hrii kotho hi adeimei chii ohrii hriiprae

Hriiprae ezho Ochii kosoyi ohrii kari hriiprae

Hriiprae lohe makhrefiino vu shujiio tasii

Tasii oshu kola pfona kajiio to aso mapra

Maprae oshu mikrii pfona koso to aso maprae

Mapra oshu eme pfona kajiio to aso maprae

Mapra oshu kola pfona osiingho vakhe larii siise modo pikhe sii

Esii oshu mikrii pfona kovoake vakhi larii siise modo pikhe sii

Esii oshu kola pfona sii o sii hi loe sii

Esii oshu mikrii pfona sii o nihi loe sii

Esii oshu eme pfona o sii modoe no

Ano,ezho ozii lovuo koeyi pfoe she kotjuo tesii oso hai sii

Esii okhe ozhe kono chokhro

Chokhro okhe ozhe kono she marao tesii oso hai sii

Esii tidi tino meila anao no hriiti mowo eme pфона

Pфона ezho okhro kava chiinghi kava ti kohrii ti lashe konomei sii.

(Free translation: Where did human life originate? Human life originated beneath the long-erected stone. They gathered at Makhrefii and departed. The father of the plain man grew up tall and happy. The father of the Meitei grew up strong and happy. The father of Mao grew up as strong and happy. The alphabet was written on the leaf of a tree for the plain man. The alphabet was written on the bamboo sheath for the Meitei. The alphabets were written on the skin of an animal for the Mao. The man of the plain learned. The Meitei learned. The Mao failed to learn, for he placed the piece of skin beside his bed where the rodents, during the night, took it away. This resulted in difficulties and hardship for the Maos in their learning. Oh, younger generation, today let's live our lives like the bright sun and moon in the sky).

The literary device used in this song is anaphora. It is a figure of speech in which the last word of the sentence is used to start the next line. The purpose is to stress the importance and feeling of its meaning. It also permits a continuous flow of thought since they did not have a written record in the early years. This form of repetition enables the community to register the song in their mind and thus strengthen memory power. The folksongs of the Mao Nagas usually employed this device.

This song contains several mnemonic aids that help to remember the past. These are *Ochiikoso* (long stone), *Makhrefii*, *kola* (plain people), *mikri* (Manipuris), *eme* (Maos), *osiingho* (leave), *kovoke* (bamboo leave), *osohai* (hide of animal). It is said that life originated at '*Ochiikosoyi*' (*long stone*). The long stone is found in one of the villages in the state of Nagaland. This object "*Ochiikosoyi*" is a mnemonic device indicating that at one point in time, the people settled in and around the vicinity where this stone is found. From there the people probably moved towards the present Makhel (*makhrefii*) as the song points to.

Hriiprae ezho Ochii kosoyi ohrii kari hriiprae (life originated at Ochii kosoyi). In this line, *Ochii kosoyi* is also spelled as *Otsuw Koso* and it is the Chichama village (one of the present-day villages in Nagaland which, to this day, tells this story); this indicates that they must still move forward.

“*Makhre*” is the present Makhel village, a historical Mao Naga village situated in the district of Senapati in the state of Manipur. It is believed that the people settled at Makhel, and later departed in different directions as the song indicates: *Hriiprae lohe makhrefiino vu shujiio tasii* (they gathered at Makhel and departed).

As stated in the previous chapter, Makhel village in this verse “*Makhre*” is also known by different names and spellings by other tribes who trace their roots to this place. The Angamis called it *Mekhroma Imekhromai* (Kuolie 2).

Assonance or the repetition of vowel sounds is a mnemonic and literary device found in the folksong *Makhriifii*. The vowel sound “o” is found repeated in *Ochii, ojiiphe, Ochii kosoyi ohrii*. In *Makhriifii*, the vowel “o” is found almost in every line. Anaphora or the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of a consecutive sentence is a second mnemonic device in the same folksong, e.g., “*hriiprae, maprae, esiioshu*”. Anadiplosis too is found in this folksong - “*hriiprae, tasii, mapra, chokhroandpfona*”. The Epistrophe device is seen in expressions like “*sii, maprae, hriiprae*”. Richmond has rightly observed that one of the important elements in folk narrative poetry is phraseology, characterized by repetitions and exaggerations. This is the hallmark of folk poetry, the very sum and substance of its being (Richmond 88-89). Writers like B.B. Kumar, SH.M. Rizvi Th. Robert, Sengupta, Sarthak, and others shared the same legend of the origin of the different tribes like Angami, Tangkhul, Maram, Paomei, Sema, and Lotha and points to Meikhel (*Makhel*), the historical village situated in Senapati district, in the state of Manipur, as the place of dispersal. The location of places is one of the important elements of mnemonics that adds credibility to the narratives.

Besides the people and the language that convey to us about the past, we see in the legend, myth, prose, and verse narratives some mnemonics that bring the distant past into the present.

It also helps in the construction of identity.

4.3.2.2 *Makri Hrii* (The Makhel race)

Isi pfoki kajii hino,

Shiipfo kohriina kamae.

Shiivorii korii kajiihi,

Ojiimoziih kamasiie.

Oshuli Kohrii thopfii no,

Isiipfoki mozhuwe.

Shiivorii no ozhi katei,

Chiikuwo kochue.

Tatholodo, shiipfo kohrii

Isiipfoki molethokoe Makhrifii.

Makhrifii no imei aso prae,

Achii makhrino tamarae.

Makhri fiino mephro prado,

Kashii, ive, kotho kate ye kakilei,

Kahrii kane amephro kapra,

Araso Chiitebu phinoe.

Isiipfoki phino kapra,

Ni khriingo siino amashii so hithoe.

Kazhe, kata, kane thopfii sii,

Mane pile tto shiivorii.

Makhrifii hi isii kamae,

Shiivorii, ojii mozihi Isii vanoe.

Bashi zhiido, ole mangei moe,

Alikha pule nghie chapei.

Alikha kovu mozhulo,

Isiiphi leimei Shiivorii khrokri se.

Vu ashujii ali pu lenghie,

Nikhriingo rachiie no newe (Kholi 76).

(Free translation: Isii is a big Mountain. It is the root of Shiipfo's race. Shiivorii is a big river. The human race looks up to Isii Mountain! It is the heart of the Makhriifii. It is at Makhriifii that people gathered for a meeting. It is a place of dispersal. Rise up, Shiipfow's race)

The mnemonic devices that are found in the above poem are "*Isiipfoki*" (Isii is the name of a mountain), "*Shiipfo*" (the name of the ancestor of the Mao Nagas), "*Shiivorii*" (name of a river), "*Makhriifii*" (Makhel village), "*chiitebu*" (Wild pear tree). These mnemonic devices offer probable "*loci*" (place). *Isiipfoki* is the place through which the people must have crossed and passed through *shiivorii* before they reached *Makhriifii* (Makhel village), as Ashikho Mao also opines that during the sojourn of the ancestors, Korro and his people went towards this mountain and its vicinity in which lies also the famous "*Akujii- Dziiku*" valley. Later they settled at Kheso (a place in present Nagaland). The people of Korro moved in the eastern direction following the course of the river "*Chuherii*" (Mao 18-19) till they reached Makhriifii (present Makhel village in Manipur). It was during the leadership of Shipfow (spelled as Shiipfo in the verse) that the people reached *Makhriifii*. The names of real and not imaginary mountains, persons, rivers, trees, and villages mentioned in the poem make the narrative authentic and contribute to lasting memory.

The words "*Isiipfoki*" and "*Shiivorii*" are almost found in every stanza. They act as a refrain in the poem. The assonance 'o' sound is found all through the verse. *Chiitebu* stands for the symbol of unity for all the Naga tribes that are believed to have dispersed from Makhel. The consonant sound "k" is found in words like,

...kothokate ye kakilei...

Kazhe, kata, kane

Epistrophe is found in

... Isii pfoki moletho koe Makhrifii.

Makhrifii no imei aso prae.

4.3.2.3 *Ekhru Choro* (Choro the Bachelor)

Ekhru Choro (Kholi 138-142) is a poignant poem about “*Ekhru Choro*” (bachelor Choro). It is also found in prose narrative. The poem is very pictorial in its setting, namely, the paddy fields in the countryside. The poem begins with Choro being made to look after the fields by his stepmother and it ends with his tragic death after an eagle attacked him.

Thingho hi priire osoruprii,

Chozii priie Chorongho nghole.

Apfiieh Charani, Kapeini

Sakrolo kashii rashii toleshe.

Aprowo nieh kochuchu lemoe?

Siitokhe, Kapeini sazhi kalino,

Kolupra pio koshomei solole

Charani sapu kalise pfo lole.

Charani sapu hino Emimei solole.

Kapeini tozhi kalino phicho khalole.

Charani topi kalino ome solole,

Opfiiphe pru mozhotie chiibuho mazhiile.

....

Lohi nitsiizii Kapeini ohrii kashiiro,

Monii holewo, chorowosii?

...

Lohi ikhrumei Choro leda kobuwo sii

Opfo soruwo mei yi konii vuwole tto choe.

Siibviio tukhumei vupha hekono vu nghoe.

Koro likhrusii vu ngho ikhru choro.

Tolu komuni lemeino lopono dapfo,

Vungho kowo ekhru Chorowo yisii,

Zhelo vulotesii kasamei hothino

Vulotesii siisii mangei khrao khramei.

(The story in gist: Choro, a young boy, spent his time looking after the field. He was ill-treated by his step-mother who would mix chicken dung in the food that she sent him. The only love he received was from his two step sisters - Charani and Kapeini. One day, when they had come to give him food, he asked them for some pieces of their clothes with which he dressed up like a bird and changed himself into one. He promised them that he would give them some parting gifts later on.

In this visit to them, he dropped beautiful feathers into the hands of his father and two step-sisters; instead, bird droppings for his step-mother, some of which fell into her eyes and she became blind and had to live a miserable life thenceforth. He asked them to send him news when his father passed away. On receiving the news, he came with his bird friends, but remained on for a long time; and when he took flight and crossed the village gate, he was killed by *tolu komuni* (eagle).

The poem has 28 stanzas, each stanza having 4 lines. The poem begins in a mood of fear and anxiety,

Thingho hi priire osoruprii,

Chozii priie Chorongho nghole.

It has mixed literary devices; one of them is rhyme as found in the three stanzas of the poem.

Thingho hi priire osoruprii,

Chozii priie Chorongho nghole.

Apfiieh Charani, Kapeini

Sakrolo kashii rashiito leshe.

Thini, chiithu kazhii edie

Chiithu kazhii ni sii avuhi zho

Lohii ikhrumei Choro leda kobuosii

Chiibuho jiishii here oro.

Izho tala lewo ariikhilo koniimono?

Izho tala lemo ariikhilo koniilejii.

Lohi nitsiizii Kapeini ohrii kashiiro,

Monii holewo, chorowosii?

The above rhyme scheme is ABAB. As discussed in the introduction, the oral folk narrative does not have regular patterns. The narrative, being oral, its expression changes. The above piece does not have a regular rhyme scheme throughout.

We also have examples of *anaphora* in the poem. The two pairs of lines start with the same words “*Izho*” (today) and “*Lohi*” (that one).

Izho tala lewo ariikhilo koniimono?

Izho tala lemo ariikhilo koniilejii.

and

Lohi nitsuzii Kapeini ohrii kashiiro monii holewo?

Lohi atsuzii Kapeini ohrii kashiiro monii holemo

“*Izho*” is also an example of *Anadiplosis*. The presence of such literary devices makes the poem flow smoothly and interestingly.

The often-repeated line refrain is found in “*Lohiikhrumei Choro ledakobuowosii...*” Choro is the central character in the poem. All actions revolve around him. The repetition of his name evokes a sense of sympathy and pity.

4.3.2.4 Chakhepfo Chahrewo (Story of Chakhepfo Chahrewo)

The Mao Nagas have narratives that speak of some great warriors and strong and extraordinary people. Their bravery knew no bounds. Chakhepfo Chahrewo is one such person famous for his bravery, strong will, and heroic adventures. Chakhepfo Chahrewo is a legendary figure famous for his supernatural feat but, in the end, met his downfall due to his over-

ambition. This story is found both in prose and poetry and can be grouped under the literary device of tragedy.

Chiibuno mohru mariipe, ojii maremeiso,

Ivelei siibu kajiiliti okhro kochu sata,

Obu phecho kolimo kamano lapfo

Siibvii pfo khrukowoti athemei khroko sowosa!

Ikhru Chahreo lemeikhro sokhu chosii,

Ikhru Chahreo lemei tino kapriihoe,

Okhe-eh priilemo ora yi priilemo,

Ikhru Chahreo nghodzii ti lei prii zhoamoe?

...

Nino zhepfo khru osii alei koleilo,

Osii alei machete hopfo khruilo,

Zhe asupfo marabu kajii vati telo

Telo teli astui Echeni yisii nele

...

Izhowo dziili avu avulokahra sopfo,

Odelei kahrii lei arii sopfo kalei,

Itsii mochowow ye mochomo kalei,

Titibvii hriio kalei hriisii Hriio bue (Kholi 143-146).

(The story in a gist: *Chahreo* was the strongest of the Nagas. He was not afraid of anything, neither tiger nor god. He challenged and defeated the rain, the sun, and the *osu* (deer, known to be the fastest animal). The only one who finally accepted his challenge was the landslide; in this competition, *Chahreo* was killed by the landside as he hung grasping onto the branch of *chiidubu*. He had a consequent bad after-life experience where he had to pass by the gate alone, carrying his things, since no one would help him. All these were because of his pride, for he failed to offer worship to God before beginning the challenge to the landslide).

The poem has 20 stanzas and each stanza has 4 lines. As are the features of mnemonics, its elements are *Chahreo*, *Echeni* (names of persons), *kotu* (name of a bird), *marabu*, *chiidobu* (names of trees), and strong images like the strong winds, unusual competitions with the wind, the sun, the rain, the deer and the landslides that make the story of Chahreo lasting. The atmosphere is gloomy, and uncertainty looms over at the beginning and at the end of the poem.

It begins with hyperbolic expressions:

Chiibuno mohru mariipe, ojii maremeiso, (the strong winds came from the south)

Ivelei siibu kajiiliti okhro kochu sata (shaking the small and big branches)

Obu phecho kolimo kamano lapfo (uprooting the trees from its roots)

None except Chahreo is stronger than the extraordinary happenings on the earth. He was a strong and mighty man. He could defeat all the powers on the earth except the landslide which, at the end of all his victories, rips his body apart during their competition.

Anaphora refers to repetition of a word or words or expression at the beginning of successive phrases or sentences. In *Chakhepfo Chahrewo* this is noticed particularly in the following sets of lines which start with the same expressions like *Omi dova* (landslide), *Ikhru Chahreo* (Bachelor Chahreo), and *Ochiiti* (weather). It gives a poetic effect.

Omi dova ninghi kavalei lejii Chahreo sii (Both Chahreo and landslide would compete with each other)

Omi dova anghi asuva tili hibviile (Chareo is the speaker- Landslide and myself would compete)

Ikhru Chahreo lemeikhro sokhu chosii, (The yell of Chahreo could be heard)

Ikhru Chahreo lemei tino kapriihoe, (There was nothing that he was afraid of).

and

Ochiiti iriie chiirii yisii valote do (He competed with the rain and won)

Ochiiti inie chiini yisii vahi lotie (He competed with the sun and won)

4.3.2.5 **Kateini Kajiini** (Recreational Song on Kateini and Kajiini)

This song on Kateini and Kajiini is a recreational kind of song that children learn from their early years from the elders. The free translation of the song is that it is not good for Kateini and Kajiini to stay together for Kateini would make fun of Kajiini. It's a pity.

Kateini Kajiini (a)

Ako kali chovomoe (b)

Kateini no Kajiini (a)

Koza tiwe (b)

Ti ti no shiie (c)

Ti ti no shiie (c)

The poem is an expression of pity for Kajiini which are indicated in the second, fourth and fifth lines. Another version of lines 5 & 6 is *titi leshiie/ noshiiye* (this is not ok, feel pity). Many of the Mao Naga tribe's poetry is alliterative (words that begin with the same consonant (Mikics 10). It is a repetition of sounds that allows the smooth flow of rhythm, thus adding a certain beauty to it. The rhyme scheme is ABABCC. The “k” sound is a fine example of alliteration while “ti, ti” belong to the literary device called Onomatopoeia, and “shiie” is an example of Epistrophe.

4.3.2.6 Saleni (The Feast of Sale)

Saleni (feast of *Sale*) is an important or the most important feast of the Mao Nagas. It occurs in the month of *Sale Khro* corresponding to the Gregorian calendar month of July. It is celebrated after the tedious job of planting paddy. It provides an occasion for people to relax and enjoy. The feast is also sacred because many rituals and rites are observed during this feast (Nepuni 118). All the traditional feasts are being celebrated to this day though simplified with the religious ritual and rites. It is interesting to note that before the celebration the people observed *Genna*, i.e., no-work days.

Arunamei Saleni koso manio ngholo

Ngholo akhramei olo longho chusii olo longho
Longho ezhi puheno chiilo moshiikobu kope pra
Aba kothi mo koe mari chiisa du ezhi loti khejii
Khejii apfii soruwo opfo soruwo sii ezho mari chiisae du ezhi loti khejii
Ana pei ede kono mari chiisa du ezhi kolo siichomo
Nino shii nipo nikhra kono o soma
Soma apfii niye ikhro elowo hrii
Apfo niye ikhro elowo hrii
Makhra hrii kapra hi mari chiisa chiizhono shii konu o licho
Licho ezho mari chiisa opa leino shu konuwo licho
Licho sii thisii chiidu kono ochii thu lire sato
Sato Ochii kothu ti khuho due no
Eno hokhe kari ti opfo soruwo mei maki soda kohru sata
Sata ezho chara ezhi ni chara kochu
Chuchu ezho mari Asha chiisa sii kobo he pio, Mari Asha ye loloe adah
Ada ezho chara ezhi chara kochuchu
Ezho mari chiisa sii kobo he pio mari Asha lolo kochu
Kochu opfo soruwo omei charawo siihe
Siihe ezho azhii Asha mei tio kobo he pio, mari chiisa sii loloe ada
Ada apfo soruwo choho no shotie chobo moho
Moho ezho mari chiisa sii pfohilow nichiiime
Nikhrao bacho sii kha khi pie adah apfo soruwo
Ruwo echo echu suro no sa shiie sii
Ezho echo soru avue kochu li vu tieh ada pfo soruwo².

(The story in gist: Asha and her friends went to collect shampoo plants. After the feast of Saleni, while plucking them by the side of a lake, her bangles fell into the lake. Her stepmother accused her of giving away the bangles to her beloved. Deeply distressed, Asha took her father the next morning to the lake, where a strong wind blew back the bangles to her, but in turn took her life. Her father returned home after knowing the truth, but decided not to show the bangles to his wife.)

In most of the narratives of the Mao Nagas, the action takes place in familiar landscapes in and around their habitat. The references to a festival (*Saleni*), the climbing mountains (*pfokikapra*), hunting of birds (*rahokohu*), the dresses, *olo* (a kind of slippery plants to make shawl) and bangles (*chiisa*) are all familiar activities and objects of the festival. These activities and objects connect the people to their ancestors. These are mnemonic devices that help to remember their past.

The episode of the folk poetry narrative on Kholiru, also known as Asha or Ashia, is set in the context of Saleni (feast of Sale). It is believed that Kholiru was from *Kosiime* (Saranamei) village which at present falls under the Paomata region of the Paomei Tribe in Manipur. The village is not far from the historical village of Makhel. Though the story and the song are the same, there are variations, but all retain the essence of the story. Geographical location is one of the elements that help to identify a folk group (Yoder 295). The story of Asha takes place in a village which at present falls in the district of Senapati.

The celebration of festivals is an important mnemonic device in the preservation and handing down of traditional practices and their rich culture. The festivals also provide an occasion to relax, a time to rest from hectic agricultural work, and a rest for the earth. It is also a time to strengthen the bond of unity and communion not only with the family members but with other members who are married and settled down in other villages and they and their relations are invited to the parental home to celebrate together.

The poem has more than one literary device. Words like “*ngholo, longho, kheji, soma, lichu, sato, ada, kochu, siihe, moho*” are anadiplosis in the poem. Alliteration is found in the consonant “*kh*” while assonance is found in “*e*” sound as in “*echo echu*” and “*ezho echo*”

Examples of Anaphora are found in,

Lichu ezho mari chiisa opa leino shu konuwo lichu

Lichu sii thisii chiidu kono ochii thu lire sato

and Epistrophe in

Aba kothi mo koe mari chiisa du ezhi loti khejii

Khejii apfii soruwo opfo soruwo sii ezho mari chiisae du ezhi loti khejii ...

Nino shii nipo nikhra kono o soma

Soma apfii niye ikhro elowo hrii

Apfo niye ikhro elowo hrii

Makhra hrii kapra hi mari chiisa chiizhono shii konu o lichu

Lichu ezho mari chiisa opa leino shu konuwo lichu

Lichu sii thisii chiidu kono ochii thu lire sato

Sato Ochii kothu ti khuho due no...

Epistrophe device is found in

Soma apfii niye ikhro elowo hrii

Apfo niye ikhro elowo hrii

The assonance sound “*o*” runs through the whole piece.

Another important aspect of narratives is the use of imagery. Memory helps us to create images by making references to the past (Assmann 62). The settings in most of the poetry and prose narratives are pictorial. The actions take place in familiar places, “*Loc*i” as Yates calls them and environments known to the people. The traditional feasts like *Chiithuni, Saleni* and the other traditional feasts and activities are very much part of the life of the people. Since

many of the traditional feasts are still being celebrated to this day, the narratives that speak about this are very easily understood and help one to connect to the roots. Many activities in the narratives are referring to the everyday life and activities of the people like agriculture and related activities such as, hunting, rearing of domesticated animals and friendship.

Assonance or the repetition of vowel sounds is a mnemonic and literary device found in the folksong *Makhriifii*. The vowel sound “o” is found repeated in *Ochii, ojiiphe, Ochii kosoyi ohrii*. In fact, in *Makhriifii*, the vowel “o” is found almost in every line. Anaphora or the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of a consecutive sentence is a second mnemonic device in the same folksong, e.g., “*hriiprae, maprae, esiioshu*”. Anadiplosis too is found in this folksong - “*hriiprae, tasii, mapra, chokhro and pfona*”. The Epistrophe device is seen in expressions like “*sii, maprae, hriiprae*”. Richmond has rightly observed that one of the important elements in folk narrative poetry is phraseology, characterized by repetitions and exaggerations. This is the hallmark of folk poetry, the very sum and substance of its being (88-89).

4.3.3 Wisdom Sayings as a Mnemonic Device

The Oxford Dictionary defines wisdom as the ability to make sensible decisions and give good advice from experience and knowledge. The Compact Oxford Thesaurus defines it as sagacity, intelligence, common sense, prudence, judiciousness, etc. (923). It is the opposite of folly. Wisdom is the art of dealing with various situations in life in good judgment. It is also a kind of teaching that one gathers from experience and transmits to others (*The Didache Bible*, The Wisdom Books 770). As the term indicates, it helps in the character formation of individuals. It is full of practical advice for other fellow beings by those experienced and learned, as also by knowledgeable people. The purpose and functions of wisdom is to teach, advice and instruct. A few examples found among the Mao Nagas are given below. The verse

narratives are heavily loaded with meanings and lessons for practical life. The values are communicated and taught through it.

- a) One folk rhyme or wisdom saying warns the cowboys not to visit certain places because they are the abode of evil spirits who could harm them and their cattle:

Nolu kochu li

Otu khu kochu li

Ojii kahre he li hoprasho

Ojii ni (sic no) kitha le

(Free translation – when young and tending the cow, do not go to the unholy land, the land will curse them to death) (Kazhiia 103).

The mnemonic device of assonance “o” runs through the rhyme adding beauty to it. “*Ojii*” in the third and fourth lines are examples of anaphora in the rhyme, while “*kochuli*” is an epistrophe. Phrases or word or words are in epistrophe position if the repetition is at the end of sentences like “*kochuli*” in the first and second lines.

- b) Below is a wise saying of the rhyme scheme- aabb

Hoeh olo hi soli itsii ho chomo

Olo hi soli mozho chomo

Chomo olo koso ochii kapemei

Lephro no jii sii khrao khumei

(Free Translation: when you sing you do not lose wisdom, those who sing and instruct, are courageous)

“Chomo” in 2nd and 3rd lines is an example of anaphora, while “chomo” in 1st and 2nd lines and “kapemei” and “khumei” are examples of epistrophe, which is the repetition of the final word or words of a structure.

- c) *Modo-e Shiikhoka*

Pfo Nenio, pfo Kahei

Nipa siiho, niziisii hoe

Siidochiitale

(The two brothers: Modo Shiikhoka and Nenio were lazy; they sold all their property for their survival. Now they have nothing left but to leave the village and go somewhere in search of livelihood)

As is the nature of wise sayings, the author is not known. But the verse sends out a powerful message to the audience to cultivate the spirit of hard work. If people do not work hard, they will end up like the brothers in the verse who sold all that they had and when all is spent, they will have to leave their homes and village and go somewhere else in search of livelihood.

The common assonance sound is “o”. Pfo in the 2nd line is an example of alliteration. The presence of these mnemonic devices helps to catch the hearers’ attention.

It is difficult to make a clear-cut division of the difference between wisdom sayings and proverbs. Both aim at the formation of the characters of individuals.

4.3.4. Mnemonic Devices in the Mao Naga Proverbs

As stated in chapter 1 of this research study, cultural memory interprets common practices through different genres like proverbs and maxims. Proverbs are brief genres of oral expressions. Proverbs are the source from which the literary epigram tradition originated. Proverbs are mnemonic techniques that use wisdom to transmit moral lessons. These are clever, succinct and widely used classical idioms in both informal and formal settings, like courtrooms and classrooms. Every proverb is a complete statement that offers a self-sufficient point of view and plan that just requires a communication event to be put into action. One of the shortest kinds of ancient expressions is the proverb. Proverbs contain literary devices such as meter, rhyme, assonance, alliteration and others that are typically seen in English poetry (Abrahams 117–119).

The proverbs, sage sayings, and adages that the Mao Naga ancestors left behind are rich in cultural heritage and contain rich moral values and their meanings are difficult to understand. These serve as life lessons. They are brimming with religious and moral precepts for daily living. They provide insight on the appropriate course of action in particular situations. A few of these have to do with life, food, job, family relationships, manners, patience, loyalty and other topics. The meanings and interpretations of a few examples are provided along with free translations. Assonance such as “o”, “i”, and Mao Naga vowel sound “ii” are very common literary devices in the Mao Naga proverbs. In the proverbs stated by Abraham’s devices are meter, rhyme, assonance, alliteration, etc. (Abrahams 119). The few proverbs¹ cited below are short phrases, yet they carry powerful messages for upright lives, that count for its longevity and act as mnemonic devices. It is difficult to make a detailed analysis of the given phrases, but the most common and outstanding literary devices are pointed out in the phrases³.

- a) *Otamei sii chovoe* (If you have good relatives, you have everything). To have good relatives is like having a treasure. They will be there in time of need when all others desert you. *Okhri zhiio hriilo moli she* is an oft repeated expression. The common devices that we find in the two phrases are assonance “o”, “i”, and Mao Naga vowel sound “ü”.
- b) *Niibaluli kratiwe* (if you laugh too much, you will cry). We must set limits to what we do. If we are happy too long, we must remember that sorrow is not far behind. The very short phrases and the devices we find are “i” and “a”.
- c) *Toni mozholuli chakitiwe* (If you desire to eat something too much, you really can’t do so). The assonance sound “o” is common in this phrase. The meaning is that we need to set a limit to our desires. We should not long for something too much. Otherwise, when it comes you may not be able to enjoy it.

- d) *Koto kosho hi ojiikhru li bue* (Food and drink are beneath the ground): If one does not work hard, one will have nothing to eat. We cannot simply pluck food and drink from the tree. One has to earn them by the sweat of one's brow. The prominent assonance "o" sound is present in almost all the words.
- e) *Opfii opfomei ye da chiinoe* (One should not beat one's parents): Unlike the other phrases, assonance vowel sound "o" is present in the first two words, "*Opfii opfomei...*". The repetition of vowel sound enhances mood and emphasis. The meaning of the phrase is that the curse of the parents and elders will bring about sicknesses and misfortune. If we do not respect and honour them, they may curse us. An example of expression of a curse is '*orabuso*'.
- f) *Kotsiimei nghokha chiinoe*: (The way of the elders should not be blocked). This is a reminder to everyone to respect and love the elders, and not become an obstacle in the way of the elders, for they take the place of God. The literary device is the assonance sound "o".
- g) *Kotsiimei to shuto chiinoe*: (the food of the elders should not be taken away). The literal meaning is that the food of the elders should not be snatched away from them or that they must not be deprived of food. The prominent assonance sound is "o".
- h) *Imei hi opfo no kamae* (The stomach is the root of one's life). If you don't have food, you cannot live; you cannot work when your stomach is empty. Your entire life depends on how well you care for your stomach (food). There is a mixed assonance sounds like "e", "o", "e" in the phrase.
- i) *Kade sii koma nela ni koso* (like Kade, you reap what you sow). "o" and "a" are outstanding assonance devices found in the phrase. This proverb has reference to a man named Kade who was working very hard for many days to bring water to his paddy field by making a canal. One day when it was almost over, his parents

brought him food (*kophani*) which was a mixture of rice and chicken which is considered to be very nourishing. On seeing the food container, he got angry with his parents, not knowing that the food contained also chicken. He threw away the food. In this way, the most nourishing food was wasted by *Kade* himself. The meaning of the proverb is that one wants to do good but at times he/she blocks it with his/her actions.

4.4 Analysis of a Few Mao Folk Narratives Using Dell Hymes' S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G.

Model

Memory Studies is a multidisciplinary sector. It comprises several branches. Ethnography studies people and their culture. The ethnography of communication is concerned mostly with how people of a particular group relate with each other through the use of language, be it written, oral, or in any other form. Language is one of the important aspects that distinguish a particular group from the others. It is the vehicle on which members belonging to the group speak, understand and communicate meaningfully. Language is not separated from culture. They are inextricably linked with each other. Language communicates the culture of the people. It is as old as human beings. It is therefore pointed out by Hymes that language is the oldest form of man's scientific enterprises (Hymes 35). It is an important mnemonic device through which the past is handed down.

In every society, communication is initiated through spoken words and not in a written form. In an illiterate society, the preservation and continuity of the social identity and culture depended solely on oral transmission following a pattern of repetition and interpretation to ensure the continuity of the group. The Nagas in general and the Mao Nagas in particular did not have a written script of their own. As a result, orality became the main pool of knowledge and information transmitted mostly by the elders to the younger generations. This was done mainly through the art of storytelling. Lanusashi Longkumer, a Naga historian, writes that the

Nagas had an effective means of communication and records have been preserved for many years through the deeply rooted and time-tested foundations of oral tradition. Their oral narrative speaks of their origin and migration, the formation of villages, war, peace, festivals and so forth. All these were transmitted orally from one generation to the next through songs, poetry, stories, tales, etc. (qtd in Kire 59-60). The social context in which the oral narratives take place is very important. According to Bascom, there are six factors, very much similar to Hymes' SPEAKING model that contribute to the credibility of the narratives.

(1) when and where the various forms of folklore are told; (2) who tells them, whether or not they are privately owned, and who composes the audience; (3) dramatic devices employed by the narrator, such as gestures, facial expressions, pantomime, impersonation, or mimicry; (4) audience participation in the form of laughter, assent or other responses, running criticism or encouragement of the narrator, singing or dancing, or acting out parts in a tale; (5) categories of folklore recognized by the people themselves; and (6) attitudes of the people toward these categories (334).

In this section, a few Mao Naga narratives will be analysed using Dell Hymes' model, interpreting the content and context in which the narratives seem to have originated. Hymes' mnemonic device – SPEAKING skills—is an acronym which stands for a) setting, b) participants, c) ends, d) act sequences, e) keys, f) instrumentalities, g) norms, and h) genres (Hymes 59-65). The eight elements of this acronym will be used to analyse few folk narratives.

4.4.1 The setting

Setting refers to the time and place of a speech act and, in general, to the physical circumstances (Hymes 60). It refers to the time and place in which the events narrated took place historically. The settings in the narratives in the Mao Nagas are localized and give a vivid picture of the landscape: a cluster of houses surrounded by paddy fields, forests, village ponds, farms, etc. Therefore, it presents the beautiful landscape of the villages surrounded by paddy

fields and forests, the villages usually built on the hilltop. Most of the Mao Naga narratives took place in familiar landscapes within their habitats: villages, paddy fields, forests, and the *morung*. A few narratives like in *Shiikache Ko* make a mention of faraway places (places unknown, the narrative does not mention the area). Shiikache's sister was married off to a faraway village. While, in some, the presence of supernatural elements adds fantasy and increases the power of imagination or rather takes the audience to a wonderland. The supernatural tales narrate ordinary people's encounter with the super hero. The heroes and the heroines are ordinary people. Such tales speak of man's inherent attraction for the supernatural (Boro 181).

Specific settings in the narrative in *Choro Ko* are mainly concentrated in the village, his home, and the *odo* (paddy field). The story of Choro starts with his activities in *oru lei* (paddy field) and *chiidze kaka* (courtyard) (Salao 12) (the village playground - open space). The story of Thoduo is also in the *odo lie* (paddy field) while *Chakhepfo Kahrio* takes place in different places. The first part could be probably in the forest or a little away from the village since he was a great warrior who challenged and killed all that came his way except the landslide.

Akajii Ye Ariijii Ko is also set in the village, family and forest. *Kholia Ko*, *Kholiru Ko*, *Shiipfowo Ko*, *Shiikache Ko* (Salao 27-32, 33-38, 42-45). *Bunio ye Koshoni ko*, *Moronato Kahei ko*, *Osi ko*, *Oru koho ko*, *Khozhow ko*, *Moranti kali ko*, *Orameipfii monokolo ko*, *Mache ko*, and *Hriio ko* (Saleo 1-2, 18-59) have all village, paddy fields and of course the family as settings in the narratives.

Kateini Ko (the story of Kateini) takes place in the village. The same story is also entitled *Kajini and Katini* (Kricho 60); very few stories mention specific village places as *Viswema* (Salao 6) in *Kateini Ko* which is one of the present villages in Nagaland bordering the states of Nagaland and Manipur.

Kholiru Ko (the story of Asha) (Salao 33-38) in Saranamei (at present falls in the territory of the Paomei Naga, situated not far from the historical village Makhel in the district of Senapati, Manipur); *Akajii Ye Ariijii* is a story which takes place in the Chiizhumei (Willong) and Maram villages, *Dziliiamosiia* (Kricho 1-5), the great grandmother of the Mao Nagas and those tribe who shared the legend, seems to have taken in and around the present historical Makhel village, *Choro Ko* (the story of Choro) (Salao 10-13) is set in the fields of the countryside; *Kholia Ko* (the story of Kholia) in two villages and their surrounding forest. Some stories are set in the villages, the typical paddy fields, while *Chakhepfo Kahrio Ko* (the story of Chakhepfo) takes place in Chakemei Zhonamai (Yangkhullen) villages, in *Moronati Kahei Ko*, *Shiikache Ko*, *Chojiina Kali Ko*, *Shiipfowo Ko*, *Mache Ko*, all settings have the house/village and the story seems to have taken place a long time ago in that part of their land. Thus, we see almost all the stories take place in the villages or their surrounding areas. The locales are familiar and natural, thus giving credence to the story (Vatuk and Vatuk 26).

The youth dormitory was an important centre for socialising. In the past, it used to be a centre of education for young boys and girls who would come together to entertain themselves, to learn songs and crafts, listen to stories, etc. Since it was important centre, the mention of the places added credibility to the narratives that they listened to. Thus, in *Kateini Ko*, it is narrated that Kateini and her sister went to youth dormitory for girls (Salao 5) as was the custom of the time to celebrate the community feast with their friends in the evening. It is during their meetings in the *morung* that the traditional culture of the people is disseminated to the younger generation through folktales, etc. (Nepuni 107-108). Even in the world of the dead, like in the story of two orphans, it is mentioned that the boy went to the youth dormitory.

4.4.2 The participants

Narratives are primarily narrated by someone to some others. Storytellers are found in every society accompanied by eager listeners (Thompson 3). In the Mao Naga tribe, the

narratives are disseminated by the elders, parents, or some knowledgeable persons. In all the narratives the participants are usually the narrators and the audience. The narrators told stories or events that are connected with the daily lives and occupation of the community. This was more evidenced in the social gatherings such as festivals and meetings in the youth dormitory, wherein the listeners are young people, whereas, the narrators are the elderly or even those of two or three generations prior to the listeners.

4.4.3 The Ends – the Narratives and their Purpose

a) To entertain and to teach

The narratives are formed or communicated with the purpose of entertaining people. At the same time, it also has social functions and teaches values. The narratives reflect the lives of the community, as M.J. Herskovits said, giving an insightful picture of the way of life (qtd in Boro 222). They thus play the role of preserving and imparting culture. They act as guides to the culture of the people. They unveil and transmit culture to the younger generations. The narratives are the syllabus. They are a part and parcel of the lives of the people. They reflect their lives, activities, occupations, costumes, craft, food habits, beliefs, relation with nature, etc. This is what makes DrAnil Boro rightly say that they reveal cultural traits such as “attitudes, values and cultural goals” of the people (222). The values enshrined are perennial, relevant and applicable to everyone at any age and any period.

b) To reveal the past: social and cultural facets

Narratives reflect the socio-cultural life of the people. The people are hard-working. There are occasions like festivals when people take a break from the stress on the soil. Festivals are recurring moments of special significance during the year. Every community has their special feasts celebrated with meanings attached to them. They offer the people a period of rest. The Mao Naga festivals are based on the agricultural cycle. The festivals of Chiithuni and Saleni are two important feasts celebrated by the people not only in the olden days as narrated

in *Kateini ko* and *Kholiru ko*, but also by the present generation. The narratives also strengthened social ties and community cohesion as they are often told during the gatherings and festivals.

At one point in time, the people were engaged in war with others. *Shiikache Ko* and *Kholia Ko* narrate that it was to end such disputes that “*Aso koto*” (Peace Treaty) was celebrated between the warring groups and peace was restored after such celebration. This was also an occasion where the traditional attires would be worn and displayed. The villages of Chani and Shiikache had one such feast. All the male folk would dress in their best traditional attire. Chani wove the best dress for Shiikache. Shiikache, in his best attire, with his shield decorated with two hummingbirds *rikriiridzii* (a male and female bird), went to the host village for the Peace Treaty feast. Chani had also attached attractive wild animal horns onto his shield. The peace treaty is usually held for three days. The days are spent drinking, eating, and sporting. Both the groups vow that henceforth they would live in peace and not engage in war. Before the departure of the guests, the host village presents to the guest group a spear along with some cash, symbolic of the covenant made between them that would remain forever (Mao 164-165; Salao 1983).

Another aspect of the people’s cultural and social life is their dress. The Mao Nagas have different dresses for men and women on different occasions. In Kateini’s story, the wealthy wear “*katisalerisa*” while the poor wear *okhrilosa*. The best dresses are also worn during the “*pfokikapra*” (climbing mountain) in the story of Kateini, “*Aso koto*” (peace treaty) in Shiikache story, and *Zhoso koso* (Feast of Merit) Kholia’s story etc. Chani began to prepare him for training in various games because she wanted him to be the best.

“Folk costume is one of the symbols of folk community, and one of the variables of a culture”. In any traditional community, we find differences between male and female dresses, indicating also the social status of individual in the society (Yoder 302, 304).

Chani siino Shiikache peno chii kothuni ozhe kozhe eo ye otsu kavu do (Longjump and Shotput) modowo hithini woli Shiikache sii sokhru lowo zhiishu pratie...(Salao 54)

Yet another aspect is the role of women in society, the ordinary as also the extraordinary roles. In a patriarchal society, the women were considered the weaker section, incapable of doing any good beyond their assigned role which was almost always to their homes (Rosalind 188-189). It had always been the duty of men to perform heroic acts such as war, avenging the enemy, taking part in politics, and in outdoor activities.

“*Akajii Ye Ariijii Ko*” and the narratives on the stepmothers presents a strong undercurrent of stereotyping in the characters of Kapeini and the stepmothers in “*Kateini Ko*”, “*Kholia Ko*”, and “*Choro Ko*”. Kapeini’s story is told as a reminder to the people of women’s capacity for deception rather than as an acknowledgement of a woman’s heroic deed. Kapeini uses her charm and beauty to seduce the man who had killed her brother and to avenge his death by slaying him using her sexual allure. She is forced to use the only weapon she has with her to defeat her enemy but this ‘weapon’ is not necessarily her beauty and charm. It was her intellect and statecraft that helped her to succeed when all other men failed. When all requests for help to avenge the death of Ariijii are denied, Kapeini’s skill in political scheme comes into play. She gains access to Akajii and uses her wit and intelligence and kills him. However, Kapeini’s heroic deed is not acknowledged. Instead, undeserved fame and honour are accorded to her brother who carries the head from the village gate to the village ground. Since headhunting was the domain of the men folk in the olden days, her claim to honour went unheard and unacknowledged in the male dominated Mao society (Kazhiia and Kiangte 308-309).

The cruelty of stepmothers in the stepmother narratives is exaggerated to the point that they are stripped of all human compassion. But by magnifying the cruelty of the stepmothers,

the narratives caution against the power women can wield, if uncontrolled. While conveying lessons, there are elements of prejudices and shortcomings, especially the biased attitude towards women, by projecting only the stepmothers who are cruel and wicked. The narrative serves, in a way, to keep alive the norms of the ancestors and to teach the younger generations the punishment and reward of good and bad behaviour. The archetypal character of the cruel stepmother that is found in almost all cultures is indicative of patriarchy's idea of women and motherhood. The stepmother represents the subverted image of womanhood (Kazhiia and Khiangte 247, 250).

c) To teach man-nature interconnectedness

Most folk narratives revolved around the life and daily activities of the people. Every activity that they are engaged in is connected with nature. From this evolved an understanding of the need to treat nature as sacred. Since they were an agrarian community, they were fully aware that their livelihood depended on the produce of the land. The young and the old worked hard on the land. Even community feasts which are celebrated during the year are centred on agriculture. Nature is not only regarded as sacred but also from the aspects of providing, conserving, harmony, sustenance and enjoyment (Nepuni 56-57). The narratives highlight the relationship between man and their natural environment, promoting a sense of stewardship and respect for nature.

Richly adorned and attractive dresses are part of the social life of the Mao Nagas. Many stories speak of such dresses; mention is also made of how they are made, namely, from the gifts of nature. Thus, in the story of *KateiniKo*, in the narration about the celebration of *Chiithuni* - the celebration of the fruits of a rich harvest - a day is set aside to *pfokikapra* (climb the mountain), where young men and women wearing their best traditional attires would compete in various traditional games after reaching the spot (Kricho 60). The dresses were woven from the special plants that were available to the people in the forest in the olden days.

Ikhru ilo sii kapeni siipfiwo ohuhopfo Ochiivukro lie inulei nopfii nolu thopfii se vu kolitiee: Kateini ye Kajiini pfii siino ikhru ilo hesiino... izho kapeni sii kopfii hrullei themeiyi no mamaizhiie to kakriiwe to oko se anowolitie. (It was time for the young men and women to return after climbing the mountain. As they were returning to the village with traditional yells, the mother of Kateini and Kajiini enquired from others as to whose dress was the best on this Saleni) (Salao 4).

This dependence on nature is also mentioned in the story of Kholiru, where it is narrated that Kholiru and her friends went to the forest after the feast (of *Saleni*) to collect *olo* (a kind of slippery plant, its fibre was used to make dresses).

The theme of nature as a provider who sustains human life is seen in *Moronato Kahei Ko* and *Thoudo Ko*. *Moronato Kahei Ko* is the story of two young orphans whose parents died while they were still very young and who were unable to fend for themselves. At that time, the people's main occupation was agriculture and its related activities. The young orphans were not able to cultivate by themselves. The dead parents, taking pity on the orphaned children, would come at night to complete the farm work.

The main character in *Thoduo Ko* is Thoduo whose parents died when he was very young; his elder sister Cholidania was married off when he was young. So, he does not know where and to which village she was married off. The narrative begins with the statement that one day *Thoduo ye Cholidania sii odolie nghoche* (Thoduo and Cholidania went to the field). Thus, the folk narratives speak of nature providing the people sustenance, as also the occasion for merry-making.

Nature also acts as a protector and provider. *Kholia Ko* is a narration in this regard. It is the story of a young girl named Kholia who had a stepmother. Acting upon the insistence of the stepmother, the father takes Kholia to the forest to abandon her. While on the way to the forest, Kholia and her father rested under a big tree. In the evening, mixed feelings of fear and anxiety came over her when her father left her alone in the forest. In these moments of confusion, she heard a consoling voice from nowhere telling her not to be afraid but to take shelter under its feet and the

following morning to go down following the course of the river/stream where she would meet a man who was better than her father. “The tree has opened wide its cavity for her shelter for the night” (Mao 43).

Kholia Ko is a folk narrative that symbolically portrays nature as a protector and preserver. The huge tree gave her protection, offering her a sense of hope about meeting a man who would be more loving to her than her father. The tree acted as her mother giving her direction to go down by the stream where she would find a man who would rescue her. Kholia’s stepmother wanted her to die in the forest to be devoured by wild animals. But it turned out to be the other way. She was cared for and protected by the tree which acted as her parent. The tree is personified as a loving person who cares and comforts. Kholia can be identified with nature and her misery to silence and the destruction of nature. The river plays an important role as it leads her to find healing (a man who accepted her), gradually leading her to a prosperous life (Kazhiia 182-183).

d) To highlight ecological imbalances

This section will deal with the environmental crisis in the narratives. There is the story of Chahreo. His birth was signalled by strong winds like tsunamis, uprooting of mighty trees and massive destruction in both land and sea. As he grew up, he was known for his extraordinary strength. No one could challenge him. Since there was no one to challenge him, Chahreo began to challenge nature. He challenged the sun, the rain, the flood and the deer. He also displayed his prowess by catching an eagle and a flying bulbul with his bare hands. He was victorious in all the above competitions. Everyone stood in awe of his achievements and dared not walk into his presence. But a day came when nature’s wrath fell upon him. His downfall came when he challenged the *Omi dova* (landslide). He was killed by it while hanging onto a fig branch to save himself.

The two stood in the line and the perfect white hen was set free and it flew beyond the fig tree on the hilltop and referee was blown and both speed (sic) up towards the fig tree. As soon as

Mr. Chahreo grasp (sic) one branch of the fig tree the spirit slip (sic) the soil down deep taking Mr. Chahreo's dead body down leaving the torn right hand hanging on a branch of a fig tree. Mr. Chahreo, the super, was badly defeated by the spirit of the landslide (Mao 35).

Chahreo lived in a period when traditional rituals and rites were strictly practiced. His confidence in his extraordinary strength became the reason for his downfall. In one of the versions, it is narrated that on the day of his competition with the landslide, he displeased god by neglecting to perform the rituals and rites and so god's wrath fell upon him (Kricho 16). Nature is presented as a destroyer, a powerful element greater than any other force on earth (Kazhiia 183). Stones and rocks have been powerful means of comfort, prosperity and protection for humankind. The early men took shelter in caves of stones; they generated fire by rubbing one stone against another - *milakosii* in the Mao language (Mao 6).

The wisdom of the elders is stored in the folktales and other forms of narrations as also in objects and monuments which have meanings attached to them. They have survived through the good and the not-so-good times. They carry the moral values of society which Dell Hymes referred to as the end or the goal (Hymes 61).

4.4.4 The Act Sequences – the Events

The events of the narratives centred on a few characters who were engaged in normal activities in those times when the stories originated. They revolve around a few characters and familiar environments that make it easy for the audience to remember. In the stories of *Kateini* and *Kajiini*, *Kholia*, *Choro*, *Thoduo*, *ChakepfoKahrio*, *Choziina*, *Kholiru*, *Shiipfowo*, *Shiikache*, *Morona Kahei*, *Kozhow*, *Morona Kali*, *Mache*, *Hriio*, the events begin in the families like the ill-treatment of the stepchildren by stepmothers as in the stories on *Kateini*, *Kholia* and *Choro*, the death of the parents and the struggle the orphans went through in life in the stories of the two orphans. Then they slowly moved to other places but all within the vicinity of the homes and villages.

The events involved are normal activities that are expected of both genders and are practised to this day to some extent. The community celebrations of *Saleni* in *Kateini Ko*, *Kholiru Ko* are being celebrated even to this day (it is a festival after the plantation in the month of *Sale* (July)) (Mao 54, 88; Saleo 6). *Pfokikapra* is a special day in which all the males, clad in colourful traditional attires, carrying guns and spears, and the females in their traditional baskets on their heads and walking sticks in their hands would climb towards to fixed mountain. On reaching the destination, some games would be conducted. During their return, the girls would be carrying the ceremonial firewood given by their brothers as a sign of love. This firewood will then be taken to *lochi ibulei* (the girls' dormitory) for the bonfire in the evening (Nepuni 117-118). It was in this context that Kateini and Kajiini too went to the girls' dormitory on the eve of Kateini's escape to her aunt's house at Viswema, while in Kholiru or Asha, it was soon after this feast that she and her friend went to the forest to collect *olo*.

It was the customary practice of the people to organize peace treaties with other warring villages. In the stories of Kholia and Shiikache, the action moves towards the celebration of one of the significant celebrations, *Aso Koto*⁴(Peace Treaty) (Saleo 35) which has already been explained earlier.

Another important aspect of the events in which the action revolves is the celebration of *ozhoso*⁵ (Feast of Merit) in *Kateini Ko*. The remnants of the Feast of Merit are now occasionally celebrated among the people. After Kateini went to live with her aunt at Viswema, by fortune, she got married to a wealthy man. They became rich.

Pfonghei adzii kolo thisii choho nishupra lowo omozii ye ozhoso to orumei yi pi pe zhutatie.

Pfonghei no orumei yi mohru karei vusii Kateini pfo yi no vu ochii mohruo to mape prae.

Ana pfochimei siino ninapei no soto soshowo lei kabei zhiimoe, pfo sii mazhira tatiwo chiizii-e zhiimo libei wotie to petilie Kateini pfo se lomotie (Salao 8).

(Later Kateini got married. They grew rich. One day, they threw a party for the people of the village. Kateini's father was too invited. Her stepmother contemptuously asked what good could come out of her. Therefore, her father did not respond to the invitation).

As indicated in the story, only rich families could afford to throw such a feast. It is celebrated usually in March as per the lunar calendar of the Mao Nagas (Mao 109). Wealth was counted in terms of cattle, paddy fields, sons, firewood, land, paddy, etc. Those who performed this feast gained social status in society. They were entitled to wear *Zhoso sa*. It was a celebration of the fruits of hard work. The wealth is shared with others generously through this feast. A memorial of the Feast of Merit is erected to propagate their names and memories for generations to come (Nepuni 122). The forefathers were rich as can be concluded from the number of monoliths put up to commemorate the Feast of Merit.

The feast of *Aso Koto* (Peace Treaty) and *ozhoso* (The Feast of Merit) used to be part and parcel of the community's way of life. The remnants of these feasts are found around the present habitat of the Mao Naga in Manipur today, though these feasts are longer held by them. The actions involved in the stories are normal activities that are expected from both genders and are more or less practised to this day. The community celebration of Saleni (post plantation feast usually in the month of July) in the tales is being celebrated even to this day (Kazhiia and Kiangte 249).

4.4.5 The Keys

The key refers to the tone or spirit and how the story is introduced (Hymes 62). The tone of each story differs and in the same narratives, we find a mixed tone of sorrow, happiness, fear and anxiety. There is a note of sadness and poetic justice as in the stories on Kateini, Kholia, Kholiru, and Choro, while Dziiliamosiia, Chakhepfo Kahrio, and Orameipfii monokolo, Chojiina or *Khepfochara: the ferocious spirit* (Kricho 6), Hriio, Tupha Tsu, have supernatural elements in it. But these do not in any way divert the stories from the real-life

situation. To some extent, they convey the worldview of the people, which is a multi-species world: the world of gods, animals and men. There is a sense of cooperation among these three worlds. This is very much seen in Dziiliamosiia.

The folk songs concentrate on a single episode, and develop dramatically but unlike Richmond who says that folk songs are impersonal (86), the Mao Naga poetry is full of feelings of pity and compassion.

4.4.6 The instruments

The channel in which the stories are communicated is called an instrument. In an oral society like the Mao Nagas, the past is handed down orally through the medium of stories, songs, wise sayings, and objects and monuments with values attached to it

4.4.7 The norms

Norms refer to how the story is communicated or narrated. There are no hard and fast rules as to who should pass on the narratives among the Mao Nagas. The older folks in the family and society would narrate stories while sitting around the kitchen fire, “Village Park”, and “stone yard”; the young children would be eager to listen to such stories (Kricho vii). The elders in the community were the storytellers. They would narrate them to the children, thus unfolding the past to them (Nepuni 48).

4.4.8 The genres

Genres refer to the kinds such as myths, tales, poems, riddles, etc (Hymes 65). In an oral society, where writing came in much later, the past was communicated mostly through stories, songs, myths, and wise sayings (Nepuni16).

It is the geographical and cultural familiarity which lends that element of truth that invigorates the narratives with life, making them more potent to instruct (Kazhiia and Khiangte 249). There is no doubt that the narratives entertain but also instruct and reveal the rich past to help to preserve the culture of the people. They also convey social values (Vatuk and Vatuk

27). In this way, narratives and their attached values continue to live on in the memory and lives of the people.

4.5 Monuments and Objects as Cultural Memory:

Monuments and objects hold much relevance to the cultural identity of a people including the Mao Naga. Some of the most important monuments and objects that are still to be found in the region inhabited by the people are discussed below (see also chapter 3 for details). Cultural memory, spanning millennia, relies on tangible objects and monuments to preserve and recall the past more effectively. These artefacts serve as vessels for historical narratives, shaping the collective understanding of bygone eras. These monuments which hold deep cultural significance for the people are meaningless without the narratives that give meanings and interpretations to these objects.

The Mao Naga narratives, for instance, extend beyond mere accounts of people to encompass objects and monuments intertwined with the community's past, now imbued with historical significance. They wave stories of the past. These relics serve as mnemonic devices, triggering recollections of pivotal events in the community's history. They epitomize Pierre Nora's concept of "sites of memory," embodying cultural phenomena that tether a society to its past, facilitating the formation of identity (Erll 308-309). Passed down through generations, these objects carry memories that perpetuate traditions, becoming ingrained in the collective consciousness. For instance, in Peru, the quipu - a system of knotted cords adorning headdresses - functions as a repository of information, detailing the length of kings' reigns and other crucial historical data (Vansina 37). Thus, this section will explore how monuments and objects featured in narratives intertwine with ancestral beliefs and lifestyles. The village of Makhel, home to the Mao Naga people, holds a rich collection of historical artefacts that have been carefully preserved over time. These objects, imbued with cultural significance, have been handed down through generations via oral tradition.

Stories are abundant with creativity and dreams that captivate audiences, ensuring that they remain etched in people's memories. Our world is brimming with marvels and imagination. Within it, certain objects are thought to hold supernatural abilities, defying natural laws. Across various cultures, traditions mention the miraculous powers attributed to certain inanimate objects such as the seven magical items in Tale Type 518, which assist individuals in gaining wealth.

Hriio Ko (Saleo 54-59) recounts the life of Hriio, a man who encounters supernatural phenomena. It tells of the extraordinary birth of Hriio's daughter following his encounter with these supernatural forces, as well as the mysterious vanishing and subsequent return of his daughter after several years. One day, while returning from the fields with her friends, the daughter inexplicably disappears, only to reappear years later already married. When the mother expresses a desire to visit her daughter's home, she insists on bringing along a special box called *mati-e obviinasii* as instructed by her daughter. This box contains three precious stones: Omieva, Otova, and Moriiva, which are believed to bring luck and wealth to the family. These stones are said to have mystical properties; Omieva for human life, *Otouva* for cattle, *Otova* for wealth, *Oruva* for warfare, and *Mokhuliri* for nobility (Mao 8). It is forbidden for people to look at or touch these stones. These aspects suggest that the ancestors of the Mao Nagas possessed miraculous stones for ensuring prosperity, good health, and the welfare of their animals.

In ancient times, there were objects like *Tupha Chava* (Nepuni 55) or a flat magic stone (Mao 45) that was thought to possess extraordinary abilities. Legend has it that when a basket of paddy was placed on it to dry, the yield would double by evening. This miraculous rock is said to be located near a fruitful tree, leading to the area being named Tobufii, which eventually became known as Kanifii, and the residents of Kanifii were called *Shupfo Tonime* (Mao 46).

The stone, still existing in Tobufii village, is said to have lost its power due to human greed. According to local legend, the stone's significance was tarnished by human ambition and desire, leading to discord among community members, as depicted in stories surrounding the mystical stones of *Tobufii* and *Khezakeno*. Despite its diminished power, the stone serves as a reminder of the glorious past, a belief ingrained in the collective folklore of the Mao Nagas, passed down through generations (Kazhiia 104).



Fig. 13. Three Brothers Farewell Stone, at Chazhelophi, Makhel village
(photographed during the field study 2022)

The above monuments known as the Three Brothers' Stones hold significant value as it serves as a memorial for the three sons of *Dziiliamosiia* (Kricho 4), aiding in the recollection of their lives. These three monoliths were placed to commemorate the departure of *Dziiliamosiia* sons and can be found at *Chazhelophi*, approximately three kilometres south of Makhel village.

Legend has it that before departing, the brothers erected a monument together. Before their departure, they wished to share a meal. The eldest brother's meat transformed into a live cock, while the second brother's fish came alive and swam away. The youngest brother brought a Mithun for the feast. As they cooked, he ran out of firewood, and while he fetched more, the others, eager to taste the meat, inadvertently entangled their hands in the pot. The youngest brother untangled them using necklace beads. Initially, drawings and inscriptions adorned the

stone monument, now situated in Makhel village, symbolizing the departure of the brothers, but these markings have since faded with time (Nepuni 54-55).



Fig 14. *Tamara Tu* (Departure Stone) at Makhel village, Manipur (photographed during the field study 2022)

During the field work, it was observed that writings on *Tamara Tu* are not clear and that some renovation work on it was going on.

Legend has it that when the ancestors of the Nagas arrived at a place called *Khriibu*, the throne, known as *Likhu Lirii-bu*, refused to budge. This story persists to this day, with the throne remaining steadfast at *Khriibu* (*Mopfu-zhu*, Pudunamei village) as a testament to its significance (Mao 43). This narrative highlights the organized structure of the Mao Naga community, with a king or leader who governed and guided the people. *Likhuliriibu* represent authority in certain sense.

Another significant tree in the culture is the *Mara bu*, commonly known as the banyan tree, which holds special reverence and serves as a cultural symbol. Its name - Mara meaning spreading and *bu* referring to tree - aptly describes its expansive branches reaching in all directions.



Fig.15. *Mara bu* (Banyan tree) at Makhel village, Manipur (photographed during the field study 2022)

Legend has it that *Dziiliamosiia*, the ancestress, overshadowed by a white cloud, conceived mysteriously while sleeping beneath this sacred tree. With its robust structure and extensive root system, the *Mara bu* symbolizes the male principle, while *Dziiliamosiia* embodies the female principle. Providing shelter and refuge, this tree stands as a vital presence in the Makhel village. Notably, its growth pattern is intriguing; as new leaves flourish on one side, the opposite side may bear withering ones (Nepuni 52-53) reflecting a cyclical balance. This phenomenon is observed with branches budding on one side while remaining bare on the other, symbolizing the interconnectedness and duality of life.

The *Chitebu Kaji*, also known as the wild pear tree, grows in *Charangho* (Shajouba) village. According to tradition, it was planted by the Nagas, who once shared a common ancestor, before they migrated to new lands seeking a better life and pasture. This tree holds significant symbolism, representing unity and brotherhood among the people. *Genna*, a traditional observance, occurs when its leaves fall. Legend has it that if any branch of the tree were to fall, misfortune would befall the people living in the direction it falls (Nepuni 53-54).



Fig. 16. *Chiitebu* (Wild pear tree) at *Charangho* (Shajouba) village, Manipur
(photographed during the field study, 9.01. 2022)

The (wild pear tree) *Chiitebu* is a tree that is well protected and guarded and is still standing tall at Shajouba (*Charangho*).

Thus, we see how monuments and stones that bear historical importance connect the past with the present. They served as mediums through which the events of the past are transmitted to the younger generations.

Cultural artefacts serve a dual purpose of both aiding in memory retention and influencing the way history is recalled, as noted by Rigney (65). Monuments, whether in the form of monoliths, trees, symbols, or attire, play a significant role in conveying the past, each telling the stories of previous generations. Real locations of historical significance, along with geographical features like mountains and rivers, as well as man-made structures such as monuments, serve as important touchstones in history. Similarly, Khiangte that the commemoration of past events through the construction of stone monuments during occasions

like the Feast of Merit, as well as through social gatherings, reflects the community's collective understanding of their history.

4.6 Conclusion

Mnemonic devices are abundant in the Mao-Naga narratives. There is no doubt that the people themselves are the first and basic mnemonic device in the sense that they desire to remember, narrate and pass on to their future generations their rich cultural heritage and practices and the meanings attached to them that have served as the basic means of remembrance. Besides, there is an abundance of literary mnemonic devices in the various prose and verse narratives of the Mao Nagas. Thus, the fact that even the modern literary devices such as assonance, anaphora, anadiplosis, epistrophe etc., are found in the various story narratives – both prose and poetry has been proved through this research study.

In addition, there are also the material elements which serve as mnemonic devices about the history and culture of the people. These are the monuments, the dress, the ornaments, the feasts and similar celebrations of the people which take them back to their roots and cultural heritage. The settings, the participants, the keys, the instruments and the genres of the narratives also serve as mnemonic devices for the people.

The Mao Nagas, having been an oral society until the recent past, deserve admiration and acknowledgement that their ancestors were wise in the sense that they, wittingly or unwittingly, included so many mnemonic devices into their narratives that not only made them come alive, but also preserved for the future generations their rich cultural heritage and identity.

Notes

1. *Oral Traditions: A Study in Historical Methodology*, 1972
2. Contributed by the late Pfokho Kapesa, Punanamei Village, Manipur.
3. Kholi, A. *Interview* conducted by Rose Mary Kazhiia, 3 Jan 2022.