

Original Article

## DIGITAL MAPPING OF LEGENDS: PRESERVING NARRATIVES, CONNECTING CULTURES

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### ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to investigate the creative fusion of indigenous storytelling and digital mapping technologies, with an emphasis on legends from Viswema Village and T.Khel Kohima Village, Nagaland. By creating interactive digital maps, an attempt will be made to put mythological narratives onto their geographic landscapes, transforming these legends and the places they have roamed into storyscapes. This approach will not only preserve the cultural heritage of marginalised communities but will also bridge cultural divides by inviting global audiences to explore and engage with diverse mythologies as well.

**Keywords:** Legends, Narratives, Digital Mapping

### INTRODUCTION

This study is an attempt to investigate the creative fusion of indigenous storytelling and digital mapping technologies, with an emphasis on legends from Viswema Village and T.Khel Kohima Village, Nagaland. By creating interactive digital maps, an attempt will be made to put mythological narratives onto their geographic landscapes, transforming these legends and the places they have roamed into storyscapes. This approach will not only preserve the cultural heritage of marginalised communities but will also bridge cultural divides by inviting global audiences to explore and engage with diverse mythologies as well.

Storytelling, a practice amongst the Nagas is a very common practice since the bygone days. The young listens, learn and pass down the knowledge they have learned to the upcoming youths. Likewise, the Angami Nagas also practice the same. With the absence of written words in the past, stories, myths and legends are passed down orally from one generation to the other through folksongs and folktales. The system of passing down knowledge is done orally by elders to the younger generation through gatherings in the Morung or near the kitchen fire places where families and friends gather for feasting or just informal gatherings. But with rapid modernity and different influences from the outside world and the busy life of the people, the popularity of Morungs and frequent gatherings has come to an end.

There are different writers who have raised concern over the decline of the oral tradition with modern influences and perhaps mapping stories and legends digitally could preserve some out of many in certain way can become a platform for the younger generation to learn about their roots and also, reach the global audience.

Many rich sources of the past history are slowly and steadily fading away with time and age as the older generation with authority on the oral history of its culture, tribe and the traditions are passing away. The need for documentations of the rich tradition through the oral narration can be one of the main sources from where we can record and preserve the history Enie (2015–2016).

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In the absence of any written document or Literature, the origin and history of the Nagas are based on legends and oral narratives, often shrouded in mystery and myth bordering an obscurity. [Yhokha \(2022\)](#).

According to J.H. Hutton, Mr. S.E. Peal in his “Fading Histories,” lamented the delay in the study of the Naga tribes, and the consequent loss of much material out of which their past histories might have been recovered.” “He urges the “unearthing of some local history from these people ere it has faded forever, and the careful study of the Naga tribes before they are “reformed and hopelessly sophisticated”. [Hutton \(1921\)](#).

Another marked characteristic evident in Naga literature is heavy reliance on the oral tradition. The Nagas did not have any written script in the past and hence the oral tradition occupied the most important place as the primary and only source for the Nagas to preserve and transmit their values and culture from generation to generation. [Kezo \(2017\)](#).

Having understood the concern of some writers, the present study will highlight two legends. One from Kohima village and the other from Viswema village respectively. Both these legends have similarity of wealth, dreams that revealed them of their future and they are individuals who lived amongst their people and whose stories the younger generation still narrates but whose legends might cease to exist if not told and preserved.

### THE LEGEND OF PUTSOLIE OF KOHIMA VILLAGE

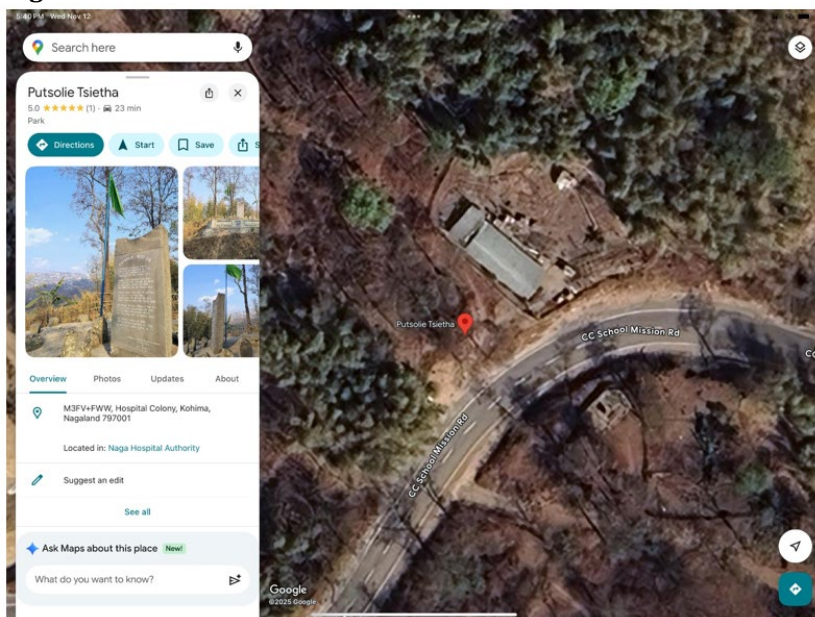
Once upon a time there lived a man named Putsolie in Kohima village. He is known for his possessions not in terms of money but in terms of owning thousands of cows. It was believed that from Kohima village to Kohima local ground (1 km distance) his cows would populate the streets whenever his cows are taken for grazing to the jungle. He also possessed so many lands in different areas such as; Pfhiesieki (Daklane), Serünu (war cemerety) to the present directorate of post office, Terhuonyieke (midland), Dzüdouzou, Menyibozougei, Kharüzou, Chaügei (Minister’s hill).

It was told that when Putsolie was a child, in his dream someone said, “Sielie sielie, olatounuo, we, we,” “Sie lie thepfumia, thehe keselie morosuote, n phriemia tsu lertie idi terhuomia puo ki pushie.” In his dream he was told to get up and make preparations for a feast. As he was growing, the dream he had was never forgotten though he does not know how he will be preparing for a feast. But when he became an adult and started owning so many cows and possessing so many lands, he realised that the dream he had is coming to reality.

He was rich beyond imagination that he could conduct the feast of merit many times. The feast of merit is done only by rich people in the past to appease the spirits and the reason why only a rich man could host the feast of merit is because they have to feed one whole village, young or old. He could perform so many other rituals to appease the spirits and he could host so many other villages in feast which was beyond the thinking of a layman and only a legend like him could host feast of merit and maintain the same wealth for so many years.

The given google map image is one location where ‘Putsolie’s Tsietha’ where stones are laid in commemoration of the feast of merit he hosted, marked the at right side of the image.

**Figure 1**



<https://maps.app.goo.gl/bpCwzNqTqdLfrWHM8>

## THE LEGEND OF KETSA DOWE OF VISWEMA VILLAGE.

One day as Dowe was returning from his field, two stones started following him, one appears to be black in colour and bigger in size and the other one, a little smaller than the black one. He started wondering about the stones following him and from time to time he kept on looking at the two stones. As he kept on walking with the two stones following him, to his utter surprise, the two stones started mooing like cows. So, he stopped and picked up the stones by his hand and wondered whether they are good or bad stones, because in the past it was believed that there are two types of stones. One brings good luck and the other brings bad luck.

After wondering about the two stones for some time, he picked them by the hands and decided not to take the two stones to the village so he walked towards 'Kharü', the village gate and behind the village he prepared a safe place for the two stones. He spread sapra (leaves) for the stones to be laid and after that he covered the stones with sawa (hay) and went back home. That night he wanted to see what his dream will say about the stones. He was informed in his dream that those two stones are not bad stones but good stones that will bring him luck. The stones turned out to be 'kenyi vü, kenyi tsü' a stone of wealth and richness. He got up that morning after that dream and he went to temi, temi also told him that it is a stone of richness especially for the possession of Cows. He then went back to the village gate where he safely kept the stones and took them home. After some time, he was amazed to see that the two stones he kept started multiplying and to his surprise his cows also started multiplying day by day and in no time his front porch was packed with cows. When the herdsmen come and takes the cows to the forest to graze, they would still hear the mooing of cows towards the direction of Dowe's house and they use to feel that they must have left some cows from their resting shed, but if they go to collect the rest of the cows, they could not find any cows around and they would only hear the mooing. The sounds which they hear was the sounds made by the two stones and also those other stones which were born out of the two stones. Dowe became rich in terms of having a large herd.

In the olden days village folks usually go to the terrace fields to check on the water supply on each of their field. Dowe was a brave man so he would go the field at night to check on the water supply in the terrace fields. On one such night after checking the water supply in the field, as he was climbing up towards the village again, he turned back and to his surprise, one of the forests he could see fire blazing from that forest, he also saw a lot of people there. He shouted 'o somine tsü otototemo tavodade', whoever is making fire in that forest, come back it is already night time. The moment he completed that, the spirits carried fire on their heads and started running towards Dowe. He was gripped by fear of the fire running towards him and ran as fast as he could and finally reached his home and as he entered his house, 'chiekwü' a nest like thing kept for the chickens to sleep, fell down along with a dead chicken and hit his toe. Which could be a sign that the life he could have lost has been transferred to the chicken that died as soon as he entered the house. The good spirits were always with him and it was believed that he was protected by them.

In another occasion, it was told that there was a time when famine hit Viswema village to its worst. During this time, all the brave spirited men stand and guard the village. It was during this time one man moves towards the edge, he saw so many evil spirits so he asked/told "Dowe please go and chase the evil spirits towards that edge". Dowe obeyed and walked towards the place where there were hundreds of evil spirits standing. With his spear and machete in hand, he shouted at them to go away and all the evil spirits obeyed him and ran away to their own designated place.

Such a man was Dowe, who lived and breath at Viswema Village and his legend is still told, remembered and marvelled by his great grand-children till today.

Below is the image of the village gate where Ketsa Dowe laid his stones beneath some leaves before he confirmed with the elders whether the stones that followed him were good or evil.

**Figure 2**





**Figure 3**

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/UDGCbkhzqJddUe2LA>

The given examples of maps are the locations of where the legend Putsolie of Kohima village and the Legend Dowe of Viswema village have roamed and made history.

Having mentioned about their stories and with simple example of google mapping, one can build storyscapes relying on the maps and indigenous storytelling can be transformed into a modern way of retelling stories and legends using modern equipment's. Visiting these places physically would become another level of experience and for people who cannot go to these places can also experience and learn about them if future researchers can bring virtual reality system in their research along with different ways to engage the listener. In this way it will not only attract young generation to learn about the legends of the past, but will also preserve the cultural heritage of marginalised communities and will also bridge cultural divides by inviting global audiences to explore and engage with diverse mythologies as well.

The story telling phase may cease to exist with the passing of the older generation slowly passing away, but if one meticulously interacts with the people with vast memory of the stories of the past along with locations told and marked, the fading legends, stories can be preserved for posterity.

Future scope of the study:

Researchers and developers may develop and build up these collected research and similar studies for an interactive learning experience and real time access through technology – augmented reality, virtual reality and AI.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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### Map

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/bpCwzNqTqdLfrWHM8>

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/UDGCbkhzqJddUe2LA>

**App:**

GPS Camera

**Interview:**

Rhütso, Pungozüle. Personal Interview. 4 July 2023.

Mechulho, Metenole. Personal Interview. 4 July 2023.

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