Understanding Death and Its Ritual Expressions: An Ethnographic Study of the Rengma Nagas, India

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ABSTRACT

The Rengma Nagas are tribals that inhabit the Tseminyu District of Nagaland, India. They trace their migration to China, travelling through Tibet, Indonesia and Myanmar. They have their own customs, culture, tradition, language, laws, practices, rites and rituals. One of the prominent practices is the set of rites and rituals surrounding death. The mortal nature of human beings enables us to understand death. The when, how and why of the various rites and rituals concerning death are necessary. These necessities strongly assert the connection between the living and the dead. Life does not end with the cessation of physical life. It continues in another world, commonly known as 'the world of the dead.' The Rengma Nagas treat dead persons with respect and dignity. Once the person is declared dead, numerous rites and rituals accompany. The cleaning of the body, the preparation of the tomb, the traditional items beside the deceased body, the animals killed in their honour, the genna and observance portray death even more mysteriously and sacredly. The belief in life after death and the interconnectedness of the world of the living and the dead are encrypted in the rites and rituals. The paper attempts to describe and analyse the rites and rituals concerning death among the Rengmas, drawing on interviews and relevant data.

Keywords: Rites, Rituals, Death, Culture, Tradition, Rengmas

Word count: 215

INTRODUCTION

One of the realities of human life is death. Different tribes and cultures have unique concepts and practices concerning death. Death and death rituals have been the subject of study across cultures and beliefs, although the manifestation differs from culture to culture (Vorha, 2020). Death rituals in most cultures are deeply rooted in the community's understanding of the world, which is highly connected with the divine, the ancestors, and the natural forces (Singh, 2022). Rites and rituals surrounding death are often in line with religious beliefs. The concepts of life and death hold a significant place across the globe. These beliefs are deeply embedded in their cultural practices, rituals, folklores, folksongs and oral traditions (Deb. D, 2013). Death rituals encompass a wide range of ceremonial customs and practices. The diverse interpretations and practices surrounding death provide deeper insights into life, time and the unknown world (Singh T. I., 2022).

Death is called *kesi* in Rengma. It literally means the cessation of life. The Rengmas believed that death is a transition from earthly existence to the spiritual realm. Furthermore, rites and rituals of death strongly reaffirm this belief. The performance of rites and rituals is necessary both for the dead and for the well-being of the living. Death is not only a cessation of physical life, but a transition to another domain. Thus, at death, separation and transition are expressed through specific categories of ritual practices. The Rengmas, like most traditional societies, follow a set of practices, customs and beliefs associated with death and burial. Burial rites and customs are concerned not only with the mourning, preparation and disposal of the body, but also with the well-being of the survivors and with the persistence of the spirit or memory of the deceased (John, 2015).

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According to Ramya (2025), when a person dies, the soul separates from the body and enters the realm of the spirit. Similarly, the Rengmas believed in the separation of body and spirit at death. Death is viewed as a transition into another world unknown (Reichel, 2009). The dead travel to and rest at *kense sun* (resting place), then enter the world of the dead. There is a bridge between the secular and the sacred, between the visible world and the invisible world (Thomas, 2022). Today, the majority of the Rengmas are Christians, but they have not done away completely with the traditional rites and rituals of death.

Theoretical Framework

Throughout history, rites and rituals concerning death have occupied one of the most important places in the cultural and traditional life of the people. There are variations among tribes and civilisations. The study is grounded in the understanding that death is not only a biological event. It is also a social, cultural, and spiritual phenomenon. Arnold Van Gennep, an ethnographer and folklorist, conceptualised death rituals as a rite of passage. There are three stages of death for the deceased. There are separation, transition and incorporation. Every person passes through these stages. Symbolic interactionism, propounded by George Herbert Mead, offers insights into the meanings of life, death, and the afterlife. Symbolic interactionism is an approach that builds on the social formation of symbols, common or shared meanings, and their use in communication, both within and outside the self in its interactions (Barbalet, 2009). The use of objects, the manner in which the dead body is revered and disposed of, symbolise the deep cultural meanings. Key concepts in symbolic interactionism include symbols, meanings, self and society (Udoudom, 2025). It is carried forward from generation to generation to keep people alive in the culture.

Study Methodology

The study is qualitative. The ethnohistorical method is used to understand the rites and rituals concerning death among the Rengmas. The tools for data collection include unstructured interview schedules to effectively record oral narration. Fifteen village elders comprising men and women above the age of 65 years were purposely selected for the research study because of their lived experiences and traditional knowledge of practising rites and rituals at death. A qualitative approach through in-depth interviews gave a convergent understanding of the ritual practices. This supported the data, making it more reliable. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, and non-participant observation was employed to observe the rites and rituals of death. The responses were recorded in the local language and translated into English. Analysis of the data was done through coding, and narrative analysis was used to highlight and describe insightful information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. The immediate preparations and rituals after death

The family members take all necessary care to make the overall preparation for the dead. Mrs N. Khing said, “Once a person is declared dead, the close members of the family come and clean the body. New clothes are put on the deceased person and placed on the bed.” The personal belongings are wrapped and kept in the house. Friends and relatives are informed about the death of the person. Meanwhile, a burial place is marked in consultation with the family members. When there is an observance of *genna*, it is forbidden to enter the house of the deceased. Mrs N. Khing further stated, “Only family members and close relatives are allowed to perform the required work and burial.” Thus, adequate measures are taken to allow the transition from death to life (Vorha, 2020). Death is structured locally. The function of culture is to guide the realisation of order in the life of society (Singal, 2018). Thus, all preparations and rituals are conducted with consideration for the Rengmas' culture and traditions. The death ceremony is carried out according to the guidelines in the culture.

The theoretical framework and the rites and rituals of death among the Rengmas are presented in parallel for a deeper understanding of death. Separation, transition and incorporation are interconnected stages through which the deceased moves from the world of the living to the world of the dead. These stages correspond to Arnold van Gennep’s theory of rites of passage. For the Rengmas, separation refers to the rituals and practices that detach the deceased from the community of the living. Transition is the intermediate stage in which the soul (*teronyu)*, is believed to remain in a liminal state before proceeding to the land of the dead. Incorporation marks the soul’s

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final acceptance into the world of the dead where the ancestors reside. The soul ultimately reaches the land of the dead and ceases its relationship with the living.

Table No. 1: The immediate preparations and rituals after death and the theoretical interpretations

Separation	**Transition**	**Incorporation**
Death is formally declared	Cleaning/washing the body	Informing friends and relatives about the death
Close family members gather around the deceased	Dressing the deceased in new clothes	Marking the burial place in consultation with family members
Personal belongings of the deceased are wrapped and kept in the house	Placing the deceased on the bed	Performing the required burial rites
Restriction of entry into the house during *genna*	Preparing the deceased for burial	Burial carried out according to Rengma cultural guidelines
Only family members and close relatives are permitted to undertake the necessary preparations	Observing the prescribed *genna* during the preparation period	The deceased is given a culturally prescribed death ceremony

Digging of the tomb and burial

The deceased body is usually measured with *ntsenve*, a type of stick available in the forest. The size and length of the tomb depend on the body. Mr S. Khing said, "The tomb is to be first dug by a man who is unmarried and has less possession of land and property." By performing such work, he receives land, fields, and property from the deceased family members. He earns his livelihood by doing such work. After he digs the tomb, the others can follow. This was asserted by Mr J. Kent, Mr N. Kent and Mr Y. Tep. The tomb is to be dug big and straight in the initial part, and then the bottom part is to be smaller as per the size of the body. A small mark called *teronyu tson* is made on the side before the bottom part. It is the route which the soul would travel to the next world.

The deceased body is placed and rolled on a bamboo mat called *fü* (a bamboo mat used for drying paddy among the Rengmas). After placing the body on the bottom part of the tomb. Cut stones are placed at the end of the bigger portion of the tomb right on top of the body, without touching it. The stones are collected only from a particular site called *tsu kebo.* Mud is put on top of the stones till the ground level in the shape of a little mound.

After the burial, the members of the family come back and go to the pond and bathe themselves. This is done so that no such misfortune may occur in the family again or a bad spirit accompany them to their home. They abstain from food till the next day.

Table No. 2: Digging of the tomb and burial and the theoretical interpretations

Separation	**Transition**	**Incorporation**
Measuring the deceased body with *ntsenve*	Making the *teronyu tson* mark as the route for the soul to the next world	Family members return from the burial place
The tomb being dug initially by an unmarried man with less land and property	Placing the body at the bottom part of the tomb	Bathing to prevent misfortune from returning to the family

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Digging the tomb big and straight in the upper portion and smaller at the bottom	Placing and rolling the body on the bamboo mat (*fü*)	Bathing to prevent a bad spirit from accompanying them home
Preparing the tomb for the deceased	Collecting stones specifically from *tsu kebo*	Abstaining from food until the following day
Physically removing the deceased from the house	Covering the stones with mud up to ground level, forming a small mound	Resuming family life after completing the post-burial purification practices

The essential grave goods

When a man dies, the essential items that he used during his lifetime are kept on his side. They are also called grave goods. It denotes all items found in the grave, from the human remains to depository objects (Harke, 2014). Mr Y. Tep stated, "For men, a traditional shawl is placed on top of the body; *rhikho* for ordinary people and *zonyuphi* for *dzonyu günyu* (people who gave a feast) and *Khera* is also placed." Mrs L. Kent said, "The deceased is clothed in a new dress, signifying new life. However, just before the burial, another cloth is placed on top to cover the new clothes so that they do not attract other spirits on their journey." A machete (*je*) on the left side and a spear (*nyi*) on the right side. Mrs N. Khing said, "However, the handles of both are to face downward (*ponso wen)*." It means that from this day forth, there is no more life in them. Living people grow upward, whereas the dead go downward. A machete and a spear represent courage and security for the living and the dead. The friends of the deceased person stick their spears on top of the tomb, which is taken back as they leave the tomb after the rites and rituals. For women, their ornaments *a-kon tye,* is placed on top of the body. However, before burial, it is taken away. Some people bury it along with the dead. A traditional shawl, '*phiri'* is placed on top of the body. Weaving items are also placed in the tomb.

If the family does not have a shawl to put on, they may borrow from others in return for a plot of field. For both men and women, a few coins are placed beside the dead body so that they are not poor in the next world. Mrs L. Kent recollected the story of a deceased person who appeared in the dream of the family members, stating that others are all rich and wealthy, whereas he is poor, for no money was given to him at his death. For the Rengmas, a morsel of food and *zü*, rice beer, placed on the *rüti* leaves, is kept on the tomb. After the burial, the same is kept on the bed of the deceased person for ten days. Fire is to be kept burning on top of the tomb till the third day to keep away bad spirits. People across cultures practice the giving of essential goods. They are buried along with the deceased person. The social status of a person is reflected in the goods given to them (Mendaly, 2017).

Table No. 3: The essential grave goods and the theoretical interpretations

Separation	**Transition**	**Incorporation**
Essential personal belongings are placed beside the deceased as grave goods.	The deceased is clothed in a new dress, symbolising new life.	Food and *zü* (rice beer) are kept on the tomb as offerings.
For men, a traditional shawl (*rhikho* for ordinary men; *zonyuphi* for *dzonyu günyu*) and *khera* are placed over the body.	The handles of the machete (*je*) and spear (*nyi*) are turned downward (*ponso wen*), symbolising the end of earthly life.	A morsal of food and *zü* are kept on the bed of the deceased for ten days after burial.
For women, *a-kon tye* ornaments are placed on the body and may be removed before burial or buried with the deceased.	Another cloth is placed over the new clothes before burial to prevent other spirits from being attracted.	The deceased is symbolically provided with the necessities believed to be required in the next world.

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A few coins are placed beside both male and female deceased persons.	The deceased is physically moved from the house to the burial place.	The deceased is incorporated into the spiritual/ancestral realm through offerings and post-burial observances.
A morsel of food and *zü* are placed on *rüti* leaves and kept on the tomb.	The period immediately following burial marks a stage between earthly life and the next world.	The continuation of offerings and observances maintains a symbolic relationship between the living and the deceased.

Animals killed in the name of the deceased person

Once a person dies, rice is cooked, and a chicken is killed in his/her name. Mrs N. Khing said, "The deceased person's share is taken out with a spoon. It should not be taken out more than twice. No hand should touch the portion to keep it clean. If a hand touches them, the deceased spirit will not eat them, for it is unclean for the spirit." A dog is killed in the name of the deceased person. A dog is considered man's best companion both for the living and the dead. Thus, a dog as a companion would accompany him on his journeys to the next world. The dog barks away the enemies and all the animals that the man killed during his lifetime (Mills, 1937). The dog's meat is eaten by the family members and close relatives before the body is taken for burial. No food is to be consumed by the family members once the body is taken out for burial till the next day. A chick is buried inside a small hole made on top of the tomb on the head side. The chick wards away all evil spirits that come its way. It scratches the ground and searches for water for him. Animals like pigs or cows are killed, and food is given to the guests and other people who laboured. The funeral feast depends on the wealth of the deceased's family members. Pigs, cows and mithuns are the common animals killed for the feast (Kath, 2005).

Burial practices for different types of death

Burial of a person with unnatural death

Those who die in wars, accidents, falls from a tree or cliff or other misfortunes are buried outside the village gate. They are buried before sunset to avoid defilement of the land (Rengma, 2011). The deceased persons are buried on the same day without delay. Mr Y. Tep said, "If *porinyu* and *lyürinyu* (bachelors and spinsters who are advanced in age with no offspring) die, no one in the village would go to the field. If so, the field will not bear plentifully for *Porinyu,* and *lyürinyu* have no offspring of their own." The non-reproduction of these people reflects the bad production or harvest. Unnatural deaths like falling from a tree, being killed by a gunshot, being killed by a wild animal, death by fire, drowning in a river, death in childbirth, etc., are considered bad omens. A full-fledged burial is not given, and the opportunities for burial inside the village are also denied to them (Liba, 2020).

Burial of women who die during delivery

A woman who dies during delivery is treated as a bad omen. Thus, no relatives or friends give a helping hand to the deceased husband. The husband does all the work by himself, including the digging of the tomb and burial. The dead body is not to be taken out through the main door. Mr Y. Tep and Mrs N. Khing narrated that the husband cuts through the side wall and takes the body out for burial. Late Mr Tsekhamvü Semp of Tseminyu village did likewise when his wife died during the delivery. Mrs N. Khing said, "Such a dead body is buried outside the village gate to mean that such a bad omen should not come inside the village." However, some are buried near the house, for it is difficult for the husband to carry the deceased to a far place by himself. It is *genna* to walk on top of the grave of such a woman. If a woman dies after delivery, she is to be buried like any other person.

Burial of an infant

Infants are buried differently among the Rengmas. Mrs N. Khing stated, "When an infant who has not reached a year dies, it is buried in the corner of the house. The tomb is dug straight, and then, at the end, a space is created

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on the side to accommodate the body. The infant is wrapped in clothes and placed on the side. Pieces of sharpened bamboo are embedded between the body (kept on the side) and the tomb." Mr Y. Tep asserted that for infants, a few clothes and a shawl with cut fringes are placed on top of the body so that, as it journeys to the land of the dead, the cloth should not get stuck on the branches of trees. The infant is too young to carry a load of things to the next world. This is the reason fewer clothes and items are placed on the tomb along with the body. The lighter it is, the better their journey.

Mourning period for the dead (*kesi nyen*)

Émile Durkheim, a sociologist, stressed the role of mourning rituals as serving social ends even more than they served the private needs of the bereaved. Mourning is not the spontaneous expression of individual emotions. It is a duty imposed by the group of individuals (Davies, 2002). For Rengmas, after the burial, the members of the family mourn the dead by keeping a fast till dawn. The same is observed by those close relatives who share the same land with them. To eat after the burial would mean that they are not related by blood or land. Mr S. Khing said, "Those who go against it will no longer be considered as close kith and kin, brother or sister." The members of the deceased family and the close members can eat the next day. However, chilli is not part of the diet till the tenth day is over. The members of the deceased person are not to go to the field till the third day. If they happen to go to the jungle, they are not to drink water as the others do. Mr Y. Tep said that they are to drink on a *tsemho* leaf (the tree bears small sour fruits). "It is *genna* to mourn the dead for seven days", stated Mrs A. Tep It should be complete ten days. The third and the tenth days are the most important days of observance. In some Indian cultures, deceased family members are not expected to participate in spiritual activities, enjoy refreshments, dress modestly, or take part in sports or cultural events as signs of mourning for the dead (Bhat, 2022).

The journey of the soul to the land of death

Death is seen as a transition, a transformative beginning into another form of life (Reichel, 2009). Mr H. Semp and Mr P. Semp said, "The soul of the deceased person does not go straight to the land of the dead. The soul stays at home at *kepere* (rafter of the house) till the year." After this, the soul travels and stays at a resting place called '*kense sun.*' The soul of the dead is addressed as '*teronyu.'*During the Ngada festival (third day of Ngada), the souls leave *kense sun* and go to the land of the dead. This was affirmed by all the informants. As they travel to the land of the dead, a man in white would stand at the gate and beat them with a branch of a shrub, *nyeju*. After which, the dead remember the living no more. In olden days, people would gather in front of the Morung or at a particular place to watch the journey of the souls. They carry a flame of light and walk towards the land of the dead. Such sights were visible even till the 1990s (*the author is a witness to this sight*). The Rengmas believed that good people go up to the sky and make fire on the star to let the living people know.

Table No. 4: The journey of the soul to the land of death and the theoretical interpretations

Separation	**Transition**	**Incorporation**
Physical separation of the deceased from the community	The deceased soul remains at home at *kepere* (rafter of the house) for one year	The soul departs from the house and enters the world of death
The deceased person becomes *teronyu* (soul of the dead)	After one year, the soul moves to the resting place called *kense sun*	The soul departs from *kense sun* and journeys to the land of the dead
The deceased is separated from the world of the living	The soul awaits its final departure to the land of the dead	A man dressed in white stands at the gate and beats the departing souls with a branch of *nyeju*
The deceased soul leaves the house	The deceased carry a flame of light as they journey to the next world	After passing through the gate, the dead no longer remember the living

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The deceased soul remembers that he is dead	The soul departs to the land of the dead	Good people are believed to ascend to the sky and make fire on the stars as a sign to the living

Remembering the dead

The dead long for the living. Thus, the dead are remembered on various occasions. Mrs N. Khing, Mr Y. Tep and Mr K. Kent recounted and said, "On the third day *zü kephe dzon* during the Ngada festival, in the morning hours, the deceased family members would go and cut bamboo, make a basket *teronyu shon* and place it on top of the tomb. The daughter-in-law would place cooked meat and *zü* on the *teronyu shon* for the in-laws who are dead." The products of the fields are also given in thanksgiving for the dead. This is done because the fields they cultivate belong to them. Contributions can be from family members or close relatives, and friends. This practice enables the younger generation to remember their great-grandparents with honour. The dead members of the family are not forgotten. There is a close affinity between the living and the dead.

Beliefs concerning life after death

There is a strong belief in life after death. The dead live in a different world. They have their homes and fields for cultivation. They also share fields with the living. Mrs N. Khing said, "When a person dies, the deceased spirit turns into a grasshopper. The grasshopper would stay inside the house for some days and disappear." Mr Y. Tep narrated a story to prove that life exists after death.

Mr Shwenlo Kent of Tseminyu village died and went to the land of death. He saw his deceased father and mother. His father was making a bamboo strap, and his mother was pounding paddy. His father said that they were not receiving any guest for they were keeping a *genna*. He then returned and came back to life. He lived for many years.

A story is being told about two young boys whose parents died. Since they were still too young to cultivate and weed the fields, the spirit of the parents would come and clean the fields for them. Realising the handiwork of other persons, the two young boys hid themselves to see the one who did such work. To their surprise, they saw the spirit of the parents working in the field. The two boys caught hold of the fringes of the cloth. One succeeded in flying along with the parents, the other failed. On reaching the world of death, the mother warned her son not to come out for fear of the spirit of death. The mother covered him with seven steel plates. The death spirit smelt human flesh and said, "*mishü rünyu bo*." (It is translated as "I can smell a new body") The death spirit pecked out all seven plates and struck the boy's head, removed his brain and killed him.

Life does not end with physical death. It continues after death in another world. Mrs N. Khing recounts the saying among the Rengmas, "husband and wife quarrel even in the next world."

Contemporary Challenges

Over time, many traditional practices are challenged. There is a tendency to look down upon traditional values and practices (Ghosh, 2024). To be rooted in culture and follow tradition seemed old-fashioned. People who follow traditional beliefs are looked down on as uncivilised. Additionally, globalisation, technological advancements, urbanisation, environmental changes, and political and economic pressures exerted pressure on cultural elements and practices. In the search for growth and development, cultural practices and traditions are threatened. Displaced communities become more vulnerable to the loss of culture, tradition and weakening of social cohesion (Kumar, 2025).

Furthermore, colonialism tried its best to erase indigenous culture and tradition. Mr J. Kent and Mr Y. Tep recounted how the youth were discouraged from sleeping in the Morung. The Morung was the traditional educational institute of the village. There was a tug-of-war between the colonists and the indigenous people. For indigenous and tribal people, cultural survival is, in fact, a resistance to colonialism (Martin, 2022). Some stood their ground; others lost the battle. The conquest of the British brought about cultural trauma. The clash of the indigenous and foreign cultures was a tragedy of culture and tradition (Xu, 2020). In the pretext of conquering

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land, there is an imposition of Westernisation, Western lifestyle and Western mindset. Mr Y. Tep and Mr N. Kent narrated how the local reading and learning of the alphabet diminished with the arrival of Western education. This gradually killed the spirit of culture among the indigenous and tribals. Unlike European countries, East Asian countries are more communitarian. Interpersonal relationships are a hallmark of the indigenous and tribal people. However, colonialism instilled a sense of individualism among the people. The loss of communitarian life contributed to the loss of culture (Wang, 2017). Today, there is a tendency for cultural revival without strong roots.

In Nagaland, the arrival of American Baptists pushed cultural and traditional practices beyond the village gates. The early missionaries could not differentiate Christianity from cultural values. All that was culture and tradition was considered heathen. A strong wave against culture destroyed the Naga culture (Kahmei, 2021). A separation took place between the followers of the indigenous religion and Christianity. Some villages were formed based on this category. The latter separation was between the Catholics and Protestants. Mr Y. Tep, Mrs L. Kent and Mrs A. Tep recounted the attitude of the protestants against cultural and traditional practices. They said, "The protestants discouraged cultural festivals and the use of traditional attire. Even the grave goods were not placed inside the tomb, for such practices were considered non-Christian." The author remembered how the Protestant parents restricted their children from participating in the Ngada festival. With a larger portion of Nagas embracing Christianity, cultural and traditional practices began to fade.

As per the 2011 census, Christianity is the predominant religion in Nagaland, with 87.93% of the people professing the faith. Religion was the factor of uniting the individuals and social groups towards a shared meaning (Shohe, 2022). Among the Rengmas, Mr Lokhin was the first to be baptised on 28th April 1907 (Lorin, 2014). Today, the Rengmas practice Christianity. However, the actual cultural and traditional practices are not known to the present generation. However, of late, realising the importance of culture, Christians began to inculcate some of the prominent cultural practices without demeaning Christian values and practices.

The cultural norms and settings enable people to act, think, and behave accordingly. Culture expresses itself in different forms and matters like birth, death, marriage, attire, language/dialect, festivals, dances, symbols, jewellery, food habits, values, beliefs, norms, folklores, art, and crafts, etc. Life is counted not by years, but by the values, ethics, and beliefs of a culture (Khing, 2025).

CONCLUSION

The study of the rites and rituals concerning death among the Rengmas revealed a rich cultural system that reflects beliefs, values, and social relationships. The practices associated with death, including mourning, burial, purification, remembrance, and other customary observances, demonstrated the community's respect for the deceased and for the well-being of the living. These rituals also strengthen kinship, communal solidarity, and cultural identity by bringing families and community members together during times of loss. The rites and rituals associated with separation, transition and incorporation embody the Rengmas' traditional concept of death. The Rengmas believed that with death, the deceased journey from the world of the living to the world of death. Although modernisation, Christianity, education, and changing social practices have influenced traditional customs, many elements continue to hold cultural significance. The Rengmas' ritual expressions concerning death give a foretaste of the afterlife.

Appendix

Glossary

Rengma Indigenous Language

A-kon tye :Traditional necklace for women

Dzonyu günyu :Men who earn the name by giving a feast for the village

Fü :Bamboo mat used for drying paddy

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Genna :Taboo

Je :Machete

Kense sun :Resting place for the departed souls on their way to the land of death

Kepere :Rafter of the house

Kesi nyen :Mourning the dead

Khera :A traditional sash worn by males

Lyürinyu :Unmarried women

Ngada :The festival of the Rengmas, which lasts for 8 days

Nyeju :A type of shrub that is believed to be used for touching the dead as they enter the world of death.

Ntsenve :A type of shrub with long branches

Nyi :Spear

Phiri :A white traditional shawl worn by women

Ponso wen :Facing downward

Porinyu :Unmarried men

Rhikho :A traditional white shawl used by men

Rüti :A type of Hedychium plant found in the forest

Teronyu shon :A bamboo basket used to keep food and drinks for the dead

Teronyu tson :A path for the departed soul. A small mark in the form of a path was made inside the tomb for the departed soul to travel to the other world

Tsemho :Rhus cheninses family plant

Tsu kebo :A site where stones are collected to be used in the tomb

Zonyuphi :Men's traditional shawl. A combination of black, white and red colours

Zü kephe dzon :The third day during Ngada festival, when the local rice beer, zü is tasted and distributed

Zü :Local rice beer

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