

## Longterok: An AO-Naga's Testament of The Self

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### ABSTRACT

The sanctity of stones/rocks in the Bible has been preserved in the highest order with it being applied in the most exalted manner to the Messiah. In this paper an attempt is made to decode the petra genitrix myth of the Ao-Nagas from the six stones—Longterok—at Chungliyimti. This myth not only is a recount of the origin of our forefathers but establishes the order of clans and phratries within the tribe. Reflections in the paper are done in accordance with the essence of the Christian symbolism and traditional beliefs of stones along with Jungian convictions.

**Keywords:** Longterok, Ao-Nagas

### **T**he Myth of Longterok: The Origin of Man (Ao, 2012)

The myth begins in a place called “Longterok” which literally translates to “Six Stones”. It is said that the first Ao-Nagas emerged out of the earth at Longterok, from where they essentially “*poktet*” (burst-out) out of the six stones one after another. They were six of them, of which three were males and three females. The three males were united in marriage with the three females each. Thus the three males eventually became the patriarchs of the three main clans of the Ao-Naga. With this came the initiation of the order of clans and phratries within the tribe. This place where the first men came to and where the Longterok lay was then established as Chungliyimti which is the ancestral village of the Ao-Naga.

### *Archetypal amplification:*

#### **Hypothetical Interpretation**

In the myth, the first men emerge from the earth which clearly alludes to a form of the emergence creation motif. As it is implied, emergence creations lay emphasis on the creation of humanity (Leeming, 2010). It is an act of birth, emerging from the womb of the mother. Here we see that the ‘mother earth’ is Chungliyimti, which is considered as the de facto center of the world for the Aos. The myth is a clear indication of the phenomenon of birth. The people gestate within the womb of the mother before being ‘born’ and eventually come to consciousness and realization of the external world. For the Ao-Nagas the land is the source of life and sustenance, it is the land that gave them life and continue to. This land is the root of their identity and bearing.

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In the myth they then follow through the phenomenon of “bursting out” from the stones. Herein this act is conflatable with that of the opening act of emerging from the earth. In the myth there is no mention of an external prompt that led to this action of bursting out, rather it seems like an internal need to achieve consciousness and to create. Humans have had a long standing and intimate history with stones since time immemorial. Stones have remained a constant unchanging and unmoving factor in the phenomenal world. Stones are a symbol of endurance, symbolising eternity. They are guardians who have stood still against time and have seen the world around them evolve. They have stood witness to millennia of change and hold within them all the wisdom of the ages.

The stone represents the feminine and becomes the personification of the earth mother. In some Native American myths, the stones are even considered as the “bones of mother earth” (Cooper, 1978). Similarly in a lot of primitive cultures including that of the Aos, the stones are life giving and capable of giving birth to people. Even within the Nagas, the Phom and the Sangtam tribes share their myth of origin from Longterok. (Mills, 1926) According to Eliade, (Eliade, 1978) “stone is the source of life and fertility, that it gives and procreates human creatures just as it has been engendered by the earth.” *Petra genatrix* is a theme that occurs in a lot of myths across the world.

The stone is the archetypal image and the “matrix where a new mankind was to emerge” (Eliade, 1978) This *petra genatrix* is not only one that pertains to the birth of men but to greater beings such as gods and goddesses. The Roman sun god Mithra was born from the rock and even in Samoan mythology *petra genatrix* serves as an important cultural milestone. The *petra genatrix* of the forefathers is the sacrosanct beginning in which the soul of a collective tribe is given life and consciousness.

The six progenitors that emerged from the stones are three males and three females. The significance of their number and union is important to carry forth the narrative. The six of them together bring equilibrium and harmony. Among the numbers six is the most perfect number and also the most productive (Leeming, 1978). In a number of cultures including that of the Christians, the Hebrews, and the Sumerians, six represents the six days of creation. Furthermore, the number also symbolizes the union of opposites, which is exactly mirrored in the act that followed after their emergence. This sacred union between the three couples can be equated to the alchemical coming together of sulphur and mercury (Leeming, 1978), which can also be the coming together of the king and the queen for a spiritual and intimate union. They attain the perfect union of the masculine and the feminine bringing into completion the natural order and giving form to the womb of creation, to create and bring life to a new nation and their legacy.

In the myth these first men are who the Ao-Nagas perceive to be the patriarchs of their tribe and the ones who laid the foundation upon which the structure of their whole society is placed. When they came to being, they created a whole new world, a new cosmos with Chungliyimti at the centre of this. The Ao-Nagas have been guardians to upholding this created world. Longterok as the *Omphalos* (navel) and the centre of the world (Eliade, 1958) is consecrated as the site of a numinous beginning for a tribe who generally believe themselves to be blessed and chosen. The next section of the paper will explore a deeper psychological exposition.

### *Unearthing the Self:*

For Jung the stone stands as one of the most befitting symbols of the self. Stones have, as mentioned earlier, fascinated men and many people have been known to pick them up and collect them Jung being one. It is the belief that stones contained life that has inspired men. As for the Ao-Nagas, owing to their animistic traditions, so much of importance is bestowed upon them with some beliefs of them “being alive” and being able to move by themselves. (Ao, 2012). These stones contain spirits and were worshipped and revered. Gendered stones such as male and female stones who are not to be provoked so as not to have their wrath befall upon men still exist. They are venerated as stone deities.

Jung (Jung, Von Franz, 1964) points out that the stone reflects the innermost and simplest form of man at the core while stripped of all the superfluous extensions, an experience in which he too can feel “immortal and unalterable”. This is perhaps the reason why across cultures and civilizations stones have been erected in honour of great men and to commemorate important events in history. In the animistic experience of the Ao-Naga this experience of the self as the stone cannot be more literal.

A paradigm shift in the belief system ushered in a different perspective of this symbolism for the Ao-Nagas. With the indoctrination of Christianity ever since its arrival in the land, the stone has been a more Ecclesiastical symbolism. In the Old Testament, as it is written in Proverbs 118:22 “the stone which the builders rejected as worthless turned out to be the most important of all”, this perhaps was an earlier indication of the Christ as the stone. Anecdotal to the way Jesus was prosecuted and rejected by the church and the people.

Now, we come to the New Testament wherein Acts 4:11 attests to this analogy that Jesus indeed is the embodiment of the stone. This is a kerygmatic affirmation of Christ as the eternal saviour and the unmoving and unwavering symbol. It is through him that Christians will attain salvation and the self.

Jung (Jung, 1959, 70) says that “Christ exemplifies the archetype of the self. He represents a totality of a divine or heavenly kind, a glorified man, a son of God, *sine macula peccati*, unspotted by sin”. He is undoubtedly “our cultural hero who regardless of his historical existence embodies the myth of the divine primordial man, the mystic Adam. It is He who occupies the center of the Christian mandala...He is in us and we in Him” (Jung, 1959, 69). For the entirety of the Christian life, it is what is fuelled by this desire to embody the image of Christ that rationalises their belief. It is the belief that a good Christian's actions and way of life should attest to his existence for even the scripture says that man was made in the image of God.

Jesus is the center, the source of life, who stands as the projected image of the inner self. For the same reason it is from whom they derive their spirituality that quenches the thirst for their soul. As in 1 Corinthians 10:4, “they drank from the spiritual rock that went with them, and that rock was Christ himself”. This is an enactment of the Eucharist which is duly practiced. It is upheld by the core belief that the *imago die* will be revealed in the believer.

In relation to the other exemplary form of the self, the *lapis*, we find Marie-Louise von Franz quotes the Arabian alchemist Morienus “[this thing] the philosophers' stone is extracted from *you*: *you* are its mineral, and one can find it in *you*”, this *lapis* is the Christ in us which is supposed to grow within ourselves. For the Ao Naga, Christianity has given religiosity to practice the spirituality that aids the gradual process of finding the experience

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of discovering the self. This is to say the least for the Ao Nagas, that the earlier practice of projecting the Self on the life-giving stones in an external world have taken a turn into a projection inward. The symbolism of the stone for the Ao-Naga has through history morphed to fit into a new religious experience which has been brought upon by a new system of cosmology (Eliade, 1958)

Since the beginning of time, the Ao-Nagas have depended on a history of rich oral tradition to carry on and preserve their culture and heritage. Mythology, folklore, triumphs of cultural heroes, all passed down through storytelling and songs, in a tradition where the elders of the community take it upon themselves and pass on the mantle to safeguard these sacred histories. Myths of creation such as of the Longterok give us an opportunity to ask questions of our existence, of who we are and where we come from. They have the power to give meaning to life.

In cultures such as these, the past of the ones before becomes a part of the ones that are in the present. The ancestors become a part of the legacy that one needs to uphold and keep alive. Each Ao-Naga is a living embodiment of the souls of their ancestors. Marie-Louise Von Franz have highlighted the importance of keeping in touch with the ancestral souls. She has quoted Jung from his essay "The Gifted Child", "...it seems to me especially important for any broad-based culture to have a regard for history in the widest sense of the word. Important as it is to pay attention to what is practical and useful, and to consider the future, that backward glance at the past is just as important. Culture means continuity, not a tearing up of roots through "progress." . . . Just as the developing embryo recapitulates, in a sense, our phylogenetic history, so the child-psyche relives "the lesson of earlier humanity," as Nietzsche called it. The child lives in a pre-rational and above all in a pre-scientific world, the world of the men who existed before us. Our roots lie in that world and every child grows from those roots... Knowledge [and this is the essential sentence for us] of the universal origins builds the bridge between the lost and abandoned world of the past and the still largely inconceivable world of the future. How should we lay hold of the future, how should we assimilate it, unless we are in possession of the human experience which the past has bequeathed to us? Dispossessed of this, we are without root and without perspective, defenceless dupes of whatever novelties the future may bring." (Von Franz 2017)

Contextually, the situation of "the gifted child" applies to that of the Ao-Nagas. Over the years, the indigenous status of the Ao-Nagas have been subject to numerous changes and adaptations. Temsula Ao(Ao,1999) critiques this apparent acculturation and assimilation of the community with a certain loss in the core identity of the Ao-Nagas. The traditional rudimentary values of the past are threatened with extinction. Values such as communal identity which is seminal to that of the Ao-Naga society are slowly overtaken by that of the individual. All this pose a great danger of the Self being dissociated. In a lot of such primitive societies being endangered by modernity, religion plays a critical role. This is no different for the Ao-Nagas because as Panger Imchen (Imchen, 1993) puts it, "for an Ao, the total, or whole being of a person comes under the purview of religion". Religion stands at the crux of the worldview of the Ao, in other words one could say an Ao experiences the Self through his religion. The shift from animism to Christianity has no doubt brought upon a cultural shift. Von Franz (Von Franz, 2017) says that "the primitive tribe is cut off from its ancestral continuity by some kind of external spiritual influence, for these tribes they generally decay and lose within the shortest time all their will and power to live."

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However, there hasn't been a complete erasure of the past perhaps as a result of the importance relied on the historical continuity that has been passed on and carried over as the souls of the ancestors and what can be said as the "archetypal foundations of the psyche" (Von Franz, 2017) for an Ao-Naga. This connection and preservation is for the Aos the only way in which they can keep connected with their past and the only way he can gain access to the reservoir of absolute knowledge of the collective unconscious" (Von Franz, 2017) without which one's lived reality will be limited and one loses the ability to be connected to the unconscious experience which has the faculty and the gift of foreknowing the state of things to come.

The myth of Longterok retold through generations as such has been a bridge that has been connecting the Ao-Naga to the Self, giving access to the wealth of knowledge that lies within the inherited unconscious and guiding him through all the external changes and complexes. This ritualistic upholding of sacred oral lore has been the strong bond that ties the Ao man to his continued past which has kept his Self from disassociating (Von Franz, 2017). In another example of ritualistic practices that is still practiced, in keeping the sanctity of stone deities, every year at Mangmetong village, the villagers offer special prayers in the name of Jesus to the two stones *Longzaktepjak* (sharpening stone) and the *Alongtepangtsiung* (stone with a mouth) in order to avoid harm and danger befalling on them during harvest (Imchen, 1993). Through all this, the Ao-Nagas repeatedly venerate the elemental nature of their creation, whilst solidifying their inner experience, navigating their way through the mandala and connecting to what is their Self. The journey of the Ao-Naga is one wherein he has become the "living stone" (1 Peter 2:4-5).

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## Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

## Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

**How to cite this article:** Changkiri, T. (2023). Longterok: An AO-Naga's Testament of The Self. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(1), 1865-1869. DIP:18.01.188.20231101, DOI:10.25215/1101.188