IJCRT.ORG ISSN : 2320-2882

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

REDISCOVERING THE STONE HERITAGE OF THE ANGAMI PEOPLE: A FORGOTTEN LEGACY

[1]Petevino Chase and [2]Konei Nakhro

[1]Assistant Professor, [2]Associate Professor

[1]Department of Environmental Sciences, Kohima College, Kohima, Nagaland, India

Abstract: The Angami Nagas of Nagaland hold a rich cultural legacy rooted deeply in their land, nature and especially stone. Central to this are stone monuments—megaliths and stone-built structures that once signified status, ritual achievement and ancestral memory. While some of these have been documented, many legendary- and myth-bearing stones—those connecting people to mythological narratives and spiritual belief systems—remain neglected. As villages rapidly urbanise, these stone markers, once integral to communal and ritual life, are increasingly forgotten or repurposed. Indifference among people and shifting societal values contribute to their deterioration. This paper revisits the historical significance of these legend- and myth-bearing stone heritages, explores the reasons for their obscurity, and advocates urgent, inclusive conservation and revitalisation. Reviving this facet of Angami stone heritage transcends monument preservation: it is about reclaiming identity, memory and ancestral continuity.

Index Terms - Stone monuments, village, myth, legend, heritage, ancestral, Nagas

I. INTRODUCTION

The culture of the Angami Nagas, residing primarily in and around the Kohima district of Nagaland, has a deep connection with stones, which once held immense social, spiritual, and political importance. Central to this heritage are their stone monuments—resting platforms, grave markers, commemorative megaliths that reflected status, ritual accomplishments, and ancestral memory. Traditionally, their social structure was closely linked to the Feast of merit, which are elaborate community events where individuals displayed wealth and status through acts of giving back to society (Nienu 2015 and Kire 2019). In Angami society, stones were often tied to major life events, beginning with the establishment of a village (Nakhro and Chase 2025). In establishing a village, a stone monument is erected called the *Kiputsie.* The aim of every Angami family in the past was to live well, appease the unknown, *Kepenuopfü*, and be able to fulfil all the stages of Feasts of merit, which involve erecting stones, starting with erecting memorial stones for the dead called *Kesiamero* and culminating with erecting stones for the feast giver when they are still alive called, *Kerheitsiese* (Christina *et. al.* 2025). Monoliths are also erected as a part of renewing and maintaining friendships between villages. This practice of erecting stone monoliths continues to play an important role in marking major milestones of modern organisations and institutions today. Researchers in recent years have documented stone monuments, primarily focusing on megaliths and stone architectural structures (Wunderlich *et al.* 2021). However, other stone structures, such as legend and myth-bearing stones, as well as those with practical utility in the past, largely remain ignored and forgotten despite playing an important role in the socio-cultural heritage of the people.

For this study, legend-bearing stones are stones associated with legends—narratives rooted in historical events or figures, often embellished over time. Legends typically involve human characters and are tied to specific locations or events. At the same time, myth-bearing stones are central to myths, sacred narratives that explain natural phenomena, origins, or cosmological concepts. Myths often involve deities, supernatural beings, or creation stories. Both legend and myth-bearing stones are natural or man-made stones imbued with cultural, spiritual, or mythological significance through oral traditions, legends, or folklore. These stones often serve as tangible links to a community's ancestral narratives, embodying stories that explain natural phenomena, moral lessons, or historical events. A study of the social lives of such stones can provide a window into the past, casting rays of light on a history that has gone largely unwritten and undocumented, although not, of course, unremembered, as rich repertoires of oral history flourish from one Naga village to the next (Wouters 2016). These stones are repositories of a community's memory and identity, often serve as focal points for rituals, or act as moral reminders within a community. In many cultures, even around Northeastern India, these stones are integral to understanding societal values, historical events, and spiritual beliefs (Marak 2012, Gogoi and Baruah 2021, Bora 2023 and Singh 2023).

II. Study Area and Methodology

The Angamis are one of the seventeen major indigenous tribes inhabiting Nagaland. Kohima, the capital of Nagaland, is home to the Angami tribe, consisting of 105 villages with a total rural population of 146,900 (Census, 2011). The study was conducted in two Angami villages, namely, Jotsoma and Khonoma. Jotsoma village is situated on a sloping ridge to the west of Kohima at an elevation of 1445 m above sea level, having a total population of 2458 people according to the 2011 census. Khonoma village spreads over an area of 123 Km² covering the southernmost parts of Kohima district, the state capital of Nagaland. Some prominent features of these villages are their morungs, stone heritages, rest houses, and gates with carved motifs. Megaliths form an intricate part of their tradition, like any other Naga villages which highlights some important events. These stone heritages are the oldest historical relics of the Nagas since the wooden architectural structures they built did not last for more than a few decades.

The present study focuses on two Angami villages – Jotsoma and Khonoma of Kohima district. A purposive sampling has been employed, with the assumption that folktales and the location of the mythical and legendary stone sites are known better among the older generation within the selected study villages. This paper relies on qualitative research methods with the following components.

Field Surveys were conducted in the study villages to identify and record existing legend and myth-bearing stones. The researchers engaged with community elders and knowledgeable villagers to gather oral narratives associated with each stone by recording interviews in both the vernacular Angami language *i.e*., Tenyidie, and English, ensuring accurate translations. The interviews were conducted with five respondents in each village in the demographic groups 60 years and above. Literature Review of colonial-era ethnographic accounts and modern scholarly work were carried out extensively.

III. Literature Review

The cultural heritage of the Angami community is deeply connected with their megalithic and monolithic stone traditions, which serve as tangible representations of their social structures, spiritual beliefs, and historical narratives. A comprehensive review of available literature, reveals that while archaeological studies have extensively documented the megalithic culture of the Angamis, there remains a significant gap in the recording of legends and myths associated with these stones.

The living tradition of megalithism has been identified among various tribal communities living in north-eastern, eastern, central, and southern India (Srivastava 2023). Archaeological research has provided substantial insights into the megalithic practices of the Angami Nagas. Hutton's (1922) work laid the groundwork for understanding the significance of these structures. Subsequent studies by Jamir and Vasa, in Oppitz *et al*. (eds.), 2008, explored the archaeology of local cultures, where Jotsoma and Khuzama Angami villages were also reported among the various archaeological sites in Nagaland. Wunderlich *et al*. (2021) conducted comprehensive research on the megalithic stone heritage of Southern Nagaland, documenting festivals related to stone erection and cataloguing various stone structures, including standing stones, sitting platforms, dolmens, and cairns. These studies underscore the multifaceted roles of megaliths in social, economic, and ritual contexts. The megalithic traditions of the Angami Nagas share similarities with those of neighbouring tribes, particularly within the Tenyimia group, which includes the Chakhesang, Rengma, Pochury, and Zeliang tribes. The Chakhesang, formerly known as Eastern Angami, exhibit comparable practices, such as erecting standing stones beyond village boundaries, often in solitary or grouped formations. Evidence of the Naga oral tradition on migration, supported by archaeological studies, was carried out by Aier (2018). Studies by Tunyi (2019) and Wunderlich *et al.* (2021) have highlighted the parallels in the Feasts of Merit rituals between the Chakhesang and Angami communities. Further afield, the Mao Naga village of Makhel in Manipur showcases sacred stone monuments, including monoliths, stone slabs, and stone circles, reflecting a shared cultural heritage across the region. The megalithic and monolithic stone traditions of the Angami Nagas are integral to their cultural identity, encapsulating aspects of their social structures, spiritual beliefs, and historical narratives.

In the context of the Angami tribe, colonial-era ethnographers like Hutton (1921), Elwin (1968) and Haimendorf (1939) documented the community's rich megalithic heritage. Contemporary scholars, including Venuh (2015) and Kire (2019), have continued this exploration, emphasizing the enduring relevance of these stone structures in Angami society. Sacred stones such as *Theguo Tsie* in Jotsoma village were also mentioned in the narrative of the festivals of Angamis in Nagaland (Nagi, 2018). Stirn and Van Ham (2003) wrote about “Luck stones” among the Nagas. These are black pebbles or meteorites believed to be animate and capable of breeding, especially when placed in a vessel full of grains. These lucky stones are believed to bring the villagers bountiful harvest, prosperity, success in hunting, children, and cattle in plenty. Luck stones were also mentioned among Ao Naga tribes by Kire (2019). Beyond their physical presence, many stones in the Angami region are infused with legends and myths passed down through generations. One such account involves the dream-stone at Viyakiricha, Khonoma, as mentioned by Hutton (1921). Another prominent legend is that of Koza, an ancestral figure believed to have used a magical stone in Khezhakenoma village to double the amount of paddy spread upon it. Easterine Kire's novel "When the River Sleeps" introduces mythical stones like *Khuroba/Ketsietheguo*, believed to grant desires when used for spiritual purposes. Further studies by Singh (2019) and Solo (2021: 50) have documented various legendary stones among the Angamis, including *Miegweno tsie*, *Sokeimela*, *Hiekha tsie*, *Tsiekhieu* (*Chükhieo tsie*), *Khriezorü biki*, *Danyü tsiese*, *Dihozhü*, and *Tsorie tsiese*. *A few Ura Academy publications also record legendary and mythical stories associated with stones. These include Neteya, which recounts the legends of Yalie’s tsiese and Rhalie’s themou (Ura Academy 2002); In U Kenei Dze, Sopfünuo’s story is narrated.* Ura Academy, a pioneering vernacular foundation of the Angamis, has also contributed in this way to preserving these narratives, emphasizing the importance of oral traditions in maintaining cultural heritage. SCERT Nagaland Heritage films, a YouTube channel of the State Council for Education Research and Training, Kohima, using this platform, is engaged in promoting Megalithic stone heritage and legends and myths of Nagaland through storytelling. Thus, we can see that while archaeological and ethnographic studies have extensively documented these practices, there remains a pressing need to preserve and record the rich tapestry of folklore and myths associated with these stones.

IV RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Legend and myth-bearing stones are given less importance than megalithic culture:

In ancient times, megalithic culture was integral to the Feast of Merit—the highest ideal the Angamis aspired to achieve. Feast of Merit was a series of feasts that were hosted by a couple who had worked hard in their fields and accumulated wealth in the form of plentiful harvests and abundant livestock. The series of feasts, beginning with easier attainable targets, progresses to successive higher levels that enhance the prestige and social rank of the feast giver. This requires erecting megaliths called *Kesiamero* (Figure 1) at the initial stage of the series and *Kerheitsiese* towards the end. *Kesiamero* are megaliths erected in memory of the dead in the feast giver's family. These megaliths are flattened and their sizes are not so big, usually a few inches in width and about 4 feet high or even as short as 1 foot in height. The number of stones erected ranges from two, in memory of the feast giver's parents, to even five or more (depending on the number of deceased family members that they want to commemorate.

Figure 1: *Kesiamero* are megaliths erected in memory of the dead at Khonoma Village

Whereas, *Kerheitsiese* are stones erected by the feast giver, which consist of two large stones, the bigger of which is in honour of the man and the smaller of the two for the wife. The sizes of these stones are usually big, about 6 feet, and the thickness can also be several inches. Studies mentioning the Feast of merit and associated monolithic and megalithic structures are available in plenty, although not very comprehensive. The importance of this feast and associated megalithic culture is evident in all writings about the Nagas and Angamis, which appear incomplete without making a mention of this aspect.

Figure 2: *Kerheitsiese*, a megalith erected in commemoration of a host of the Feast of merit, at Jotsoma village

Legend and myth-bearing stones, however, are given less importance in the Angami society. Archaeological studies of the megalithic culture are grounded in physical remains—stone structures, burial sites, and artifacts that can be analyzed, dated, and compared across regions. Whereas legend and myth-bearing stones often rely on oral traditions, folklore, or mythological narratives. The lack the robust data needed for precise historical or cultural reconstruction makes the latter less attractive for empirical research. Thus, in Angami villages as well, available studies focused on megaliths and legend and myth-bearing stones lie forgotten. Another reason can be attributed to scholars' tendency to prioritize material culture that offers clear archaeological insights into prehistoric societies (rituals, economies, social organization). While myths are often considered ephemeral and mutable, subject to reinterpretation and embellishment, and therefore less "reliable" for reconstructing the past. As a result, while myth-bearing stones enrich our cultural understanding, they often receive less rigorous scholarly attention than megalithic

structures, which provide a more solid archaeological foundation.

Available literature on Angamis illustrates how deeply the Feast of Merit and its accompanying megalithic traditions have become intertwined into their collective identity. To complete the series of feasts, a family must dedicate years of sustained effort—from accumulating resources to organising sumptuous celebrations and erecting imposing stone monuments. These monuments are not merely emblems of elevated status; they are enduring tributes to the toil and sacrifice invested by ancestors. That legacy, passed down through generations, becomes a source of pride for descendants. Even as belief systems have shifted, the spirit of megalithic culture persists. This is not because of spiritual necessity, but because families cherish the memory of their predecessors' achievements and feel compelled to preserve that heritage. In stark contrast, legend- and myth-bearing stones, those once believed to harbour magical qualities, have been relegated to obscurity. Though they may predate the megaliths, these stones depended on annual upkeep through ritual and ceremony to maintain their powers. When those rituals fell away, sometimes with the advent of new religions or cultural norms, the stones were believed to lose their potency. Local testimony confirms that respondents attribute the disappearance of mythical powers to this very discontinuation of practice.

The predominant myths and legends associated with specific stone structures

In the course of the fieldwork, many legend-bearing and myth-bearing stones were recounted by the respondents. But for the present study, five such legends and myths associated with stones were documented from each of the study villages. The details of these folk tales are summarised in Table 1. The following section gives a brief account of the legend and myth-bearing stones in Jotsoma and Khonoma villages.

Table 1: Five most significant legend and myth-bearing stones in the study villages

Sl. No.	Stone heritage	Village	Legend/Myth	Present status	Preservation
1.	*Thegotsie*	Jotsoma	Myth	Contested	None
2.	*Lhudio- Kesüdio Chütho*		Myth	Not existing	None
3.	*Ketsie Zabo*		Myth	Existing	None
4.	*Chakrükezatsie*		Myth	Contested	None
5.	*Ketsie Nitsü-o*		Legend	Existing	None
6.	*Pera Pikhe*	Khonoma	Myth	Existing	None
7.	*Miagweno Tsie*		Legend	Existing	None
8.	*Sokimeila*		Myth	Existing	None
9.	*Hiekha Tsie*		Legend	Existing	Maintained
10.	*Chükhieo Tsie*		Myth	Existing	None

1.1 Jotsoma

a. ~~Thegotsie~~ (Sacred Luck Stones): ~~*Thegotsie* are polished black stones – round, oval, or elongated – ranging from the size of an~~ Entada bean (*Entada rheedei*) to a palm-sized ball. Always found buried and believed to surface only to the truly fortunate, they are kept secret within households. Each year, during the *Thekranyi* festival, the household head performs rituals to maintain the stone's magical powers. Although hidden, their presence becomes known through signs of rising prosperity, drawing the attention—and sometimes theft—of others. When stolen, rightful owners often destroy the stone (by burning, scorching, smoking, or striking with iron) rather than let the rival keep its powers. Finders of *Thegotsie* are typically from poorer backgrounds; ownership brings rapid wealth and social respect.

A famed priest, *Khadi Mevo*, reportedly possessed such a stone, leading to a flourishing community over which he presides—abundant food, growing population, and energetic celebrations—anchored by his stone's influence. After his death, elaborate measures in the form of seven wooden replicas of his corpse were buried on the burial site, ensuring his remains were never exhumed.

Several sub-types of *Thegotsie* are:

i. ***Mechügo*** ("community fortune stone"): Discovered amid mysterious glowing and rhythmic sounds, it was claimed collectively to benefit the entire village, with rituals led by a designated clan for generations.

ii. ***Migo***: Smaller stones that grant swift wealth but can bring volatility; one owner's house burned repeatedly amid inexplicable occurrences.

iii. ***Khunogo/Mithuperigo***: Found under strange natural phenomena—glowing trees, for example—and identified by shamans before being ritually accepted into a home.

iv. ***Methiego*** ("thunderbolt"): Linked to thunderbolt legends—zigzagging through trees and emerging after several years—these stones are handled with deep reverence and laid untouched for years before recovery. Possession heralds significant prosperity.

b. Lhudio-Kesüdio Chütho(bangle): *Lhudio* and *Kesüdio*, revered as powerful spirit guardians of water bodies in Jotsoma, presided over two sacred springs: *Thenha Rü* (*Thenha* spring) and *Rüso Dzükhu* (*Rüso* pond), both noted for never drying up—even in severe droughts. The waterlogged, marshy landscape, cloaked in dense greenery, lent an eerie and mysterious atmosphere. Yet, villagers still frequented these sites to fetch water or bathe.

Lhudio and *Kesüdio* were said to be giant rivals, matched in strength and pride, and their jewelry's jingling could be heard as they strode up *Phezhu* Hill. During a legendary clash, they wrestled ferociously, resulting in *Lhudio's* massive stone bangle (*chütho*) cracking in two. *Kesüdio* retreated back to *Rüso Dzükhu*, leaving a trail of blood in his wake.

For years, the villagers pointed to a large, arc-shaped stone believed to be the broken fragment of *Lhudio's chütho*—an enduring proof of the myth. However, when the Government High School was constructed on that site, the arcstone was reportedly buried, its physical trace lost.

c. ***Ketsie Zabo*/Weather stone:** *Ketsie Zabo* is a flat weather stone located along the *Dzüchie* footpath, leading to the village paddy fields. Believed to hold a living spirit, the stone has long been used by villagers as a natural weather predictor.

i. Rain forecast: If the stone's surface appears damp or wet, it signals impending rain.
ii. Clear skies ahead: If it looks dry, fair weather is expected.

For generations, villagers have consulted *Ketsie Zabo* before embarking on outdoor activities or planning fieldwork. There was a strict taboo against touching the stone—even accidental contact with a cowherd's walking stick was frowned upon. Persistent rainfall sometimes sparked suspicion that someone had disturbed the stone's power through touch. Every year, during the *Terhünyi* festival, the community conducted a ritual to honor and appease the spirit dwelling in the stone—a testament to their deep reverence for *Ketsie Zabo* not merely as a natural object, but as a sacred weather guide.

d. ***Chakrükeza tsie* (Stone producing Brine)**: *Chakrükeza* was once a significant site, known for a unique stone believed to naturally produce *keza dzü*, brine. Villagers often come here to collect this valued resource, especially used for seasoning traditional curry stews. The *Chakrü* people, originally from another Naga tribe had come and temporarily settled in the village. However, due to their bad reputation, they eventually had to leave. With resentment, they sabotaged the brine source before departing, and using a Mithun horn, they struck the sacred stone, splitting it in two. They then buried the stone and the spring with soil, cutting off the flow of the brine. When the villagers later discovered it, they tried to undo it but all they could find was a *khotu chü*, a stone slab (where a *mekho*, or traditional basket, was placed to carry water jars without assistance). The place came to be called *Chakrükeza*, a name combining *Chakrü*, and *keza dzü*, the brine that had once made the site valuable.

e. ***Ketsie Nitsü-o:*** A young cowherdess feared losing her precious necklace, so she removed it, wrapped it in her shawl, and placed it on a stone while tending to her grazing cows. On returning, the necklace had vanished. Overwhelmed, she searched but found nothing, and went home in tears. Her parents accused her of giving the necklace to her lover, even threatening to withhold food until she retrieved it. Heartbroken, she returned to the stone, struck it with her shawl, and cried, "Return my necklace and take my life." Miraculously, the necklace appeared. She brought it home but soon thereafter died. In her honor, a tsiepfhe—a circular stone structure—was built at the spot. The location was named *Krarü Tsiepfhe*, meaning "came weeping," commemorating her grief and tragic fate.

Figure 3: *Ketsie Nitsü-o*, Dzüdza, Jotsoma Village

1.2 Khonoma

a. ***Pera Pikhe* (Bird's mortar):** A large stone features a deep hole at its top that remains constantly filled with water, believed to be imbued with spiritual power. During the dry seasons, birds of all kinds gather to drink from this perpetual well. In times of drought, the villagers hold that if barren women draw out all the water from this hole, the spirits will be appeased and send rain in return. This ritual practice was maintained until recent times, reflecting the community's deep belief in the stone's magical influence and connection to rainfall and fertility.

b. ***Miagweno Tsie*:** High atop a sheer mountain in Khonoma village, rests a narrow, precarious stone ledge known as *Miagweno tsie*. According to folklore, this ledge was once the playground of beautiful dwarf spirits, particularly during springtime. Villagers describe the ledge as so narrow and exposed that even just imagining walking along it sends chills. Indeed, tales say that even the bravest warriors failed to traverse it. Yet one extraordinary woman earned renown for her agility and grace: able to swiftly walk to the ledge's end, undo her hair, tidy it, and return safely. The stone's name connects to the benevolent spirit *Miagweno*, as villagers believe the dwarf-like beings who frolicked upon it resemble those kindly entities from Angami belief—hence the name *Miagweno tsie*.

c. ***Sokimeila* (Weather stone):** A set of stones believed to have the power of changing the weather is found in the *Dzüdza* River. Whenever touched or cleaned by unlucky people, strong winds are caused, which damage crops or start fires that burn houses in the village, resulting in great loss. However, if touched by lucky persons, it causes rainfall, indicating a rich harvest. Even today, touching or cleaning the stones is much feared by villagers lest the omens indicate disaster.

d. ***Hiekha Tsie* (Stone erected in memory of Hiekha)—**also known as *Yalie Tsiephou*, "the stone *Yalie* erected." This monolith is believed to be the largest stone ever raised by human hands in the region. The legend of Hiekha or Yalie is another story depicting the use of intelligence to come out of a difficult situation (Singh 2019). The tale is a tribute not only to brute strength but to wit, resilience, and intergenerational pride. *Hiekha*, a wealthy man and respected community leader, was determined to immortalize himself by erecting a massive commemorative stone following a Feast of Merit. But the stone proved to be so enormous that even the strongest combined efforts could not budge it from its resting place. It was *Yalie*, *Hiekha's* son, whose resourcefulness turned the tide. As the stone began to shift, *Yalie* crawled into the narrow gap beneath it. With all eyes on him, he boldly declared that if the stone were abandoned before it had fully separated from the ground, it would crush him. His courage created urgency. Emboldened, the men renewed their efforts with combined strength—and finally succeeded in freeing it from the earth. Thus was the colossal monolith erected, forever known as *Hiekha Tsie* or *Yalie Tsiephou*. It stands as a testament to courage, cleverness, and filial devotion—a living monument narrating the power of mental strength allied with collective action.

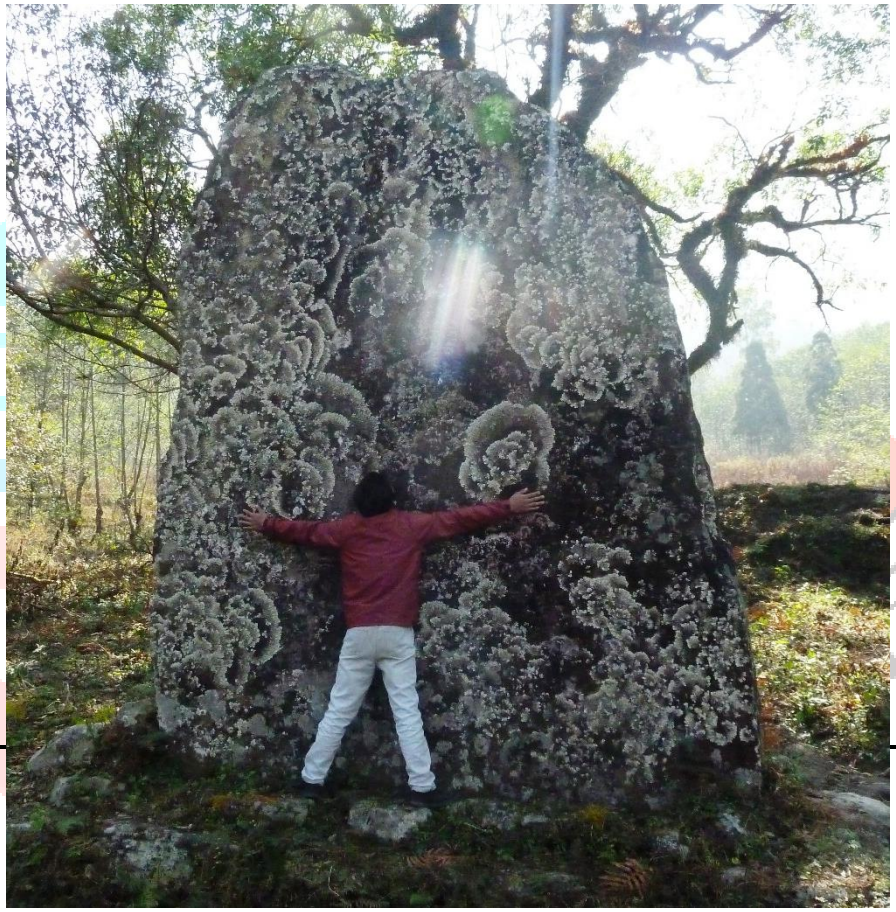

Figure 4: *Hiekha tsie* at Khonoma village

e. ***Chükhieo Tsie*:** *Chükhieo* is revered in Angami folklore as the guardian spirit of wild animals. Hunters in Khonoma traditionally offered prayers to *Chükhieo* before embarking on hunts and gave thanks after a successful hunt. A distinctive cliff face in the wilderness of Khonoma is believed to bear the likeness of *Chükhieo*. Before the establishment of the Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary, hunters looked toward this rock's face as a divine omen—interpreting its expression to gauge the outcome of their hunt. If *Chükhieo's* face appeared to smile, it was taken as a sign of misfortune, and the hunting trip would likely fail. If the face looked solemn or sad, hunters believed it foretold a bountiful hunt ahead (Solo 2021: 50). This tradition highlights the Angami worldview, which posits that successful hunts are deeply interconnected with spiritual insight, respect for animal life, and symbiotic harmony with nature—values that continue to influence cultural identity even after the region transitioned into a protected sanctuary.

Efforts implemented to preserve the legend and myth-bearing stone heritage

No preservation measures were identified in the study villages examined (see Table 1). However, in Khonoma, despite the absence of traditional religious observances among villagers, several of the stones included in the study remain well-maintained. In contrast, some stones reportedly seen in Jotsoma are no longer present, even though eyewitnesses recall their existence.

DISCUSSION

The Study began by asserting that within Angami stone culture, megalithic monuments receive predominant attention. This focus reveals a fundamental divergence: megaliths are celebrated as concrete testaments to social endeavor and prestige, whereas legend-bearing stones require recurring ritual to sustain their sacred status. Once those rituals cease, belief in the stones often dissipates. In contrast, the Feast of Merit, associated with megalith erection, remains vibrant in communal memory and honor, with younger generations actively upholding its legacy even as ancient rituals wane.

In this way, the study highlights that Angami cultural endurance depends less on mythic potency and more on memory, collective labor, and conscious commemoration. Correspondingly, academic attention often sidelines myth-bearing stones in favor of the more visible megalithic tradition. As documented in this research, five legendary stones—anchored in myth and ritual—from Angami villages were recorded, though countless others remain undocumented, and many have been destroyed or repurposed for development. One notable instance occurred in Khonoma: a stone believed to "bark", locally called *Ketsie molieya kezhau*—was partially split by a local mason. Although the stone no longer produces sound, it still stands as a silent emblem of collective memory and lore. Stone traditions remain deeply woven into Angami life, serving as enduring symbols of identity, ritual practice, and historical consciousness.

This research illustrates that myth-bearing stones are not merely inanimate objects; they function as living archives of oral narrative, embodying generational memories, beliefs, and histories. Each stone, whether tied to ancestral myth, spirit guardianship, or heroic deed, serves as a physical narrative's anchor, preserving legends that might otherwise fade. Through storytelling, ritual visitation, and communal reflection centred on these stones, oral tradition is given tangible form in the landscape, making intangible memory visible and lasting. In Jotsoma village, several of the stones analyzed no longer exist in their physical form. Yet their legends remain vivid—demonstrating how oral traditions operate as living archives, preserving collective identity and social values independently of material permanence. This is consistent with wider Naga scholarship, where megaliths often continue to symbolize cultural narratives even after disappearing from the physical terrain. The absence of a stone does not diminish its cultural importance. Instead, through storytelling, memory, and ritual invocation, communities reproduce a sacred landscape in absence—fostering continuity even as physical markers erode. This intangible presence echoes global folklore traditions surrounding lost sacred sites. Documenting vanished Angami stones can not only revive interest in their myths but also motivate renewed community engagement with these narratives and their preservation.

Analysis of selected legend-bearing stones reveals their deep roots in Angami traditional belief. People regarded *Thegotsie* owners with respect; hunters consulted stones such as *Chükhieo* for cues to hunting success; barren women sought rain at sacred water-holding stones. These interactions illustrate how myth and ritual shape ecological awareness, respect for wildlife, and spiritual engagement with the land. Angami legends encode communal wisdom from environmental ethics to social values and cosmological principles, serving as structured knowledge systems for navigating community life. Traditionally, elders transmitting these stories within youth dormitories (*Kichüki*) ensured continuity of history, custom, and moral guidance even in the face of demographic and religious change. Today, although only a negligible number of Angamis practice traditional religion, many sacred stones are maintained or ritually referenced even when their original mythic context has faded. The disappearance or burial of certain stones does not erase their narrative presence; rather, their symbolic absence often elevates their mythic status and spurs heritage preservation efforts.

V. CONCLUSION

Legend-bearing and mythical stones within Angami culture function as living monuments—embodying community memory, oral traditions, ecological knowledge, and moral instruction. Even in the face of modernization, these stones remain integral to village identity, ritual life, and cultural continuity. Their associated tales endure even when the stones themselves deteriorate or disappear. The decline of traditional belief systems and elder-led oral transmission—especially through *Kichüki* (youth dormitories)—heightens the urgency to document legends before they vanish. Many sacred stones have already been lost due to erosion, land-use change, or development projects. Recording both surviving stones and those no longer present helps reconstruct the ritual landscape of Angami life. Mythic figures such as *Chükhieo* encode environmental ethics and reverence for wildlife; preserving these stories helps sustain indigenous knowledge aligned with sustainable stewardship of nature.

The present study advocates community-based conservation and education, involving local stakeholders—women's groups, youth organizations, cultural committees—in restoring and managing known stone sites. Integrating cultural education in schools and creating digital archives with photographs, sketches, audio recordings, and videos of rituals, oral narratives, and stone sites will significantly bolster heritage preservation. By combining meticulous documentation with culturally sensitive preservation strategies, researchers and communities can ensure that Angami myth-bearing stones transcend relic status to remain vibrant symbols of cultural identity, ecological consciousness, and ritual agency. This process demonstrates that absence need not mean oblivion—myth and memory continue to shape community, landscape, and shared meaning in evolving times.

The fieldwork faced limitations of time and funding, and many informants were beginning to forget the finer contours of legends linked to these stones. With the loss of knowledgeable elders in the villages, the need to record this heritage became even more pressing. Respondents also expressed a reluctance to revisit certain belief systems and rituals—revealing the complex emotional dynamics tied to these traditions.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors are very grateful to the respondents in the study villages for providing valuable information, which made the study possible.

REFERENCES

[1] Aier, A. 2018. Studies on Naga Oral Traditional Volume-1. Heritage Publishing House, 156pp.

[2] Bora, S. D. 2023. Essence of Megalithism among the Ethnic Communities from Assam Meghalaya Border Region. Ancient Asia 14(1): 63-76.

[3] Christina, K., K. Nakhro, P. Chase, Sunjeminla, and M. Khate 2025. Traditional Angami Architecture: A Study of Continuity and Change. Minor Research Project Report submitted to the Department of Higher Education, Government of Nagaland—unpublished, 48pp.

[4] Gogoi, S. and C. K. Baruah 2021. Cist, Tombstones and Syncretism: Megalithic Traditions among the Hrusso of West Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh. Skylines of Anthropology 1(1): 36-47.

[5] Haimendorf, F. 1939. The Naked Nagas. Methuen and Co. Ltd., London.

[6] Hutton, J.H. 1922. The Meaning and Method of the Erection of Monoliths by the Naga Tribes. The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain 52: 242–249.

[7] Jamir, T., and D. Vasa. 2008. Archaeology of Local Cultures: New Findings and Interpretations in Nagaland. In Naga Identities: Changing Local Cultures in the Northeast of India. Eds. M. Oppitz, T. Kaiser, A.V. Stockhausen and M. Wettstein. Gent: Snoeck Publishers. Pp. 323-339.

[8] Kapfo, N. 2023. Christianity's Cultural Influence: A Study of Chakhesang Naga Society. International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts 11(10):141-146.

[9] Kire, E. 2019. Walking the Roadless Road. Aleph Book Company.

[10] Kire, E. 2016. When the River Sleeps. Zuban.

[11] Khonoma Tourism Development Board. 2004. Environmental Impact Assessment Report – Khonoma Green Village Project Report, Khonoma village.

[12] Marak, Q. 2012. Megaliths, Types, and its Living Traditions Among the Jaintias of Northeastern India. Journal of Indo-Pacific Archaeology 32: 45-53.

[13] Nakhro, K. and P. Chase 2025. Ancestral Wisdom and Village Settlement among the Angamis of Nagaland: Recalling the Tradition. In Traditional Knowledge System: Indigenous Knowledge System of North East India and Beyond, Historical Essences, in Eds. Singh O.R., H.A. Meetei, O.R. Devi, and L.S. Devi, volume v, Global Publishing House, India. Pp. 233-253.

[14] Nienu, V. 2015. Naga Cultural Milieu: An Adaptation to Mountain Ecosystem. Dorylus Publishing Group.

[15] Nyori, K. 2022. Revisiting "Myth" in Easterine Kire's novel When the River Sleeps." Literary Herald 8(2):25-31.

[16] Pao, V. and Rajeev, K. 2023. Exploring the symbolic representation of stone monoliths in Feast of Merit of Poumai Naga tribe, Manipur. Scope 13(4):180-191.

[17] Sanglir, C. 2021. The Feasts of Merit: The Naga Concept of Surplus Distribution and Promoter of Cultural Traditions." International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts 9(5):198-202.

[18] Singh, O.P. 2023. Megaliths as Sacred Monuments in the Mao Naga Village of Makhel in Manipur, Northeast India. Heritage: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology 11(1):965-979.

[19] Singh, M. 2024. Mythical Legends and Legendary Myths: A Case Study of Khonoma, Nagaland. www.sahapedia.org/myths-and-legends-of-the-angami-nagas-of-khonoma (Accessed on 22nd August 2025).

[20] Solo, N. 2021. The Angami Nagas in Folklore and Stories of the WWII: A Study of Cultural History. Dissertation submitted to Nagaland University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy in English. pp 111.

[21] Srivastava, S. 2023. Megaliths: A review. Scope 13(2): 303-329.

[22] Tunyi, S. 2019. Life Behind the Monolith Culture of the Chakhesang Community. Journal of Advanced Research in English and Education 4(4): 5-9.

[23] Wouters, J.J.P. 2019. The Sociology of Stones in Nagaland. Megalithic Tradition of Northeast India. In Ed. Queenbala M. New Delhi: Concept, 255pp.

[24] Wunderlich, M., T. Jamir, J. Mu¨ller, K. Rassman, and D. Vasa. 2021. Societies in balance: Monumentality and feasting activities among southern Naga communities, Northeast India. PLoS ONE 16(3): 1-36. **[2]** Basu, S. 1997. The Investment Performance of Common Stocks in Relation to Their Price to Earnings Ratio: A Test of the Efficient Markets Hypothesis. Journal of Finance, 33(3): 663-682.