

ICSS/13/OP/342

**Orchestrated celebration: performing a reconstructed identity in the
Hornbill Festival of Nagaland (India)**

Tatongkala¹

Nagaland is a hill state in the north-eastern end of India and the homeland of several traditionally distinctive communities who have been collectively identified as the Nagas – a colonial exonym labelled for them since the British Rule. The colonial administration and the Christian missionaries played crucial roles in shaping the present political and cultural fate of the people of this region. While the British administration, particularly its classification of the people of this region and their cartographic segmentation were responsible for complex problems in later times pertaining to Naga identity, the process of Christianization with the aegis of the missionaries created a visible difference between the mythicized pre-Christian past and the present-day life overtly dominated by the Christian religiosity. Since the year 2000, a spectacular cultural festival under the name of Hornbill festival began to be organized by the State Government of Nagaland on the month of December every year, with an aim to foster cultural unity among the various constituent groups at home and to showcase their rich cultural resources to the rest of the world.

This paper aims to dwell on the political, cultural as well as economic aspects of this increasingly popular cultural extravaganza in Nagaland. It is argued here that Hornbill festival can be seen as the equilibrium of the diverse interests of its various stakeholders – the local ethnic groups, the Government and the sponsoring private agencies. While on the economic front it makes the biggest tourism event in Nagaland, on the political front it provides the much-needed space to demonstrate the unified Naga identity.

Key words: *Hornbill festival, Cultural commodification, Identity reconstruction, India*