

# The role of the *morung* age groups in expressing and transmitting agricultural knowledge in Nagaland, with particular reference to Khonoma Village

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## ABSTRACT

Agriculture is the predominant economic activity in the state of Nagaland in northeast India. In Naga villages, agricultural knowledge is one of the aspects of the community's cultural heritage that is passed on from generation to generation through the age groups that are associated with the bachelors' or men's houses known as *morungs*. This paper takes the Angami Naga village of Khonoma as the case study to examine the role of the age groups in the agricultural life of the village. It investigates how the age groups acquire agricultural knowledge through

practical activity, and how agricultural knowledge, including knowhow, skills, practices, rituals, festivals and values, is expressed and transmitted by the age groups. It demonstrates how this knowledge is used by the age groups to navigate the economic and social life in the village.

## Keywords

age groups, *morung*, bachelors' or men's house, agricultural knowledge, Nagaland

## Introduction

Nagaland, a state in northeast India, is home to 15 Naga tribes, viz, the Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chang, Khamniungan, Konyak, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sangtam, Sumi, Tikhir, Yimkhiung and Zeliang tribes (Government of Nagaland n.d.).<sup>1</sup> As of 2011, the total population of the state (comprising both Naga and non-Naga communities) is 1,978,502, of which 71.14% is rural (Census India n.d.). Agriculture is the predominant economic activity, with 68.03% of the state's population engaged in it (Statistical Handbook of Nagaland 2007). Shifting – or *jhum* – cultivation is practised by all the tribes, while wet rice cultivation is also practised by the Angami and Chakhesang. The main crops grown in the state are rice, Job's tears, millet, yam and maize.

The aim of this paper is to contribute towards expanding our knowledge and understanding of the role

of the age groups in agricultural life in Naga villages. The age groups are closely associated with the bachelors' or men's houses, which are known by the Assamese word '*morung*' in the anthropological literature on India's northeast region, although each Naga tribe has its own word for this building/institution. For example, among the Ao it is called *ariju* or *arichu*, and among the Lotha it is known as *chumpo*. The necessity of the *morung* for its defensive functions during the period when inter-village warfare and headhunting were rampant among the Naga tribes has been well documented in the ethnographic and anthropological literature dating back to colonial times (e.g. Hutton 1921a, 1921b; Mills 1922, 1926, 1937; von Fürer-Haimendorf 1938, 1939). Meetings, rituals and rites concerning warfare were held in the *morung*. But other aspects of cultural heritage were passed on intergenerationally in the *morung* as well. These included oral traditions, songs, skills of a utilitarian nature such

as woodcarving and basket making, etc. Von Fürer-Haimendorf (1938, 361) had mentioned how initiation into the age group marked the entrance of males into the economic life of the *morung* community among the Konyak. Thereafter, the age group would work on the fields of each of its members in rotation, and it was also hired to work on the fields of rich men. The focus of this study will primarily be on investigating how the age groups acquire agricultural knowledge through practical activity, and how agricultural knowledge, including knowhow, skills, practices, rituals, festivals and values, is expressed and transmitted by the age groups.

The case study for this paper is the Angami village of Khonoma which is located at a distance of 20 km south of Kohima town, the capital of Nagaland. Khonoma has 424 households and a population of 1943 (Population Census India 2011). The most important socio-political unit in the village is the clan known as the *thino*. It is the primary source of one's identity. There are three *thinos*: the Merhüma,<sup>2</sup> Semoma<sup>3</sup> and Thevoma,<sup>4</sup> each of which further comprises a number of sub-clans and lineages. The *thinos* also lend their names to the three wards or *khels* in the village. Land ownership is of three kinds, viz, village, clan and individual. Village land is collectively owned by the village community for public use by village members. An example of this is the forested land where villagers can hunt and fish, and from where firewood can be collected for household use. Clan-owned land is meant for exclusive use by members from a specific *thino*. An example of clan-owned land is the fields that are set aside for the *khel's* youngest age group to work on (discussed below). Individual-owned land is land that is inherited or acquired, and can be sold. In this category, ancestral land can only be passed on to a male heir (the youngest son). Both wet rice cultivation and *jhum* cultivation are practised. The main crops grown are rice, millet and potato, besides some vegetables.

## Field research

The findings presented in this paper are drawn from parts of my doctoral research, for which fieldwork was undertaken in Khonoma between September 2010 and September 2011. The ethnographic methods of field survey, participant observation and interviews were employed. I visited all the *morungs* and the houses of a number of fathers (*kikrakikeseus*) of different age groups. I took part in and observed agricultural activities, and attended

social occasions, gatherings and festivals, which enabled me to gain an understanding of Khonoma's agricultural calendar, daily agricultural practices, and the agricultural activities of the age groups. Interviews were conducted with the village elders, hosts of *morungs*, *kikrakikeseus*, members of various age groups (both male and female), and villagers who had engaged an age group to work in their fields. These interviews were concerned with obtaining information on the socio-political and economic structures and institutions, *morung* organisation and membership, age group organisation and membership, and agricultural activities undertaken by age groups. Some of the interviews were conducted in English, and some in Tenyide, the language of the Angami. For interviews that were conducted in Tenyide, Mr. Vibu Iralu and Ms. Rovino Savino assisted me as translators during September 2010 – July 2011 and July – September 2011, respectively.

The following age groups were researched:

- Sievi *Kikramia* from Merhüma *khel*, with Mr. Sievi Iralu (74) serving as the *kikrakikeseu*, comprised of members aged between 25 and 32 years.<sup>5</sup>
- Pezalhukho *Kikramia* from Merhüma *khel*, with Mr. Pezalhukho Thoü (58) serving as the *kikrakikeseu*, comprised of members aged between 9 and 16 years.
- Vicu *Kikramia* from Semoma *khel*, with Mr. Vicu Vakha (77) serving as the *kikrakikeseu*, comprised of members aged between 25 and 32 years.
- Diethovikho *Kikramia* from Semoma *khel*, with Mr. Diethovikho Ratsa (early 70s) serving as the *kikrakikeseu*, comprised of members aged between 15 and 25 years.
- Nilhusa *Kikramia* from Thevoma *khel*, with Mr. Nilhusa Kuotsu (64) serving as the *kikrakikeseu*, comprised of members aged between 18 and 25 years.
- Dosalie *Kikramia* from Thevoma *khel*, with Mr. Dosalie Punyü (58–59) serving as the *kikrakikeseu*, comprised of members aged between 9 and 17 years.

Certain criteria were considered when selecting these age groups for study. For one, since all of them were among the three youngest age groups from their respective *khels*, they were more likely to be taught and assisted on matters of cultural practices by older age groups and other elders from their *khels*. Therefore, it was possible to collect data on how and what cultural knowledge was transferred to them by the older generations, and how they expressed

this acquired knowledge. Pezalhukho *Kikramia* and Dosalie *Kikramia* were selected on account of being the youngest age groups that were established in 2011 in Merhüma *khel* and Thevoma *khel*, respectively. As such, they contributed towards data on the practices involved in the formation of new age groups.

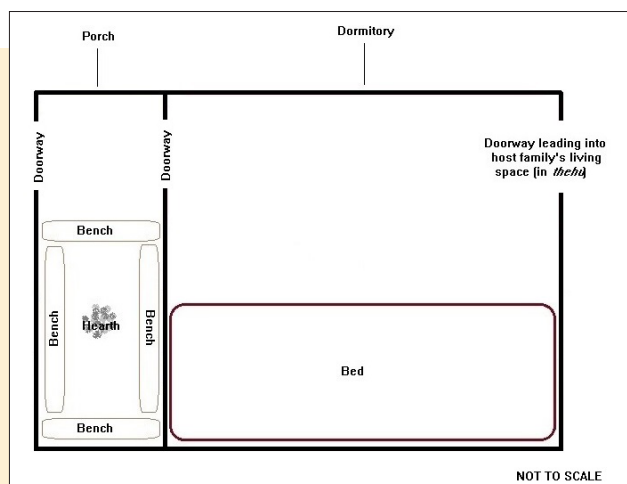
## The *morungs* in Khonoma

There are 21 *morungs* in Khonoma: five in Merhüma *khel*, seven in Semoma *khel* and nine in Thevoma *khel*.<sup>6</sup> The total area covered by a *morung* is generally between 20 and 30 feet in length, and between 15 and 25 feet in breadth. The *morungs* are not decorated in any manner that, at first glance, would set them apart from the other houses in the village. The roof is made of tin, and the walls are made of bamboo matting, tin or wood, although in the Meyase *morung* and lower Nhakha *morung* in Merhüma *khel* the walls are made of concrete. A *morung* consists of a porch where benches are arranged around a hearth, and immediately behind the porch is a dormitory which has a long wooden bed that runs the entire length of the room. The *morung* bed, which has been hewn from the trunk of a single tree, is usually between 14 and 18 feet long, and five to six feet wide. A bed for which rituals have been performed is known as *rased zhü*, while that for which no rituals have been performed is known as *zhüdo*. The procurement and installation of *rased zhü* involves a great deal of labour and expenditure by a *khel*, which is why precautions are taken to ensure its safety. Thus, in

several *morungs*, the wall that separates the porch and the dormitory can be quickly dismantled should the need arise to remove the bed for any reason whatsoever – for example, in the event of outbreak of fire.

The *morungs* in Khonoma are of two kinds. The first is the *rüsaki*, which is a stand-alone building not attached to a household. The second kind of *morung* is the *thehu*, which is unique to the Angami. It is attached to a household and the host family acts as its caretaker. In this set-up, the host family's living space begins from the room immediately after the dormitory. However, Chasie *morung* is a two-storeyed building, where the *morung* occupies the ground floor and the host family resides on the upper floor.

The Khurükha *morung* in Semoma *khel* and the lower and upper Nhakha *morungs* in Merhüma *khel* are named after the area in which they are located, while the other *morungs* are known by the names of the sub-clan or lineage to which the host family belongs. However, it is not the case that only those who belong to the same sub-clan or lineage of the *morung* host may make use of the *morung*. Rather, as *morungs* are meant to serve the needs of a *khel*, all males who belong to a particular *khel* are allowed to use the *morungs* within their *khel*. Men use the *morungs* as places to meet, chat and exchange news. At some *morungs*, men can be found engaged in basket making which is one of the important crafts of the menfolk. Various rituals and rites are conducted in the



**Figure 1**  
General plan of the *morung*.  
Illustration by Shisachila Imchen.



**Figure 2**  
Front view of Yalie *morung*, Thevoma *khel*, 28 September 2010.  
Photograph by Shisachila Imchen.



**Figure 3**  
The hearth in the porch of Punyü *morung*, Thevoma *khel*, 28 September 2010.  
Photograph by Shisachila Imchen.



**Figure 4**  
The dormitory in Yalietsu *morung*, Thevoma *khel*, 28 September 2010.  
Photograph by Shisachila Imchen.

*morungs* from time to time. Some *morungs*, such as the Pier, Whiso and Yalietsu *morungs* in Thevoma *khel*, are still used quite frequently for sleeping.

While women are prohibited from entering the *morungs* among most Naga tribes (Mills 1922, 1926, 1937), women in Khonoma are not completely barred from entry. But they have to observe certain norms regarding their movement in and around the *morungs*. In the first place, since the system of a host family exists, it would be unfeasible to ban the entry of females, especially those who are members of the household. After all, one must pass through the *morung* porch and dormitory before being able to access the host family's living quarters. Female visitors of the host family are permitted to pass through the *morung* but not to linger unnecessarily, particularly in the dormitory. In the event that a meeting is being held in the *morung*, women who do not belong to the host family are expected to avoid going to the place altogether. When passing by a *morung*, women are supposed to greet the men seated in the porch as a sign of respect. In general, a woman is to approach a *morung* only if men are present. She has to announce that she is entering the *morung* and she may then enter the porch to speak with the men. But it is expected that the visit is kept short, and the dormitory is generally off-limits to her. It is absolutely taboo for a woman to climb atop the *morung* bed.

Previously, Khonoma also had provisions for groups of girls to sleep in a house under the care of a woman and

her husband who were often the parents of one of the girls. Bachelors could visit and court the girls at such a home, and the males would retire to the *morungs* in the evenings. But this traditional arrangement for unmarried girls no longer exists.

In any case, both males and females are inducted into an age group when they reach the appropriate age. Males remain members of their age group for life. However, when a woman marries, and if her husband belongs to another age group, whether from her *khel* or another *khel*, she begins to participate in the activities of her husband's age group.

### ***Initiation into the age group***

The village elders Mr. Sebi Dolie (84) and Mr. Thoniu Savino (71) provided data on *selili*, a ritual that one undergoes at four or five years of age, before one can be inducted into an age group. This ritual is conducted by an elderly man if it is for a boy, and by an elderly woman if it is for a girl. It involves the symbolic washing of hair or bathing at the community well, the tying of leaves from the plant *tsohe* (which resembles paddy) around the child's forehead, wrist and leg, and the utterance of blessings by the elderly companion that the child may grow like the *tsohe* plant. The elderly companion and child fetch water, carry it home and light the fire. The child is made to touch a chicken which is thereafter strangled by the elderly companion. The companion observes the excreta and the way the chicken's legs cross. Its appendix is also

removed and examined to divine omens. The chicken is then cooked and consumed only by the child and its elderly companion, and any leftover meat is buried. Thereafter, they observe abstinence from all forms of work (*genna*), and avoid contact with animals and travellers. Children who undergo this ritual are henceforth recognised as members of the *khel* and are held responsible for their actions. A significant point to note is that the female child can no longer climb atop the *morung* bed. Breaking this taboo would require the entire village to observe *genna*.

Here, Turner's (1967) concept of liminality, which he has based on the theory of *rites de passage* as discussed by Arnold van Gennep, is useful in discussing the transitional phases that the child undergoes in the *selili* ritual. The act of washing of hair or bathing at the community well can be considered to fall within the first phase of separation, as identified by Turner, wherein the act symbolically represents the washing away of a previous state when the child had no responsibilities towards society and its detachment from the same. The child then enters the second phase, defined by Turner as margin or *limen*. In this phase, the child does not have a defined status in society and is in a transitional state. It is therefore both capable of polluting and vulnerable to being polluted. So, the meat eaten by the child and its companion cannot be shared with others, and the child and companion are kept in isolation. The third phase that the child enters is one of aggregation in which passage is consummated. The child has a stable status once again, and has clearly defined rights and responsibilities.

It is roughly between two and five years after a child has undergone the *selili* ritual that he or she joins the age group system. An age group is known as *thesü* and comprises both male and female members. Each *khel* forms a new age group every four to five years. An age group is assigned a 'father', known as *kikrakikeseu*, meaning 'he who takes care of the group of earning labourers'. The age group comes to be known by the name of its *kikrakikeseu* and is addressed as '[father's name] *Kikramia*', with *kikramia* roughly translating to patronage over members of an age group.

When the time comes for a new age group to be formed, older males from a *khel* will identify a suitable candidate for the role of the *kikrakikeseu*: he must have considerable resources to cover the expenses incurred by his age group, and his house must have sufficient space in and

around it for his age group to carry out various activities. This is because the foremost duty of the *kikrakikeseu* is to provide his home as a setting for members of the age group to mingle, with the societal expectation that such mingling encourages strong bonds to develop among the members. It is at the home of the *kikrakikeseu* that members hold meetings as well. From time to time, the *kikrakikeseu* may also be expected to provide food to the age group when its members gather. He may, as a parent would, advise members of his age group on how to perform tasks and how to conduct themselves in order to become productive members of society. In matters of making decisions to undertake projects, the *kikrakikeseu*'s input is valued, but the age group ultimately has the final say. In this, it is the male members who make decisions, while the female members have no voice.

Once an appropriate candidate has been identified by the *khel*, the members of a senior age group approach the potential *kikrakikeseu*. My interviews with the *kikrakikeseus* revealed that similar scenarios seem to have played out when they had been approached: each had at first declined the request to become the *kikrakikeseu* by saying that there would surely be other suitable candidates more fit for the role. A back-and-forth discussion followed, until the senior age group members were finally able to persuade the candidate by telling him that much thought had gone into the selection.

It may also happen that a *khel* is unable to find anyone suitable for the role of the *kikrakikeseu*, which results in the delay of the formation of a new age group in that particular *khel*. During the period of my field study, this was the case with Semoma *khel* which did not form an age group in 2011. Pezalhukho *Kikramia* was formed in Merhüma *khel*, and Dosalie *Kikramia* was formed in Thevoma *khel* that year.

Other procedures are in place for a change in *kikrakikeseu* in instances when death is involved. One, if the new *kikrakikeseu* dies before the next age group is formed in the *khel*, the age group members will be assigned another *kikrakikeseu*. However, Mekhrie *Kikramia*, which until 2011 had been the youngest age group in Merhüma *khel*, was not assigned a new *kikrakikeseu* after the *khel* granted the request of the family of the late Mr. Mekhrie Meru that it be allowed to continue taking care of the age group. Two, another *kikrakikeseu* must be found for the youngest age group in a *khel* in case there is a death in

the family of the *kikrakikeseu* before a new age group has been formed.

The initiation ceremony for a new age group usually takes place in May–June during the Thekranyi festival (more on this festival below). In the early morning, the new age group members are led by the elders of the *khel* to the home of their *kikrakikeseu*. Before the large-scale conversion of the populace to Christianity, a priest of the indigenous beliefs would slaughter a pig and invoke blessings for the house of the *kikrakikeseu*. These days, changing religious affiliations have led to adaptations in ritual, depending on the Christian denomination to which the *kikrakikeseu* belongs. Thus, when the new age groups were formed in 2011 in the Merhüma and Thevoma *khels*, it was the Deacon from the Baptist Church and the Catechist from the Catholic Church who prayed and blessed the houses of Mr. Pezalhukho Thoü and Mr. Dosalie Punyü, respectively. After blessings have been invoked for the house of the *kikrakikeseu*, tea (which has nowadays replaced *zu* or local rice beer) and snacks are served as refreshments to the age group members. Thereafter the members are led to the paddy fields set aside by the *khel* especially for the use of the youngest age group. The members dabble about there for a while. In the evening, they deck themselves up in ceremonial attire and gather at the house of their *kikrakikeseu* to sing songs around a bonfire. This performance is watched by other members of the *khel*. Neither Pezalhukho *Kikramia* nor Dosalie *Kikramia*, however, held these evening activities, owing to the fact that many of their members were busy with school work.

A point to note about the initiation ceremony is that all new age group members, irrespective of which sub-clan or lineage they belong to, are treated in an equal manner. They are bestowed with the same blessings, served the same refreshments, and undertake the same kinds of work in the fields. Being members of the same age group, there is the expectation that they will continue to work together and grow strong bonds. Here, Turner's (1967, 100–101) remarks that collective rites for neophytes are usually characterised by equality are relevant. He had observed, for instance, that during the rites associated with circumcision seclusion among the Ndembu of Zambia, food was shared among the boys, notwithstanding rank, age or kinship position, and they slept in clusters of four or five around lodge fires. Deep friendships were encouraged, and even after the completion of rites it was thought that

the ties developed would continue to link them and carry on in old age.

### ***Acquisition of agricultural knowledge and transmission patterns***

A new age group is required to work in the paddy fields assigned to it by its *khel* during the first few years following its formation. The youngsters pick up crucial knowledge and practical skills about crop cultivation through practical activity. In addition, the members learn to interact with one another and to work as a unit, which contributes towards building solidarity within the age group. The fields are later passed on to the next age group that is formed after some years.

Age groups are also hired to work in the fields of fellow villagers at certain times of the year. This work enables members of age groups to develop their knowledge and skills related to crop cultivation. At the same time, age groups contribute to the community by providing much-needed labour, particularly during the seed-sowing season in March–April and during the transplantation season in May–June. Such occasions provide the opportunity for the acquisition of agricultural knowledge. *Lica peli* (*lica* means 'mass', and *peli* means 'exchange of labour') illustrates this point well. It is an activity that is undertaken by an age group during the seed-sowing season in March–April, when the earth in the fields has dry, hard clumps of soil that need to be beaten down in order to make the fields suitable for sowing. Generally, work is carried out in the



**Figure 5**  
Sievi *Kikramia* during *lica peli*, 11 March 2011. Photograph by Shisachila Imchen.



**Figure 6**  
The midday meal of rice and pork on the occasion of *lica peli*, 11 March 2011.  
Photograph by Shisachila Imchen.



**Figure 7**  
Members of Sievi *Kikramia* share the midday meal on the occasion of *lica peli*, 11 March 2011. Photograph by Shisachila Imchen.

fields of at least two individuals per day. At the time of my fieldwork, Sievi *Kikramia* from Merhüma *khel* observed *lica peli* on 11 and 12 March 2011. On the morning of the first day, the members of Sievi *Kikramia*, clad in appropriate attire for the occasion, met at Nkhakha (lower) *morung* and then proceeded together to the terrace fields. They tilled the land by beating it with hammers. While at work, they sang songs known as *tsietichakru* (*tsie* means 'seeds', *ti* means 'to plough' or 'to sow', and *chakru* means 'songs'), which revolve around the acts of ploughing the land and seed sowing. Sievi *Kikramia* had sought the advice and help of older age groups from the *khel* to teach them the *tsietichakru* songs, which in the process ensured that this element of the community's cultural heritage was transmitted to them from the older generations. During *lica peli*, members of the older age groups arranged the positions of the workers based on how well-versed they were in the songs they sang. Those considered better versed in singing the songs were placed at the top of the terrace fields, while those not quite as well-versed were placed on the lower steps, and at the bottom were placed those considered 'dull'. When the workers left the fields for the midday meal, the females carried all the implements. This was because it is considered shameful for a man to carry his own implements since it indicates that he has no close female friend from within his age group. The midday meal was provided by the owners of the fields. They served refreshments of puffed rice and tea, and the main meal consisted of steamed rice and pork that had been cooked together with garlic, ginger, chillies and salt. The main

meal was served in large basins from which groups of up to six individuals ate, to signify unity among the members of the age group. During work in the afternoon, a few members of Sievi *Kikramia* requested volunteers from the older age groups to hand over some wrapped-up puffed rice, saved from the midday meal, to someone in the audience as a token of admiration for that person. On the second day, work was carried out in the *jhum* fields that are owned by Merhüma *khel*. Traditionally, after work was over in the evenings, the male members of the age group would take part in sporting events such as long jump, high jump and short-put, and the female members would sing songs. Sievi *Kikramia*, however, did not hold any of these evening activities.

### ***Expression of cultural practices and societal values***

My observations of *lica peli* as carried out by Sievi *Kikramia* reveal a number of instances when cultural knowledge and societal values were expressed. Sievi *Kikramia*, having learned the *tsietichakru* songs from the older age groups, were able to express these songs to the audience who had come to watch *lica peli*. Additionally, *lica peli* was an occasion for the Merhüma to strengthen relationships within the *khel*, which is significant given the fact that the *thino* is the most important socio-political unit in the village. Working together, helping fellow-members carry their implements and sharing the midday meal served to create a sense of community among the members of Sievi *Kikramia*. They were also able to understand and reiterate their relationships with

other members of the *khel*, such as the older age groups whose advice and support they sought, and the owners of the fields in which they worked. Moreover, Merhüma *khel* was able to showcase itself in a positive light to the other *khels*. People from all over the village came to watch the proceedings, and thus, the members of Sievi *Kikramia* and the older age groups worked hard together to put on a good rendition of the *tsietichakru* songs. This performance was an expression of the strong bonds shared by the members of Merhüma *khel*.

### **Application of agricultural knowledge in strengthening the *khel***

The importance of the *thino* in village life cannot be overstated, and the age groups are considered to be vital in maintaining social relations and fulfilling social obligations. Age groups are able to tap into the knowledge about the agricultural calendar and agricultural activities gained through practical experience to navigate their relationships with other members of the *khel* and to make contributions, enhancing not just the name of the age group but that of the *khel* as well.

For instance, the age groups are aware of the periods in the agricultural year when they can provide labour in the fields of fellow villagers and get paid for it. These earnings can then be invested in celebrations and projects. When paddy is transplanted from the nurseries to the fields in May–June, for example, age groups work in the fields of their members in rotation and also in the fields of other members of their *khel*. Payment for this work is usually made in cash nowadays. Much of it is spent the following year for feasting during the festival of Thekranyi. This is the biggest festival for the youth in the village. The festival's name is derived from the word '*thekra*', which indicates the earnings of the age group from having worked in other people's fields during the transplantation season the previous year; and from the word '*thenyi*' which means 'festival'. During Thekranyi, small donations (*thekhro*) of rice are collected from the households in the *khel*. To this is added meat that has been acquired through *thekra*, and the members of the age group feast together on this. The work carried out by the age groups in the fields of *khel* members, the act of households donating rice to the age groups, and the act of feasting together by members of the age groups all serve to reinforce ties among the various members of the *khel*.

Age groups also use the funds accrued through



**Figure 8**  
Women take a break from working in the fields on a stone sitting platform, 20 July 2011. Photograph by Shisachila Imchen.

agricultural activity to execute projects that would be of benefit to the community. Most commonly, they build stone sitting platforms. These platforms are raised a few feet from the ground and are square or rectangular in shape. Many of them are found located next to the footpaths and in the fields, for villagers to rest upon. An age group that has built a sitting platform earns the community's appreciation. The platform comes to symbolise the unity and strength of the age group as well, since its members have constructed it together. By extension, the reputation of the *khel* to which the age group belongs grows.

### **Conclusion**


Age groups are vital to agricultural life in the village. In Khonoma, the relationship between the age groups and agriculture is made apparent right from the time of the initiation ceremony, when incoming members of a new age group are made to dabble around in the fields set aside for them. It sets the tone for the future, since agricultural work defines many of the tasks learned and undertaken in the following years. The terminology used to refer to the father of the age group, '*kikrakikeseu*', which means 'he who takes care of the group of earning labourers', also emphasises the relationship between the age groups and agriculture. In particular, age groups fulfil the very important need to provide labour in the fields of fellow villagers. But this is not all. While earning in the process of work, members of the age group pick up practical agricultural knowledge which encompasses a

wide range of cultural knowhow, skills, practices, rituals, festivals and values. This ensures the expression and transmission of agricultural knowledge from generation to generation. Such knowledge aids the age groups in navigating the economic and social life in the village.

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## ENDNOTES

1. These are the tribes recognised by the Government of Nagaland as stated on its official webpage.
2. Merhüma comprises the sub-clans Gwizantsu, Lievüse and Meyase. Gwizantsu comprises the lineages Chase, Dolie, Meru and Savino. Lievüse comprises the lineages Khate, Liegise, Sakhrie, Terhüja and Thoü. Meyase comprises the lineages Iralu, Kenieu, Khwükha, Pulise, Sanyü and Zetsuvi.
3. Semoma comprises the sub-clans Chalieutsu and Kuthotsu. Chalieutsu comprises the lineages Chücha, Mor, Ratsa, Seyie and Vakha. Kuthotsu comprises the lineages Rürhie, Secü, Vüprü and Zhünyü.
4. Thevoma comprises the sub-clans Chatsu, Kuotsu and Phetsu. Chatsu comprises the lineages Chasie, Punyü, Sophi, Yalie, Ziekhrü and Zinyü. Kuotsu comprises the lineages Hieme, Khrieliezhü, Talie and Whiso. Phetsu comprises the lineages Kruse, Pier and Yalietsu.
5. All ages mentioned are from the period of fieldwork in 2010–2011. It must be noted that for individuals above 50 years or so, the ages that informants have provided for themselves are usually rough estimates. This is because even up to the middle of the 20th century the Naga were by and large illiterate, and records of birth dates were not kept.
6. The *morungs* in Merhüma *khel* are Gwizantsu, Khate, Meyase, Nhakha (lower) and Nhakha (upper). The *morungs* in Semoma *khel* are Chücha, Khurükha, Mor, Rürhie, Secü, Vakha and Vüprü. The *morungs* in Thevoma *khel* are Chasie, Kuotsu, Pier, Punyü, Sophi and Ziekhrü, Whiso, Yalie, Yalietsu and Zinyü.

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