

Traditional War of the Mao Naga

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ABSTRACT

Human beings long for peace however, it begins and ends with war. Traditional Mao Nagas do the same. However there is something which is unusual in these Nagas tribes which is that they glorified war and earn social status moreover they have religious belief and significant that war bring fortune and prosperity. There are various types of war which are fought under strict customary rules. Interestingly these wild tribes have a provision for peace treaty which everyone takes it seriously and certain procedures are follows to have such peace treaty.

KEY WORDS: War through traditional ethos.

Introduction

Mao is one of the important tribe of Naga who mainly settled in the Northern part of Manipur State. It has a rich cultural heritage. We may not like it but War is integral part of our life in the past of the present and in future too. We fought war for war, fought war to avoid it, and fought war for peace. This craze will continue till the end of the world. The traditional Mao Nagas too fought various type of war however each war has to be fought adherence to strict customary laws.

Mao forefathers fought many wars. In such act they earn their courage and dignity by killing each other. Due to this reason Mao forefathers cannot scatter in a small area. At any festive occasion they will wear their attire according to their rank or at the time of war they will wear their dresses. A person wearing head gear will lead ahead and the person wearing war tail will be at the end of the group.

i. Rules of war and fights

Open war means engagement of the date, time and preparation for the battle day whereas in sacred war, one can attack enemies without giving information to the enemies spying their enemies' movement.

In a group fighting, if a weaker man runs in the house of someone for shelter or refuge one should not continue the attack, if violated by chasing or beating, owner of the house can instigate legal action against the defaulter.

Woman folks taking part in the war: During the war womenfolk will bring food for their lunch and supply stones to their brothers, they will look after the injured people.

i. Bringing enemy's head

If their enemies were killed in the battlefield, they cut off their head and brought to the village. The village chief will pronounce war voices and the heads are buried in the ground situated near the centre pillar of the village chief.

ii. Warriors' Honour (Oruzho)

In the village he who killed enemies and brought their heads to the village, the chief will announce *ephre mane genna* and a bull will be slaughtered by the slayer to distribute to the villagers as *shovii* and the village Chief will bless him performing rituals. Thereafter, he is entitled the 'warrior honour'. Any person who killed enemies but not performed such ritual is prohibited to wear any war honour dresses. If blessing is done once, one is not necessary to ask to blessing again for the second time. Different warriors' honours are awarded to warriors for different feast, some of them are follows:

1. Wearing of War Tail (*oru imi kopfii*): War tail is worn by the last person of the war group, he will look after the group to give directions /instructions to take position, and he must be a brave man. Villagers will put war tail to the expert in the war who killed many enemies in the past wars. He had to defend villagers' war group at the last position. He will be very sensitive to watch enemies' movement whether coming in any direction. If he is not expert enemies can attack war group easily from their back.

2. Necklace hair (*Oru otopishu amoto*): Necklace hair is worn on the neck by a person who has hunted others head in the war. They are also respect by the villagers, because they killed many enemies in the war. If he has not killed any enemies he should not wear such hair at his neck. During war or any special occasion every individual must wear proper war title dresses.

3. Wearing hair on the hands (*Obamai kha kopfii*): Hairs are put on the wrist by a person who cut enemy's hand during war.

4. War Horn (*Orukai kopfii*): War horn is worn on the head by the expertise of war; they will lead in front of the villagers and will attack to their enemies first. War horn is given as a title to those who kill many enemies during war or sacred war time.

5. Wooden pictogram of head hunting: (*Omaipi dekopfii*): Head hunted during a declared war in front of the villagers will carry hanging wooden head in upward position, which is in normal position of human head. Head hunted in undeclared war (on the way or in the paddy fields) one will carry hanging wooden head in upside down position. It is prohibited to put normal position or straight position in undeclared war.

iii. Revenge Seeking (*Mokho kopho*)

If any villager is killed by an enemy on their way to the paddy fields or anywhere, the deceased brothers or villagers will take revenge during a work in the paddy field or busy doing some work. If one cannot take revenge from outside, then they will come and attack at home while he is sleeping. If they killed their enemy a message is sent to the messenger that your people were killed by that particular person and village name. Revenge cannot be taken by anybody; it can be taken only by a courageous or a brave man (warrior) who is expert and experienced in the war. The person taking revenge will eat proper diet which makes the body physically fit in order to jump at any moment. Family members of the deceased will come and request along with finest wine and a small pig to the house of the warrior to seek revenge for them. If the warrior is unwilling, he will say that he had a bad dream at present and he will try next time. The next time also the relatives of the deceased will come and request again in such a way, he will go and take revenge. The warrior will bring the head to the family members to show it. Before war starts, or taking any revenge the Mao people follow their dreams gravely.

iv. Village Guard (*Rikhemai*)

In the village, courageous and strong man will guard the village, if they do not guard the village the villagers cannot work in the fields because the enemies will come and attack anytime. The villagers give paddy to the village guards as taxes during harvest time. Therefore, brave men do not harvest much because of looking after the villagers. As such Mao forefathers were not thinking any other activities but getting ready for war only.

v. Peace Treaty with Neighbouring Villages (*Asoto kochu*)

Asoto means calling the people to eat together from one village to another village whether enemy or an ally. If it was enemy or waging war between each other, they will make peace treaty between the two villages and cease fighting. They will make friendship and stop any quarrels for any reason and support each other in times of hardships.

The procedures for making peace treaty are as follows:

1. Contact for peace treaty (CFPT)
2. Traditional attire arrangement
3. Onset day for peace treaty

4. Taking of lunch during journey
5. Entering the host village
6. Selection of guests
7. Feasting with both the villages
8. Elders meeting of both villages
9. Sports competition during peace treaty
10. Departure day of peace treaty
11. Luncheon on the way back after peace treaty
12. Returning back to the village
13. Observation of *Phehre genna* by the host village

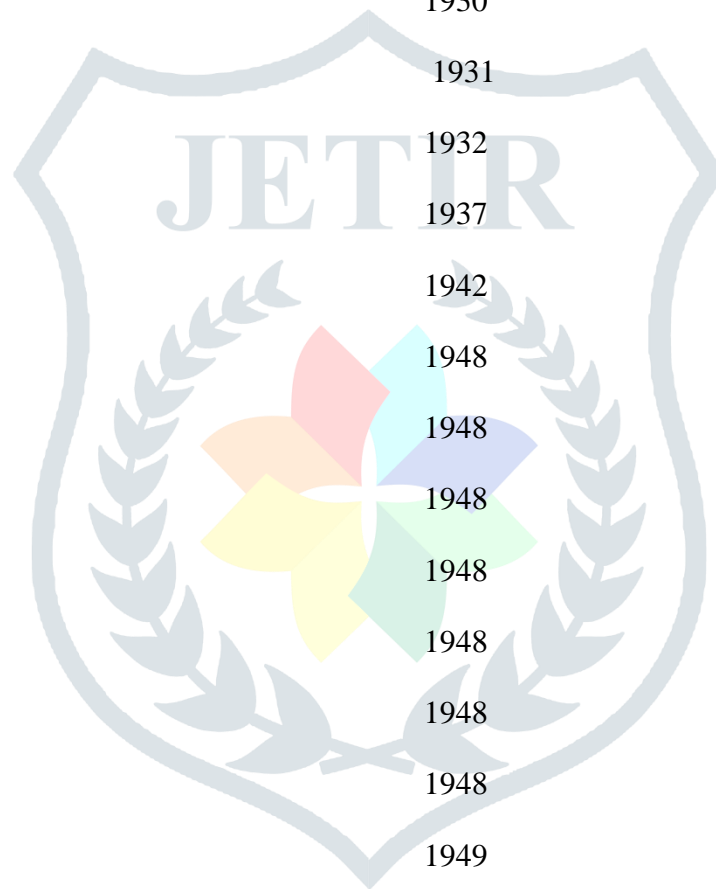
Shajouba village (One of the village of Mao Naga) make peace treaty with the following villages which are mentioned here as under: 1. Koide 2. Khezakenoma 3. Tungam 4. Tungjoy 5. Saranamai 6. Maram 7. Angami 8. Punanamai. During head hunting if the contender head belongs to same community, the head was not taken.

Shajouba also acted as defence force for Pudunamai in their war against Khezakeno and defense force for Chowainamai in their war against Maram. Chowainamai in return rewarded the favour by gifting a hillock to the north of their village and aptly named it as *Chahofii*.

Recorded Pudunamai village peace treaty signed reaffirmation feast souvenir from 1800 to 2002 villages was here under:

Village Name	Year
Mehruma/ Khonoma	1800
JakhamPudunam	1820
Phiisachodima	1880
Leshemi	1903
Lasumi	1903
Zapami	1903
Chalhong	1904
Washangphung	1904
Leishangphung	1904
Selsi	1904
Ngaju	1904

Maval		1904
Changshang		1904
Hengjang		1904
Jotsoma/ Thaloma		1906
ChowainamaiKhullen		1925
ChowainamaiKhunou		1925
Maopungdng		1925
Lhisema/ Kohima		1928
Saranamai		1930
Kirhazuma/Viswema		1931
Somdol		1932
Maiba		1937
Kigwema		1942
T. Khullen		1948
Mayangkhang		1948
Yaikongpao		1948
Tumnoupokpi		1948
Makeng		1948
ThangalSurung		1948
Mapao		1948
Kikruma		1949
Shajouba	Song Song	1950
Shajouba	Makhan	1952
Shajouba	Saranamei	1956
Shajouba	Koide	1960
MaramkhullenPudunamei		1963
Sadim	Pudunamei	1975
Tunjoy	Pudunamei	1997
Viswema	Pudunamei	2000



Kezoma	Pudunamei	2001
Tungam	Pudunamei	2001
Tadubi	Chakumei	1985
MaramKhullen	Chakumei	2015

Mao Naga forefathers practice 'the head hunting culture' with a notion of courage and prestige for they believe that it is a significant of social status, religious significant for the belief that it will bring fortune and bountiful harvest and security of the village. During Mao forefathers' period they do not have a fixed land boundary, the lands were covered with very thick forests and few human population. There are certain war rules and regulations namely the declared war and undeclared war. Undeclared war is hurtful than a declared war. In undeclared war one can kill an enemy at any moment. Victory in the declared war is considered more prestigious than the undeclared war.

Wearing of war rank badges during special occasions or festivals were namely, cutting an enemy's hand, hair or head during war. Expertise of war wears headgear of horn and tail of war.

During war if an ally or enemy wanted to stop the war, they can call for a peace treaty. Many terms and conditions were to agree by both the parties. After the peace treaty, both parties do not have any restriction from each other but to live in peace and prosper together.

After the coming of British and with the advent of Christianity in the area, the head hunting culture and wars among different villages of the Mao people come to end.

Conclusion

The Tribal particularly Mao Naga who seemingly seems to be ignorant, undeveloped and wild but in reality they are unique and sophisticated more than outlook. Their lives are governed by strict customary laws with detailed precision. They were wild yet human, they were undeveloped yet there was rule of laws, they were uneducated yet they know and maintain ecological balance. They too fought war but with adherence to rules and regulations, this marvels us all.

GLOSSARY

1. *Asoto* : Calling people to eat together
2. *Ephre mane genna* : Village chief announcing genna for bringing head in the village.
3. *Pehre genna* : Observation of genna after peace treaty
4. *Rikhamei* : Village guard
5. *Shovii* : Meat distributed to villagers indicating head brought in the village.
6. *Mokho kopho* : Revenge.
7. *Obamai kha kapfu* : Wearing hair on the hands.
8. *Omaipi dekopfu* : Wooden pictogram of head hunting
9. *Orukai kopfu* : War horn.
10. *Oru imi kopfu* : Wearing of war tail.
11. *Oru otopishu amoto* : Necklace hair.
12. *Oru zho* : Warrior's honour.