ARTICULATING NAGA NATIONALISM

by

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ABSTRACT

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Nationalist movements by nations without states or ethnonationalism continue to be part of the political landscape in many parts of the world. Internal colonialism, state imperialism, and economic exploitation are cited as some possible causes for ethnonationalism. Examples of economic growth and granting of greater autonomy have not resolved these conflicts. So what is it that engenders, motivates and sustains these ethnonationalist movements? By analyzing a case of ethnonationalism, Naga nationalism, this thesis makes a two-tiered argument: first, the ultimate aim of ethnonational movements is for a greater political power for self-determination either for autonomy within states or sovereignty. Secondly, what gives credibility and motivation to these movements are the ethnic cores with deep historical roots that predate modern constructionist forces.

Throughout more than six decades of the Indo-Naga conflict, the Nagas have insisted that they are not Indians and that Naga territory was never a part of India. Based upon such 'colonial free' history and ideology, Nagas see themselves as defending their independence, and not asking for independence from India. It isn't as if the Nagas woke

up one day and decided to band together and fight for Naga independence. There has been a progression from the initial defense of independent village-states, to an articulation for a pan-Naga cause through the formation of the Naga Club in 1918 leading to the eventual declaration of Naga independence on August 14, 1947, a day before Indian independence, to its articulation as a peoples' movement today. Modern exogenous factors such as British colonialism, Indian state building measures including armed repression and discriminatory extra-judicial laws, modernization, economic differences, and global indigenism have influenced the development of Naga nationalism. But Naga nationalism is ultimately centered on and motivated by a functioning 'navel' – an ethnic core consisting of elements such as kinship, history, origin, myths, race, polity, language, territory, symbols, and religion which provide the foundations and cultural resources for their identity, a strong psychological bond and consciousness of their oneness as a people that find expression in nationalism as a credible struggle to define and protect the 'Naga way of life.'

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ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

ADG: Army Development Group
AFSPA: Armed Forces Special Powers Act
AIPP: Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact
ANSAM: All Naga Students' Association Manipur
CCP: Chinese Communist Party
CNBC: Council of Naga Baptist Churches
DC: Deputy Commissioner
FGN: Federal Government of Nagaland
GPRN: Government of the Peoples' Republic of Nagaland
GOI: Government of India
IAITTF: International Alliance for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests
ICITP: Indian Council of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples
IIL: Indian Independence League
INA: Indian National Army
Kuknalim: Victory to Nagaland
KWIA: Flemish Support Group for Indigenous People
Lim: Land
MCA: Military Civic Action
Morung: Bachelors' dormitory
MRG: Minority Rights Group
Naga Hoho: An Apex organization representing Naga communities
Nagalim: Geographical territory covering all Naga inhabited areas, also sometimes known as Greater Nagaland
NBCC: Nagaland Baptist Church Council
NHDTC: Naga Hills District Tribal Council
NMA: Naga Mothers' Association
NNC: Naga National Council
NNC (Adino): Naga National Council (Adino's group), associated with the signing of the Shillong Accord
NNC (Non-Accordist): Naga National Council (faction that currently objects to the Shillong Accord
NPCC (I): Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee (Indira)
NPMHR: Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights
NSCN: National Socialist Council of Nagaland
NSCN-IM: National Socialist Council of Nagaland – Isak, Muivah and Khodao
NSCN-K: National Socialist Council of Nagaland – Khaplang
NSF: Naga Students' Federation
NWUM: Naga Women's Union, Manipur
PAP: Protected Area Permit
RAP: Restricted Area Permit
SEAGST: South East Asia Graduate School of Theology, Singapore
UN: United Nations
UNC: United Naga Council

Undergrounds: Armed Naga nationalist
UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDRIP: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNESCO: United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNPFII: United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
UNPO: Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organizations
WGIP: Working Group on Indigenous Populations
Yezabo: Constitution

INTRODUCTION

"And so, to all other peoples and governments … know that America is a friend of each nation, and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity. And that we are ready to lead once more," said President Barak Obama at his Inaugural Address on Tuesday, January 20, 2009. To the hostile leaders of the world, Obama continued, "we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist." In those words, Obama articulated American nationalism setting the tone for his presidency. As Nicholas Kristof pointed out in a *New York Times* op-ed piece, "from the start, Obama redefines the nation's place in the world" focusing on "soft power alongside hard power" (New York Times, January 21, 2009). But as the same day's *New York Times* editorial commented, "as President Obama was being inaugurated on Tuesday, Israel was withdrawing its troops after a 23-day assault intended to weaken Hamas and halt its rocket fire" (January 21, 2009:A30). The International section of the same day's issue of the *New York Times* also carried two news reports: one, that China "faces threats from independence movements related to Taiwan, Tibet and the western desert region of Xinjiang, and that American arm sales to Taiwan jeopardize stability in Asia" (Wong January 21, 2009:A19). The second report contained the story of thousands in Chechnya protesting the killing of a human rights lawyer who represented the family of Elza Kungayeva, an 18-year old, whose "killing in 2000 has come to symbolize for many Chechens the atrocities committed by federal forces during two wars in Chechnya" (Schwirtz, January 21, 2009:A19). Each of the above cases shows that nationalism is an important concern for the strongest state as well as for ethnic groups that are not states; there is no postnationalism state. These cases also present different scenarios of

nationalism and illustrate that nationalism is relational and situational. The United Nations, for instance, lists 16 current conflicts where the Peace Keeping forces are involved. These cases also point out the dialectic nature of nationalism: On the one hand, nationalism has a universalizing and homogenizing character that constitutes a unified group into a body of sovereign states that look after the welfare of the citizens. On the other hand, nationalism also tends to be particularizing in claiming the individuality and sovereignty of each nation state.

While the different manifestations of nationalism at different times in history and in different locales make it difficult for a mono-causal approach or a grand theory to explain nationalism exhaustively, one can discern two broad approaches to explain nationalism: internal and external factors that engender and motivate nationalism. The internal and external factors are also called by different names: 'cultural and situational factors' for Paul Brass and Charles Keyes (1981), or 'subjective' and 'objective' factors for Anthnony Smith (1986:3), 'primordialist' and 'circumstantialists' for Daniele Conversi (1995) and Judith Nagata (1981). The internal cultural factors are characterized by the ethnic elements and ideas about them such as blood, race, religion, myth, symbols, origin, and territory, while factors such as modernization, oppression by a dominant majority or state, uneven economic development, denial or limitations of political rights, and universal human rights, characterize the external elements. Among those who privilege the ethnic factors, are those who define nations in terms of common origin, ethnicity and cultural ties. So, for instance, in 19th century Europe, nationalists often saw the state as an isomorphic political entity belonging to an ethnic group whose traditions were

promulgated. Thus, nations are modern but are also the result of history with roots in the past Kohn (1944). Similarly, for Smith (1986, 1996), nations have existed for a long time during the pre-modern period and nationalists are like political archaeologists rediscovering and reinterpreting the communal past to create the present.

Proponents of these two approaches to nationalism may be grouped in two broad categories: primordialists, perennialists and ethno-symbolists on the one hand, and modernists or constructivists on the other. The former group tends to essentialize the ethnic elements and argues that nations have a core and a pre-modern existence, while the latter group argues that nations are modern constructions and the result of secular and rationalist forces. These find expression in two broad types of nationalism: ethnonationalism and civic nationalism. In ethnonationalism, membership by ethnicity and kinship functions as a motivating force (e.g. Germany), whereas in civic nationalism, broader civic issues define and motivate nationalism (e.g. France, U.S.A). Either one or a mixture of both may predominate, but ethnonationalism and civic nationalism are not mutually exclusive of each other.

This thesis is primarily concerned with ethnonationalism. Ethnonationalism is not the exclusive domain of modern nation-states; it is also part of the political struggle of ethnic communities within nation-states or what are often categorized as nations-without-states. Within the broader domain of nationalism, ethnic nationalist movements such those of the Basque, Catalonia, Quebecois, Scottish, Northern Ireland, and Métis, Sámis, Nagas, Karens, Kashmiris, Tamils of Sri Lanka, or those in places such as the former Yugoslavia

and the former Soviet Union, dot the current political landscape of the world. Ethnic conflicts are not a thing of the past. Often ethnonationalism because it is associated with ethnic elements has been characterized as 'bad' and conservative, while civic nationalism has been projected as 'good' and progressive. But the realities of nationalism manifested worldwide do not support such an evolutionist perception. Ethnic nationalism is not the result of atavistic primordial forces, but has been utilized and evoked by nationalists in the contexts of political, socio- economic and identity crises to attain or protect political power (Guibernau 1999).

What gives rise to these non-state ethnic nationalist movements? Among others, internal colonialism (Hechter 1975), a form of opposition politics primarily against the existing state (Breuilly 1994), neo-colonialism or peripheral nationalism (Hechter 2000) as a resistance by a culturally distinctive territory against incorporation into an expanding state (Guibernau 1996, 1999), modernization, economic exploitation, economic egoism, uneven development, state tension, imperialism and indifference towards the peripheries, are cited as possible causes for non-state ethnonationalism. In many instances, as Xavier Crettiez points out, "the political translation of cultural or economic differences gives way to virulent expressions of ethno-nationalism" (2002:7). But examples of economic egoism by groups such as by Catalina, Basque, and Flanders, show that economic growth or economic marginalization does not resolve ethnonationalism conflicts. Also, in cases such as the Basque, Sámis, and Métis, ethnonational activism continues even after the granting of greater autonomy to them within their states. So what is it that engenders, motivates and sustains these non-state ethnic nationalist movements? What aims and

objectives continue to draw them? As can be evidenced from many cases, non-state ethnonationalist conflicts are about who decides the future of an ethnic group.

By examining a particular case of ethnonationalism, Naga nationalism, this thesis makes a two-tiered argument: First, the ultimate aim of ethno national movements is for a greater political power for self-determination either for autonomy within the states or sovereignty from the state. As Breuilly says, one of the basic assertions of nationalism as a political doctrine is that, "the nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty" (1994:2). Similarly, Calhoun also points out that aims to nationhood "are also claims to distinctiveness *vis-à-vis* other nations, claims to at least some level of autonomy and self-sufficiency, and claims to certain rights within a world-system of states" (Calhoun 1993:216). Infringement on the political rights of a state and an ethnic group will inevitably lead to increased nationalistic passions. Second, what gives credibility to non-state ethnonational movements are the ethnic cores with deep historical roots that predate modern constructionist factors. Smith (1986) argues that nations are not completely modern because, first, nations are not static targets but processes; also, nations need ethnic cores which can be reconstructed and presented to its members; and finally, nations need territorial homelands as much as historic territories in which the ancestors lived and which the members carry in their heart. In the process of an ethnic group's nationalist struggle for achieving its ultimate objective – political self-determination – external factors such as modernization and globalization reinforce the ethnic core and contribute to the movement. By investigating

Naga nationalism, one realizes how such processes of non-state ethnonationalism arise and are articulated.

To some extent, Naga nationalism is articulated as an identity struggle. The conflict between the Naga people and the Indian State that began in 1947 is one of the world's least-known but longest-running and bloodiest armed conflicts (Baruah 2003). The Nagas consider their contiguous territory as their independent homeland, a territory that was only partially colonized by the British and never at any time part of India. On the other hand, according to the Indian state, Nagaland is a colonial legacy just as any other state in India because under the Independence Act of India 1947, the British transferred sovereign power to India over the territories of British India including the Naga territories. After six decades of this political conflict, with dire consequences including the loss of many lives on both sides, no solution to this problem is in sight.

Directly or indirectly, most Nagas have been affected by Naga nationalism. Some have had tragic loss of lives either of family members or friends or community members. Some have endured oppression from the Indian Army and others from the Naga armed nationalists, commonly known as Undergrounds, or from both. I am from Lakhuti village in Wokha district in the western part of the state of Nagaland. My parents still live in Lakhuti. Of people in my immediate family, my paternal grandfather died in December 1994 a few months short of being 100 years old. He lived a strong, healthy life and worked in the fields until the last two weeks before he died. In his old age, the only complaint I ever heard him say was his pain from the beatings he got from the Indian

Army personnel in the late 1950s and early 1960s. My father didn't talk much about the national movement. When he did, he loved to talk about one incident. One day he was coming home from another village. The Indian soldiers wanted to waylay him, and they hid themselves behind a big oak tree by the roadside. When my dad reached the oak tree, he got so spooked from the unexpected sight of the Indian soldiers that he howled and jumped up and down. The Indian soldiers seeing his reaction burst out in laughter. That day instead of arresting him, the Indian Army shared a cigarette with him and let him go. At other times he was not so fortunate. On one occasion, suspected as being a sympathizer of the Undergrounds, he, along with others in the village was jailed and tortured.

As for me, my parents say I was born the year after we came back from the forest. The Indian security forces had used village grouping as a method to separate the Naga Undergrounds from their support bases in the villages. As part of the grouping tactic by the Indian Army to apprehend the Naga armed nationalists, the people in my village were sent to live in the forest for three months. But my first memory of Naga nationalism is an incident that happened when I was about 6 or 7 years old. It was late at night, and I was already asleep. Suddenly I was awakened by the sound of a gunshot followed by voices of a man groaning in pain and another man shouting to catch the gunman. Our neighbor, a relative, was shot in the arm. He had just come home that evening and had gone to bed. Someone tried to shoot him through a hole in the wall. After hitting him in the shoulder, the bullet ricocheted and hit his driver, though by then the bullet had lost its impact. Our neighbor grabbed his pistol and darted out the house to kill the would-be assassin who by

then had disappeared into the night. Their whole family woke up, and there was crying and commotion in the house. I remember my dad running to their house. After a while, I looked out and saw my dad and other people carrying our neighbor to his cousin's place. I was told that our neighbor was a Brigadier among the *'Orae evan'* (forest dwellers), a common name for the Naga Undergrounds who were involved in the armed struggle against India. As I grew older, some in the village said that our neighbor was a double agent; some said that he had come that day to give guns to the Assam Rifles (an Indian paramilitary) outpost in the village. But there were others who vehemently denied such allegations. A few years after this incident, he was caught by the Naga Undergrounds and, after cutting off his arms and legs one by one, was buried alive.

When I was a kid, the way adults disciplined us was to tell us, "Look out, [Indian] *sepoy* (Army) are coming." That's what parents do to this day in many Naga villages. As kids, it frightened us, and when we saw any Indian Army personnel the immediate reaction was to run away and hide. Such fears, however, were not unfounded given the experience of repression by the Indian para-military who were perceived not as protectors but as enemies of our people. Their indiscriminate atrocities of beatings, tortures, house raids, and killings only compounded the fear and hatred in the people.

Years later when I began doctoral studies, Naga nationalism was furthest from my mind. For one, because of the violent nature of Naga nationalism, I was not ready to be involved. I had witnessed too much humiliation, killing, factional violence and oppression by the Indian security forces and Naga Undergrounds. Secondly, as a Catholic

priest, I did not feel competent to discuss Naga nationalism whatever that meant. On the contrary, I tried to distance myself from the violence of factionalism and the humiliation of oppression by the Indian security forces and internal Naga strife even going as far away as New York. But, as the saying goes, it is what you run away from that haunts you the most. So it was that when I thought I was farthest away from Naga nationalism and began my doctoral studies, one of my brothers was beaten by some members of the Naga Undergrounds. Subsequently, he dropped out of school. It was then that I began to think seriously about the far-reaching effects that Naga nationalism had on every Naga. Its effect has made a deep psychological impact on the Nagas. Instead of resorting to violence or pessimistic acceptance, I began to think about how I could make a positive contribution. My research is an attempt to respond to this Indo-Naga conflict in a constructive way.

When I was trying to get a funding for my research for this thesis, a spokesperson for a prominent funding agency commented: "No one comes up with any new theories so we have stopped funding research on nationalism." This supposed paucity of theories in nationalism studies initially scared me away from proceeding with my research proposal on nationalism, but the more I thought about Naga nationalism and saw the effect it had on the day-to-day lives of Naga people, the more I sensed its relevance and immediacy. How long must the Nagas live a life of forced taxations or live in constant fear of threat to life under the shadow of a AK- 47 rifle or face extortion letters by the so called 'Naga national workers' or continue to be intimidated by the Indian Army? How long must India attempt to isolate the Nagas? Why should the Nagas be 'protected' and their land

remain 'restricted'[1]? Since August 1997, the Government of India and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland – Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM) declared a cease-fire and are engaged in political talks. Particularly at this time, the ongoing political talks with India have reached a stalemate and Nagas are at crossroads. Perhaps this is an opportune time to analyze Naga nationalism in the hope that such an analysis will assist in a resolution to the problem.

My approach here is to understand the genesis of Naga nationalism from different perspectives which, though not exhaustive, can better explain Naga nationalism. Rather than approaching the issue through the lens of one grand theoretical framework to explain Naga nationalism, I chose to examine how Naga nationalism is being articulated today and thereby explore the factors that are responsible for the genesis, continuity, and development of Naga nationalism. Naga nationalism, as articulated today, combines such ethnic factors as the Nagas' ideas of their identity, and definition of themselves in relation to the Indians, their religious profession as Christians (Nagas have internalized Christianity even though it was externally generated), and exogenous factors such as colonialism, the nation-building technologies of the Indian state, particularly militarization, global economy, and global indigenism. These external factors increasingly influence and fuel Naga nationalism but ultimately the corner stone of Naga nationalism is its ethnic core or what Smith calls *ethnie* – the fund of cultural myths, symbols, memories, history, etc., – which serves as a cultural foundation for nationalism (1996:110).

[1] In addition to the regular Visa to visit India, foreigners visiting restricted areas such as Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh have to get a Restricted Area Permit (RAP), also known as Protected Area Permit (PAP), which is given for ten days only.

After a brief general introduction to the Nagas, Chapter I examines the history of Naga nationalism. The dominant narrative by the Naga armed nationalists, civil society, and intellectuals consider some events as salient features of Naga nationalist history. Among these features are the formation of the Naga Club in 1918 by the World War I veterans, followed by the memorandum by the Naga Club members to the Simon Commission in 1929, the transformation of the Naga Hills District Tribal Council to the Naga National Council in 1946, the 9-Point Hydari Agreement in 1947, meeting with Gandhi in 1947, the declaration of Naga independence on August 14, 1947, Nagas' refusal to join the Indian Union in 1950, Naga plebiscite on May 16, 1951, the boycott of Indian elections in 1952 by the Nagas, a cease-fire in 1964, the Shillong Accord in 1975, the formation of the NSCN on January 31, 1980, a cease-fire from August 1, 1997, and the ongoing political talks between the Government of India and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak, Muivah and Khodao (NSCN-IM). But on a closer examination, Naga nationalism consists of multiple histories and sometimes conflicting. The Angami Nagas of Khonoma tell their story of Naga nationalism from 1832, the year the British entered their territory and the wars that ensued between the Khonoma people and the British. This narrative is symbolized in historical landmarks such as the Semoma Fort in Khonoma. For Asoso Yonuo, a Naga bureaucrat and a scholar, Naga nationalism began in 1879 in a battle between the British and a group of Angami villages that Yonuo calls the "war of independence" (1974:99). For the Congress political party in the state of Nagaland, Nagas lived in constant warfare with each other and were not a nation at any time in their history. In fact, argued Congress party, the creation of the state of Nagaland answered the aspirations of the Naga people and became the 'bedrock' of Naga society.

However, such narratives have been harshly criticized. What do the existence of these different histories mean? What can they tell us about Naga nationalism?

Chapter II deals with a brief review of the literature on nationalism. Theories about the origins of nations and nationalism such as primordialism, perennialism, ethno-symbolism, modernism and constructionism find expression in two broad types of nationalisms – ethnic nationalism and civic nationalism. The review then focuses on ethnonationalism. The chapter discusses two types of ethnonationalism – one, associated with the nationalism of nation-states, and the other associated with the nationalism of nations without state or non-state ethnic nationalism. The chapter then discusses theoretical literature on ethnic elements such as language, religion, and geography that give credence to ethnic nationalism. In dealing with nationalism of nations-without-state, also called non-state ethnonationalism, the chapter asks what causes such ethnonationalism. Are ethnonational movements transformations of unsuccessful nationalisms particularly during the decolonization period after World War II as Eriksen (1991) suggests? Or are the ethnic movements similar to colonial liberation movements? Are ethnic movements, as Tambiah (1989) suggests, modular export from the West to the peripherial East? Scholars such as Brown (1988), Hechter (1975) and Horowitz (1985) argue that ethnic nationalism is due to socio-economic and power disparities, while Conversi (1995), Breuilly (1993), Hutchinson (1987) and Gurr (1993) privilege the role of the state and see ethnic nationalism as a reaction against the state by marginalized ethnic groups. Do these supposed causes sufficiently explain the phenomenon of ethnonationalism? The chapter will also show, as Ramon Miaz (2003) proposes, the

prerequisites and the process of how ethnonationalist movements take shape. Drawing on such theoretical debates, the chapter discusses briefly the literature on Naga nationalism particularly differences between those such as Yonuo (1974) and Mao (1992) who argue that Naga nationalism was a creation and a gift of British colonialization, and others such as Vashum (2001), Shimray (2005), and armed nationalists (NNC, NSCN-IM) who argue that Naga nationalism is based on ethnic sources that predate British colonization and modernity. The rest of this chapter discusses the research methodology used for this dissertation.

Why does Naga independence form around Naga identity and history when other ethnic groups in other Indian states, except for the Tamils and Kashmiris, have their own identity but are not engaged in nationalism? Chapter III discusses the ethnic origins of Naga nationalism. Nagas claim a unique history and culture that is not only different but also incompatible with India. The inceptions of Indian nationalism and Naga nationalism were contemporaneous (Dommen 1967:729). But, other than a then shared common enemy, British colonialism, Indian and Naga nationalism differ in that while Naga nationalism is based on a sense of ethnic identity and shared religion, Indian nationalism is not based on shared ethnicity or religion. Like Karen nationalism (Gravers 1996) in Myanmar, Naga nationalists base their arguments on Naga ethnicity, cultural particularism, and religion that is incompatible with the culture and ethnicity of the dominant state, India. As Dommen said, after "India achieved independence, Indian administrators replaced the British, but both were regarded as foreigners by the hillmen" (1967:726). What ethnic elements do Nagas consider as diacritical markers that

differentiate them from India and Indians? Vashum argued about ethnic core, "the systems of traditional village-states of the Nagas, be it village republic or village monarchy, appear to have impact for the rise and sustenance of the Naga national movement for sovereignty/independence" (Vashum 2000:147). Further, according to Vashum, "the Nagas' [intense] love for their homeland and their traditional attitude of self-reliance and freedom, the pride to preserve their unique identity and not to be under the control and authority from outside in any circumstances, did prove to be the essential assets or the coal for the burn for Naga nationalism" (Vashum 2000:113-114). This chapter will examine in detail Nagas' conception of their own identity, and other ethnic elements such as language, polity, and race that substantiate their claims for nationalism. By examining the cultural and historical background of Naga nationalism, and how it is articulated today, this chapter will explore how cultural continuity claims predate colonialism and modern exigencies and give credibility to Naga nationalism.

Chapter IV discusses the impact of British colonization on Naga nationalism. The arrival of the British in the Angami Naga territory in 1832 and the Nagas' response to British colonialism form an important landmark in the formation of Naga nationalism. It was within the colonial experience that Nagas became known to the outside world and that they experienced this same world; it was during colonialism that the pan-Naga political identity developed in a big way. It was due to the technologies of colonial administration such as tribal policies and 'unadministered areas' that reinforced Nagas' concept of themselves as a people distinct from 'Indians'; it was also such policies, according to the Nagas, that not only reinforced the non-Indianness of the Nagas culturally and politically,

but also shaped and strengthened Naga nationalism. And it was from the colonial experience that Naga nationalism grew from the defense of independent village-states to an effort to regain their freedom, and finally to an aspiration for political sovereignty as a Naga nation. By examining such issues, the chapter will examine how colonialism contributed to Naga nationalism.

Another external variable for non-state ethnonationalism is the role played by the dominant state, particularly in terms of how state policies affect ethnic minorities and how ethnic minorities in ethnically diverse state negotiate their identity and relationship to the state. In many respects, for the Nagas, the post-colonial experience has been more traumatic than the colonial. The post-colonial Indian period, more than perpetuating the colonial, has been more repressive and violent in nature, and has had a greater impact on the Nagas. Nagas are at the periphery not only geographically but also in economic development and in the Indian imagination. Even more, the Nagas' experience of the Indian state is one of military oppression and violence epitomized in the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) which gives extra-judicial powers to the Indian security forces in Kashmir and Northeast India including Nagaland. Chapter V discusses how the Nagas' experience of the repression by the new Indian state fueled and deepened their anti-India feeling, garnered the grassroots support and eventually became an important legitimizing factor for nationalism.

Religion and nationalism both rally people and bind them together, reinforcing their identities so that both can also be used to construct or deconstruct nation states.

According to Smith (1986, 2003), we find the sacred sources in religion that are deep-rooted, enduring and evoke powerful passion and commitment in people. In examining their relationship theoretically, some argue that with the advent of modernity and capitalism, nationalism has replaced religion as the primary source of constructing and sustaining an identity. Others believe that there is no such thing as religious nationalism because nationalism is associated with the secular. And yet, the truth is far from that kind of theoretical construction, as the examples of Britain's identification with Protestantism, Israel's with Judaism, Hindu nationalism in India, and the Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats and Muslim Albanians in Yugoslav illustrate. What role does religion play in Naga nationalism? Chapter VI discusses how Naga nationalism considers religion as an ethnic marker that defines them as different from Hindu India. Collectively, though, Naga nationalism asserts that Nagas, whether Christians or followers of indigenous local beliefs, are incompatible with Hindu India. As the religion of the majority of the Nagas, Christianity is deeply entrenched in Naga identity. But Christianity has been in Nagaland only since 1876, and one might say, is an exogenous factor. Naga nationalists particularly the National Socialist Council – Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM), believe that Nagas are a chosen people with a chosen destiny, guided by God along their migration from Mongolia to their present land of habitation to form a Naga nation, and destined to be messengers of the Christian God to their neighbors, particularly the Hindus (in India) and Buddhists (in Myanmar). This belief is crystallized in the popular motto 'Nagaland for Christ,' used by the Undergrounds. But how does current factional violence that has crippled Naga society exemplify or contradict such religious convictions?

Theoretically, an exogenous factor attributed to Ernest Gellner (1983) holds that nations are the result of standardization of high culture (literate and codified) in the modern context of industrialization, which brought people together from different backgrounds in urban areas necessitating the creation of a common identity. As an outcome of modernity, cultural homogeneity created by industrialization and the need for the state apparatus as the only mechanism that can provide elements such as standardized education, are what drive nationalism. Gellner argues that various factors in industrial society such as "universal literacy, mobility and hence individualism, political centralization, and the need for a costly educational infrastructure – impel it into a situation in which political and cultural boundaries are on the whole congruent" (Gellner 1983:110). Chapter VII draws upon Gellner's approach to point out certain standardizing elements that have characterized Naga nationalism. To have a global identity and be recognized as an independent member state of the United Nations is a standard that Nagas nationalists seek to achieve. This standard is further reinforced by attempts to respect and uphold human rights – individual rights such as in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and collective rights such as the Declaration of Rights on Indigenous Peoples. The right of self-determination enshrined in these rights provides the standards for nations to be independent states and standards that member states of the UN conform to. At least in theory, Smith says, "the claim to nationhood is, of course, the claim to equality of international treatment" (1986:1). When it comes to universalization of states, as Smith says, "in the eyes of the small nations their own cultures matter, however second-rate they may appear to others, usually Western or great power elites" (Smith 1986:217). The internationalization of the Naga political situation, particularly from the 1990s onwards,

bases the Naga struggle for self-determination on the UN defined universal human rights and the rights of the world's indigenous people. For instance, arguing for the legal status of the Naga struggle, the NSCN-IM points out three historical bases for Nagas' rights to self-determination and sovereignty: First, the inalienable historical rights based on the fact that there has never been a time in the Nagas' history when they have not resisted foreign intrusion into their territory; secondly, the common ethnic origins and common civilization and history which unite all Naga communities in the Naga nation as attested by the migration stories; and thirdly, the consciousness of the Naga people as a nation (GPRN 2001:6-7). Naga civil organizations such as Naga Hoho, Naga Students' Federation (NSF), and Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) have been active in articulating Naga nationalism as a fight for human rights, particularly the rights of the Nagas as indigenous people. As recently as December 10, 2008, the NPMHR urged India and the world to "respect Nagas' right as a people and a nation" (NMHR 2008:*Morung Express*). If initial arguments based on 'leave us as in ancient times', and 'unique history and culture' defined Naga nationalism with primordialist overtones, recent arguments based on universal human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples have provided a modern normative framework, a standardized high culture (Gellner 1981, 1995, 1997) of universal values, that has transitioned Naga nationalism into a struggle for self-determination, a right that Nagas feel can be guaranteed and fully realized only by becoming a sovereign nation state thereby achieving a global identity as a member of the world community of nations.

As Calhoun says, nationalism "has become the preeminent discursive form for modern claims to political autonomy and self-determination"(1993:213). Both the internal and external factors complement and interact with each other as a synergy to substantiate and explain Naga nationalism. Though the credibility of Naga nationalism is prominently based on ethnic internal factors, Naga nationalism is also sustained by multiple external factors. This research ultimately helps in understanding aspects of ethnonationalism, particularly ethnonationalism that arises from an ethnic community's self-conception, partial colonization in its ideology of 'colonial free' history, modernization, presumptions and attitudes towards ethnic groups by a dominant state leading to claims of injustice and domination, influences by universal standards of universal human rights and global indigenism and how these factors reinforce and substantiate a community's ethnic core and struggle for political self-determination. These issues will be examined in the rest of this thesis.

Fig. 1. Map of India indicating 'Nagaland' as the area that concerns Naga nationalism; it is not meant to represent the state of Nagaland.

CHAPTER I

HISTORY: FROM INDEPENDENT VILLAGE-STATES TO NAGA NATION

General Introduction of Nagas

The Nagas are a group of people who live in the present northeastern part of India and northwestern section of Myanmar (Burma). According to the oral traditions, Nagas migrated from Mongolia, and then through southwestern China and Myanmar into their present territory of habitation.[2] Except for some groups that live in Assam, the Nagas inhabit a contiguous territory, but at present the people and their land are divided between India and Myanmar (west of the Chindwin river bordering the Kachin state and Sagiang state). Within India, the Nagas and their territory are further carved out into the states of Nagaland, Manipur (the four hill districts of Ukhrul, Senapati, Tamenglong and Chandel), northeast Arunachal Pradesh, and Assam (North Cachar Hills, Mikir Hills, Golaghat, Lakhimpur, and Sibsagar districts). The Nagas inhabited an area of about 120,000 square kilometers,[3] within which the state of Nagaland covers an area of 16,527 square kilometers. On the Indian side of the Naga territory, Kohima is the capital of the state of Nagaland, while Dimapur, Mokokchung, Tuensang, Wokha, Ukhrul and Senapati are some of the other important towns. The majority of the Nagas live in the state of Nagaland with a population of 1.98 million; unofficial estimates put the figure between 3.5 and 4 million[4] but an official census of the whole Naga population has not been taken

[2] According to the Lotha oral tradition, the Lothas were living underground under similar conditions. One day two ancestors of the clans went hunting and followed the hunting dog through a cave-like hole out onto this earth and decided to settle there. Mongolia is second on the list for places of settlement and migration from there on.
[3] According to estimates by NSCN-IM (www.nscnonline.org).
[4] The NSCN-IM estimates about 3.5 to 4 million Nagas (www.nscnonline.org).

because of the political problem and the inaccessibility of many areas particularly in Myanmar.

The exact number of Naga groups also has not been ascertained. One reason is that historical forces such as colonization have affected the classification of the groups, called tribes by the British; some of the subgroups were amalgamated into major groups (e.g. Chakesang, Zeliangrong), while subgroups have also evolved into major groups (e.g. Pochury) and the process continues to this day (e.g. Tikir) particularly in order to have a political representation and get the benefits of affirmation action and economic benefits. The charts below illustrate changes in the number of Naga groups; first, within the state of Nagaland in 1963 and 2009, the second as estimated by Yonuo and Horam (two scholars), and third by Naga Hoho (a civil society) and by NSCN-IM (armed faction).

List of Naga Groups

Nagaland State 1963	Nagaland State 2009
1. Angami	1. Angami
2. Ao	2. Ao
3. Chakhesang[5]	3. Chakhesang
4. Chang	4. Chang
5. Khiamniungan	5. Khiamniungan[6]
6. Konyak	6. Konyak
7. Lotha	7. Lotha
8. Phom	8. Phom
	9. Pochury[7]
9. Rengma	10. Rengma
10. Sema	11. Sumi[8]

[5] Chakesang tribe is a combination of three tribes – Chokri, Khezha and Sangtam. Actually, some of the Pochury people were mistaken as Sangtams. Before 1945, the Chokri and Khezha were known as Southern Angamis. Linguistically and culturally, the Chokri belong to the same group as the Angamis. A section of Chakesangs in Zamai area belong to Poumai community who are of the Shepoumaramth group (see also Lotha 2007:2; 2008).

[6] Known as Kalyo-Kengyu during British colonial period.

[7] Since April 19, 1990 Eastern Rengmas are now known as Pochury and recognized as a separate tribe in Nagaland.

11. Sangtam	12. Sangtam
12. Yimchungru	13. Yimchungru
13. Zeliang[9]	14. Zeliang

Yonuo[10] (1974)[11]	Horam[12] (1975)
1. Anal	1. Anal
2. Angami (Tengima)	2. Angami (Tengima)
3. Ao	3. Ao
4. Chakesang (Chakru, Kheza and Sangtam)	4. Chakesang
5. Chang	5. Chang
6. Chiru	6. Haimi
7. Damsa	7. Htangan
8. Haimi	8. Jeru
9. Htangram	9. Jothe
10. Kalyo Kengyu	10. Kabui[13]
11. Khampti	11. Kalyo-Kenyu
12. Khienmungam	12. Kharam
13. Kom	13. Konyak
14. Konyak	14. Lamkang
15. Kuki	15. Lotha
16. Lamgang (Pakan)	16. Makaoro
17. Lotha	17. Mao
18. Mao (Shipoumai)	18. Maram
19. Maram (Maharamai)	19. Maring
20. Maring	20. Mayao-Monsang
21. Mongsang	21. Namshik
22. Moyong	22. Nockte
23. Nocte	23. Phom
24. Para	24. Rangpan
25. Phom	25. Rengma
26. Rangpan	26. Sangtam
27. Rengma	27. Somra
28. Sangtam	28. Tangkhul
29. Sema	29. Tsaplaw
30. Singpho	30. Uchonphok
31. Tangkhul	31. Zeliang
32. Thangal	
33. Tangsa	

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[8] Some of the groups have adopted their indigenous names. Thus Sema is now known as Sumi, and the Lotha group has changed to the indigenous name, Kyong in 2008.

[9] The list for the state of Nagaland included Kuki among the groups although Kukis are not considered as Naga.

[10] Yonuo says there are about fifty 'tribe' names of which better known are listed here (1974:6-7).

[11] Atai Shimray lists 40 Naga groups (Shimray 2005:32-33).

[12] Horam says, "there are as many as 32 known Naga tribes" (1975:27).

[13] The Rongmai tribe in Manipur is also known as Kabui.

34. Wancho
35. Yimchunger
36. Zeliangrong (Zemai, Liangmai, Rongmai)

Naga Hoho (2002)
1. Anal (M, +MR)
2. Angami
3. Ao
4. Chakesang
5. Chang
6. Cheril (MR)
7. Chirr (+MR)[14]
8. Chiru
9. Chothe (M)
10. Heimi (MR)
11. Hewa
12. Htangan (MR)
13. Inpui
14. Khiamniungan (+MR)
15. Konyak (+MR)
16. Kharam Khaklak (MR)
17. Koireng/Moyon
18. Kayo (+MR)
19. Khaklak (MR)
20. Kengu (MR)
21. Lamkang
22. Liangmai
23. Laihe (MR)
24. Lainung (MR)
25. Lotha
26. Maram
27. Mao
28. Maring
29. Moyon
30. Monsang
31. Macharay/Makury (+MR)
32. Malang (MR)
33. Nokho/Noko
34. Nokte (MR)
35. Nolang (MR)
36. Namshik (MR)
37. Pakang (MR)
38. Phellongri (+MR)

NSCN-IM (2008 Calendar)
1. Anal (M, +MR)
2. Angami
3. Ao
4. Aimol
5. Chakesang
6. Chang
7. Cheril (MR)
8. Chirr (+MR)
9. Chiru
10. Chothe (M)
11. Heimi (MR)
12. Hewa
13. Htangan (MR)
14. Inpui
15. Konyak (+MR)
16. Khiamniungan (+MR)
17. Kharam Khaklak (MR)
18. Koireng/Moyon
19. Kayo (+MR)
20. Khaklak/Hkaklak (MR)
21. Kengu (MR)
22. Kom
23. Lamkang
24. Liangmai
25. Laihe (MR)
26. Lainung (MR)
27. Lotha
28. Maram
29. Mao
30. Maring
31. Moyon
32. Monsang
33. Macharay/Makury/Makhori (+MR)
34. Malang (MR)
35. Nokho/Noko
36. Nokte (MR)
37. Nolang (MR)
38. Namshik (MR)

[14] The Naga Hoho and NSCN-IM have listed groups such as Chirr, Makori, and Phellongri as major groups even though currently they are considered as subgroups.

39. Phom	39. Pakang (MR)
40. Pochuri	40. Phellongri (+MR)
41. Phango (MR)	41. Phom
42. Phankem (MR)	42. Pochuri
43. Pangmi (MR)	43. Phango (MR)
44. Pangu (MR)	44. Phankem (MR)
45. Para (MR)	45. Pangmi (MR)
46. Poumai	46. Pangu (MR)
47. Rangpan (MR)	47. Para (MR)
48. Rasit (MR)	48. Poumai
49. Rekho (MR)	49. Rangpan (MR)
50. Rengma	50. Rasit (MR)
51. Rongmei	51. Rekho (MR)
52. Sangtam	52. Rengma
53. Saplo (MR)	53. Rongmei
54. Shangphuri (+MR)	54. Sangtam
55. Singpho	55. Saplo (MR)
56. Sira (MR)	56. Shangphuri (+MR)
57. Somi	57. Singpho
58. Sumi	58. Sira (MR)
59. Tarao	59. Somi
60. Tangkhul (+MR)	60. Sumi
61. Thangkal	61. Tarao
62. Tangsa	62. Tangkhul (+MR)
63. Tikhir (+MR)	63. Thangkal
64. Wanchao	64. Tangsa
65. Yimchungru (+MR)	65. Tikhir (+MR)
66. Zeme	66. Wanchao
	67. Yimchungru (+MR)
	68. Zeme[15]

(MR= Myanmar; +MR= India and Myanmar).

The changing makeup of the Naga groups indicates that some of these distinctions were already in place before their encounter with the British and Indians. Secondly, the changing number of Naga groups means that Naga identity is fluid and is in process. Thirdly, Naga identity is complicated. How Nagas identify a particular group as Naga is not consistent. The Konyaks, for example, have an oral tradition which says that at one

[15] According to the NSCN-IM website, there are 42 Naga groups each with their own language and dialects.

point in history, the Konyaks and Kachins were brothers. Similarly, some believe that the Meiteis were once Nagas (Horam 1977:23).

Except for the major towns such as Dimapur and Kohima where the population is a mixture of the various groups, the different groups inhabit specific areas of Naga territory. The present administrative units are divided into districts and, in most cases, are broken down according to groups. The following chart illustrates this.

State of Nagaland	
District	Group
Kiphire	Sangtam, Yimchunger
Kohima	Angami
	Rengma
Longleng	Phom
Mokokchug	Ao
Mon	Konyak
Peren	Zeliangrong
Phek	Chakesang, Pochuri
Tuensang	Chang, Sangtam
	Khianmungan
Wokha	Lotha (Kyong)
Zunheboto	Sumi

State of Manipur	
District	Group
Chandel	Moyon
	Thankgal, Chote
	Tarao
Senapati	Mao, Maram,
	Poumai
Tamenlong	Rongmei
Ukhrul	Tangkhul

Even though there is increasing migration to the towns and cities, the majority of the Nagas still lives in rural areas. Naga villages are usually on the ridges or tops of mountains. Besides being a cooler climate for habitation, they were also strategic for defense purpose in situations of warfare. Although the location of the villages at such places and their separation by mountainous terrain also made communications with other villages difficult, it did not prevent trade relations between villages, other Naga groups and neighboring non-Nagas. The polity of these villages is similar to the Greek city-states, autonomous republics in governance (Yonuo 1974; Horam 1975).

Most Nagas in the rural areas engage in subsistence farming. A few groups such as Angami, Chakesang, and Mao have terrace fields, but the majority of the Nagas still practice the slash-and-burn method of cultivation. Rice, millet, corn, Job's tears, yam, soybean, and beans are some of the major crops grown. Timber, petroleum and natural gas, limestone, and cobalt are some of the natural resources. In the absence of any industries, much of these natural resources remain untapped.

Though much of the written records on the Nagas began with the encounter of the British with the Nagas from 1832, the history of the Nagas does not begin there. Earlier mention of the Nagas is attributed to the Greek scholar Ptolemy in *Geographia* in 150 A.D. where he describes the people living in the present Naga inhabited area as the realm of the naked people. The Chinese monk Hueng Tsang is also believed to have traveled to Assam in 645 A.D and described the area east of Assam as "contiguous to the barbarians of south-west China. These tribes are in fact akin to those of the Man people in their customs" (Walters 1904 in Sanyu 1996:7). Other sources that make mention of the Nagas are the chronicles of Ahom Buranjees in 1228, Meiteis in Manipur by 750 A.D. and Burmese history (Yonuo 1974; Sanyu 1996).

From 1830s onwards, with the British encounter of the Nagas, writings on Nagas began to proliferate. From military reports and articles at the initial stages (Grange 1839, 1840; Bigge 1841; Broodie 1845; Butler 1855, 1875) to topographical survey reports (Badgley 1874; Godwin-Austen 1875; Damant 1880; Mackenzie 1884; Peal 1872, 1874, 1882, 1894, 1896), culminating in ethnographic articles and books by administrator-

anthropologists (Woodthrope 1881; Davis 1891; Furness 1902; Balfour 1923; Bower 1943, 1946, 1950; Hodson 1905, 1909, 1910, 1911; Hutton 1921a, 1921b, 1928, 1930, 1965; Mills 1922, 1926, 1931, 1937; Smith 1925; Fürer-Haimendorf 1936, 1938, 1939, 1969). The British produced monographs and other ethnographic literature that popularized the Nagas to the outside world, particularly to the anthropological and scientific community in Europe (See Lotha 2007 for details on the history of Naga anthropology).

Histories of Naga Nationalism

History is dangerous and indeterminate. Where does one even begin? To make a starting point is already to take a position. Any starting point is arbitrary. Even more crucial is the question of whose history? As Chatterjee asked, "Whose Imagined Community?" (1993:3). India claims that Nagas are a colonial legacy from the British and has asserted domination over the Naga people. From India's perspective, the history of Naga nationalism is a history of a recent separatist movement led by misguided leaders. Accordingly, Indian leaders, from Nehru onwards, have treated the Naga issue as a law and order problem. On the other hand, Naga nationalists are obsessed with history. One of their primary claims is that Nagas have a unique history of independence from time immemorial. But what happens if it is a history of 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm 1992) and thus disqualified as inauthentic? As Hobsbawm points out, "the history that nationalists want is not the history that professional academic historians, even ideologically committed ones, ought to supply" (1992:3). How would the Naga nationalists' historical discourse withstand the allegations of Naga nationalist history as

Whig (evolutionary understanding of history) history (Fogelson 1989:136; Calhoun 1993:225)? Based on the notion of Naga independent village-states 'from time immemorial' as the common denominator, different historical narratives about Naga nationalism can be gleaned from different interest groups.

Dominant Narrative of Naga Nationalism History

By and large, Naga armed nationalists (NNC, NSCN-IM, NSCN-K), civil society (Naga Hoho, Naga Students' Federation, Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights, Naga Mothers' Association, United Naga Council), and most Naga writers have followed the well trodden path of using particular events as the salient features to trace the history of Naga nationalism. According to this historical narrative, Nagas were always independent people, Nagas were only partially colonized by the British, and they were administered as an Excluded Area and were never part of India at any point in their history. India as a nation did not exist before 1947. As a matter of fact, Naga nationalists say, Nagas declared their independence on August 14, 1947, a day before India became an independent nation on August 15, 1947. This historical discourse considers as important the following markers beginning with the formation of the Naga Club in 1918 by the World War I veterans as the starting point of Naga nationalism.

Naga Club, 1918: The beginning of Naga nationalism, according to this dominant narrative, was the formation of the Naga Club in 1918 by some Naga leaders and members of the Allied Labour Corps who returned from France. As the Naga Hoho

described, “the Naga Club was political in nature, social in welfare and recreational in game and sports” (Naga Hoho 2002:23).

Simon Commission, 1929: A decade later, on January 10, 1929, the Naga Club members submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission that visited Kohima in connection with the Reform Scheme of India. Requesting the British Government to safeguard their rights against all encroachment from other people whom they believed were more advanced than them by withdrawing the Naga area from the Reformed Scheme and placing it directly under its own protection, the memorandum, among other things, requested that when the British left India, “we [Nagas] should not be thrust to the mercy of the people who could never have conquered us themselves and to whom we were never subjected; but leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times” (Naga Club 1929). As Yonuo points out, the memorandum “emphatically pointed out the obvious desire of the Nagas for the restoration of their independence that the British had snatched from them” (Yonuo 1974:133). At the deliberations concerning the Simon Commission report in the House of Commons in May 1935, Cadogan is supposed to have told the House: “I am one of the few honourable members of this House who have had conversations with the head-hunters of Kohima. … They have a shrewd suspicion that something is being done to take away their immemorial rights and customs” (Yonuo 1974:133-134). According to the Simon Commission Report:

> … the stage of development reached by the inhabitants of these areas prevents the possibility of applying to them methods or representation adopted elsewhere. They do not ask for self-determination, but for security of land tenure, freedom in the pursuit of their traditional methods of livelihood, and the seasonable exercise of their ancestral customs. Their contentment does not depend so much on rapid political advance as on experienced and sympathetic handling, and on protection

> from economic subjugation by their neighbors. (Report of the Indian Statutory Commission in Yonuo 1974:134)

Following the report of the Simon Commission, the Hill tribes, including the Nagas that were considered backward by the British, were designated as Excluded Areas by Government of India Act 1935, and these areas were placed under the Governor.

Coupland Plan/Crown Colony Plan: As the possibility for the Independence of India drew near, the British continued to be concerned about the welfare of the Hill Tribes in the Excluded Areas. Claiming to be "responsible for the future welfare of a set of very loyal, primitive peoples who are habituated to look to us for protection and who will get it from no other source," the British administrators argued that the tribals were "not, in a hundred years, ready to take their place in a democratic constitution, or to compete with the sophisticated Indian politician for place and power" (Reid 1944: 27). With an idea to protect the Hill tribals, Sir Reginald Coupland submitted a report proposing the Coupland Plan, also known as the Crown Colony, "a civil administrative unit comprising the Hill Areas along the north and east frontiers of Assam and taking in as well the similar areas in Burma itself" (Reid 1944:28). But the design for a Crown Colony Plan did not materialize. The Nagas were opposed to the idea of a Crown Colony and insisted, "that the moment the British would go from India, it too would have to leave Nagaland, and they should receive back their sovereignty" (Yonuo 1974:141). But the idea that Nagas could be on their own was not acceptable to the British Government. Sir Andrew Clow, the then Governor of Assam, felt that the Nagas "had neither population nor the resources that a modern state should need to sustain its sovereignty" (Yonuo 1974:141).

Naga National Council (NNC), 1946: According to this dominant version of history, the course of Naga nationalism took an important turn with the formation of the Naga National Council in 1946. By the 1940s, the number of Naga intellectuals were on the increase consisting not only of people with college degrees, but also of *Dobashis* (interpreters), government employees and community leaders who, by then, had broad experiences of British colonialism and the happenings in the world around them. The course of the Second World War reached the Naga Hills. Many Nagas were enlisted to fight for the British. The Allied Forces fought the Japanese in the Naga Hills where the Japanese were defeated in the Battle of Kohima and prevented from entering into India (Yonuo 1974 gives more details of the war in the Naga Hills). Many Naga villages such as Kohima were not spared the destruction of the war. In April 1945, Sir Charles Pawsay, the Deputy Commissioner of Kohima, established the Naga Hills District Tribal Council (NHDTC) in order to unite the Nagas and help with the reconstruction of the war-torn Naga areas. In the meantime, post-war current of anti-colonial struggles, particularly in Asia and Africa, became a dominant global phenomenon. India, by then, was at the height of its nationalist struggle to overthrow the British. Indian nationalism was affecting the Nagas too. Gandhi and other Indian nationalist leaders influenced Naga leaders such as T. Sakhrie. Nagas' assertion of their right to independence was within this global context of post-war anti-colonial struggles. Like their Indian counterparts, Nagas also sought to be free from the yoke of British colonialism. Naga leaders had hoped that because of their invaluable help during the war, the British would in return do something for the Nagas before they left India. But in the ensuing months, members of the various Naga Tribal Councils felt that the British were not ready to accede to the

Nagas' political aspirations. At the meeting of the Naga Hills District Tribal Council in February 1946, in Wokha, the representatives changed the name of the organization to Naga National Council (NNC) with greater political ambitions. Even though the NNC's immediate concerns were to help the administration in the post-war socio-economic reconstructions, it soon became a political organization "whose purpose now became to achieve the unification and solidarity of all Nagas under one government as their legitimate national aspirations and interests" (Yonuo 1974:161). The political objectives of the NNC were clearly stated in a resolution at their meeting on June 19, 1946 at Wokha:

(i) The memorandum drafted by the members of the NNC and approved by the general meeting at Wokha, containing four clauses concerning the future position of the Naga Hills has been submitted to the representative of HMG [His Majesty's Government] by the NNC;
(ii) This Naga National Council stands for the solidarity of all the Naga tribes including those of the unadministered areas;
(iii) This Council strongly protests against the grouping of Assam with Bengal; and;
(iv) The Naga Hills should be continuously included in an autonomous Assam in a free India, with local autonomy and due safeguards for the interests of the Nagas and the Naga tribes should have a separate electorate. (Yonuo 1974:161-162)

More than just a pressure group, the NNC now spearheaded the nationalist movement with clearer objectives. As Guha says, the formation of the NNC "had the classic trappings of a nationalist movement, in embryo: led by middle-class intellectuals, their ideas promoted in a journal of their own, *The Naga Nation,* 250 copies of which were mimeographed and distributed through the Naga country" (Guha 2007:268). From then on, the NNC set about trying to forge unity among the Nagas to achieve their political goals.

Interim Government: Even though the Coupland Plan was rejected, the NNC leaders were influenced by the benefits that this Plan proposed. Realizing that Nagaland was undeveloped, T. Sakhrie, the Secretary of the NNC, supported the Crown Colony concept but when that did not materialize, he was in favor of working out a relationship with India. According to T. Sakhrie:

> Our country is connected with India in many ways. We should continue that connection. I do not mind whether the future India is a congress government or a league government. But as a distinct community as I stated before, we must also develop according to our genius and taste. We shall enjoy home rule in our country, but on broader issues be connected with India. (T. Sakhrie in *The Naga Nation*. Vol. I, No. 5:5-6 in Sakhrie 2006:10)

Against such background, at their meeting on February 19, 1947, the Naga National Council (NNC) resolved "that a Memorandum be submitted to His Majesty's Government and the Government of India to grant an INTERIM GOVERNMENT for a period of 10 years to the Nagas (British subjects) and to make provisions for running it, at the end of which the Nagas will choose their own form of government" (NNC, Archival documents compiled by Khodao Yanthan, hereafter Khodao Papers). Subsequently, the NNC sent a memorandum to His Majesty's Government on February 20, 1947, to request for, "Setting up of an Interim Government OF THE NAGA PEOPLE, with financial provisions for a period of ten years, at the end of which the Naga people will be left to choose any form of Government under which they themselves choose to live" (NNC, Khodao Papers). As the Nagas did not get any reply to this memorandum, the NNC submitted a second Memorandum for Guardian Power to His Majesty's Government on May 19, 1947. This second memorandum made the following clarifications:

1. That the 10-year Interim Government of the people will be a government by the Naga people over the people of Nagaland, having full powers in respect of legislation, Executive and Judiciary.

2. That Naga land belongs to the Naga people and will be inalienable.
3. That the Interim Government of the Naga people will have full power in the matter of raising and expenditure of revenue the deficit in the budget being met by the Guardian Power.
4. That for defence and for aiding Civil power in case of emergency a Force considered necessary by the Naga National Council will be maintained in Nagaland by the Guardian Power. That Force will be responsible to the Naga National Council who will in turn be responsible to the Guardian Power. (NNC History:10 hereafter NNC Hist)

But the Nagas' appeals failed to convince the British who considered the Nagas Hills as part of British India. Instead, through Governor Sir Andrew Clow, and Deputy Commissioner Sir Charles Pawsay, the Nagas were told that a separate Naga nation would not be practicable and advised the Nagas to remain united and reach a mutually benefiting accommodation with Assam. The Secretary to the Governor of Assam told the Nagas that they were too few to successfully rebel against a nation of 300 million. Writing in *Naga Nation* … the official concluded, "Why lose the bone of 'autonomy' to try to get the bone of 'independence' which is not possible to get?" (Guha 2007:270). The charge was given to the committee for Constituent Assembly to work out plans for the future of the hills peoples including the Nagas. When Gopinath Bordoloi, the Chairman of the Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly of the Government of India visited Kohima in May 1947, the NNC met with him and "reiterated their stand that at the end of the 10-year period under the Guardianship of India, they should be left free to choose their own future" (NNC Hist:11). The Nagas also stressed that they would have a separate Constitution of their own and "would not accept any other kind of constitutional arrangement" (NNC Hist:11). The Nagas continued to insist on an interim government for a 10-year period.

***Nine-point Hydari Agreement June 1947*:** In June 26, 1947, Sir Akbar Hydari, the Governor of Assam, was sent to Kohima to persuade the Nagas to give up their demand for a separate nation as it would not be feasible. The NNC representatives, in their address to Hydari requested that the Governor "take all steps to bring all the Naga tribes together" and insisted that, "when the Nagas are seeking aid for their Interim Government, it is only fair and reasonable that they be not deprived of their just share" (Yonuo 1974:173). Following a series of meetings from June 27 to 29, regarding the issue of a Ten Year Interim Government demand by the Nagas, a Nine-Point Hydari Agreement was signed between the NNC and Governor Hydari for a period of ten years, at the end of which "the Naga National Council would be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga people arrived at" (NNC Hist:14).

Declaration of Naga Independence, August 14, 1947: By then, the idea of an independent Naga nation was gaining momentum. As planned, the NNC declared Naga Independence on August 14, 1947. A cable was sent to the United Nations General Secretary: "Nagas will be independent. Kindly put on record that Nagas will be independent. Discussions with India are being carried on to that effect. Nagas do not wish to accept Indian constitution. The right of the people must prevail regardless of size" (NNC Hist:15).

The Indian government, of course, did not recognize Naga Independence. To India, the British had placed the Naga Hills area under Assam, and the Naga areas were the

frontiers of the new country even though the borders were not properly demarcated. Negotiations between the Naga leaders and their Indian counterparts continued. On May 9, 1948, the NNC delegation met with Sir Akbar Hydari in Shillong to get an assurance of the implementation of the 9-point Agreement. At this meeting, Governor Akbar Hydari informed the Naga delegate that the 9-point Agreement would be incorporated in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India even though the original agreement had no mention of the Constitution of India. Nonetheless, the Nagas were assured that the 10-year agreement would be implemented. The letter to the NNC by the N.K. Rustomji, Advisor to the Governor of Assam, on June 11, 1948, stated: "I am desired by His Excellency to state that the machinery necessary to that end is already in motion. There was never, nor shall be, any question of non-implementation of the terms of the [10-year] Agreement" (NNC Hist:16). Another written assurance for the implementation of the 9-point Agreement that was signed by Akbar Hydari, Governor of Assam, and, G.N. Bordoloi, Premier of Assam, was given to the Nagas. The statement read:

> The deputation [NNC] was given a hearing by both His Excellency and the Hon'ble Premier and were given assurance by both that there was never any question of non-implementation of the Agreement. A misunderstanding had appeared to have arisen in the minds of certain section of the Naga people that the Agreement of June 1947, was nullified by the provisions laid down in the Draft Constitution. It was explained to the deputation at length whereby the Agreement might be translated into action. If, however, there still remains any doubt or apprehension in the minds of the Naga people regarding the validity of the Agreement, His Excellency and the Hon'ble Premier were prepared to give the writing assurance that had been asked for." (NNC Hist:16)

Not satisfied with the response, on November 3, 1949, a three-man delegation of the NNC met with the representatives of the Government of India at Shillong to ascertain the implementation of the 9-point Agreement. According to the NNC, the Naga delegation was "bluntly told that there was no Agreement made with the Nagas" (NNC Hist:17).

Gopinath Bordoloi, the Premier of Assam, also told the Nagas that the Indian government did not acknowledge the existence of the 9-point Agreement. The Nagas felt that the Indian government had reneged on the 9-point agreement. The Nagas felt betrayed and hurt greatly by the Indian government. From the NNC's point of view, "This deliberate lie to cheat the Nagas further widened the gulf separating the Nagas from the Indians" (NNC Hist:17). Ahu Sakhrie, however, states that the failure of the Hydari Agreement was due to "the mistrust the two parties had of each other" (Sakhrie 2006:10).

Sovereign State of Nagaland: Disappointed, an 11-man Naga delegation met with C. Rajgopalachari, the Governor-General of India in Shillong on November 28, 1949. Supposedly, at this meeting, the Governor-General told the Naga delegate: "India wants to be friendly with you. India does not want to deprive the Nagas of their land. Nagas are at full liberty to do as they like, either to become part of India or be separated if it would be best for (sic) their interest to be isolated" (NNC Hist:17). The Nagas, however, picked up a mixed message; they felt they were made to believe that the provisions of the 9-point Agreement would be incorporated in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India and the Nagas were being asked to accept the Indian Constitution, a status they had been fighting against thus far. Back home, at a meeting on December 30, 1949, the NNC resolved, "to establish at the earliest possible time a 'SEPARATE SOVEREIGN STATE OF Nagaland' in fulfillment to the aspiration of the Naga tribes represented in the Naga National Council" (NNC Hist:17). Subsequently, on January 24, 1950, the NNC informed the UN and the Government of India of their resolution: "Nagas do not accept the Indian constitution" (NNC Hist:18).

When Dr. Rajendra Prasad went to Shillong, a 12-man Naga delegation went to meet him on October 27, 1950. Through Bishnuram Medhi, the Chief Minister of Assam, the Naga delegation submitted a letter to the President of India reiterating "once again the old, oft repeated, Naga demand for a Separate Sovereign State." The letter further stated: "We have not yet been given the knowledge as to when power will be transferred to Naga hands. … we seek a definite assurance from Your Excellency for India to show her magnanimity to the Nagas as to when the Nagas will be given Independence to form a Separate Sovereign State of Nagaland" (NNC; Khodao Papers). But, according to NNC reports, the Government of Assam refused to give the Nagas an interview with President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad.

Naga Plebiscite, May 16, 1951: Frustrated that the Government of India was not listening to the Nagas, Phizo, the NNC President, wrote to the President of India on January 1, 1951, to inform him that the people of Nagaland would have a voluntary plebiscite on the issue of Naga independence. For a second time, this information was sent to the President of India again on April 11, 1951, this time adding that May 16, 1951, was the date selected for the purpose. The President of India was also informed that, "this plebiscite will be recorded by taking the thumb impression of the adults of both sexes from the age of 16 years and upwards" (NNC; Khodao papers). The letter also invited the Indian Government to send observers.

On May 16, 1951, the plebiscite was held in the Naga Hills. According to NNC, the plebiscite was 99.9 % in favor of Naga independence. The NNC declared: "The verdict of

the people has been for the constitution of Nagaland into a separate sovereign state in which they can live their own lives, and guide their own destiny" (NNC, see also Means 1967:293). Subsequently, the NNC tried to inform the Indian Government about the results of the plebiscite. So during the visit of Jairam Das Daulatram, the new Governor of Assam, to Nagaland from June 14-17, the NNC submitted a memorandum to him. Later, not satisfied with the response or non-response from the Indian Government, a 23-man Naga delegation went to Shillong and met with Governor Jairam Daulatram on December 19, 1951, and asked him to forward the result of the Naga voluntary plebiscite to the Government of India, but according to the NNC, their request was refused (NNC Hist:19).

Fig. 2. An elderly man putting his thumbprint on the plebiscite paper on May 16, 1951 (courtesy NSF)

Administrative Diplomacies: Not wanting to be part of the States Reorganization plan, the NNC, led by Phizo, instead met with the States Reorganisation Commission of the Government of India on May 7, 1955, and requested " for early recognition of our Naga

demand for Sovereign State of Nagaland" (NNC Hist). But as far as the Indian Government was concerned, the status of the Nagas was a non-issue; Nagas' aspirations would be met by the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution which gave protective measures along with the other tribal areas in Assam. The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution contained provisions for the administration of tribal areas in the States of Assam, (of which the Naga Hills were then a part) Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. According to this Schedule, the Nagas Hills District would be an autonomous district within Assam. Among others, the Schedule gave the district councils the power to legislate on:

> (a) the allotment, occupation or use, or the setting apart, of land, other than any land which is a reserved forest for the purposes of agriculture or grazing or for residential or other non-agricultural purposes or for any other purpose likely to promote the interests of the inhabitants of any village or town;
> (b) the management of any forest not being a reserved forest;
> (c) the use of any canal or water-course for the purpose of agriculture;
> (d) the regulation of the practice of jhum or other forms of shifting cultivation;
> (e) the establishment of village or town committees or councils and their powers;
> (f) any other matter relating to village or town administration, including village or town police and public health and sanitation;
> (g) the appointment or succession of Chiefs or Headmen;
> (h) the inheritance of property;
> (i) marriage and divorce;
> (j) social customs (Constitution of India).

The Nagas, however, had all along been demanding for independence and saw the Sixth Schedule as another attempt by the Indian government to compromise their political autonomy.

Not satisfied with the provisions of the 6th Schedule of the Constitution, the Nagas, then led by Phizo, insisted that the Nagas' right to be independent after ten years of being included, as in the 9-point Hydari agreement. But as B.N. Mulik, the director of

Intelligence Bureau under Nehru, argued, even at that time the Assam state's "difficulty was that it could not agree to any special status for the Nagas, for if this was conceded, other tribals, particularly the Mizos, who differed from the Assamese even more than the Nagas, would also immediately raise a similar demand" (1972:301). However, the Nagas refused to settle under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and continued with their demand for independence. As Guha points out, "there was a fundamental incommensurability between what the NNC was demanding and what the government of India was willing to give. This was an argument which, it seemed, could be ended only by one party's prevailing, militarily, over the other" (2007:282). The situation in the Naga areas for the next decade and a half would be characterized by Nehru's 'hard and swift' policy of militarization and violence, which consequently led to the grassroots support for Naga nationalism and, at the same time, witnessed the emergence of the moderates within the NNC who supported a non-violent approach to solving the Naga political problem. The atrocities experienced by the Nagas during this period engrained in them deep anti-India feelings.

The Sixteen-Point Agreement and the Creation of the State of Nagaland: As the Indo-Naga conflict continued, it was clear that India would not be able to solve the Naga problem by military repression. According to Mulik, the Director of the Intelligence Bureau: "We in the Intelligence Bureau were also quite clear in our minds that the Naga partisan guerrillas could not be defeated by purely military action" (1972:314). A political solution was the only way out. Aided by the Intelligence Department, the Indian government sought to undertake a political settlement and military action to pressure

people to accept solutions. As a first step to pacifying the Nagas, S.M. Dutt, the intelligence officer, came up with the idea that the Naga Hills District had to be separated from Assam and administered as a separate unit directly under the Government of India. Nehru too supported that idea. However, a tactic was devised not to make the Nagas think that the Government of India was relenting to the Nagas' demand so they won't ask for more – complete independence. To do this, Dutt convinced the Governor and the Chief Minister of Assam "that whilst the separation of Naga Hills from Assam should be accepted in principle, no unilateral decision should be announced and that the request for the separation should formally come from a representative of Naga convention and the Government of India should generously accept it as a token of their good faith towards the Nagas" (Mulik 1972:315).

By this time the Nagas were getting tired of the atrocities perpetrated by the Indian Army, and the moderates among the NNC leaders were seeking a way to find a political settlement to end the misery of the people. These moderates played into the hands of the Indian Intelligence, maneuvered by Dutt, to call for a Naga People's Convention (NPC) to decide the future of the Nagas. Eventually it was leaders of the NPC that negotiated with Nehru for the statehood of Nagaland comprising of the Naga Hills District and the Tuensang Frontier Division under the 16-point Agreement between the Government of India and the NPC with provisions that contiguous Naga areas would later on form part of the state of Nagaland. On December 1, 1963, Nagaland became the sixteenth state within the Indian Union with special provisions under Article 371 A of the Indian Constitution:

> Special provision with respect to the State of Nagaland.-
> (1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution,-
> (a) no Act of Parliament in respect of-
> (i) religious or social practices of the Nagas,
> (ii) Naga customary law and procedure,
> (iii) administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law,
> (iv) ownership and transfer of land and its resources, shall apply to the State of Nagaland unless the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland by a resolution so decides. (Constitution of India)

On the surface it looked as if India had privileged the Nagas through affirmative actions such as reservations – for education and employment – and constitutional provisions. But the fact remained that Nagas were still divided in the four states of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam and Arunachal, and in two countries, India and Burma rather than as an independent entity.

Cease-Fires and Peace Talks: The Naga Baptist Church Council (NBCC) has been in the forefront of mediating peace between the Indian Government and the Nagas. Engulfed by the violence that was leading the Nagas nowhere, the NBCC at their meeting in Wokha in January 1963, decided to broker a cease-fire between the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN) leaders and the Indian Government. The NBCC asked the Government of Nagaland to set up a Peace Mission for this purpose. Both the FGN and the Government of India agreed to the concept of the Peace Mission. Jayaprakash Narayan, Vinobha Bhave the Director of the Sarvodaya movement, B.P Chaliha, the Chief Minister of Assam, and Rev. Michael Scott, an Anglican priest who protested against the apartheid policies in South Africa, were selected as members of the Peace Mission. Ultimately only Jayaprakash Narayan, Michael Scott and B.P. Chaliha served on the team. The team began meeting from April 5, 1964, onwards. As a result of their efforts, a cease-fire

between the FGN and the Government of India was declared on September 6, 1964. The cease-fire agreement was signed by Governor Vishnu Sahay, representing the Government of India, and by Zashie Huire, Biseto Medom, and L. Zhenito representing the Federal Government of Nagaland. The terms of the cease-fire agreement stated:

> The undertakings that have been given by each side for the period of the cease-fire (one month in the first instance) are as follows:
> The Security Forces will not undertake –
> a. jungle operation;
> b. raiding of camps of the underground;
> c. patrolling beyond one thousand yards of Security posts;
> d. searching of villages;
> e. aerial action;
> f. arrests; and
> g. imposition of labour by way of punishment.
>
> During this period fines connected with allegations of complicity with underground activities will not be imposed.
>
> The Federal Government of Nagaland also undertake to suspend –
> a. sniping and ambushing;
> b. imposition of fines;
> c. kidnapping and recruitment;
> d. sabotage activities;
> e. raiding and firing at Security posts, towns and administrative centers; and
> f. moving with arms in towns, villages and administrative centers, wherever there was Security posts and approaching 1,000 (one thousand) yards of the Security posts. (Press release issued by the Peace Mission, August 20, 1964)

According to the cease-fire agreement, Peace Talks were to be held after September 6, 1964, and the talks were to be 'free and frank' without prejudice by either side to the principles and aims of the other. From the first round of talks onwards, the FGN representative Zashei Huire stressed the two-nation theory (see also Means and Means 1966:300). This, of course, was unacceptable to India. When the FGN representative, Isak Swu, reiterated this at the second round of talks, Y.D. Gundevia, the leader of the Indian team is supposed to have replied, "All we are trying to persuade you to realize is

that we are really not two nations living side by side. That is not our way of looking at the problem" (Means and Means 1966:300). At the end of the round of talks, the Peace Mission issued the following proposals:

> On the other hand, the NFG could on their own volition decide to be a participant in the Union of India and mutually settle the terms and conditions for that purpose. On the other hand, the Government of India could consider to what extent the pattern and structure of the relationship between the Nagaland and the Government of India should be adopted and recast, so as to satisfy the political aspirations of all sections of Naga opinion and to make it possible for the ideals of peace as expressed in the Naga Peace Declaration to be substantially realized. (Khodao Papers)

In order that peace should continue in Nagaland, the Peace Mission also suggested, "whereupon both the parties had unequivocally affirmed and declared that they would renounce war and violence as a means for political settlement." But the proposals also added: "The Peace Mission's proposal following this bilateral declaration of renunciation of war, to deposit all underground arms in safe custody and to withdraw all Indian Security forces from law and order duties could not unfortunately, be implemented" (Peace Mission Proposals 1964). According to Michael Scott, the proposal floundered on the very practical question of who was to act first (Scott; see also Means and Means 1966:301). In order that both parties would pursue the renunciation of use of armed forces, the Peace Mission also suggested:

> … the NFG require all arms issued to its forces to be concentrated at one or several places, in their armouries and under their custody so that there can be no basis for any future complaint of their forces parading with arms or extorting money or supplies under threat. They should also seriously ask themselves whether further recruiting and movement out of Nagaland towards Pakistan does not create an impression that these are only acts preparatory towards resumption of hostilities and if so, they should take remedial measure by putting a stop to such recruitment and movement. The Government of India should ensure that its security forces and the civil administration do continue to abide strictly with the terms of the agreement, both in spirit and letter. (Khodao Papers)

Six rounds of talks were held between the Nagas and the Government of India ending with the one on October 3,1967. At the end of the talks, it was back to square one and peace eluded Nagaland. The Nagas insisted on fighting for "their birth right to independence," and the Government of India also continued to insist on finding a solution within the Indian Union. The gulf between the Naga and the Government of India was too wide, and neither side was ready for an alternative resolution. In February 1966, Jayaprakash Narayan resigned from the Peace Mission and, following a bomb blast at Lumding and Diphu in which the Naga armed forces were implicated, Chaliha also resigned in May, 1966. The Government of India became suspicious that Michael Scott was helping the Nagas and was deported from India in the same month.[16]

Shillong Accord and the Formation of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland: On June 26, 1975, the Indira Gandhi led government declared a state of National Emergency for the entire country. Following this, Nagaland was placed under President's Rule. Operations by the Indian Armed Forces resumed in the Naga areas; many nationalists and sympathizers and suspects were jailed. Under conditions of intense violence that the Nagas faced, some members of the NNC, without the consent of the senior NNC leaders, signed an accord with the Indian government on November 11, 1975, commonly known as the Shillong Accord. Under the Shillong Accord, "the representatives of the [Naga] underground organizations conveyed their decision, on their own volition to accept, without condition the Constitution of India" (Shimray 2005:102). Further, the undergrounds agreed to surrender all arms and ammunitions. However, top NNC leaders

[16] The immediate cause for Scott's deportation seems to have been his interest in internationalizing the Naga cause by trying to communicate with the UN Secretary-General.

such as Phizo, the President of NNC, Khodao Yanthan, Isak Swu and Muivah were not signatory to the Accord. At the meeting of the Naga National Assembly on August 15 to 16, 1976, the Shillong Accord was rejected and denounced as a sell-out of Naga's rights and the meeting resolved to continue the nationalist struggle. Phizo, the NNC President who was already in London then to garner international support for the Nagas, was asked to denounce the Accord, but he failed to do so. In the next few years there were killings within the nationalists between the supporters of the Accord and those that rejected it. As the NNC was seen by many nationalists to have lost credibility because of the Shillong Accord, with the failure of Phizo to condemn the Accord, and with the widening rift and escalating violence between the supporters of the Accord and the non-supporters, on January 31, 1980, senior NNC members under the leadership of Isak Chishi Swu, Thungleng Muivah and S.S. Khaplang dissociated themselves from the NNC and formed the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). The result of the Shillong Accord, instead of solving the Naga issue, caused a split within the nationalists into NNC and NSCN.

Creation of NSCN-IM and NSCN-K: Relationships within the ranks of the NSCN, however, soured due to a struggle for leadership. In April 1988, Khaplang and some of his supporters attacked the NSCN camp. Khaplang was expelled, and he subsequently formed his own organization under the name National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) or NSCN-K, with headquarters in Myanmar even though many of the members operate from within Nagaland and Manipur. Meanwhile, the other NSCN members continued under the leadership of Isak Swu as the Chairman and Muivah as

Secretary as National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) or NSCN-IM with headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand, and Hebron Camp, Nagaland.

Fig. 3. A map issued by the NSCN-IM showing the current Northeast Indian states with the proposed map of Nagaland (Nagalim) highlighted in blue.

Differing Voices

Khonoma: However, within the Naga society itself there are different and at times conflicting histories of Naga nationalism. At a local level, in the Khonoma village of Angami Nagas, the struggle to defend their territory and independent life began in 1832, when the British passed through the Angami Naga territory for the first time to establish a route between Manipur and Assam. The British party led by Captain Francis Jenkins and R. B. Pemberton along with 700 soldiers and 800 porters was attacked by Khonoma people. From the Khonoma village's perspective, a monolith that tells the story of the Semoma Fort at Khonoma symbolizes the history of Naga nationalism that began with the British contact and later on with the Indian state. The fort was first constructed in 1825, the first Anglo-Khonoma battle from this fort in 1850, the second Anglo-Khonoma battle and the first demolition of the fort in1879, the second reconstruction of the fort in 1890, the second demolition of the fort by the British government owing to an internal conflict in 1906, the third reconstruction of the fort in 1919, the third demolition of the fort during Indo-Naga conflict in 1956, and, the fourth reconstruction of the fort in 1990. The story of the Semoma fort tells the story from the pre-British construction of the fort to postcolonial struggles against India.

Such narratives are also substantiated in folk songs such as one from Khonoma:

> You from far unknown valley;
> Looking more ghost-like than man;
> With peculiar wooden toys;
> Crushing neighbors without much efforts;
> Have settled in our land.
> May we with good fortune
> Conquer and defeat …
> And have our peace once again. (Sakhrie 2006)

Fig. 4. Semoma Fort at Khonoma (Photo by Abraham Lotha).

Other monuments in the village attest to the wars between the British and the people of Khonoma, such as the monument for Damant who was killed in battle in 1879.

Fig. 5. A monument in Khonoma for G.H. Damant who was killed on October 4, 1879 (Photo by Abraham Lotha).

Asoso Yonuo: For Yonuo, on the other hand, Naga nationalism begins with the siege of Kohima in 1879, which he calls the 'war of Naga independence' (1974:99). However, politically, one of the early articulations of a pan-Naga nationalism was made by the Naga members of the Allied Labour Corps in France during the First World War, who according to Yonuo:

> … brought back accounts as to how the great civilized nations fought for their ends and interests while Nagas were condemned as barbarous for their head-hunting wars. Second, the intercourse among the different Nagas of different tribes in France, far from their homes fostered mutual love, service and a sense of political unity which manifested itself in their verbal resolution that on return to their land they would work for friendship and unity among themselves and give up their nasty weaknesses like head-hunting and village feud. It was this spirit which spearheaded an upsurge of the Naga nationalist movement. (1974:125-126)

The outcome of this sense of solidarity and political unity among the Naga Labour Corps members and the example of other states was the formation of the Naga Club in 1918 upon their return home. According to Yonuo even though at its inception it was social rather than political in character, the Naga Club eventually "developed a political outlook and raised its will against British imperialism in a peaceful and loyal manner" (1974:131). From 1918 onwards, Yonuo also follows the dominant historical narrative.

***Haipou Jadonang*:** Zeliangrong Nagas also point out a precursor to Naga nationalism. Around the late 1920s, a socio-religious reformer, Haipou Jadonang came on the scene as a political leader among the Zeme, Liangmei, Rongmei and Puimei Nagas who are also collectively known as Zeliangrong. He saw the Zeliangrong people suffer from forced labor, imposition of house tax, physical torture, humiliation and extreme poverty under the yoke of British rule. He prophesied that the British Raj would come to an end and would be replaced by Makaam Guangdi (Naga Raj). The Makaam Guangdi (Naga Raj)

does not mean Naga kingdom although some would popularly like to interpret it as such. What Jadonang actually meant was that the British rule would be replaced by Makaam (Naga) rule[17]. There would be no house tax, no forced labor, and no poverty during the Makaam Guangdi. He initiated the no-tax campaign and even mobilized and trained 500 Rihphyan (warriors) to fight the British. The British saw him as a threat to their political dominance and imprisoned him on December 6th 1928, but released him three days later. In the following years, Jadonang's popularity as a socio-religious reformer and political leader grew among the Zeliangrong people. In an article for the *Souvenir* that was brought out for the 75th death anniversary of Jadonang, Gangmumei Kamei (2006), a Naga historian, says that Jadonang was charged with four crimes: 1. self-declaration of Jadonang as a God; 2. proclamation of Naga Raj; 3. declaration of war against the Government and the Kukis; and, 4. obstructing the Census work of 1931. The Political Agent, J.C. Higgin, found no evidence to support these charges, but Jadonang was falsely implicated in the murder of four Meitei traders, was arrested in 1930, and hanged in Imphal on 29th August 1931. Jadonang was influenced by Gandhi's policy of non-cooperation and his freedom struggle against the British was anti-colonial but not in terms of Naga nationalism. As Kamei (2006) points out in his message for the *Souvenir*, Jadonang's anti-British struggle has been interpreted as part of India's freedom struggle and as a precursor of the Naga National Movement.

Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee (Indira), (NPCC (I): There have also been dissenting voices from pro-India Nagas to such historical narratives by Naga nationalists. In 2000, the Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee (Indira), NPCC (I), published a

[17] This was communicated to me by Gangmumei Kamei in an interview during my visit to Khambiron.

booklet called *Bedrock of Naga Society* (*Bedrock* hereafter). In short, the booklet described the Statehood of Nagaland as the Bedrock of Naga society (NPCC (I) 2000:10). According to S.C. Jamir and the leader of the NPCC (I) party, then, the Nagas were not a people. The opening paragraph of *Bedrock* stated: "The 16-Point Agreement of 1960 … was also one of the best things to have happened to the Naga people because it led to the birth of Statehood – on whose firm foundation our society is built. … due to the Agreement, for the first time, the world recognized the territory of the Nagas as Nagaland" (NPCC (I) 2000:1). Secondly, arguing against Naga nationalists' claims that Statehood compromised the sovereignty of Nagas because Nagas were a separate independent entity from time immemorial, *Bedrock* claimed that Nagas had neither a definite and unified political structure nor did they exist as a nation. The truth, according to *Bedrock*, was that Nagas "were actually a group of heterogeneous, primitive and diverse tribes living in far-flung villages that had very little in common and negligible contact with each other. … Every village was practically an entity in itself. A village does not make a nation. … In these circumstances, the question of a unified 'Naga nation' did not arise" (NPCC (I) 2000:2-3). According to *Bedrock*, "the plain fact is we [Nagas] never existed as an independent, unified nation at any time in our history" (NCC (I) 2000:4). Ironically, though, the author(s) of *Bedrock* considered this as objective truths and substantiated their arguments based on sources written by British surveyors and administrators: "There is enough documentation recorded by the British administrators, some as late as the end of the 19th century, which gives the correct picture as it existed" (NPCC (I) 2000:3). For instance, R. B. McCabe's statement was used to describe the Naga way of life: "Grouped in small communities of from 100 to 3,000 persons, the

Nagas have remained isolated on their hill tops, only deigning to visit their immediate neighbors when a longing for the possession of their heads become too strong to be resisted" (NPCC (I) 2000:4).

Reactions to *Bedrock* were quick. The Naga Hoho condemned the booklet as "more violent than the violence itself" and added that "the NPCC betrayed the NNC [Naga National Council] by undoing the 1951 plebiscite [by] bringing the state of Nagaland as a substitute to sovereign state" (NSF 2000:17). The Naga Students' Federation (NSF) were up in arms against such a historical narrative and condemned *Bedrock* outright as derogatory stating, "it attempted to distort the facts of a race which suffered immensely in the course of its history and tried to nullify all the struggles, pains and sacrifices the people undertook" (NSF 2000:3). On November 30, 2000, the NSF made a bonfire out of thousands of copies of the booklet. A framed burned copy of the *Bedrock* hanging in the NSF's office fiercely contests such a discourse. A Press Communiqué issued by the NSF also said, "the NSF was provoked to resort to its own course of action because the booklet says that the Nagas were without history and were savages and barbarians which is not so" (NSF 2000:22). The communiqué responded to all the points stated by the NPCC particularly the claim for history. Among others, the NSF stated, "the 16 Point Agreement was responsible for deviating [sic] the Naga nationalism resulting into killing of Nagas by Nagas, extortions, money culture reducing the Nagas to a level of commodities in front of Delhi" (NSF 2000:23). The NSF also accused the NPCC (I) saying "that by dehumanizing and distorting all the Nagas race and history, they also have declared themselves as bastards without any origin of their own" (NSF 2000:23). At the Nagaland Legislative Assembly session in 2007, the leader of the Nagaland Congress

Party, Imkong, was accused as being anti-Naga based on *Bedrock*. "It [the content of the book] was a mistake and is not an issue anymore," he replied.

Fig. 6. The handwritten inscription on the green background reads: "Naga Students' Federation condemned the Bedrock of Naga Society because it distorts the basic history of the Nagas. NSF burnt this booklet on 30th November 2000 in front of NSF office" (Photo by Abraham Lotha).

From Village-States to Nation

In examining the history and development of Naga nationalism, it is important to understand what the Nagas consider important to them. What are the Nagas fighting for? Every nation has a past, and as Hobsbawm says, "what makes a nation is the past, [and that] which justifies one nation against others is the past" (Hobsbawm 1992:3). From time immemorial, as Nagas say, Nagas lived in independent village-states. Politically, Naga nationalists argue that the corner stone on which Naga nationalism is founded is the history of independent village-states. It is in defending the independence of these individual villages-states that Naga nationalism began. In one sense, one can argue that the history of Naga nationalism evolved from a defense of independent village-states that eventually developed into a political struggle for the establishment of the pan-Naga nation-state.

Initially, the resistances to intrusions such as by the British were confined to the defense of particular villages. According to Visier Sanyu, a history scholar from Khonoma, "the study of almost half a century from 1832 to 1880 shows how the Angamis, so small in manpower and materials, did not permit the British to gain a permanent foothold in the Naga Hills" (1996:99). The Angami Nagas, particularly Khonoma, fought the British from 1832 onwards, but it was individual villages such as Khonoma or Mezoma and not the Angami people as a whole who fought the British. The Nagas were hostile to the survey activities by the British. In 1875, Lt. Holcombe, who led the survey party, was killed along with 131 men. Mezoma battled with the British again in December 1877. Similarly in the Lotha area, it was the people of Wokha and Pangti villages that resisted

the British individually. As a matter of fact, Captain Butler, the Political Agent, went through a number of Lotha villages without any opposition only to be killed in 1875 at the periphery of Pangti village, which had planned to ambush him and his convoy to oppose the survey activities of the British. In retaliation, the British, led by Lieutenant Woodthorpe, burnt Pangti village. By March 1875, the headquarters of the Naga Hills was shifted from Samagudting to Wokha in the Lotha area to control the Nagas and to prevent them from intruding on British subjects in the neighboring areas of Assam.

Initially, as Robert Reid says, it was "the necessity of protecting the borders of Nowgong and Sibsagar against raiding Nagas which in the early days compelled us to penetrate into the hills little by little which ceased with the formation of the Naga Hills District" (in Yonuo 1974:107). Later, instances of headhunting and warfare in Naga villages beyond the administered villages led the British to adopt an expansion policy as a result of which the British frontier in the Naga Hills moved forward (Yonuo 1974:107). It was only in 1879 for the first time that thirteen Angami village-states banded together with a force of about 6000 men to attack the British stockade at Kohima. In an attempt to maintain order in the Naga Hills, and to bring the Nagas into complete submission, the British occupied Kohima as the headquarters of the Naga Hills District. The British also sought to levy taxes on the villages beyond Kohima. In response to such moves by the British, the Angamis in the surrounding areas retaliated and attacked the British stockade at Kohima in October 1879, a siege lasting eleven days that resulted in a near defeat of the British. According to Sanyu, "it was the siege of Kohima that united many Naga villages against a common enemy" (1996:104). The British battle with the Angami villages continued

until the spring of 1880, after a day of intense fighting that ended with the defeat of Khonoma which has been recorded as the severest colonial battle in the Naga Hills.

The war of 1879-1880 led to the establishment, in 1881, of Kohima as the headquarters of the Naga Hills as a British district. Gradually, the independent village-states in the Naga Hills "came into the rule of a different people (the British), a different religion and different ways of life" (Yonuo 1974:110). A house tax of Rupees 3 was levied on the Angamis and Rupees 2 for the other Nagas, which continues to this day. When the Angami Nagas of Khonoma fought the British in the late 19th century, they were not defending the Naga nation. The war of 1879-1880, however ill-organized, was an important marker in Naga nationalism that saw a transition from fighting for individual independent village-states to an alliance of a number of villages. At this stage, though, Naga nationalism was still confined to the solidarity of a few villages that united against the British, and did not include the Nagas as a whole; the concept of a pan-Naga identity and a unified Naga nation was yet to be developed although Nagas still recognized a kinship in each other.

The formation of the Naga Club in 1918 was the act that began to articulate pan-Naga political aspirations. In the Naga Club members' memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1929, the idea of standing up for a pan-Naga right of independence "as in ancient times" appears, but Naga nationalism was still not yet articulated in terms of an aspiration for an independent Naga nation. In the 1940s, Naga nationalists such as T. Sakhrie began to moot for an interim government (until the Nagas could stand on their own feet) with

the aim of ultimately forming an independent Naga nation. By then, the events of decolonization after World War II leading to the creation of new states in the former colonized areas of Asia and Africa, and the tide of Indian nationalism influenced Naga nationalist leaders with the immediacy and urgency of forming a Naga nation. By August 1947, following disagreements with their Indian counterparts over the issue of an interim government for ten years, the idea of an independent Naga nation fully evolved with the NNC leaders' declaration of Naga Independence on August 14, 1947. From what was British India, if the formation of Pakistan was based on religion, the declaration for an independent Nagaland was based on ethnicity (non-Indian) and the ideology of "colonial free" (free from the British and Indian) history. A high point in this historical narrative was the Joint Communiqué issued by the NSCN-IM and the representative of the Government of India in Amsterdam on July 1, 2002, following the talks that stated: "The Government of India recognized the unique history and situation of Nagas. It is agreed that talks should proceed in an accommodative and forward-looking manner so that a lasting and honorable solution can be arrived at" (NSCN-IM 2006:43).

Nagalim

A clarification regarding the use of the name 'Nagaland' and 'Nagalim' needs mentioning here. Naga nationalists from early on used 'Nagaland' to refer to all the areas inhabited by the Nagas, including those in Myanmar and in the Indian states of Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and present day Nagaland. After the creation of Nagaland (comprising of the Naga Hills and Tuensang Frontier Division) in 1963 as the sixteenth state in the Indian Union, 'Nagaland' began to be increasingly associated with the state of

Nagaland. But the nationalists, particularly the radicals, considered the state of Nagaland as a sell-out of Nagas' rights and continued to use 'Nagaland' as referring to all the Naga inhabited areas, and the nationalist struggle was geared towards the integration of all Naga areas under one administrative unit. However, by early 1990s, the NSCN-IM, in particular, began to use 'Greater Nagaland' to differentiate the whole Naga territory from the state of Nagaland. In 1993, the Naga Students' Federation (NSF)[18] decided to use 'Nagalim' replacing the word 'land' with an indigenous Naga term '*lim*' which means 'land' in Ao and Lotha. The objective of the NSF was for a 'Unified Nagalim'. The NSF's explanation of the concept of a 'Unified Lim,' stated:

> The history of the Nagas has not been free from controversy due to geographical and narrow politics where "**divide and rule**" tactics has (sic) been employed from within and without. The affect (sic) of the tactics has been a blow to the unity and identity of Nagas. The political and geographical factors have given rise to a kind of psychological block where we refuse to understand and accept our own; further coloured by certain oral traditions. Consequently, Nagas have been conditioned to a limited and narrow world-view. (NSF, "For a Unified Naga Lim" 1995: 2-3. emphasis original)

Taking a cue from the NSF, from 1998 onwards, the NSCN-IM has been in the forefront to used the name 'Nagalim' as, according to them, the struggle is not only for the Nagas

[18] The word LIM was first coined during the days of NNC. With the formation of KUKNALIM derived from two [Naga] dialects. "KUK" derived from Tenyidie word "kuo" "victory and "NA" as people Naga and "LIM" from Ao dialect "limah" land. So "kuknalim" in its fullest meaning means victory to people and land. Later in 1982 when Z. Lohe was the President of the Naga Students Federation … resolved a new theme or motto of NSF as "for a greater Lim and glory of the Nagas." … In 1993 with Mr. K. Temjen Jamir as the President of the NSF and Mr. Theja Therieh as the Speaker of the conference theme for the fifteen (sic) General conference of the NSF at Ukhrul was "for a unified Nagalim". When Vikheho Swu took over as the President of NSF and Neiba Kronu as the Speaker, on the endorsement of the 15th General Conference of the Federal Assembly at Ukhrul a Commission was formed to work out the concept of the Unified Nagalim. The commission consisted of Rev. Dr. Wati Aier, Dr. Visier Sanyu, Dr. T. Shishak, and NSF Executives. The Commission brought out a brochure called 'for a unified Nagalim' in 1995 at the NSF 16th General Conference at Phek. We were also informed that NPMHR has adopted its usage in 1996. Then in 1999 the NSCN started using as "National Socialist Council of Nagalim" in place of Nagaland. Subsequent to this, debate on "Nagalim" is a history. We were wondering as to why NSF has not been able to clarify when confusion arose with the use of the term Nagalim. We believe that coining our nation's name by ourselves will also help to debate over the context of its usage. It is in the interest of the common public to be informed about such coinage. ('Genesis of Nagalim' by Sakhrie Angami, Azeto Sumi, N. Chakhesang, Moa Ao, Sekhosie, North Eastern Hill University. Source: provided by Dolly Kikon).

in the Indian state of Nagaland, but for all the Nagas. Since Naga nationalism involves all the Nagas areas, for the purpose of this thesis I use the name 'Nagaland' to refer to all the Naga inhabited territory unless otherwise specified as the state of Nagaland.

Current Cease-fire and Peace Talks

Since the early 1990s, the NSCN-IM has been actively involved in internationalizing the Naga cause. With the encouragement and support of European and North American non-governmental organizations such as the Flemish Support Group for Indigenous People (KWIA), Justice and Peace Center (South Boston), World Baptist Alliance, Minority Rights Group (MRG), Naga Vigil Group (London), and with pressure from United Nations organizations such as Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), the NSCN-IM and the Indian Government declared a ceasefire effective from August 1, 1997. Peace-Talks between the NSCN-IM and the Government of India (GOI) were to take place during the ceasefire under bilaterally agreed upon principles:

i. The political talks would be unconditional.
ii. The talks would be held at the highest level (Prime Minister's level).
iii. The talks would be conducted in third neutral countries. (People's Republic of Nagalim 2006:19)

Based on these principles, the ceasefire has been extended a number of times up to the present moment, and the Peace-Talks between the NSCN-IM and the GOI continue. Eleven years of ceasefire and nearly 60 rounds of talks have yielded no concrete results. But the negotiations continue. In the meantime, the fights between the various factions of the Naga nationalists continue unabated. Currently, various civilian groups such as the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) and Forum for Reconciliation have been

facilitating reconciliation between the warring factions. The NSCN-IM has adopted the following framework for the current ongoing Peace-Talks with India:

1. The unique history of the Nagas has to be recognized by India.
2. Indian interests also have to be considered.
3. Nagas to have their own Constitution that would cover the competencies of Naga areas.
4. The nature of relationship between Nagalim and India has to be a federal structure through the Constitutions of India and Nagalim.
5. Any settlement should be incorporated in the Indian and Nagalim Constitutions in such a way that change will have to be bilateral.

But as Isak Swu, the Chairman of NSCN-IM, said to me in an interview, "The Indian delegation has not given a formal answer to these proposals."

Factional Implosion

Meanwhile, what has overshadowed the ongoing ceasefire and the peace-talks between the NSCN-IM and the GOI is factional violence within and among the Naga nationalists that has characterized the movement. In 2008 alone, from January 1 to July 10, there were 104 killings due to factional hostilities and related incidences (*Morung Express*, July 12, 2008). People have become tired of routine forced taxations, intimidations, extortions and factional killings. In a concept paper inviting all mass based organizations, intellectuals, political parties, churches and concerned citizens for a dialogue on the prevailing political atmosphere on October 25, 2006, the Naga Hoho described the current anomaly of the Naga political problem thus:

> We fought more wars among our own people than the wars with Indian state under the banner of Nagas' cry for sovereignty. Hatred, jealousy, tribalism, etc. have dominated the movement. … The political atmosphere, involving social and the political activities in the home front is not very encouraging. Insecurity and abhorrence have been instilled in the minds of the people owing to various forms of killings continuing even during the Cease-Fire period. … Rampant taxation/extortion imposed upon the public and bizarre accumulation of wealth by

> national workers is another matter of great concern. No doubt, any political movement or revolutionary group survived only when there was selfless contribution from the people and history will never deny that. However, in the context of Naga freedom movement, the national workers must prove that they are worthy of their cause. (Naga Hoho, A Perceptive dialogue 2006)

Naga nationalism seems to be on the verge of getting drowned in the whirlpool of factional rivalries instead of focusing on putting up a united front in the negotiations with India. The fear, as Daiho Mao says, is that "the continuing factional killings defying the hue and cry from the public is not only about loss of precious lives but also seemingly the diminishing spirit of Naga nationalism among a large section of the Naga younger generation. "*Aji kiman Naga minus hoise?* (How many Nagas have been 'minused' today?) has replaced the 'popular' every morning buzzword in [sic] from newspaper readers: *Kiman morise* (How many died?)" (Mao 2008). In the process, much of the goodwill and energy of the Naga public is spent on efforts to reconcile and unite the warring factions.

CHAPTER II

OF NATIONS, NATIONALISM AND ETHNONATIONALISM: A BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

Debates on the origins of nations and nationalism have been staple fodder in nationalism studies. Among scholars on nationalism, I will divide broadly two schools of thought: those who are proponents of internal factors as the predominant criteria that create nations and nationalism, and those who propose external factors as the ultimate reasons for nations and nationalism. Though not strictly, the first group emphasizes the essentialist character of nations, while the second group emphasizes the secular, rationalist and constructed nature of nations. The former school of thought, consisting of primordialists, perennialists, and ethno-symbolists is represented by people such as John Armstrong (1982) and Anthony Smith (1986, 1996), while modernists such as Benedict Anderson (1983) and Ernest Gellner (1981) represent the latter group. By explaining the arguments poised by these two groups, I hope to examine how such frameworks can help in understanding the articulation of a particular case of non-state ethnonationalism.

Primordialists, Perennialists and Ethno-symbolists

Primordialists hold that nations are a natural given existing from time immemorial. This is the view of most ethnonationalists who are proponents of the antiquity and naturalness of ethnicity or nation, for example, Tekin Alp (1970) for Turkish nationalism and Admantios Koraes (1970) for Greek nationalism. In order to distance themselves from the extreme stance of the primordialists who see nations as a natural given, scholars such

as Smith have differentiated the 'perennialists' who disagree that nations are primordial, and argue, instead, that nations are historic entities that have existed for a long time and continue to develop in the course of history without changing their essential characteristics. Among scholars associated with perennialists are Josep R. Llobera (1994) and Adrian Hastings (1997). Hastings, for instance, recommended England as a prototype of a nation and a nation-state that emerged before the eighteenth century, even as early as the late tenth century (1997:2-5). Though without giving specific date, Llobera (1994) also traced the origin of European nations to the Middle Ages. Another perennialist, Armstrong (1982), though not arguing for a primordial existence of nations, investigated the pre-modern origins of 'nation before nationalism' in Europe and the Islamic Mediterranean, tracing the origin of nations to secular and religious sources – e.g. the influence of Greek polis for the territorialization of identity and the influence of Christianity for the formation of nations in Europe. Miroslav Hroch (1985; 1996) also argued for the existence of sociological 'nations' that developed over a long period in Eastern Europe going back to the beginning of the Middle Ages.

Among other perennialists, Smith (1986) claimed the ethnic origin of nations to be from antiquity. For Smith, "modern nations are not as 'modern' as modernists would have us believe" (1986:212). Smith (1986, 1996) argued that nations may be modern but are rooted in the past of its members. But Smith is also associated predominantly with the ethno-symbolism approach which defines nations in terms of common origin, ethnicity and cultural ties. So, for Smith, nationalists in 19th century Europe often saw the state as a

political entity belonging to an ethnic group whose traditions it promulgated. According to Smith:

> First, nations are not static targets, to be attained once-for-all. They are processes, albeit long-term ones. … Second, nations require ethnic cores if they are to survive. If they lack one, they must 're-invent' one. That means discovering a suitable and convincing past which can be reconstructed and re-presented to members and outsiders. … Third, much of the missionary zeal of modern nationalism in new states takes its content and inspiration from the 'demotic' type of *ethnie.* … Fourth, nations need homelands, not just terrain on which to nurture their identities, unities and autonomies, but historic territories in which 'our ancestors' lived and which 'we carry in our hearts.' That is why the monuments and sacred sites which embody 'our' ancestral title-deeds and memories, are so crucial for engendering a sense of common nationality. … Finally, nations need heroes and golden ages. (1986:212-213)

Specifically on a collective level, Smith argued the existence of core networks of association and culture (1996:108) upon which nationalism is formed. In other words, it is a 'demotic' *ethnie*, in which "the fund of cultural myths, symbols, memories and values was transmitted not only from generation to generation, but also throughout the territory occupied by the community or its enclaves, and down the social scale" (1996:117). As Smith argued further, "if an *ethnie*, or its spokesmen, can present a distinctive culture and believable history of its own, there is a *prima facie* case for according it the status of a 'nation' and re-organizing society to transform it into an inclusive and mobilized nation with its own territory and economy" (1986:218). These subjective factors, Smith said, "are potent signs and explanations, they possess explosive power that goes far beyond the 'rational' uses which elites and social scientists deem appropriate" (1986:201). But Smith also made a connection between the premodern and the modern through the intellectuals who reinvent past traditions, myths and memories for the cause of nationalism (1981; 1986).

The politicization of culture is a common characteristic of ethnonationalism. Certain aspects of cultures are objectified, antiquated, reified and essentialized through various ways to legitimate nationalistic claims. A classic example of this is Richard Handler's *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (1988). Through interpenetration of nationalist ideology and social science theory, Handler focused on the objectification of Quebec nationalist ideology. Handler argued that nationalists and anthropologists objectify culture and attribute to it boundaries and physical properties. In Quebec, nationalists have done this through emphasizing its *patrimoine*, folklore and the founding of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Specifically, certain internal elements are considered as core components by primordialists and perennialists. For instance, for Herder, language is the primary core of a nation. For Herder, "every distinct community is a *nation* having its own national culture as it has its own language" (White 2005:171). The mother tongue, in official dignity, "should be second to none; in its appeal to our deepest emotions its power is unequalled. … The rallying point of struggling peoples is their speech" (Guerard 1934:3). Folklore is another example. Uli Linke (1990), while tracing the history of folklore as part of the broader history of anthropology, showed the emergence of folklore scholarship in eighteenth-century Germany as linked to two distinct political movements: romantic nationalism and administrative particularism. Whereas romantic folklorists tried to unite the German nation based on a common cultural heritage by reconstructing ancient German traditions, administrative folklorists sought to increase the governing power of single German states by 'knowing' the population through studying local folk cultures. The former helped to construct a German nation, while for the latter, folklore was a tool of the state.

Supplementing ethnic factors such as language, culture, and polity as elements that define nationhood, Winichakul argued that "nationhood was literally 'formed' by the demarcation of its body, the territoriality of a nation" (1996:67). As in the case of Siam in the late nineteenth century, "the form-ation' of the geo-body of Siam demarcated the positive (what is Siam) as well as the negative (what is not Siam)" (Winichakul 1996:68). The mapping of Siam became a new representation of Siamese nationhood. The principles of 'blood' and 'territory' have been important in group kinship and political community in South Asia too. As Graham Clarke (1996) pointed out, common territory is an important identity marker in the Himalayas (1996:108). In another Asian context, Mark Elliot (2000) pointed out how memory plays an important role in keeping alive the myths of origins, sacred mountains, landscapes, and rituals associated with it, confirmed the imperially defined Manchu identity. Discussing the role of memory and geography in nation building, Elliot argued that the toponym, 'Manchuria,' appeared to have survived as a result of three factors: 1. geographic imagination of a unique identity, 'Greater Mukden,' based on ritual, literary and administrative strategies of the Manchu rulers; 2. the emperor's wish to emphasize the distinctiveness of the *Manzhou* (the name for the diverse Jurchen tribes) *vis-à-vis* the Han Chinese; and, 3. the usage of cartography, imported by Jesuit missionaries, to demarcate the territory under Qing control. Manchuria, Elliot claimed, is a hybrid construction founded on memory and geography.

Religion is another important element that ethnonationalists point out as an ethnic marker for nationalism. Religion can be used as one of the cultural foundations of nationalism (Smith 1986, 1996, 2003, 2007) as well as a modernizing agent that intertwines with and

motivates nationalism. Smith pointed out that sacred sources sustain nationalism and provide it with a wide appeal. The objects of sacred sources are first, the community itself which sees itself as the 'chosen people' who are elected for a destiny; second, 'the holy land' which the chosen people consider as their God-given dwelling place, the memories and monuments associated with it (Jerusalem and Ayodhya are such examples); third, the great and glorious past of the people, and, finally, the sacrifices made by members of the community for the sacred destiny of the chosen people (Smith 1986, 1996, 2003 and 2007). Discussions on religion and nationalism have featured nationalism as secular religion starting from the French Revolution (Hayes 1960) and perfected as a doctrine (Kedourie 1960). From the Covenant and the myth of election in the Old Testament to the rise of nationalism in Europe such as in England and the Netherlands, to concepts of America as God's Land (O'Brien 1988) and God's new Israel (Cherry 1998), one can see the religious background of many modern nations rooted in the Bible. Irish nationalism is another example (O'Brien 1994). The current conflict in Northern Ireland is still portrayed as Catholics versus Protestants. So also religion and nationalism are entwined in contemporary Kosovo, Bosnia, in Hindutva in India, Islam in Palestine and Suni, Shiia in Iran in the Middle East, and Buddhism in Myanmar where the Junta considers Buddhism as the national religion. In India, Hindu fundamentalism often has ties to political tensions including the conflict between Hinduism and Islam in Kashmir, which further affirms the role of religion in nationalism.

A frequent product of the union of religion and nationalism is violence (Fox 2004). According to Barbara-Ann Rieffer (2003), the stronger the religious influence on

nationalism, the greater the likelihood that there will be discrimination and violence. Conflict and violence arising out of religion and nationalism can also be the result of beliefs in unique identities of people based on religion or the result of what Amartya Sen (2006) called the "miniaturization of people." A recent phenomenon of religion and nationalism, argued Catarina Kinnvall, is that globalization brings about existential anxiety, insecurity and threatened self-identity for which nationalism and religion as 'identity-signifiers' provide answers by supplying "particularly powerful stories and beliefs because of their ability to convey a picture of security, stability, and simple answers" (2004:742). Nationalism and religion, in this process, are "portrayed as resting on solid ground, as being *true*, thus creating a sense that the world really is what it appears to be" (Kinnvall 2004:742). Nationalist struggles have given rise to neotraditionalists who try to revive a monolithic cultural construct for the identity and culture of a people. On the other hand, revitalization of local identities, which in many cases also includes religious identities, has also given rise to nationalism particularly in Third World countries (Barber 1983, Friedman 1999).

Modernists, Constructivists or Nations as a Recent Origin

However, essentialist tendencies of the primordialists and perennialists have been questioned by modernists such as Anderson (1983), Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) who argued that nations as we know them today are recent constructs. For example, Hobsbawm and Ranger argued that the "very concept of territorial states of the currently standard type in their region (Jews or Middle Eastern Muslims) was barely thought of a century ago, and hardly became a serious prospect before the end of World War I"

(1983:14). Given the fact that cultural elements such as origin, blood, territory, religion, have a history of selection, filtering and association with power, Hobsbawm and Ranger pointed out:

> And just because so much of what subjectively makes up the modern 'nation' consists of such constructs and is associated with appropriate and, in general, fairly recent symbols or suitably tailored discourse (such as 'national history'), the national phenomenon cannot be adequately investigated without careful attention to the 'invention of tradition.'" (1983:14)

Barth also argued that it is "the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (1969:6). Barth emphasized that "ethnicity is a matter of social organization above and beyond questions of empirical cultural differences: it is about the social organization of cultural difference" (1969:6). Other scholars also challenge the givenness or naturalness of unchanging essential characteristics of a nation or ethnic groups. Elements such as religion and language are not self-perpetuating, instead they are often manipulated by interest groups, and are the result of conscious decisions made by those in power and the intelligentsia. Similarly the boundaries and territorial contents of groups are not constant but fluid. Or, as Tambiah said, "ethnic boundary-making has always been flexible and volatile, and ethnic groups have assimilated and expanded, or, in the opposite direction, differentiated and segmented, according to historical circumstances and political-economic possibilities" (1989:336).

In contrast to the primordialists and perennialists, modernists believe that nations and nationalism as we know them today are of modern (recent) origins. Modernists view nations as a byproduct of modern developments such as print capitalism (Anderson 1983) and industrialization (Gellner 1983, 1994). For modernists (Kohn 1944, Anderson 1983,

Greenfield 1992), nationalism originated in Europe. Kohn (1944) made a distinction between 'Western' (political) and 'Eastern' (ethnic) nationalisms. 'Eastern' or ethnonationalism arose among the 'backward' nations of Central or Eastern Europe and Asia in opposition to the advanced nations of Western Europe. Because the nation-state was perceived as the ultimate stage in the progressive evolution of human societies (MacLaughlin 1987), 'good' nationalism was associated with patriotism in the West where nationalism was believed to have originated, and 'bad' nationalism was associated with non-Western politics of violence particularly in the peripheries. Kohn also attributed the rise of nationalism in Asia and Africa to the alienated intellectuals of the former societies as primary agents (1970). Prominent agents among the ethnonationalists were alienated intellectuals whose reactions were against Enlightenment ideals that motivated progress in the West. Nationalist intellectuals – Western (such as Germany) and Eastern – advocated the natural, kinship and folk culture to substantiate their nationalist claims.

Modernists point out different external factors – political, economic, and cultural – as the primary factors responsible for the rise of nationalism. Anderson (1983) pointed out the role of education and print-capitalism for the emergence of modern nations. For Anderson, a nation is "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (1983; 1991:6). Nationalism for this 'imagined community' is rooted in print capitalism. Anderson argued that, "the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation " (1983; 1997:51). Illustrating nationalism as a modern

construct, Anderson argued that print-languages created national consciousness in three ways: First, print-languages created "unified fields of exchange and communication" that formed, among the fellow-readers, "the embryo of the nationally imagined community." Secondly, by giving fixity to a language, print-capitalism "helped to build that image of antiquity," and, thirdly, "print-capitalism created languages-of-power" (1983; 1997:49-50).

Among other influential modernists, Hechter (2000) argued that the dynamism in nationalism is due to inequalities between groups leading to attempts by culturally distinct peoples to attain self-determination. Ozkirimli also argued that nations are a "sociological necessity only in the modern world" (2000:85). While for a neo-Marxist like Nairn (1981), it is 'uneven development' that gives rise to nationalism. But Nairn's argument locates nationalism only in less developed countries and can be accused of economic reductionism.

One of the most influential modernists, Ernest Gellner (1983; 1997) proposed that nations and nationalism are the result of the process of modernization. The famous 'Warwick Debates' (1995) on nationalism between Gellner and Smith were characterized by Gellner's question, "Do nations have navels?" The debates concerned the origins of nations. Smith's stand was that though nations are not a 'natural' phenomenon or primordial and that though nations in the modern sense that we know them today have recent origins, it is an important characteristic that nations are rooted in the past. Gellner's characteristic reply was that Smith's ethnic cores are like the navel which

serves no function and therefore not needed. Instead of the ethnic cores, or networks of cultural factors, nationalism is rooted in "the distinctive structural requirements of industrial society" (Gellner 1983:35). Gellner did not see nationalism as a derivative from state-formation but as a necessary corollary of modernity. In the modern world, ethnic and cultural factors are transformed by economic and scientific changes. In this sense, nations and nationalism are the result of modern processes. Gellner defined nationalism as "the striving to make culture and polity congruent, to endow a culture with its own political roof, and not more than one roof at that" (1983:43). But what modern contingencies of a society gave rise to nationalism? For Gellner, nationalism is rooted in "the distinctive structural requirements of industrial society," a characteristic of modern societies (Gellner 1983:35). Nations are created because of the need to create a standardized and homogenous high culture to meet the demands created by industrialization. The maintenance of the high culture is facilitated by "the state as a protector and usually the financier or at the very least the quality controller of the educational process which makes people members of this kind of culture" (Gellner:1995 website). Once created, the state or the administrative apparatus creates unity among different groups of people which did not exist before. The state achieves this by creating such factors as a common language, transferring people around, and having a common law. Similar to Gellner's position of nationalism as a result of modern times characterized, for instance, by industrialization that leads to standardization (high culture) that further leads to demand for a state to protect and guarantee a certain standard, Calhoun also pointed out a modernization theory which "predicted that when outlying regions were incorporated into a social system they would gradually be 'homogenized'

into cultural similarity with the rest of the system, nationalism centered on the encompassing state would grow and contrary ethnic mobilization would be transitory" (1993:218).

Among the criticisms leveled at Gellener's approach are, first, that nationalism is seen as a functionalist mechanism. Secondly, this theory does not have a universal application because in countries such as China, North Korea, the former USSR, nationalism was not essential for the formation of those states. This also brings us to another criticism that Gellner's "historical stages and time-zones are specifically European" (O'Leary 1998:78). In addition, according to O'Leary, "what is also doubtful is the primacy he gives to industrialization in explaining the genesis and maintenance of nationalism, unless industrialization means something broadly synonymous with modernization, commercialization and democratization. Other mechanisms have been conducive to the genesis and maintenance of nationalism" (O'Leary 1998:78). Conversely, nationalism continues to thrive in many industrialized states. Smith (1995) also pointed out that for national unity to survive, emotion and passion are needed. Such unifying strengths can come about due to shared experiences of deep history.

In between the perennialists and modernists are others such as Renan and Calhoun who argued that even though nationalism is a distinctively modern discourse, it is rooted in the rhetoric of pre-existing ethnicity. As Renan said, even though a nation may be a "daily plebiscite," two elements constitute a nation: "One is the possession of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to

perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form" (1996:52). As with the Yugoslav conflicts, it took an extrinsic factor – the policies of the former communist government towards the ethnic groups – in part to trigger ethnic conflicts. Ethnic nationalism in particular, such as the ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, "depended on social constructions of identity, mobilized members of the chosen ethnic group only unevenly, and served the interests of some participants far more than others" (Calhoun 1993:212).

Civic Nationalism and Ethnic Nationalism

The above arguments for primordial, perennial, and modern constructivist approaches to understanding nationalism find political expression between two types of nationalism: civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism, also called ethnonationalism. As Calhoun pointed out, among the nation states, it is possible to distinguish between two broad types of nationalism: one that "claims to have superseded traditional identities such as ethnicity by the founding of a true and modern nation, and [another that] claims to national identity and sovereignty rooted precisely in ancient ethnicity" (1993:221). The first type, civic nationalism, is represented by modern states such France, Britain, and the United States. The ideals of the Enlightenment influence and provide the background for civic nationalism. Among the early proponents of this group, Renan (1882) defined the existence of the nation as "a daily plebiscite" (1995:153-154). There are different versions of civic nationalism. In its extreme form, the United States of America is one that, at present, has no ethnic core but, instead, has the Constitution that provides the legal processes for nationalism. Similar to Renan's nationalism as 'a daily plebiscite,'

Connor (1994) also argued that nation and nationalism are a process and nations emerge only when a significant portion of the population has identified with it.

We can also distinguish nations "that are the result of the free choices of their members from those … whose identity and cohesion are given to their members independently of any voluntary will" (Calhoun 1993:221). This second type, ethnic nationalism (also called romantic nationalism), exemplified by Germany, has thinkers such as Herder and Fichte who conceived nation and ethnicity as natural. Herder believed in the essence or soul of the German nation. For example, Herder considered the nation as "the basic unit of humanity" (White 2005:167). With ethnic nationalism, the particularizing group goes to the extent of essentializing the basic elements of their self-ascriptive identity such as language, history, blood and descent, marriage, race, religion, territory which are seen as innate, natural and self-producing, resulting "in what has been aptly called 'pseudo-speciation,' that is, the collectives in a certain sociopolitical space think of themselves as separate social kinds" (Tambiah 1989:336). Ethnic nationalism is not confined only to ethnic groups, but also exists in nation-states. I make a distinction between two types of ethnic nationalism: nation-states and non-state nations that are within states also called nations without states which Guibernau defined as "cultural communities sharing a common past, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, and wishing to decide upon their political future which lack a state of their own" (1999:1; 2000).

Non-State Ethnonationalism

What causes non-state ethnonationalism? Given the fact that many nationalist movements are both nationalist and ethnic in character, Thomas Eriksen argued that unsuccessful nationalisms transform into ethnonationalism "whose members reside more or less uncomfortably under the aegis of a state which they do not identify with their own nationality or ethnic category" (1991:265). A classic example of this kind would be Naga and Kurd nationalism. Eriksen also made a distinction between ethnic nationalism whose aim is not statehood (such as the urban minorities in the US and Europe), those who, such as the indigenous 'Fourth World' peoples seek autonomy within nation-states, and those that struggle for total political independence (1991:265). Among other perspectives on ethnic nationalism, Hobsbawm argued that, "ethnicity turns into separatist nationalism for much the same reasons as colonial liberation movements established their states within the frontiers of the preceding colonial empires" (1992:6).

For Tambiah, ethnonationalism "unites the semantics of primordial and historical claims with the pragmatics of calculated choice and opportunism in dynamic contexts of political and economic competition between interest groups" (1989:336). Tambiah saw nationalism itself as a modular (Wallerstein and Anderson) export from the West to the periphery East, or the transmission of the 'historical consciousness' of the 19th Century under colonialism imbibed by the local elites (1989:340). But for ethnic nationalism, Tambiah took a step further from Anderson and argued that the politics of the newly independent states "have by virtue of various internal dialectics and differences led to a new phase of politics dominated by the competitions and conflicts of 'ethnic

collectivities,' who question nationalism and 'nation-state' dogmas" (1989:341). Tambiah pointed out phases in the development of ethnicity politics. The first phase considers ethnicity politics as a colonial legacy began with the colonial powers aggregating people and territory into larger polities; secondly, the consolidation of existing differences by colonial powers such as the British codification of 'tribal,' 'caste' or regional differences. During the era of independence of the formerly colonized countries, actual decolonization, the nation-building of the new states down-plays internal diversities, subsequently resulting in the eruption of ethnic conflicts (Tambiah 1989: 341-343). In this process of the politics of ethnic identity, people have "been made to become conscious of ethnic identity, and how in turn they have been energized as collectivities to engage in political action" (Tambiah 1989:343; also 1996:116-117; Cohn 1987). According to Tambiah, this happens when democratic systems enable like-minded people to mobilize and make claims on behalf of groups. He explained this further:

> But increasingly it became clear that the alleged secular constitution and institutions of representative government predicated on the individual rights of citizens, and the willingness of "one-man-one-vote" citizens to form parties on the basis of competitive interests, did not generate the expected outcomes. Instead, collectivities, which we may call ethnic groups, have become the political actors, seeking affirmative action for the achievement or restoration of privileges and life chances in the name of *ethnic (or racial) equalization.*" (1989:344, emphasis original)

Thus, in situations of declining fortunes of well-placed communities, expectations of periphery communities facing the threat of domination by majority expansion, and asymmetrical incorporation, ethnic equalization becomes the principal charter for participatory democracy in multi-ethnic communities. These satellite ethnic/tribal minorities tend to be potential secessionists. Thus, for Tambiah, ethnic conflicts may be seen negatively as a divisive destruction of the state or positively as devolutionary

politics. Secondly, for Tambiah, ethnic nationalism is the product of two global processes that interweave and collide:

> … world capitalism and its operation through multinational corporations, and widespread nation building by liberated colonies now ruled by elite intelligentsias who, however, have to react to their divided civilian constituencies. These interacting global processes, while having certain homogenizing effects, have simultaneously spawned differentiation and opposition within the new polities, manifested as ethnic conflict" (1989:341).

On the other hand, David Brown distinguished two types of ethnic separatism: "between those who stress the ascriptive and primordial features of ethnic identities and those who focus on the impact of socio-economic and power disparities" (1988:51). On the question of why ethnic separatism arises in the first place, Brown suggested some broad scenarios: First, ethnic separatism could arise in multi-ethnic states where the state machinery is weak leading to national disintegration into ethnic components; second, uneven regional economic development, particularly between the metropolis and the peripheries of multi-ethnic societies, giving rise to demands for a 'better deal' which, if not responded to, could lead to ethnic nationalism; third, cases of ethnic groups defending their cultural and territorial homeland within a state controlled by an alien group, such as the Nagas' case, and the expansion of the state seen as a threat to such claims; fourth, manipulation and mobilization by the elites of ethnic groups seeking to promote their own careers and status in the name of nationalism; fifth, a combination of some of the above generates ethnic nationalism (1988:51-53).

Economic reasons also feature predominantly for the development of ethnic political activism in Hechter (1975) who explained how economic factors – a disadvantaged incorporation into British political economy - provoked ethnic movements in the British

Celtic periphery. Similarly, Donald Horowitz (1985) explained that ethnic groups secede from a state for economic reasons. For Horowitz, uneven economic development in states results in the rise of advanced and backward regions and groups. In such cases, ethnic nationalism is the attempt by backward groups in the backward regions to secede because they feel discriminated against by the advanced groups or regions and fear ultimate extinction.

The role played by the state is an important external factor of ethnonationalism (Perry 1996). Conversi called this the homeostatic approach to nationalism. The homeostatic approach "focus[es] precisely on the process of reaction against state intrusion" (1995:4), or can be understood as "a primary and spontaneous reaction against state-sponsored bureaucratization and assimilation" (1995:5). As Conversi argued, "nationalism's intrinsic nature is related to the state and no nationalism is conceivable aside from the rise of the modern nation-state. As the state is the most universal mode of political power, nationalism becomes also the most universal ideology in the contemporary world" (1995:4). So for Conversi, the state is the "external variable which causes the nationalist movement to explode" (1995:5). This could be due to people being uprooted and the erosion of traditional community structure as a result of modernization. According to Conversi, then, "nationalism itself is a product, a consequence, of the state" (1995:5). Conversi also argued that ethnic nationalism is "a movement in defense of a group threatened with extinction by an alien state or by abrupt social change" originating from "the erosion of traditional communitarian structures by the bureaucratic state, with the consequent intrusion of industrial anonymity in every area of modern life" (1995:4-5).

There are, of course, other movements that are against the state, but according to Conversi, what distinguishes ethnic nationalist movements from these other movements is that ethnic nationalism is "reinforced by state intervention" (1995:5), particularly due to an excess of over-zealous centralism. So, for example, ethnonationalist insurgencies can be explained as a direct response to state repression. But the state-centered view and economic factors do not sufficiently explain, for instance, the intense ethnic passion that nationalism generates.

In South Asia, according to Clarke, "Western ideas of the nation-state were used by regional elites to extend nationalism outwards from their courts to their colonially-defined boundaries" (Clarke 1996:230). This is what India and Myanmar tried to do after their independence. The problem was that the territorial borders at the peripheries, particularly in the northeast section of India, were contested. The result has been the emergence of various ethnonationalisms in both countries. Along the same line of argument, Brown, based on his research in Southeast Asia among the Karens, Shan in Myanmar, Pattani and Moro in Thailand and the Philippines respectively, argued that even though the circumstances and conditions within these countries are peculiar, "the character and the impact of the state [are] keys to explaining the emergence of these separatist movements" (1988:54). In these three modern states, it is the "identification of the state, and thence the nation, with the majority ethnic groups which provides the starting point for explaining the development of ethnic nationalisms amongst the minorities" (Brown 1988:55). Specifically, the penetration of the state into the peripheries causes a disruption of communal authority structures among peripheral ethnic

groups thus destabilizing the communities and thereby causing instability and identity crisis. In an attempt to resolve such crisis, competing elites in such situations mobilize the people against the state by articulating a nationalist ideology (Brown 1988: 54-55). In all three cases, the assimilationist and centralizing character of majority ethnic dominated state penetration *vis-à-vis* the peripherial ethnic disaffection remains a central factor (Brown 1988:56; see also Young and Esman in Brown 1988:58n.) and has played a central role for the emergence of ethnic nationalism. In short, Brown's argument was that "since ethnic separatist movements purport to be rebellions against the state, it should come as no surprise to find that the explanation for such separatism is indeed to be found in the character of the state" (Brown 1988:77).

John Breuilly is another proponent of this approach. For Breuilly, the failure to create a modern state gave rise to nationalist politics (1993:367). Similarly, John Hutchinson (1987) pointed out the example of Ireland where cultural nationalism preceded and eventually developed into political nationalism. However, the Irish case illustrated that cultural nationalism such as the Gaelic revival developed in response to anti-British state, an extrinsic factor.

Among other scholars, Ramon Miaz (2003) suggested three prerequisites for ethnic nationalism: first, certain ethnic preconditions which themselves are products of selection, filtering and invention; second, an appropriate *political opportunity structure* whether it be *formal* due to policies such as political decentralization or an increase in political access as a result of democratization, or *informal* such as state ethnic policies;

and, third, *political mobilization* by nationalist intellectuals which establishes the existence and the political objectives of the ethnic group (2003:196-197). Miaz considered the *political opportunity structure* as "the structural conductivity' of a given context for a certain movement" (2003:202). Miaz thus pointed out the importance of political-contextual factors that are especially relevant for ethnic nationalism. In particular, Miaz pointed out two aspects of political context: first, "the *institutionalization* of ethnicity, that is, the normative regulation and territorial structure of political power, and second, the more dynamic aspect of the *policies* and *regulatory strategies* applied by governments to ethnic problems and conflicts (2003:201).

Similarly, Ted Gurr (1993), discussing why minorities rebel in examining ethnopolitical conflicts, pointed out some of the possible external factors: "unequal treatment by dominant groups, competition with other groups for access to power in new states, the contagion effect of ethnopolitical activism elsewhere, and patterns of state power and policy that channel communal energies into either protest or rebellion" (1993:123). In such contexts, according to Gurr, "the most basic assumption of the theory is that ethnopolitical activism is motivated by people's deep-seated grievances about their collective status in combination with the situationally determined pursuit of political interests, as articulated by group leaders and political entrepreneurs" (1993:123). But rather than just treat them as external factors, Gurr considered them as *political opportunities* (1993:130) that the leaders and activists of groups utilize for the minority group's political objectives and aspirations. Among the *political opportunities*, Gurr mentioned three broad examples: first, global processes such as assimilationist expansion

of the state, development of global economic systems wherein minority groups are disadvantaged and alienated from their lands and other natural resources; second, two international factors – international diffusion of political action among transnational kindred, and contagion of communal conflicts that inspire groups – that add further incentives for political action; and third, the effects of state power and democracy that shape the political opportunities and nature of minority groups' responses (1993:131-135).

The dominant state is an important variable particularly in terms of how state policies affect ethnic minorities and how ethnic minorities in ethnically diverse states negotiate their nationalism. An example of such a case in Asia is Bulag's (2002) discussion of minority nationalities such as the Mongols in the context of national unity politics (*minzu tuanjie*) in China. National unity in the Chinese case is used for both nation building and unity between the various minority nationalities. Outnumbered by the Chinese in their own land, and against the odds of becoming completely subjugated by the hegemony of *minzu tuanjie*, Bulag illustrated how the Mongol communist movement, led by Ulanhu, "eventually succeeded in collaborating with the Chinese Communist Party, entering strategic alliances against the Japanese and the National Chinese government, in exchange for CCP support of an Inner Mongolian autonomy consistent with the proclaimed communist goals of colonial liberation" (2002:7). The Mongol's method of resistance and negotiating with China has significant parallels to the Nagas' case. Both the Mongols and the Nagas are ethnic minorities within a large ethnically diverse state that are consciously involved in nation building. Both China and India have numerous

ethnicities or nationalities, but their methodologies to deal with ethnic/minorities differ. Whereas China's ideology is national unity (minzu tuanjie), India's ideology is unity in diversity (sometimes by force in both cases). And this brings us to Naga nationalism, a case of ethnonationalism researched for this thesis.

Naga Nationalism

Among Naga scholars, Asoso Yonuo (1974) was one of the pioneers to write a comprehensive work on Naga nationalism. For Yonuo, the primary factor responsible for Naga nationalism was British colonialism, an external component that provided the idea, rhetoric, narrative and a substantial basis for Naga claims. For Yonuo, among other positive effects of colonialism such as modern political ideas and institutions, education, science and philosophy (1974:150), the spirit of nationalism was "another important gift of the British rule to the Nagas" (1974:154). In close association with this gift of nationalism, "the rule of law, the theories of the democratic principles and institutions and self-determination introduced by the British were readily accepted by the Nagas through the introduction of English language as a medium of communication" (Yonuo 1974:154). According to Yonuo, "the fact cannot be altered that the Naga villages or tribes were in a state of war, one against another with no bond of unity, no idea of a common interest or objectives and no concept of a Naga nation before the British appeared on the scene" (1974:154). In such a context, Yonuo argued that Naga nationalism "was born under the impact of the British administration and thereafter nourished by the educated Nagas in the early 1940s down till the present day" (1974:154). Specifically, according to Yonuo, one of the cases that sowed the seeds of

nationalism was the Reid and Coupland plan for a Crown Colony comprising tribal areas in India's northeast and northwest Burma, including the Naga areas. The Crown Colony plan, even though it did not materialize, "developed consciously or unconsciously a fragment encouraging tribal separatism, precisely to the extent of calling them separate from most of the plains people. … [which] later on, provided an apple of discord between the Nagas and the Government of India" (Yonuo 1974:141; similar to Dommen 1967:727). For Yonuo, a Naga bureaucrat in the Indian government, Nagas are part of the Indian Union:

> Coming to the political point, we see that since the British rule in India, the Nagas had been and are in India as a part and parcel of it although their demand for freedom has persisted. The Union of India is a homeland of diversity of races, cultures, languages, traditions, etc., but a homogenous one after long processes of history. From this viewpoint, it is to be understood that even the political problem of the Nagas, whatever may be, by any means, has to be settled with the Government of India and not anywhere else, as *ipso facto* proves. So it would be imperative for the Nagas to resolve their issue with the Indian government with least waste of life, waste of human and natural resources and waste of ingenuity" (Yonuo 1974:396).

Another Naga scholar, Ashikho Mao's (1992) position reads like a faithful student of Yonuo (1974). Mao has a contradictory position. On the one hand, Mao suggested that, "the Naga movement also may be treated as a 'nativist movement' which protects, defends and presents 'Nagaism' against foreigners" (Mao 1992:2). On the other hand, he argued at length that Naga nationalism is the creation of the British. According to Mao, the Nagas want to have a separate state of their own because of the following reasons: First, "the prolonged isolation and separation from the people of the plains had developed a separatist tendency among the Naga people. The British policy had aimed at keeping the hill people far from the freedom movement of India…" (1992:35). This policy of the British effectively prevented the Nagas from developing a common national bond with

the rest of the Indians. Second, Mao alleged a, "false propaganda and rumours about Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam had created a misunderstanding among the Nagas against the plainsmen" (1992:36). Third was propaganda that "the Assamese and other plains people would occupy all the key posts in the administration of the Nagas Hill district. The majority of the Nagas being illiterate would not be able to compete with the plainsmen. Hence they [Nagas] felt that their salvation lay in keeping aloof of an independent India" (Mao 1992:36). Fourth, "the British and American Christian Missionaries who were active in the Naga Hills also turned the minds of the Nagas against the other people of India" by circulating "wild stories about the rigidity of the orthodox caste Hindus who were to dominate the political scene of independent India. This created a sense of insecurity in the minds of the Nagas" (Mao 1992:36). Fifth, according to Mao, "some of the British officials serving in the Naga Hills district also induced the Nagas to maintain their separate political identity. E.g. Adams, DC talk to Nagas on Nov 26, 1946" (1992:36). And, sixth, "the separatist tendency among the Nagas also grew because they had little contact with the plains" (Mao 1992:37). These reasons, according to Mao, induced the Nagas to "start a vigorous campaign to secure an independent status for the Nagas" (1992:37). While Mao is right to point out that Naga nationalism began prior to Indian Independence in 1947, he argued that Naga nationalism is primarily a colonial construction, effectively negating his other argument of Naga movement as a nativist movement to protect 'Nagaism' from foreigners.

With the exception of Yonuo and Mao, Naga scholars (Aosenba 2001; Chasie 2005; Horam 1988; Iralu 2000: Luithui and Haksar1984; Naga Hoho 2002; Nuh 1986, 1988;

Nuh and Lasuh 2002; Sanyu 1996; Shimray 2005; Vashum 2001, 2005; Zinyu 1979), by and large, have predominantly approached Naga nationalism from the same point of view and framework – arguing for the legitimacy of the Nagas' political claims – providing a chronological description of the movement beginning, particularly, with the formation of the Naga Club in 1918. Among these other Naga scholars, Vashum (2000), another Naga scholar, defined Naga nationalism as the Nagas' right to self-determination by which he means a "sovereignty to be separated from India," … "or to be sovereign over their homeland and way of life as perceived by the Nagas by and large" (2000:111). But Nagas' self-determination was not the same at all times. Vashum agreed that Naga nationalism is a modern phenomenon and its emergence can be dated to the early 20th Century. "In the real sense," Vashum said, "the consciousness of the Nagas for nationhood, their identity and rights could be traced during and after the World War I" (2000:65). In the formative years (1918-1946), Nagas sought "to determine their own way of life themselves, or with minimum interference and/or protection from the British Government" (2000:115). By 1946, the NNC "was in favor of participating in free India with certain conditions, that the Nagas of the administered and the unadministered areas should be under one administrative unit with 'separate electorate' with enough 'autonomy' and 'safeguard'"(2000:116). For Vashum, this position can be understood as Naga desire for some sort of internal self-determination within free India. The demand for an interim government and the signing of the Hydari Agreement were significant steps in Naga demand for sovereignty. But Vashum also said that, "the Nagas' ethos of the past life had immense roles to play in the emergence of Naga nationalism" (2000:6). Vashum considered Naga nationalism as the Nagas' right to self-determination based on

Naga peoples' self-reliance 'from time immemorial,' and of Nagas' love for their homeland and their traditional attitude of self-reliance and freedom, the pride to preserve their unique identity, and not to be under the control and authority from outside in any circumstances (2000:113). Currently, according to Vashum, "it appears that the Naga people want freedom in making policies and decisions and executions thereof in their socio-cultural, economic and political affairs which they think would be realized through their movement for self-determination (sovereignty)" (2000:142). Particularly in the present climate of internal fragmentations, the immediate concern amidst the differences is "that the Nagas want to live in a unified Homeland under one administration" (2000:143). Vashum's formulation is clearly an example of a theory that argues for a combination of ethnic core and the influences of external factors on ethnonationalism such as the United Nations paradigms on universal human rights and the global indigenous peoples' fight for self-determination whose effects are seen both within and outside the state systems.

Aosenba (2001), another Naga scholar, made an attempt to examine why the Naga ethnopolitical movement has endured for more than five decades after India's Independence. Even though Aosenba called Naga nationalism an ethnopolitical movement, he did not go into details about why and how or what it is that characterizes it as ethnonationalism. Instead, Aosenba described the formation and development of the Naga 'Resistance Movement' and then suggested that India "should not remain locked in misguided bureaucratic policies" in dealing with the Naga issue but should approach it with a "moral confidence in the Naga people" (2001:112). Aosenba further proposed a

sort of "an interim agreement for autonomy of self-government" (2001:113), and for the "final talks to realize new structures and processes outside the present constitutional context" (2001:114).

Along the same line as Vashum, A.S. Shimray (2005) gave preference to the internal factors in his discussion of Naga nationalism. He traced the history of Naga nationalism beginning from the Memorandum to the Simon Commission by the Naga Club members on January 10, 1929. Taking a lead from Kohn, Shimray considerd Naga nationalism as an act of consciousness (2005:52). This consciousness, however, is based on ethnic sources: "It derives the force from the inner and dormant resources of the Nagas being an ethnic community and the perceptions and sentiments they aspire [sic]" (Shimray 2005:53). For Shimray, Naga nationalism is an articulation for a collective identity, which in turn is based on Smith's ethnic cores such as myths, common origin, shared memories, territory and a feeling of solidarity. These ethnic factors substantiate Naga nationalist claim that Nagas are different from the Indians and Burmese (Shimray 2005:55). Though Shimray does not discuss the ethnic cores in detail, he offers a detailed description of the cease-fires, NSCN-IM activities, and internationalization of Naga nationalism, indicating influences by modern, civic and exogenous factors.

Like many nationalists elsewhere, most articulations of Naga nationalism tend to be primordialist; for many Naga nationalists, the Nagas have lived in independent village-states from time immemorial and God has predestined the Nagas to be a nation. At the same time, Naga nationalism is increasingly being influenced by elements of civic

nationalism, civic factors that are exogenous and external. In order to examine these processes, it was essential to understand the way Naga nationalism has been and is being articulated. But how does one go about collecting information in such a volatile situation? The section on methodology will deal with this issue.

Methodology

The research methodologies employed in this study were an assortment of ethnohistory, library research, formal and informal interviews with Naga people from different walks of life, and fieldwork with a particular emphasis on participant observation in some instances, and pure observation at other instances such as taking part in events organized by the Undergrounds. Kohima, the state capital of Nagaland, is where the various agencies of the Naga independence struggle converge, and is most suitably located for optimum access to different categories of research subjects. Hence, I was based in Kohima from July 2006 to August 2007 for my fieldwork. The field research was primarily a synchronic, examining how Naga nationalism is now being articulated by various sections of Naga people today and the few years preceding it. The research, particularly the interviews, was conducted in English, Nagamese (a Creole that is widely spoken), and Lotha Naga dialect. For the first four months of my fieldwork, I relied on public transportation and walking to meet people in order to understand the common Nagas' understanding of nationalism as they experienced it. In walking around downtown Kohima, I was confronted with the reality of people's lives particularly after dark. After the car I acquired for research was stolen, I again resorted to walking and taking public transportation for a month. Unlike traditional anthropological researches that focus on

bounded social units such as a village or a tribe, because of the complex social reality of Naga nationalism, the research covered a wider socialscape of Naga society. This meant that the research was conducted on a broad spectrum of Naga society including visits to different locations outside Kohima. In order to get a better understanding of the Naga territory, I made a tour of as many Naga areas as possible. This led me to the districts of Mon, Kiphire, Wokha, Mokokchung and Pungro areas – places far from Kohima and Dimapur – in the state of Nagaland, and to Tamenlong, Senapati in Manipur.

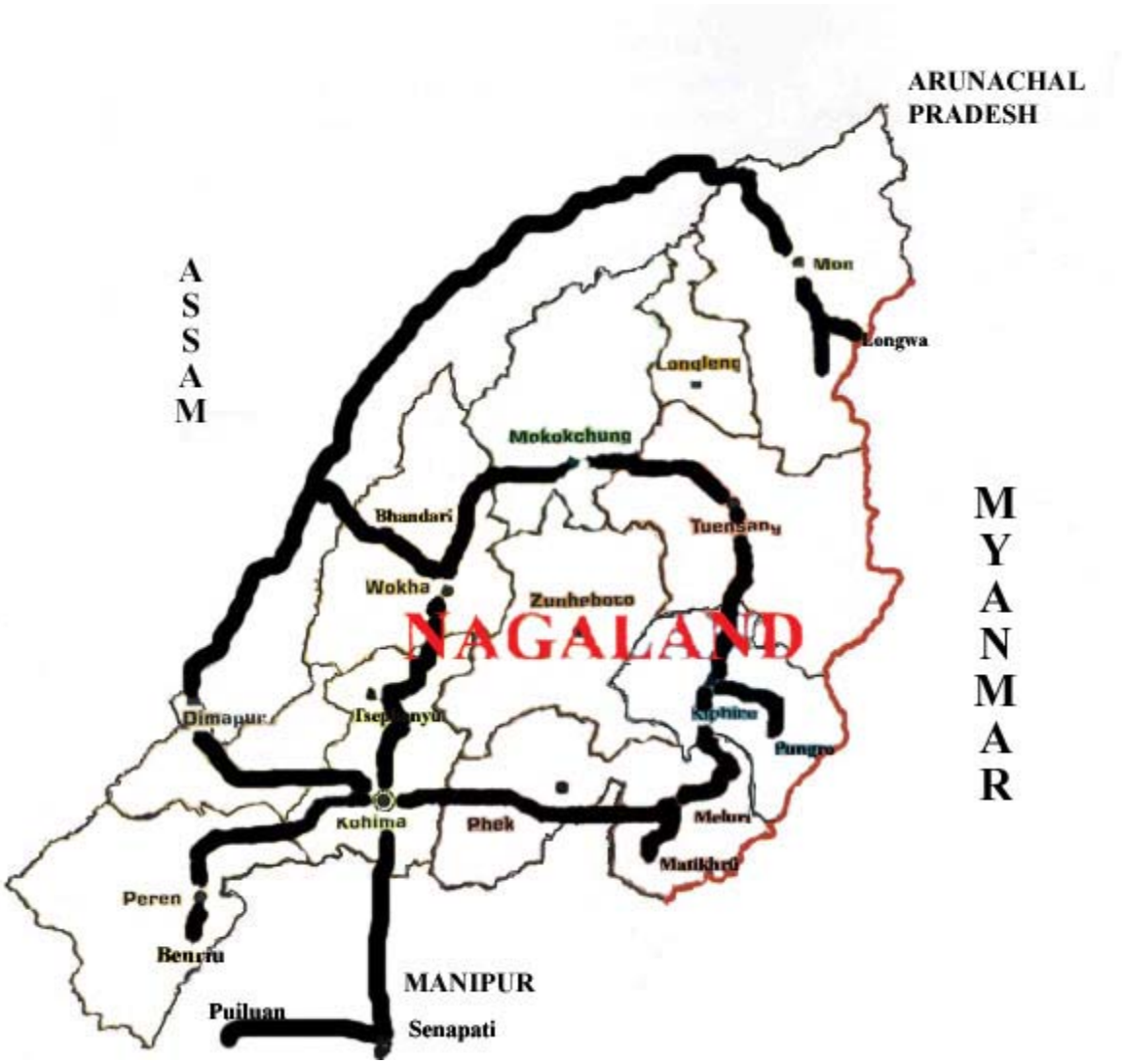

Fig. 7. A map of the state of Nagaland illustrating the geographic range of my fieldwork

Being born and raised as a member of the Lotha Naga community and having lived and worked in various parts of Nagaland, I am a native or an insider. My Naga roots are still in Lakhuti where I grew up, the same village where my grandfather and father grew up. My parents still live there. Additionally, in sharing the common experiences of the effects of Naga nationalism such as being victimized and harassed by the Indian security forces as well as Naga nationalists, I have had my share of insider experiences. To some extent, as Narayan (1993) points out, there is an inverse process going on in studying one's culture: "Instead of learning conceptual categories and then, through fieldwork, finding the contexts in which to apply them, those of us who study societies in which we have preexisting experience absorb analytic categories that rename and reframe what is already known" (Narayan 1993). Nevertheless, I would not claim to be a native participant when it concerns Naga nationalism because I have never been a member of the Naga armed nationalists popularly called Undergrounds. In addition, I am bicultural even if that sounds like an oxymoron. I am able to move among many cultural groups. I went to schools taught in English and run by Catholic missionaries and completed a college education which was modeled after the British system. As part of my training for priesthood, I studied Western and Eastern philosophies and Christian theology. The fact is that I am unique from most Nagas by factors such as being a priest, education in an American university, travels to foreign countries. In my interactions with the research subjects, much as I tried to underplay it, there was a power dimension in terms of my being a priest, and a scholar. But rather than as 'native' or non-native', as Narayan suggests, I prefer to focus on "the quality of relations with the people" (1993:672). In my case, the level of intimate affinity with Naga nationalism is from the experiences of Naga

people and the culture and history we share since childhood up to the present. Because of my Lotha Naga identity and experiences, I share an emotional common ground with many Nagas (Narayan 1993; Ohnuki-Tierney 1984).

Fieldwork Immersion and Encounters

Around 3:30 pm on July 25, 2007, less than a week after I had been in the field, I was informed that a friend of mine, Rev. Carolus Koutsu, a Naga Catholic priest in Kohima, was trying to reach me urgently to attend a meeting the next day. When I finally got him on the phone, he told me that the meeting would be about the Peace Process, and I was to be part of the team representing the Catholic Church in Nagaland. Since the Bishop was away, the invitation for the meeting had come to Rev. Koutsu, and he had to form the Catholic team for the meeting. As I was just about to begin fieldwork and was building up contacts, I was excited about the opportunity of meeting some of the 'important' people in Nagaland related to the nationalism issue and participate in part of the political process.

The next day, I met with John, a Catholic layman who had been very involved in the Naga Peace Process. He briefed me on how the Catholic Church in Nagaland could contribute to the Peace Process. According to him, the best way the Catholics can contribute is to initiate a process of reconciliation between the different factions that are killing each other. John explained the process should be modeled after the Catholic sacrament of reconciliation: one of acknowledging one's failures and mistakes, asking for forgiveness, making amends, and resolving not to kill again. Later in the evening, I met

with the rest of the team in Rev. Koutsu's office, and we discussed how to present the Catholic policy. At this meeting, we realized the Catholic Church in Nagaland had no official view. We could not consult the Bishop because he was away. The team suggested that I give the talk on behalf of the Naga Catholics.

"Why should I give the talk?" I protested. "I've been away and I don't know what is going on." "Because among us you understand best about the Naga problem," they replied.

That was an overestimation for, if at all, I was only about to begin my quest for understanding Naga nationalism. Besides, I had no problem being a participant observer, but I was reluctant about being the spokesman for the Catholic Church in Nagaland on Naga nationalism issues. And since the Catholic Church had no official position, I was worried about setting the agenda for the Catholic church; after all I was just beginning to do a research, and I wanted to be the fly on the wall – an objective participant observer but not an initiator.

As it turned out, the meeting was called by the Chief Minister, Neiphiu Rio, along with the Council of Ministers and the Consultative Committee for Peace to meet with the leaders of the people of various church organizations "for an informal exchange of views on the Naga political issue." The meeting, held at the State Banquet Hall on July 26, 2006, consisted of a who's who of religious leaders in Nagaland, and I was fortunate to meet with many of them. Many of them spoke on behalf of their organizations. "The Catholic Church is a neutral body and does not side with any particular Naga faction. For peace, unity, reconciliation and healing process to begin in the Naga society, the killings,

intimidations and extortions must stop," I said, on behalf of the Catholic Church in Nagaland. That was my initiation into the fieldwork. Thus began my fieldwork as Fr. Abraham, a Lotha Naga Catholic priest. Rather than downplay my identity as a Catholic priest, and as a Naga, I accepted my role as a priest-anthropologist as an asset and, whenever possible, also emphasized my role as an anthro-researcher. Similar to how Srinivas (1976) and Narayan (1993) had to deal with local expectations of how they should conduct themselves, I had to be conscious of local expectations of how a priest should behave. Because of my priesthood, in some cases, I was drawn closer to the issue, and in others, distanced from it.

One of my main objectives was to find out how Naga nationalism was articulated by people other than the armed nationalists and to explore the internal heterogeneity of Naga nationalism. For this purpose, I chose three civil society organizations: Naga Hoho, Naga Students' Federation, and Naga Mothers' Association. These three societies are the most powerful civil society organizations in Nagaland. I embedded myself with the Naga Hoho, the apex organization for the Nagas. I already knew some of the officials from earlier contacts. When I introduced myself to Bendangmayang Jamir, the president of Naga Hoho, who was newly elected, he willingly took me under his wings. He moved in with his family in a house close to where I lived and as a result I visited him often at his residence and even got to know his family. At times I accompanied him and his team to events where he was invited as the chief guest, and at other times I chauffeured him to attend various functions. I often sat in the Naga Hoho office and chatted with the other officials and the people who came to meet with them. I sat in at some of their meetings

and at times offered to give my views on certain issues. I felt very at home with this organization and took part in most of their activities.

The Naga Students' Federation (NSF) officials were also happy to accept me into their activities. I started out most days visiting their office. The NSF had had other researchers in the past who met and interviewed them a few times or came to ask them for some documents, but they were not used to a researcher hanging around their office complex for many days, so they felt a little uneasy when I first started lingering in their space. A few of them already knew me as a priest and that eventually helped clear their doubts, and they accepted me well. After that it became easier to communicate with them. I sat around in the office of their president, general secretary, and their conference room, sharing tea and playing carom (a type of board game) in their hallway, getting to know the issues that mattered most to them. I was an observer at many of their meetings, and on many occasions they sought my advice and opinions. I accompanied them to Matikhru for their conference and participated in their deliberations.

With the Naga Mothers Association (NMA) it was a hit and miss experience. The NMA share office space with the NSF in the historic Naga Club building which itself is symbolic of their entry into mainstream Naga issues, particularly nationalism and political structure, because traditionally women in Naga society were not privy to political deliberations of the independent village-states. I wanted to explore gender issues in Naga nationalism and considered the NMA would be a primary group to examine. Unlike the NSF and NH, their office was not opened regularly and I made concerted

effort to meet with the officials, but because they had irregular office hours contact was more haphazard. When I first met them, they were ruminating in anger over an allegation by the NSCN-K that the NMA was sympathizing with the NSCN-IM, an allegation they vehemently denied. In the mid-1990s, I had helped in one of their drug addiction recovery projects for the Naga youth which helped them realize I was not a stranger to the NMA. Their filing system was poor, and it was difficult to get any of their old documents, including their Constitution. Partly because their office was disorganized, they felt embarrassed to let me go through their documents. But orally, they were more than willing to share with me their activities, including their role as mothers to mediate reconciliation and bring unity among the warring factions. I continued to maintain close contact with them all through my fieldwork.

Fig. 8. Naga Club Building which houses the offices of the Naga Students' Federation, Naga Mothers' Association, and All Nagaland College Students' Association (Photo by Abraham Lotha).

I contacted members of the different factions such as the NNC, NSCN-IM and NSCN-K. I interviewed some of the leaders and lower ranking members of these factions to examine their positions on the Naga independence struggle and their role in it. With the main offices of Naga nationalists spread out in Myanmar (NSCN-K), London (NNC), Bangkok and Nagaland (NSCN-IM), there were logistical problems that made it difficult to get an exhaustive picture of the nationalists' workings. For example, I was fortunate that the top leaders of the NSCN-IM, Isak Swu and Muivah came to Nagaland from Amsterdam and Bangkok in December 2006, and stayed on practically for the whole of 2007 in order to pursue talks with the Government of India (GOI). These leaders stayed at Hebron Camp, in Nagaland, and I was able to meet them officially and privately on a couple of occasions at the Camp. My first official meeting with the Chairman and General Secretary, also known as the Collective Leadership, was when they invited representatives of the churches for a dialogue and asked me to moderate the meeting. Later, I interviewed the Collective Leadership of the NSCN-IM separately. I also attended the Consultative Meeting on July 27, 2007, called by the NSCN-IM leadership. I was also able to go to London and meet with Adino Phizo, the NNC leader, and her brother Kevilevor Phizo. But I was unable to meet with Khaplang at the NSCN-K headquarters in Myanmar due to problems of inaccessibility to Naga areas there. I also tried to meet other leaders of NSCN-K but was not able to do so due to safety concerns.

Additionally, as the nationalists are supposed to be 'Undergrounds', it was impossible to have unfettered access to them. Still the climate of cease-fire between the Naga nationalists and the Government of India has made it possible to meet with some of the

nationalists. During the research, I wanted, at least for some time, to live with the nationalists of all the factions to be a participant-observer as much as possible. But given the suspicion and animosity the factions have for each other resulting in excessive factional violence, and given the tendency to label civilians as sympathizers if they were found communicating with any particular faction, I felt it was too dangerous to be labeled a sympathizer of any particular faction and risk my life.

In order to investigate the role, if any, played by culture in substantiating Naga nationalism and vice versa, I investigated the main features of contemporary Naga culture, particularly how cultural institutions, symbols, and traditions are selected and objectified for Naga self-representation, how they are politically motivated, and subsequently how they are reified and transferred to a Naga nationalist discourse. In the process, I examined how Naga nationalism is reinforced by a claim for cultural unity and distinctiveness. In order to examine how cultural revival, invention and representation sustain Naga nationalism, I was interested in seeing how nationalism was articulated at the grassroots level, in the villages. For this, I chose festivals as one of the sites where, if at all, there would be a public display of nationalistic aspirations in ritual and symbol articulations. I tried to attend at least one major festival of all the tribes in Nagaland to examine if such festivals with their cultural expressions – music, dress, and rituals – are only manifestations and self-representations of Naga identity, or if in the process of articulating their Naga cultural identity, they are also unconscious nationalistic resistances to the Indian state and culture in terms of culturally demarcating their non-Indianness. I was able to attend the following festivals: Tokhu Emung (Lotha), Sekrenyi

(Angami), Tuluni (Sema), Aoleang (Konyak), Tsokum (Khiamnungan), Tsungremong (Ao), Zeliangrong, Ngada (Rengma). I could not attend Mongmong festival (Sangtam) because of a roadblock due to a landslide. I also attended a 'Cultural Panorama" festival organized by the Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Union of Kohima. This festival was held to coincide with the Tsokum festival of the Khiamnungans, and was intended to showcase the cultural panorama of six tribes of the Tuensang and Mon districts. This multitribal cultural exhibition being a new phenomenon, I particularly wanted to see the motives behind the celebrations.

To examine the role played by the Nagaland state government in cultural production, I volunteered and attended the Nagaland state-sponsored Hornbill Festival held in the first week of December each year. I wanted to find out if this festival was an event created just to promote Naga culture and tourism or had other hidden agendas. During the celebrations, I was accepted into the organizing committee's inner circle and actually helped with publicity and public relations. In addition to being a participant-observer, I interviewed the organizers of the festival, the cultural artists, vendors of different Naga products, and visitors to the festival to explore the different motives and meanings of the festival and their participation in it. I took lots of pictures that were published in the *Morung Express* (December 2:1, 11; December 3:1, 11; December 4:1, 11; December 6:6; December 7:1, 11).

Among the Nagas some individuals are regarded as elders, intellectuals or both. Their contributions and interventions on crucial issues such as nationalism, integration are

sought often and taken seriously even if what they have to suggest may not be implemented. Some of them are former members of civil society such as the Naga Hoho, NSF and NPMHR; others are journalists, freelance writers, doctors, government bureaucrats or leaders in the society. Getting their viewpoint and input was important for understanding the critical issues of Naga nationalism, so I sought out some of these persons and had in-depth interviews with them. I interviewed leaders and grass roots people 'from above' and 'from below' to get a wide view of a diversity of understandings of the same political situation.

Others I interviewed were normal citizens who were trying to make sense of the Naga political situation. From my previous experience of working in Nagaland, I was aware of the fact that the department of Art and Culture under the Government of Nagaland had conducted research on Naga culture and paid the informants in many villages. In some villages informants were reluctant to share any information unless they were paid. Unlike some traditional anthropologists, my relationships with the interview subjects were not based on the exchange of Western commodities. On the other hand, they weren't totally free either. If the informants knew that their names and pictures were going to be featured in the public media – TV, radio and newspapers – they were willing subjects even without payment. I had worked as a freelance journalist for the *Morung Express* from 2005 and during my fieldwork too I contributed articles and photographs to the newspaper. So at some of the festivals, I started out as a journalist and once the people got to know me better, I told them my objective as a researcher, and then they let me interview them. At such times, I ended up writing news reports or travel articles for the

Morung Express or just sending in photos of events that I covered. Because of the sensitive nature of nationalism, the names of the informants, unless approved by them, are changed. Quotations from informants are used by permission. However objective I tried to be, there were instances where the security and risk to lives of informants were involved, and in such cases some provisions for the safety of the informants had to be made, though I tried to make the compromise as minimal as possible in order to maintain the integrity of the research.

Though I have tried to understand Naga nationalism from different approaches, this thesis is the product of a 'situated knowledge' (Narayan 1993) whether it be physically based in Kohima for the fieldwork, a university student, a catholic priest, or situated within fields of power relations (Narayan 1993; Clifford 1986, 1988; Haraway 1988, Kondo 1986; Rosaldo 1989). This thesis, then, comes from one researcher. Any other researcher will also bring other situational factors. Thus the research, like the Nagas themselves, cannot be taken to be universal or exhaustive but rather situational and contextual. This is as much a strength as a weakness in avoiding essentialism and faulty homogenization of culture and global relations. Nor can this situation be taken as static although print representation makes it seem frozen in a specific time.

CHAPTER III

THE ETHNIC ORIGINS OF NAGA NATIONALISM

"*Nagaland is not only a topographical borderline; it is also a cultural borderline.*" (NNC 1964:44)

According to Anthony Smith, just as nations that we know now in the modern sense are products of the process of history, "nations and nationalisms are also products of preexisting traditions and heritages which have coalesced over the generations" (Smith: 1995 Warwick debates). The content of the *ethnie* that make up a nation's preexisting traditions and heritages is Smith's ethno-symbolism approach. Smith mentions the following elements of *ethnie*: a common name, a set of myths of common origins and descent, common historical memories, territory or homeland, language, customs, religion, and a sense of solidarity (1996:109-110). For Smith, the ethno-symbolism approach "can help us to understand why nationalism so often has such widespread popular appeal" (1995:4). For instance, people respond to nationalism even in the absence of promises of material benefits because their vernacular is valued and turned into the basis of a new mass public culture of the nation (Smith 1995:4; see also Nairn 1977). Such elements not only unify a people but also form the basis for protests and bloodshed that are manifested in nationalism. It is difficult to argue for a nation before nationalism (Armstrong 1982), especially in the Nagas' case, but it is possible to argue for the ethnic origins of Naga nationalism. As Smith (1995) says about nationalism, a modernist account of Naga nationalism will be only half the story. In this chapter, I will draw upon Smith's concept of the *ethnie* and examine how ethnic core provides the cultural resources for and lend credibility to Naga nationalism.

The contents of 'nation' and 'ethnicity' and their relevance to nationalism have preoccupied scholars on nationalism. Herder was one of the early proponents of nation as the basic unit of humanity (Herder 1969; White 2005:167), though White (2005) argued that Herder's concept of the nation was only cultural and not political. Herder (1969) argued that language constituted the essence of a nation. Keyes (1981) also explored the debate between the 'primordialists' and 'instrumentalists' or 'circumstantialists' for the formation and persistence of ethnic groups. For Keyes *et al*, ethnicity has a cultural and social dimension. Cultural elements such as language, religion, origin myths and legends may be appropriated as emblematic of the group's identity. Yet what is considered as emblematic of a group's identity depends on what cultural elements are chosen and interpreted to be of symbolic significance in order to achieve the objectives of the group when dealing with a particular political-economic context. In the face of changes brought on by changing political-economic contexts, the 'givens' or primordial elements serve as gyroscope for ethnic groups "as to the best way to pursue their interests for those alienated by the dehumanized agencies designed to organize the ordering of social ends in a rational way" (Keyes 1981:28). Similarly, in her discussion on ethnic nationalism, Nagata asked, "is primordiality an essential component of ethnicity and how does it accommodate to changing social conditions?" (1981:91). Nagata suggested that primordial elements such as origin, descent, kinship may be fabricated or manipulated, but "it is the message they carry that counts" (Nagata 1981:111-112). Illustrating Malay identity as a product of administrative and local factors, Nagata provided a case of identity formation as a result of a combination of primordialists and circumstantialists factors. For Nagata, ethnic identity "is a unique blend of affective, expressive and basic

ties, sentiments and loyalties with (sometimes blatantly) instrumental, calculated, political interests, and the latter are explained and given meaning by the former" (1981:112).

But it is one thing to claim that ethnic cores are preconditions to nationalism and another to say that the ethnic cores are primordial, objective and natural, a position Smith (1986) seems to imply. For scholars such as Nash (1989) and Tambiah (1989), it is within the nation-state that ethnic groups such as the Nagas have standing and conceptual meanings (Nash 1989:3). Nash described primordial ties that lie at the core of a person's identity. But these primordial ties, natural as they may seem, are "forged in the process of historical time, subject to shifts in meaning, ambiguities of reference, political manipulation, and vicissitudes of honor and obliquy" (Nash 1989:5). However, that the primordial ties are the products of historical process "does not overcome the insight that the *building blocks of ethnicity*, defined as the self-conscious group within a nation-state, are virtually the same over time" (Nash 1989:5). Among the *building blocks of ethnicity* that Nash mentioned are body, language, shared origins and history, religion, and nationality. These blocks, according to Nash, "are organically interactive and take different shapes according to historical and political circumstance (1989:6). Despite the malleability of the *building* blocks, ethnic groups uphold *kinship*, *commensality,* and *a common cult* as cultural markers to symbolize the existence and differentiation of ethnic groups. Further, in addition to *kinship*, *commensality*, and *cult*, as primary ethnic cultural markers, other "surface features stand for the index features" (Nash 1989:11). This chapter deals with the ethnic cultural markers of Naga identity. Based upon the

conception of themselves and their ethnicity, I examine how these cultural markers are articulated for the objectives of Naga nationalism.

Nagas and Indians

An important aspect of ethnicity is that members consider themselves as distinct from other ethnic groups (Eriksen 2002). Niels Braroe in *Indian & White* (1975) described how Cree Indians in the town of Short Grass attempted to sustain a morally defensible self-image *vis-à-vis* the White people. Through mechanisms of symbolic interaction such as concealing their real names from the Whites, being secretive about their supernatural beliefs, and upholding the notion of 'Indian givers' through their custom of sharing, the Cree Indians maintained their identity in the context of being considered morally outcasts by the White people. These values, as Braroe said of the Cree Indians' interaction with the White neighbors, "are more than guidelines for, or goals of, behavior; they also provide a symbolic means of presenting, evaluating, and defining the self" (Braroe 1975:9). In the process of such symbolic interactions, "what is Indian is held up as preferable to what is White." (Braroe 1975:142). Similarly, as Jean Jackson said of Tukanoans in the Vaupes indigenous politics, "winning the battle for self-determination increasingly involves acting and speaking with an authority that arises from an Indian way" (1995:5) drawn on traditional Tukanoan culture. Naga nationalism capitalizes on claiming a 'unique culture and identity' that differentiates them from India.

Naga scholars, by and large, have assumed that Nagas are one people. Lanunungsang enumerated certain socio-cultural aspects such as feeling of Nagaism, village democratic

principles and self-governance as examples for the uniqueness of Naga identity (2005:24-30; see also Nuh 1986:48-53; Iralu 2001; Anungla Aier 2004). Pikheto Sema (1992) and Neivetso Venuh (2005) also pointed out the uniqueness of Naga polity as different from Indian polity and how colonization restructured it to its current form. Some Naga nationalists and intellectuals presume that Nagas have an internally shared culture among the different groups – a shared history, identity, culture and memories which makes them ethnically distinct from Indians. Cultural features such as language, food habits, dress, racial features, and religion are cited as examples of basic differences between Nagas and Indians. As Ratsen, an Angami Naga, told me, "culturally we are different, our ways, our worldviews are different." Or as Tom adds in an interview, the difference between Naga culture and Indian culture are "a world apart. Their culture is so complex and so like a jigsaw puzzle, whereas Naga culture is understandable." Naga nationalists argue that these differences between the Nagas and Indians are based on Naga ethnicity and culture 'from time immemorial' and not upon recent developments. Phizo, President of NNC, best summarized this sense of cultural difference in his 'Plebiscite speech' in 1951:

> The Nagas have nothing to do with India. And, the Indians have nothing to do with Nagaland. This is the exact position. Historically, Nagas and the Indians did not have a common tradition. Racially, Nagas belong to the Mongolian family while the Indians belong to entirely a different race of their own. Politically, neither the Nagas nor the Indians know each other. … Legally, it is nonexistent. There is absolutely no link. Culturally, the Nagas and the Indians never had occasion to meet each other; and, there is nothing in common. … Socially, the Indians abhor the Nagas and the Nagas despise the Indians. … Religiously, the Indians are Hindus; and the ancient Naga religion is "Animism' having nothing to do with Hindus. … As it is, there is nothing in common between the Nagas and the Indians. The difference is too varied, the feeling is too deep, and the attitude is too wide and too malignant for the two nations ever to think to live together in peace much less to become "Indianized citizens". The only way to live in peace is to live apart. … Economically, Nagaland had never been dependent on India. … Naga and Indians do not speak the same language. Why, we do not eat even the

> same food. It was very good that the Indians never allowed the Nagas to go near them because they hate our people.

How do Naga nationalists legitimize their claims for cultural difference and incompatibility with India such as the one made by Phizo? In order illustrate how such ethnic and cultural differences are perceived, I will examine some specific elements. I start out by enquiring about how Nagas define Naga identity.

Naga Identity: What Does It Mean To Be a Naga?

Naga identity is often understood as multi-layered. Temsula Ao, a Naga scholar, for example, describes Naga identity as a multi-layered concept consisting of the existential (origin myths and tribal history), locational (as a citizen of a village which marks him within a specific ethnic and linguistic space), and, artifactual (such as shawls, status, etc.) (2006:6-7). This identity, according to Ao, is validated by the sense of belonging to the community to which they belong. Such multi-layered concept of Naga identity was also common among the informants for this research. In response to the question of what it means to be a Naga, some respondents had a bottom-up approach. For instance, Kino is an employee of the Nagaland state government who has also given a lot his time for the Nagas as an activist. He is frustrated by the Naga political process, but whenever he is asked by some Naga organizations to present a paper or just give a talk on Naga issues, he obliges willingly with a sense of duty. I interviewed him on a couple of occasions at his home. To the question of what it means to be a Naga, Kino responded:

> I am first a Khonoma, then I am an Angami, [and] then I am a Naga. … For me when I say I am a Naga, I mean my nationality, the highest level possible. Being a Naga is substantiated by being a Khonoma and an Angami.

Kino's definition of Naga identity is a bottom-up approach consisting of three layers – village (Khonoma), 'tribe' (Angami), and Naga nation. Kino's being from Khonoma and belonging to Angami community legitimizes his larger Naga identity.

Using the same components, there were respondents such as Kaka Iralu who define Naga identity from a top-down approach – from being a Naga down to the village and the clan. Kaka Iralu is very passionately involved in the Naga nationalism cause though not as an armed nationalist. He studied theology and trained to be a Baptist pastor, but when he came to learn more about the atrocities committed by the Indian Army on the Nagas, he stopped being a pastor and devoted his time to researching, writing and exposing the atrocities. His book, '*Nagaland and India: The Blood and the Tears*' documents accounts of military oppression in Naga areas by the Indian Army. I sat with Kaka in his home on two occasions for an interview. When I asked what it means to be a Naga, Kaka explained:

> Let me quote my son there. My son recently told me I am grateful to God for first making me a Naga, next an Angami, and thirdly a Khonoma. Affiliation to our minor clan, major clan, *khel* [colony], village, in our society and our culture … is so wonderful and I am so grateful to God for being born a Naga, an Angami, Khonoma man. I would say the same thing.

But even for someone like Kaka, when it comes to elaborating his Naga identity, he resorts to the bottom-up approach from clan to village, tribe and Naga. Clan and kinship are the anchors of Kaka's identity as an Angami and a Naga. Like different layers of an onion, Kaka explained the layers of Naga identity from inside to the outer layer in the following manner:

> My cultural identity begins with my immediate family name; it begins with the Iralu factor. I have many nephews, cousins and clansmen. In case somebody

> bashes me up without any justified reason, every clansmen will come to my rescue to avenge the perpetrator of shame on that family name. Similarly I also have an obligation to all my clansmen in case they are in a financial difficulty or personal tragedy, or an accident, I have an obligation to support and stand with them. Now, that is the Iralu level, but I am ultimately connected to the Meyasetsu level again. Iralu, Sanyu, etc. are merged with a bigger clan again. There are the Meyasetsu six clans. Even there also I have so many clansmen to whom I owe obligation, and they are also obligated to me. And then it goes on to the Mheruma level, to the Khonoma level to the Angami level to the Naga level. So at all these levels of my national cultural identity, I do not stand alone. I am affiliated to them in a bond of clan relationship, *khel* (colony) relationship, and so we are one big family.

For some informants, being a Naga is a two-layered identity. For example, for Annie, a lecturer in a government college, to be a Naga means being member of a particular 'tribe'. One thing about Annie is that she has no interest in Naga nationalism. Annie teaches at a state run college in Kohima. Her job matters much to her because it not only gives her a secure livelihood it also helps her to be 'independent' as a single mother. She has experience of growing up both in the rural and urban areas of Nagaland. Because of her education and her job, she has a wide knowledge of Naga society and culture.

> Annie: First I think of my identity as an Ao woman, because when I think of being a Naga, I just can't relate myself to any other concrete cultural identification or markers as a Naga except me being from Ao community, I think of my dialect, the festivals that we observe as an Ao, the kind of cultural conditionings as an Ao from a very young age subjected to values and things like that. So when I think of myself as a Naga, I think it is natural thing to think of myself as an Ao first and foremost. Only then because I am Ao woman, Aos are a part of the great Naga family.

On the other hand, there were informants such as Senti, a social worker, who defined their identity only as belonging to a particular 'tribe'. Senti was "sent away from home at the age of six [for education] where you forgot your mother tongue and then you picked up English." In her interaction with people from other cultures, she felt she had nothing to offer because she didn't know anything about her background. She has a newfound

interest in discovering her cultural roots and is actively involved in preserving Naga cultural heritage. Unlike most Naga girls, Senti speaks English with an accent and cadence similar to Indian women from cities like Delhi and Kolkata. Compared to many Nagas, her family is quite wealthy. The living room in her house is furnished with a number of Naga antiques and artifacts. When I asked her what it means to be a Naga, she replied:

> I don't look at myself as a Naga. I think first of all, we all started off as Ao, Lotha, Sema, so I think that identity for me matters a lot because the word Naga for me as far as I am concerned is something which was coined, you know, by foreigners on the group of people, ethnic communities which were living in this part of the world. So it's not so much Naga identity that I would identify myself with but each ethnic community within this topographical area has its own customs and traditions, you know, which has been time honored.

Senti defined her identity according to the colonial classification of the Naga 'tribes.' But such conceptions are at times contradictory. Names of 'tribe' such as Ao, Lotha, Sema, Angami, may be recent names popularized particularly with the arrival of the British, but these groups had autonyms even before the British encountered them. For instance, Angamis called themselves Tenyimia, some Aos were known as Chungli, Mongsen, Changki, and Lothas called themselves Kyong.

For other informants, Naga identity is conceived as one homogenous identity that is unique and different from other people including Indian. Nula is a member of the Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights and has been quite involved in Nagas' rights issues since he was in college and continues to play an active role in a Naga civil society that often has to deal with Naga issues. I interviewed him at one of the annual meetings of the organization.

> Nula: Naga means having our own identity. We are also a different people and when we talk about uniqueness, I think that even if the general mass fails to articulate the uniqueness we are trying to say we are different from you to the Indian. Nagas as a people, we are also different from many peoples of the world and most importantly we are trying to say to the Indians we are different from you.
>
> Abe: But for you personally when you say I am a Naga what do you mean?
>
> N: I feel that we are a group of people trying to have our own identity trying to have our own nation, so Naga means it is identity, and I think when we say identity it is not only political but cultural, political and even to the extent of spiritual. That means the attachment we have to the nature and to the land we are in. So everything we try to bring it together and have one identity as Naga people.

Keviletuo also expresses a similar understanding of what it means to be a Naga. Keviletuo is an official of the Naga Hoho, an apex body representing the Naga 'tribes'. I interviewed him at the Naga Hoho office. Since the interview, he has been elected as the President of the Naga Hoho.

> Kevi: If we look at what we say that we are Nagas, in my personal view it shows that we have a distinct identity and distinct culture different from that of the mainland India or for that matter even the majority in Burma … [We are] totally different from the Assamese, the Burmese, or for that matter, even Indians. Therefore, I personally feel that when I say I am a Naga, I view that Nagas are also a people with a different identity and a different race, and with a nationality.

Both the Naga Hoho and Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights organizations tend to deal with issues that affect Nagas in general and both have been staunch supporters of the Naga movement. It is not surprising then, that Nula and Kevi are clearly influenced by the Naga political process and the political identity of Nagas as a nation. In this definition, the layers or components such as clan, village, and 'tribe' are co-opted by the common Naga identity. The importance of the political context in the formation of Naga identity cannot be overstated because the Naga political identity was born out of colonial experience and subsequent nationalist struggle that began during the colonial era and has

continued to this day. As Venusa Tinyi says, "the common struggles and pains and sufferings have become not only part of our history but more significantly, they have become part of our Naga identity – that is they have become associated with the social and political consciousness of our Naga identity by and large" (Tinyi 2008). The formation of Naga identity can be said to be the result of the dialogic relationship with the Other (Hall 1996). As Stuart Hall (1989; 1996) pointed out, along this historical construction, a "critical thing about identity is that it is partly the relationship between you and the Other" (1996:345), or similar to Frantz Fanon's gaze of the Other that fixes an identity (Fanon 1967). With the Nagas too, as Tinyi points out, "contacts, conflicts and interactions with others of different kinds gave us the present Naga identity" (2008). For it was due to contact with others such as Indians, that Nagas realized the commonalities within the Naga groups while also at the same time, saw themselves as different from others such as their neighboring Assamese, Bengalis, Manipuris or other Indians from mainland India. In this regard, Nagas are not different from other ethnic separatist groups which as Eric Hobsbawm pointed out, base themselves "on 'ethnicity', linguistic or not, that is to say on the assumption that 'we' … are a different people" (Hobsbawm 1992:4).

Such self-representation influenced by the present political context is also illustrated in the perception of Naga identity as a process or an emergent or evolving political identity. As Kuma, a journalist and a researcher, said to me in an in-depth interview:

> I mean for me personally, … It's, when I look at Naga, it is still in the process of making. It's is a political identity that comprises of different nations. But I think the question of Naga, I look at it as more of a political identity that has evolved and continues to evolve. But at the center of it is the idea that the people want to decide some future wanting to live by what it knows is best and right for them.

> Abe: So it's it not a particular or fixed thing?
>
> Kuma: No, it's not a fixed state and that is why I say it's a political identity. For instance, tomorrow if … I mean, Nagas are able to decide their own political future we have to look at Nagas in terms of citizenship because it is not possible to create a nation consisting of only the present nations that are referred to as Nagas. There will be many other groups of people who would also be part of that new political status, and therefore I think it would not be, you know, … Just to give you an example, when the present state of Nagaland came [about], there were not 16 tribes; it was much less than that. So it's always been in the making. That is why I think it would be detrimental to look at the concept of Naga identity as one that is static. It is one that is continually evolving and changing.

While for some respondents Naga identity was already an established identity, Kuma's perceives Naga identity as evolving. It is also interesting to note that Kuma prefers to use the term 'nations' instead of 'tribes' for the various Naga communities that comprise the Naga identity, indicating his being influenced by the use 'nations' to designate Native American groups such as Navajo, Cree, Cherokee, etc. Similarly, Tiwa, a professor and considered as an intellectual and an elder in the Naga society, also argues Naga as an emerging identity, though with a difference from Kuma's perception. According to Tiwa:

> It's [Naga identity] not so much the material culture, but it is even more subjective thing than the material thing. It has to do with the consciousness. It's a process actually. The whole idea of pan-Nagaism was the work of Phizo. If you read about Hutton or Mills, they wrote about Lotha Nagas, Ao Nagas, Sema Nagas, but apart from that the Naga consciousness or pan-Nagaism came about through the efforts of Phizo. And still it is in the making I think. It's in the process.

Tiwa's definition of Naga identity has three features. First, that it is subjective consciousness that one is a Naga, and secondly, that the pan-Naga identity is still in the process of making, and, thirdly, Naga identity, is a product of the historical and political processes and the result of work done by nationalist heroes represented, in this case, by Phizo.

Tunika, a social worker who is also considered an elder and an intellectual, also described Naga identity as a process. He divides his time between Nagaland and his base in an Indian city, coming to Nagaland because of his involvement in the Naga civil society organizations and also for his work as a social worker. I had met him on a number of occasions at public functions, but did not know him personally. I caught up with him at one of his visits to Kohima, and we met at his brother's house for an in-depth interview. He looked very comfortable, composed and confident right from the beginning of the interview. His responses indicated that he had thought about similar questions and interacted with people privately and at public functions. Responding to my question, 'What does it mean to be a Naga?' he said:

> I think it is [an] instinctive process that is going on inside. I say, well I am a Naga, it comes from a sense of security from inside. … I think it is an instinctive human thing to have an identity, personal first then immediate surrounding and then in the modern world you should belong to somebody. My clan, my village, my tribe, my region … it is something that is there, and as we confront the world, this idea begins to grow. I think that is why today I say quite comfortably I am a Naga. By that I instinctively know and … what I mean is that, a Naga means yes my tribe and then the next tribe and the next tribe, and all the Naga tribes we are aware of we are all Nagas. That is what I mean [by] Naga identity. And I feel that it is at the early stage of formation, but it's a bit comparable to a heavenly bodies coming together to begin to respond to the universe on the basis of its own inherent personality or reality. Gravity is doing that, but I mean all heavenly bodies, I am told, came to be that way as result of a long, long process, enormously long process or formation.

I was intrigued by Tunika's analogy of gravity so I asked him to describe it in the Naga context. He explained that linguistic similarity and other common practices such as village system (structure) acted as forces of gravity that linked and brought the various Naga 'tribes' together. Tunika explained this in the following manner:

> I think we have ahh, first of all immediately at the village, there is linguistic identity; our linguistic similarity, commonality of the village [system] are clear, and then with our immediate surrounding it is clear, and then it goes out like that.

> And then when you examine that linkage between ourselves and others, you see a real linkage going farther and farther out. I find very often that if you count [the numerical] one, two, three to ten and you try to listen to other tribes, you [will] see some distinct similar ahh words used among most tribes in the Naga community. So I see that to be one reality that is like a gravity pulling us together, and then I think a lot of our cultural ideas are strongly alike.

Tunika's definition of Naga identity has three characteristics: First, being a Naga is a subjective, instinctive process going on within individuals that comes from a sense of security inside a person as a result of his or her relationship with the immediate surroundings. Secondly, whereas in the earlier examples, historical and political factors had clear influences on the definition of Naga identity, Tunika's concept of Naga identity is social cultural and not political. Thirdly, Tunika also uses the same components of the layers, though horizontally, for the relatedness and affinity of Naga 'tribes' as threads that connect the expanding layers that constitute Naga identity. In Tunika's case, the socio-cultural dimension of the Nagas is used to substantiate this emerging political identity.

Another definition popular primarily among the Undergrounds is the perception of Naga identity as a God-given identity. As the General Secretary of the NSCN-IM faction, Muivah is considered a stalwart and one of the leading intellectuals of Naga nationalism, and is often the spokesman for the organization. I had the chance to listen to him at a couple of public meetings called by the organization that gave me opportunities to understand his views which helped me prepare for the in-depth interview with him. Muivah defines Naga identity as given by God who, through the course of history and migration, led the Nagas to their present place of habitation. Muivah explained this argument to me in an interview:

> According to the history that can be traced out, our forefathers they lived there in Mongolia and from there [they] migrated. But I question myself to [be] really sure of our history and the purpose of the unseen God. When our forefathers moved out from Mongolia, they never thought that they would come to this land, this Nagaland. None of them knew that. ... As they moved out, they passed through different valleys of China. … they settled down in China and from there some went to ….. Malaysia, etc. it is very clear now because the way those people behave, in many cases the dress, the customary rights, costumes and traditional practices… almost all the same [are similar to the Nagas]. And I am fully convinced, [our forefathers] passed through northern Thailand, and quite a lot of them settled down there, and then we passed through Shan state [in Myanmar] and again settled down in the plains … and after that reached this Patkoi range and settled down on both [sides of the Patkoi mountain range]. How is it that they did not move out from there farther? It so happened that they chose to live in this Patkoi range. It was never their decision.

Muivah's theory is rooted in a religious explanation. He sees 'the purpose of the unseen God' who led them through their course of migration from Mongolia to the present area of habitation for establishing a Naga nation. Muivah thus substantiates his political argument with a theological explanation. As the main intellectual and policy maker for the NSCN-IM, Muivah has a lot of influence on the NSCN-IM members. This became clear to me one day when I was about to interview one of the top-ranking officials of the NSCN-IM and a new recruit who had just finished the basic training came in, and after introducing himself, said to the officer, "Sir, thank you for the training. Now I understand the reason why we must fight for our freedom. I understand now God's purpose for our people."

Other officials of the NSCN-IM base their theological arguments on the Bible. Among others, Phantia, a senior member of the NSCN-IM provides a biblical foundation for Naga identity as a God-given identity. With a firm conviction, Phantia explained to me his view of its biblical foundation:

> I believe in the words of God and from my childhood I heard of Acts 17:26[19], which says out of one man God created nations/mankind and he determined the places where people should inhabit, and he also set a time for every people. So when I heard of this I thought, then my people should also have a place, and God must have even set a time for our people to live with self-respect and dignity. … We belong to Mongoloid stock but then within the Mongoloid family there are different nationalities and we people who used to identify ourselves by piercing ear (lobes), we are called to be people with big holes in the earlobes. We look quite different from *Mayangs* (plains people). [The] skin is quite different and way of living is also quite different. We have nothing in common. Yeah, we look much fairer with chinky eyes. But then how do we differentiate ourselves from Kuki-Chin people who also belong to Mongoloid race? They say they are not Nagas whereas we claim ourselves to be Nagas. They [Naga forefathers] used to tell us, you go from north to south, east to west, those who have holes in their earlobes; you will find similarity in all their (Naga groups) cultures in one way or the other. There will be similarities. And even in languages also, if we go deep into the roots of the languages there will be similarities.

Certain features can be teased out from Muivah's and Phantia's definition of Naga identity as a God-given identity. First, because both Muivah and Phantia are engaged in the Naga political process, Naga identity is conceived as one homogenous identity. Elements that form the multi-layered definition such as clan, village and 'tribe' are not emphasized as major components. Unlike Tunika, Kuma or Tiwa, who perceive Naga identity as evolving and a political identity in the process of being formed, Muivah and Phantia's concept of Nagas identity is created once and for all by God even though Nagas' final destiny as an independent nation is yet to be realized. For both Muivah and Phantia, the God-given Naga identity is substantiated by socio-cultural elements: for Muivah, it is territorial - God has led the Naga people through the course of their migration to inhabit the land that they presently inhabit - Phantia substantiates Naga identity with features such as 'skin color' (Mongoloid race) and cultural practices such as piercing the earlobes (for both men and women) and similarity of languages among the

[19] Acts 17:26. "From one man he created all races of mankind and made them live throughout the whole earth. He himself fixed beforehand the exact times and the limits of the places where they would live" (Good News Bible).

Naga groups. Whether evolving as a political identity, or as a God-given identity, respondents opined that certain core features constituted Naga identity.

'Nagaism'/Oneness

Some respondents expressed the feeling of oneness, unity or 'Nagaism' which was described as an important ethnic component of Naga identity. Some even went to the extent of arguing that the feeling of being a Naga, or what is also called 'Nagaism' is the essence of Naga identity. According the Naga Hoho, Naga solidarity or "being a Naga or Nagaism is the living foundation of Naga nationalism" (Naga Hoho White Paper:51). This aspiration, in nationalist language, is articulated as the Nagas wanting "to live in a unified homeland under one administration" (Vashum 2000:143). I asked some of the respondents to explain further this sense of 'Nagaism' or oneness. Lanushill, a university lecturer, described this in an interview at his home.

> Yes, some say all the tribes in the Northeast have like that. But only some tribes have responded to this common feeling, you see, something distinct feeling of Naga. It's an inner thing; Nagas' sense of being one. Perhaps somewhere in the past they might have been together but owing to some circumstances, they might have split into groups. And when group splits and live in isolation from one another, they tend to develop their own language.

Similarly another respondent, Tiwa, a professor and an intellectual, mentions the histories and traditions as the primary components that results in the feeling of oneness or 'Nagaism.' According to Tiwa:

> I go back to our own traditions, histories, ah, the past rich heritage that we have. Although that's not all, I think that becomes important. … I think there is a common thread that runs across the Naga family…. And certain things - the clothing, songs, dances, instruments that we use. …. We may think who are the Poumais, Thangkals, Marams [the smaller Naga tribes in Manipur]? They are almost like the Tenyimias [the group consisting of Angamis, Zeliangrong, Chakesang, Mao-Maram] actually. But it's just that we have never heard [of

> them]. ... But they are just next door [and related] to the Chakesangs (in Nagaland).

This oneness or 'Nagaism' was also explained by Annie, a college lecturer, as follows:

> Only thing is that for so long we have been living in our own isolated lives, in our own isolated villages, that the village and tribal identities became so important, became so preservative of those identities. And so when times changed and the different tribes were made to mingle with each other, they recognized each other as brothers or something, and they could easily … identify themselves as distinct from those who were not. So it was natural for the formation of the pan Naga identity. But as time went on, the economic changes and development activities ushered in and the same reasons of self-preservation got replayed all over again in the modern context. … And this is why we have so much tribal issues in Nagaland today. I feel that the negative tribalism in us is more development related ... Otherwise, Nagas are at the core a people. … For us there are outside differences no doubt, for political purposes, but at the subconscious level or value level, we connect, and when you talk about your traditions I understand it, it makes sense to me because I may not have the same custom, but in another way.

Nagas' feeling of oneness is similar to Walker Connor's concept of nation as "self-defined" (1978:380). According to Connor, the "essence of a nation is intangible. The essence is a psychological bond that joins and differentiates it, in the subconscious convictions of its members, from all other people in a most vital way" (1978:379). 'Naga' as a nomenclature for the Naga people did not begin with the British arrival or with the Naga political movement. Although knowledge about the number of the various Naga groups and their affinity to each other was not articulated in written forms such as exists today, the Nagas were already known by their neighbors, such as the Ahoms by the thirteenth century and the Burmese (Sanyu 1996, 1997; Yonuo 1974) even before the coming of the British. The British anglicized the name 'Naga' and popularized it for colonial and western academic consumption. In the past, relationships between the various Naga groups may not have been as close as they are today because of practices

such as headhunting, and inter-tribal warfare due to infrastructural problems[20] such as tensions arising from population pressure on resources, the need for expansion due to their practice of swidden agriculture, ecological crisis or competition for scarce environmental resources.[21] But the existence of hostilities did not mean the different Naga tribes were totally unrelated as a people. The relationships between villages were punctuated by war and peaceful times, exchanging women in marriage, trade and friendship treaties. This feeling of oneness or Naganess is substantiated by origin and migration stories that reinforce the position that although Nagas at present may be divided into different 'tribes', Nagas migrated from one place along the same route. The two places most commonly associated with the sites of migration and dispersal are Makhel in Mao Naga area, and Khezakeno in Chakesang Naga area. I had a chance to visit these two places on a couple of occasions.

Origin and Migration Stories

As Smith says, 'the answers lie in those 'myths of ethnic origins and descent" that form the groundwork of every nationalist mythology (1996:121). On April 15, 2007, the Sunday Post edition of *Nagaland Post*, a newspaper daily from Nagaland, carried a news report titled, 'A trip back to the ancestral land' about a trip undertaken by the elders and youth of Jakhama, an Angami village, to Shajouba and Makhel. According to the report, the reason for the group's visit was "to see and keep itself abreast of its ancestor and the

[20] At times superstructural factors cultural beliefs, values and attitudes such as belligerent or aggressive personalities, martial values like bravery, material and prestige value of the war trophies (heads, scalps, prisoners, etc.), revenge motive, magical and religious value, etc. gave added incentives and reinforced the hostilities.

[21] Tensions arising from expansion are acute even today as, for example, the Semas moving to Niuland, and the current ethnic tensions arising from people wanting to occupy the Intangki Reserved Forest.

history" because "manmade artificial boundary seems to have its impact among today's generation of the once close-knitted Naga society to lose track of even their closest history" (Nagaland Post [Sunday Post] April 15, 2007:1). The history that Nagas talk about in relation to their ethnicity has to do with Nagas' migration from Makhel.

In the Mao Naga village of Shajouba, near Makhel, fenced within a brick wall, is the *Chitebu Kaji*, the Naga wild pear tree, considered as the oldest tree in the history of the Nagas. Naga oral traditions say that centuries ago when Nagas lived in Makhel, there was a charmed flat stone called *Tupha Chava* on which people dried paddy rice and the magical power of the stone doubled the paddy at the end of the day. Eventually *Tupha Chava* lost its magical power and it became difficult to sustain the increasing population of the village. So the elders gathered at the foot of the *Chitebu Kaji* at Shajouba, conducted a ritual ceremony during which they took an omen and dispersed to different settlements from there.

The inscription on the monolith erected on January 1, 1992, at the *Chitebu Kaji* reads:

> This tree is known as the oldest tree in the history of the Nagas. It is said that once all the Nagas lived at Makhel. But when population increase[d], all people gathered at the foot of this tree and departed to different directions for new settlements. This tree still stands as a symbol of unity and oneness of the whole Naga tribes. When a branch of the tree is broken, all the Nagas observe *genna* (a holiday observing such an event) for one day.[22]

Within the walls that enclose the *Chitebu Kaji*, there are also monoliths erected to memorialize the visits of Nagas from different tribes to Makhel and Shajouba for a

[22] One version says that the elders of the Naga tribes gathered at the foot of the Wild Pear Tree, they took an oath, "that if a branch of the tree broke under any circumstances, a day will be observed as 'Genna' by all the Nagas… by passing word from one village to another till it reached the last village" (Nagland Post, Sunday Post April 15:1). The Lothas had a custom of observing a *genna* when a branch of the village tree (in their respective village) broke and not necessarily the branch of the Wild Pear Tree.

historical validation of their ethnicity. There is, for instance, a monolith erected in the early part of the nineteenth century in memory of the "Makhel Tribes", another monolith by the Thevoma Khel of Khonoma village that reads, "Once we lived here", another memorial stone by Viswema village in 1982, and a recent one (2003) by the Baptist church of Chumukedima. The rationale for these 'visits to history' and memorial monoliths is to make historical claims for and reinforce Naga identity.

Fig. 9. *Chitebu Kaji*, the Naga Wild Pear Tree at Shajouba (Photo by Abraham Lotha).

Not very far to the northeast of Makhel is Khezakeno, another legendary Naga village. On February 11, 2007, I visited Khezakeno with a friend. The road to Khezakeno is mettled but not paved, and a modern-design Naga gate welcomes visitors into "the Legendary Naga Village." The road runs through the recent extension of the village, but the area of historical interest is in the lower section of the village, about a kilometer from

the vehicular road. After parking the car, my friend and I were walking down through the village and as luck would have it, we met Neikodo Arugi, a tourist guide who occasionally works from Kohima. Neikodo was returning home from the church after the Sunday service, and he invited us to his house for a cup of tea before we went down to the 'Spirit Stone.' As we were chatting, his father, Ngolo Arugi, came in. Ngolo has been the Baptist pastor of Khezakeno for the last 34 years. As a 75- year-old man, he is well-respected for his knowledge of the oral tradition. Many in the village come to ask him and another older man for stories about the village. He told us about how he carried water for the British soldiers in 1944 during WWII. "If we carried one container, they gave us butter. If we carried two containers, we were given meat. It was a nice way to earn British food," he told us. The British soldiers, around 200 of them, were on the ridge outside the village. Seven Japanese soldiers hid in Ngolo's parents' house. The Japanese stayed more than one month in his house and then went to Kohima. It seems that their leader was killed in Kohima. Since the War, the Japanese have made about four official visits to Khezakeno and have interviewed Ngolo Arugi. After tea, he accompanied us to the site of the 'Spirit Stone.' The 'Spirit Stone' slab is broken into four pieces that are kept on a raised platform constructed by the villagers with a fence around it. Adjacent to the 'Spirit Stone' stands a huge monolith commemorating the 9th session of the of Tenyimi Central Naga tribes – Angami, Rengma, Zeliangrong, Pochuri, Mao, Poumai, and Chakesang.

One of the elders of the village came and met us and together with the Ngolo told us the story:

> When the Nagas decided to disperse from Shajouba, they gathered at the foot of the Wild Pear Tree. Koza, one of the forefathers prayed, "God, we don't know

what direction to take. Show us the way." So saying, he held out the walking stick to let it fall to the ground and whichever direction the stick fell would be the way the people would take. They followed a swallow and when they reached the site of Khezakeno, the swallow circled around it. They came upon a flat stone, *Tso Tawo* (Spirit Stone) and nearby, there was a frog sitting on a rice plant. Whenever the frog and the swallow bit off one stalk of the rice plant, another stalk appeared miraculously. When Koza plucked the rice plant, he noticed there was another one left. Taking that as a clue from God, the people settled there. Thereafter, when the people dried paddy on *Tso Tawo*, it doubled at the end of the day. The villagers took turns to dry paddy on the stone. One day, two elder brothers did not allow the younger brother to dry paddy on the stone and a quarrel ensued. Disgusted, their grandmother came and started fire under the stone. The stone broke into pieces and the spirit of the stone ascended towards the heavens. Thereafter, the stone lost its spiritual and miraculous power and after that people migrated to different settlements.

Fig. 10. *Tso Tawo*, the Spirit Stone at Khezakeno (Photo by Abraham Lotha).

Both Ngolo and the other elder, however, pointed out that according to the oral traditions of Khezakeno, there were not one but seven waves of migration from the village due to reasons such as epidemic, poverty, famine, landslide, fire, etc.[23] Smith mentions features

[23] Longterok at Chungliyimti in present day central Nagaland is another Naga village where a section of the Ao Nagas are believed to have originated.

such as temples, castles, stone circles, etc. which are treated as natural components of an ethnic landscape that "imply a close link between history and nature, [which] the modern educator-intellectual is able to define the community in space and tell us where we are" (Chamberlin 1979:2-35 in Smith 1996:120-121). Makhel and Khezakeno are two legendary places through which most Naga tribes believe to have migrated, and many Nagas continue to visit these sites to this day.

Naga nationalists, as pointed out in the foregoing section, believe that there is an ethnic core that form part of the Naga identity that provide the base for nationalism. Features such as the clan, village, and 'tribe' are generally thought of as both constituting Naga identity, and being vital for understanding it. My next question was to find out what respondents thought were some of the ethnic cores or unifying elements under the diversity of the different Naga 'tribes'.

Clan, Kinship and Descent

Family structure and kinship are important components of the Naga ethnic core. Within each group of Nagas there are clans. For instance, Ezung, Yanthan, Ngullie, Kikon, Humtsoe, Patton, are some of the prominent clans within the Lotha group. Clan members are supposed to be related by blood and clan exogamy is strictly enforced. There are clan relationships across different groups though the names of the clans may differ. As Nula, one of the respondents said, "I think Naga society thrives on kinship. *Khor manu* (family or clan people) is something very strong." But *khor manu* or kinship in the Naga context is not only in terms of having a common ancestor but also extends to clan affinities and

relationships across different 'tribes'. As Bendangmayang, the president of Naga Hoho explained, "For example, Lothas have Yanthan, Kikon. In Ao [community] we have [corresponding] clans. Kikons are Longchars in Ao. Yanthans among Lothas are Longkhumer in Ao." Thus clan as a primordial component of Naga identity as perceived by the Nagas is not just the common biological ancestry or ethnobiology (Geertz 1963; Gil-White 1999:802) of the immediate clan but also of the clan structure across the various groups. Members of the same clan from different 'tribes' will still consider themselves as family members. Thus, kinship and patrilineal descent system are considered as primordial ethnic features to characterize Naganess. Kaka Iralu, an activist, explained to me in an interview, the importance of clan membership and inheritance practices prevalent even today as criteria for Naga identity:

> What my father bequeaths me is my private property. But as an Iralu I also have many common properties. As a Meyasetsu, as a Merhuma, as a Khonoma, as an Angami, you know, it goes in wider circles. There are individual lands, but there are also common clan lands, khel lands, village lands and tribal lands. And I am entitled as a Khonoma villager to do gardening or cutting wood in any of the common lands. Nobody can stop me. So in that sense, economically I am a very rich man. I have many entitlements to so many lands so I can remove stones and build my house, cut timber and build my house or do a farming or *jhum* (slash and burn) cultivation. These are so unique. … I guess that is what I would call my cultural identity.

The increasing utilization of kinship for nationalism is also manifested in marriage practices (particularly discouraging marriage by Naga women to non-Nagas), the patrilineal system and inheritance laws. The perception of the clan as a natural element of Naga identity is expressed in slogans such as 'Nagas by blood'. The Naga Students Federation (NSF) has taken a strong stand against the increasing number of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and North India, and made the following resolution:

> NAGAS BY BLOOD not by adoption or religion. Therefore, while appreciating and welcoming the solidarity expressed by the non-Nagas on the Naga problems, strict vigil should be maintained against adoption of non-Nagas by means of inter-marriage or childlessness as our Naga Customary Law vehemently prohibited such practices (special reference to male). (NSF 1997 – NSF 50)

Justifying this resolution, Pushika Awomi, the president of the NSF explained to me in an interview: "Marriages are voluntary, but we want to create an awareness of this danger … of demographic changes in society. Cultural topography must be preserved. We don't encourage inter-marriage to outsiders and giving property rights to others." It must be mentioned, however, that this resolution was made against the backdrop of the threat of jobs being taken by non-Nagas and illegal immigrants, and the threat of property rights or inheritance claimed by the children of Naga women marrying non-Naga.

In this connection, I also asked two members of the Naga Mothers Association (NMA), the apex civil society organization for women in Nagaland, for their position. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the NMA were primarily involved in social issues such as alcoholism, and drug addiction, including running a drug rehabilitation center. Then their office was located in another part of Kohima city. Their current office is located in the Naga Club Building which also houses the offices of the Naga Students Federation. It was members of the Naga Club who first submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission, the first official written document for Naga nationalism. And the NMA's office at the Naga Club Building is symbolic of their increasing involvement in Naga society from social to political issues. I met up with Chum and Eloe, two officials of the NMA, in their office to interview them. Among many questions, I asked their opinion on the relationship

between Naga marriage practices, the partilineal system and inheritance laws and Naga identity. The dialogue went as follows:

> Abe: Can a non-Naga become a Naga?
>
> Chum: Unless she is married to a Naga or is adopted. Then we recognize them as Naga.
>
> Eloe: For example, a woman married to a non-Naga. In some tribes they are banning to take the clan of the wife [adopting the surname of the wife which often is the clan name].
>
> C: And I don't agree with that. Naga women are marrying non-Nagas and then coming to take mother's title [surname].[24]
>
> E: Yeah, for job opportunities. So many women organizations are against this. So if a Naga woman is married to a non-Naga she should be a non-Naga. She should not drag her husband to become a Naga.
>
> C: Because from the very beginning she knows that she is marrying a non-Naga [so] why should she [make her husband adopt a Naga clan name]? ... unless the husband is from poverty (sic) and then he wants to get rid of (his surname) completely and then come this (wife's) side to the Nagas. But even that it will be very difficult to explain.
> A: What is the reason behind the Naga women objecting to that?
>
> C: We feel marriage is something which comes out of love, not out of compulsion. ... When a non-Naga courts me I know that I am going to marry a non-Naga, so why should I try to bring him to [be] a Naga? Knowing fully well that he is a non-Naga she should cling to her husband's [family and ethnicity]. Because even among the Nagas also, if I am a Sema and I marry a Lotha, then I become a Lotha. [Similarly] we also feel that if she marries a non-Naga she should go to her husband's side. Because we were taught that way.

I asked Chum and Eloe if there were more reasons to their objection of a Naga woman's non-Naga husband adopting the wife's surname (clan name). Even more than an identity

[24] When the non-Naga husband of a Naga woman adopts the surname (last name) of the wife, that family becomes a matriarchal family, a practice not allowed in the Naga society that practices strict patriarchal system. The fear is that the children of such families will then claim to be Nagas and claim benefits and privileges such as for quotas for education, scholarships and job opportunities that are reserved for Nagas by the government.

issue, the concern seemed to be more of losing job opportunities to the children of such families. As Chum explained:

> One of the reasons why we feel threatened is also because, for us, very limited jobs are there. And they are finding out that mixed parents, their children are also taking state reservation [jobs reserved for Nagas]. Because of all those things, they are making more strict about it. … Why we are objecting is because we have no opportunity as such. And when the people are objecting to it we cannot encourage our Naga girls to marry.

Kinship and descent, then, are considered important components of Naga identity. In a similar study from Mongolia, Francisco Gil-White found "a consciously held biopatrilineal rule: a child takes the biological father's ethnic status, often stated in so many words, and quite automatically (Gil-White 1999:796). Unlike Barth's notion that "ethnic identity is a matter of self-ascription and ascription by others in interaction" (1969:6), Gil-White argues that the biological ethnic status functioned as a primordial ethnic core. In defining Naga identity, Nagas perceive blood and descent and kinship as natural ethnic cores, and, similar to Gil-White's study of the Mongolians, it seems to be the case that Naga nationalism as a struggle to protect their way of life "as before" is a position that "ethnic cognition is at core primordialist, and ethnic actors' instrumental considerations – and by implication their behaviors – are conditioned and constrained by this primordialist core" (Gil-White 1999:789). Thus, Sanyu argues that what is significant in the Naga case is "that the national movement was deeply rooted in [the] traditional clan system. This made the movement relevant, accessible and very real to every Naga. ... And because it was so inextricably woven into the clan system, the concept of nationalism was understood at the village level" (Sanyu 1997:163; see also Kikon 2008:102).

Village Governance

Another foundational element that Nagas claim as a core component of Naganess is the Naga system of village republics. The village, not the clan or tribe, is the sovereign political unit of Naga society. In Naga polity, "the village rather a group of villages or a tribe is the natural unit of organization" (Horam 1975:60). As Vashum pointed out, "for the Naga people, since time immemorial, [the] village was the main basis of administration and it was generally in the form of 'Village State.' Every village had their own jurisdiction" (2000:111). Most scholars of the Nagas have stated that Nagas lived in isolation and did not interact with each other because of internecine warfare and headhunting. But the Lothas, for instance, did not practice headhunting within their own group. Instead there was much communication between the different villages even sharing borders in the fields. Also, Naga groups such as the Lotha, Ao, Angami, Phom and Konyak had trade relations with the Ahoms in Assam for centuries even before the arrival of the British. It was such relationships that brought the Nagas in contact with the British. Though Nagas may describe the existence of a village 'from time immemorial', its permanence or naturalness is not implied. Rather, what is emphasized for the cause of Naga nationalism is the system of Naga polity as autonomous village republics that were akin to the ancient Greek city-states which were independent republics (Yonuo 1974; Horam 1975, 1988; Shimray 1985; Jacobs 1990; Sema 1992; Mao 1992;Shimray 2005). Whether the village polity had a democratic system (Ao, Lotha, angami) or a chief system (Konyak, Sema, Tangkhul), each village had an autonomous existence. Even though some villages might have been subordinates to the mother village or a more powerful village, the political center was within each village.

How precisely did the system of independent village states foster the spirit of nationalism? As Mishra said, "Naga nationalism did not grow at the expense of the Tribal structure of the village administration but virtually on it" (Sakhrie 2006). Lanushill who teaches in one of the universities in Northeast India offered me a sociological explanation. I first met him in his office in the university where he worked, but when we started discussing he felt that he had something important to share with me and would need more time. So we decided to meet at his house the next morning. Over a cup of tea, he explained to me in a slow convincing manner like a seasoned teacher.

> Lanushill: Each Naga village considered itself to be sovereign, … and there were no masters above them. … So, given that self-identification as independent villages, as many scholars are now describing as village republics, it had a big impact upon this self-identification of sovereigns unto themselves being shattered. [Then came] somebody above them. This entity above them in the name of British colonial power could do more than what they could do as a village. In the sense that the colonial administration spread out by exerting its control and administration over villages and much more, making their authority as stronger than the villages, by imposing house taxes. To give tribute, to give tax to another authority suddenly must have shattered their age-old self identification as being immune from any external control. Since this occurred at a historical phase of time, from Khonoma, Wokha, Mokokcung, etc, spanning within a period of 15 years or so, the resentment must have been uniform. In the sense that we have a common enemy, why can't we unite more? ... That would be a natural sociological process. … And so that is how a nascent sense of Naga political destiny developed. It was at the such a time when the use of money was unknown and imposing money meant forcing our Naga ancestors to look for money, currency, which was only made available by being of service to the British forces or to go down to the plains of Assam, sell whatever goods they have for money. And it was at such a time when the tea garden industry was starting in Assam. It required much labor to cut down forest and all that. Many Aos, my ancestors tell us that they went down to the plains to cut forest to earn cash in coins. So it was double punishment. ... First they took away their all self-control, secondly they were made to work for money not for themselves but to be paid to the Britishers. All these things must have generated and later on fostered a strong sense of unity that one day we shall throw them out.

Lanushill's explanation is not an uncommon, especially in the rural areas. When I was a child in the village, independence (*ekhüng* in Lotha) was objectified as something that Nagas would be given. Our parents and grandparents would say:

"Phizo and Khodao (who were living in London then) are bringing independence."

"What would happen then?" we would ask the elders.

"We will live free, we will be able to go and cultivate as we like, we won't carry anybody's head load (implying the forced labor by the British and Indian Army), we won't pay tax to anybody, and everybody will have lots of money because we will print as much money as we want."

The perception of what independence could bring about has changed since then, but the reality of Naga villages continues to exert upon the Nagas a spirit of independence, freedom and dignity. The importance of the village polity as the political unit for Naga nationalism is emphasized by the Naga Hoho:

> The Naga village is the unit of peoples' sovereignty and is also the first institution of the Nagas. This unit has a territory with clear cut demarcation within which the villagers have their due space and corporate life. This unit has its own systems in the social, religious, political and economic sphere. It also has its own customary laws for the administration of justice without any interference from the outside world…. These village units were never under the rule of any alien government before the advent of the British colonial rule. Even after more than 130 years of Christian influence and introduction of the Government system, the villages still retain their uniqueness and *de facto* sovereignty. The existence of sovereign Naga villages with their own territory, their system and population from time immemorial to this day is the living proof of Naga sovereignty because the Naga nation is made up of sovereign Naga villages. (2002:ix)

Nagas' fundamental sense of independence, then, is deeply rooted in their political system of independent village republics, an *ethnie* component that dates back to pre-colonial times. From sovereignty perspective, then, as Sanyu argued, "the Nagas claim

that Nagaland was never part of Burma or India and therefore the question of secession does not arise. For the Nagas, their national struggle is a war of resistance against invasion not an 'insurgency' against a previously established authority" (1997:153-154). Thus in the initial stages of requesting the British to "leave us as we were" (Naga Club 1929), Naga nationalism was not even a search for an identity; it was something like a rudimentary political fundamentalism of wanting to continue living "wild but free" (Sakhrie 1946) in the independent village republics. As the NNC spokesman told *Time* magazine reporter: "White man was never king over us. Now black man come with guns and threaten they going to king over us. But nobody on this big earth will ever king over us" (Time, Monday, April 16, 1956).

Race: *Tephremia*, *Osom*, Non-local

Race is also an important component in the Nagas' claim as ethnically different from Indians, particularly those from mainland India. When I asked respondents to explain the race issue, most were quick to answer, "We are Mongoloid." As Merok, a social activist, told me, "First of all, even our looks itself is so different." Tom, an employee of the State government and a freelance journalist, whom I have known for many years and who also traveled with me to some of the festival sites, defined his Naga identity in this way: "I belong to a race called Naga and that I am distinct by my looks, by having certain features, by having certain features which don't resemble the mainline Indians" who themselves are very diverse. Similarly, according to Sonaj, a schoolteacher, "Basically our affiliation is more to the Asian (Mongoloid) people. The main hindrance is the [phenotypic] feature; we tend to term people who do not have our [phenotype] feature as

a non-local, non-Naga." How is this racial perception translated in real life? As Loed, a social worker, explained to me in an interview:

> Our racism may not be like the Germans had or what the Japanese had, but we have certainly a huge sense of pride. For example Indians will look down on me thinking I am a tribal but I look down on Indians. … For a long time I wrongly looked down on Indians thinking that the Indians are the most hopeless people in the world or the most undisciplined people. Even today many people believe this. When we see someone just doing some dirty work, for instance someone spitting pan (beetle nut) … if we see an Indian spitting pan while driving a taxi, for many of us we say forget about it he is Indian. If we see an unclean compound [we] say its an Indian compound. So that type of prejudice is there.

Nagas' sense of moral superiority over Indians from the mainland thus accompanies their claim to racial difference. Sometimes this racial pride and sense of superiority is expressed in Nagas' refusal to let non-Nagas become Nagas. This was pointed out to me by Kino, who has been involved in Naga nationalism for many years as a teacher and mentor to many Naga students and activists. "Are Nagas racist?" I asked Kino in an interview.

> Kino: Yes, to an extent … that we refuse to let others become Nagas, and we think Nagas are better than others; we refuse even Kukis who have lived with us, practically a part of us, and we still refuse them and I think that amounts to racism. If a Negro wants to come and become a citizen, definitely Nagas will refuse. Cent percent (100%) we will refuse. …. A white comes, then we will allow because we look at the white man with awe. At first Khonoma fought against the white man but they took the white man as god. Then we have to consider the dedication of the missionaries. Nagas really respect the white [man] because of the missionaries, … the justice of the administration [by British administrators] … our villagers used to tell me, "During the British, even if one chicken is lost, we will get back' but these Indians, …

As Kino pointed out, Nagas' perception of themselves as racially different from Indian, and their sense of moral superiority is further reinforced by their experience of the American missionaries and British administrators whom the Nagas felt were fair in their

administration of justice compared to Nagas' perception of Indians, especially the businessmen, as people who exploit and cheat the Nagas.

At times this racial difference is accentuated by the Nagas' feelings of being treated as foreigners by Indians from mainland India. Kaks, a Naga bureaucrat, who did his college studies in Delhi in 1970s told me in an interview how his feeling of non-Indianness based on racial features was reinforced by the way Indians in Delhi questioned him. I inquired what sort of questions people asked him.

> Kaks: As students when we go to Cannaught Place, by city bus, [we waited] in the Bus Stand. Once in a while the bus doesn't come for 15 –20 minutes and you are there standing in the queue, some people will get curious and ask us, where are you from? We'll say, Nagaland, and they don't know where Nagaland is. And then if they knew they would even ask, why have you come so far to study? Don't you have colleges and institutions in your own place? Others will ask, which embassy do you come from? I have times said, I am from Kohima embassy, and in their ignorance they would think we are foreigners.

Such experiences are commonplace. As a student in Pune, I was often mistaken for a Chinese or Japanese or Korean many times and asked for my passport. How were such perceptions lived out in real life? Kaks continued to share with me experiences of how he took advantage of such perceptions.

> Kaks: There was a bar in Cannought Place in Delhi called Omar Khayam, and there they used to serve liquor to foreigners, and a few of our friends South Indian friends sometimes when we go out together they would like to have beer. … I used to be the passport. … You see, when we have to go through, … Even people from the Home Ministry ask you stupid questions like that. Nagaland? Where is that? I have had officers from the Home Department, you know, not the senior members but the lower cadres *chapis* (chaps) who also travel by bus, you know, working in the Home Department asking me these questions. Oh, where is Nagaland? That is atrocious. We used to feel uuuh. Any other Indian okay, but those working within the damn system called the Home Department and they ask you questions of that nature. That is damn right [an] insult, you know. … But ultimately when you have to go through almost on a consistent basis, … you begin to feel that you are not a part of the system, and it sort of brings out in you a

> very strong sentiment that, yes, I think it is right to feel different and be proud of the fact that we are different.

Annie, a college professor, also shared her experience of being alienated because of her phenotypic difference.

> I think we are not the only one responsible but India is also responsible for that because every Naga who goes out comes back with stories of not being considered as one by Indians. … So even today, except for few lucky people, every Naga who goes out come back with stories of not being treated as an equal or of being look upon as a foreigner or as somebody who is not part of India.

I asked Annie to give me a personal experience of what she meant. To which she replied, "There are so many. There was a time when they thought I was a Buthanese or a Nepalese, or Japanese. And they started talking to me in broken Hindi, English like tourists "You come, no go."

Kaka Iralu, an author and an activist describes, in a *Morung Express* article, his experience of being treated as non-Indian by Indians immigration officers because of his physical featuers.

> Kaka: Many times, going to foreign countries, I am held up at immigration check points in foreign airports when I present my Indian passport to the immigration officers. They would look at me with great suspicion and say that I am not an Indian citizen. But the more irritating experiences are when I return to Delhi or Kolkata airport and am held up by suspicious Indian immigration officers who would cross examine and interrogate me, saying that I am not an Indian citizen! On two occasions, when I was standing on the Indian citizen's queue to present my passport for verification, I was told by an immigration officer to queue up in the foreigner's queue! (www.morungexpress.com January 27, 2009).

Along the same line, Lalsangkima Pachuau wrote about an identity crisis among people of Northeast India arising from "the experience of being pulled between the notion of ethnic identity and national identity" (2005:2). According to Pachuau, the racial and geographical location of Northeast India between Indic Asia and Mongoloid Asia causes

a geographical-cultural 'in-betweenness'; racially and culturally, people of Northeast India such as the Nagas and Mizos, belong to the Mongoloid Asia group and do not relate to the Indic culture, but find themselves politically Indian because currently they are situated in India. Naga nationalists have refused to remain in a state of 'in-betweenness' by insisting to be independent because topographically, culturally, and politically Nagas are different from India. But what about with other groups in the northeast of India, particularly those neighboring the Nagas, who have the same Mongoloid racial features as the Nagas do? While it may be easy to distinguish a Naga from an Indian from the plains like north India or south India, it is difficult to distinguish Nagas from some of the tribes in Arunachal, Mizos, Sikimise, Lepchas, based on race. To this question, respondents would typically reply: "The Mizos, Sikimie or Meities do not share our history, or experience. They do not call themselves Naga, while the Naga tribes have the affinity to call themselves Naga as is the case with the Anals and Mayols in Manipur." The Anals and Mayols have a shared history and core identity with the other Nagas.

Language

Language is one of the important elements that define an ethnic group. Naga languages belong to the Tibeto-Burman family and not to the Dravidian, Aryan, and Austroasiatic language groups of mainland India.[25] Within the Tibeto-Burman family, the Naga group

[25] The Tibeto-Burman family of languages, which is a component of the Sino-Tibetan family, comprises hundreds of languages spread over a vast geographical area that includes sections of China, India, the Himalayan region and peninsular Southeast Asia. Researchers have classified the Naga dialects into different subgroups. Grierson (1903-28) divides the Naga dialects into Western, Central, Eastern, Naga-Bodo and Naga Kuki; Shafer (1966/67) classified the Tibeto-Burman languages into a complex and detailed sub-grouping of "divisions," "sections'" "branches," and "units;" Benedict (1972), followed Shafer's sub-grouping, but preferred to stress that many Tibeto-Burman languages had resisted precise classification and so he classified the Naga dialects broadly into Kuki-Chin-Naga, Abor-Miri-Dafla, and Bodo-Garo subgroups; Matisoff (1978), on the other hand, lumped together Benedict's subgroups of the

is comprised of about 90 dialects. At the moment, the different Naga languages present themselves as seemingly unintelligible to one another. Scholars have thus tried to place the various Naga languages into groups (French 1983[26]; Matisoff 1991[27]). Among recent efforts, George van Driem (2008) argued that Naga languages "do not constitute a single genetic sub-group within Tibeto-Burman" (2008:311). Driem classified the Naga languages into different groups: Northern Naga, Ao branch, the Angami-Pochuri branch and the Zeme branch (2008:313-314). However, speakers of Lotha and Sangtam [I speak both languages] will know that the two languages are one with slight differences. Similarly, Lotha and Angami, seemingly very different, are related more than just through root words, as is the relationship between Tangkhul and Ao Chungli. If language has a political history, one could also argue that the present variations and differences in

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Naga dialects into Kamarupan (from Kamarupa, Assam); French (1983) combined Shafer's and Benedict's sub-groupings of the northern Nagas. What is clear from all this is that there is no agreeable sub-grouping of the Naga dialects among the linguistic researchers.

[26] French's dissertation is a study in comparative historical linguistics that deals with the languages of the Northernmost of the Nagas of the Assam-Burma frontier. With data collected from seven dialects – Yogli, Moshang, Nocte, Wancho, Wakching, Konyak, Phom and Chang – French tries to reconstruct the phonological system and basic lexicon of the Tibeto-Burman mesolanguage from which these dialects are supposed to have descended. French calls this group of Naga dialects, Northern Naga. He employs lexical comparison to construct models of the diversification of this mesolanguage into its daughter languages and of its relation to other Tibeto-Burman nuclei.

French's makes his case as follows: Northern Naga is noteworthy for preserving distinctions which must be reconstructed for Proto-Tibeto-Burman. Lexical comparison shows that the Northern Naga languages fall into two subgroups: Externally, as Shafer and Benedict had suggested, Northern Naga is more closely related to Bodo-Garo than to any other Tibeto-Burman nucleus, but internally, it is almost as closely related to Jingphaw. French emphatically supports Benedict's hypothesis of a Bodo-Garo-Konyak-Kachin "supergroup," which implies that these languages comprise a discrete division of Tibeto-Burman. French is not clear whether to call the Northern Naga group languages or dialects because he uses them both to define them. French's thesis includes a good survey of the Tibeto-Burman classification, especially of Benedict and Shafer and Marrison. He also problematizes well the classification of the Naga dialects.

[27] In his article Matisoff reviews the present state of researches on Sino-Tibetan languages. Matisoff's grouping contains errors. For instance, he considers the Bodos as one of the Tibeto-Burman groups of Nagaland. In his earlier work (Matisoff 1986) he mentions that of the more than 1400 Tibeto-Burman language names he collected, many are only multiple designations for the same language or dialect: its autonym (what the people call themselves), and several other exonyms (what other groups call them). When it comes to the Naga languages, he has not been able to resolve this problem. His grouping of Benedict's Kuki-Chin-Naga, Abor-Miri-Dafla, and Bodo-Garo subgroups into one group, *Kamarupan* seems far fetched.

Naga dialects could be the result of years of separation in the course of migration and warfare.

Contrary to arguments by non-Naga writers that Nagas are a conglomeration of different people because they speak dialects or languages that are unintelligible to each other, respondents pointed out similarity and relatedness in Naga languages especially at the level of root words. Nula explained the relationship between the various 'tribes' illustrated by linguistic similarities. In an interview during one of our meetings, Nula explained this argument:

> For example, to start with, language is one. So among the Nagas even across the state boundaries … for example we count from one, two, three to hundreds, almost all the Nagas will have similarities at least up to ten. And other basic necessities like fire, food, and water they will have almost the same term or there will be slight differences but easily that can be communicated to each other. … So I think from the very beginning language was also one of the uniting factors among us or was one of the things that made communication much easier.

Tunika's earlier example of linguistic similarity that acts as a force of gravity to pull together the different Naga communities is similar to Herder's concept of one language one nation. Though at the moment, the Nagas do not speak one language, Nagas claim that Naga languages have no relationship with Indic languages – Dravidian, Aryan, and Austroasiatic – therefore, Nagas are not Indians. As Nula, a social worker, explained to me in an interview: "The Lothas, Aos, Konyaks traded with Assam but their language was never incorporated into our languages. There was no adaptation of any linguistic expressions … the few words came into our vocabulary only after the colonial experience when the Assamese and Bengalis were brought to teach at primary and secondary level schools." Scholars such as Herder and Hobsbawm have also highlighted language as a

primary characteristic of the nation. Herder considered *one* nation was a natural state that embodied a unique culture and a particular way of life grounded in a particular language which "is the natural power that integrates people within a particular community and provides the ultimate horizon of all meaning and understanding for them" (Herder 1969 in White 2005:171). Explaining Herder's concept with an example, Albert Guerard said: "Any one who spoke German as his mother tongue was a German and a brother. But speech affinity, by an easy if misleading transition, suggested the idea of blood relationship. The Germans were one in speech because they were one in origin" (Guerard 1934:3). Herder's primary characteristic of the nation was language and not race. Hobsbawm also argued, "If there is any standard criterion today of what constitutes a nation with a claim to self-determination, i.e. to setting up an independent territorial nation-state, it is ethnic-linguistic, since language is taken, wherever possible, to express and symbolize ethnicity" (1992:3). But Hobsbawm was also cautions that the kind of standardized written language used to represent ethnicity or nationality can be a rather late historic construction. The use of English as the State official language in Nagaland is a prime example of a standardized language as the product of a historic construction. Nagas' argument for their non-Indianness, though, is not based on the use of English or Nagamese (a Creole commonly spoken in the state of Nagaland) but on the history and unrelatedness of Naga languages to Indian languages.

Territory and Geography

The fact that only a small section of Naga territory, the Naga Hills District, was partially colonized by the British meant that the majority of Nagas were not colonized at any time

in their history according to their oral history. Even the Naga Hills District marked out by the British for administrative convenience, was designated as 'Excluded Areas'. The rest of the Naga areas were not colonized, and the British designated these areas as 'Unadministered' or 'Free Naga' areas. This is similar to what Thongchai Winichakul (1994, 1996) pointed out as the first axiom in Thai history: the fact that Siam was never colonized by Europeans. Winichakul's (1996) work also has relevance for Naga nationalism from another perspective: the idea of the existence of 'ungoverned' territories between the sovereign kingdoms in South East Asia in pre-modern times. Winichakul cited the example of 'ungoverned' areas between Burma and Siam, that "became a huge corridor between the two countries; that is, a thick horizontal line on the earth's surface between the two sovereignties" (1996:73-74). The two sovereignties did not have control over these 'ungoverned' areas. This parallels the Nagas' case. Between British India and British Burma, there were "ungoverned" corridors or mountainous regions inhabited by the Nagas. Reid, for example, mentioned "a great belt of unadministered Naga country lying between the Naga Hills District and the Patkai range (Reid 1944:21). The British actually believed that the Saramati mountain range in the eastern part of the present state of Nagaland was the boundary between Burma and the Nagas. Thus, Reid wrote about the Patkai range (Saramati mountain range) as "the natural boundary between Assam and Burma" (Reid 1944:21). In fact, beyond the Patkai range lie vast areas of Naga territory that were not colonized by British or other colonial powers. When the British left India and Burma, some of these 'ungoverned' Naga inhabited areas were divided arbitrarily between India and Burma effectively dividing the Nagas between the two countries.[28]

[28] The international boundary between India and Myanmar cutting across Naga areas was formalized only in 1972. Nagas argue that this was done without the consent and knowledge of the Nagas.

The ‘unadministered’ areas on the western slope of the Patkai range, particularly the Tuensang and Mon area, were later claimed by India as colonial inheritance (Lotha 2007:55). Rejection of such arbitrary divisions are voiced even today as a Konyak Union official in a recent interview said referring to the arbitrary international border that cuts through the middle of Longwa, a Konyak village in Mon district: “We are not bothered about it at all. It does not exist. It was created without consulting us by India and Myanmar, so we do not accept it,” (*Morung Express* October 28, 2008). Out of the 68 ‘tribes’ listed by the NSCN-IM, 25 are on Myanmar (Burma) side, and another 11 ‘tribes’ live on both the Indian and Myanmar sides of the border. For example, of the Konyaks alone, there are 27 villages on the Myanmar side, while other communities such as the Makori and Khiamnugan have the majority of their population living on the Myanmar side of the Saramati range. For many of these communities, it is “a case of one people, one village, one identity but two nationalities” (*Morung Express* October 28, 2008).

Fig. 11. The Angh (Chief) of Longwa village in Mon District, Nagaland, with his villagers. The international boundary between India and Myanmar runs through the hearth of the house. The Angh is on the Myanmar side while his two assistants are on the Indian side of the border (Photo by Abraham Lotha).

In short, the majority of the Nagas and vast tracts of their territory were not colonized by the British. In addition, this contiguous geographical space as discussed in the beginning part of the chapter, did not have racial, historical, cultural or linguistic affinity with India proper (Reid 1944). Unlike Chatterjee's claim that anticolonial nationalists in India created a domain of sovereignty – inner or spiritual domain – "within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power" (1993:6), Nagas did not need to create their own domain of sovereignty; the domain of political sovereignty for most Nagas, especially those that were not colonized, was a reality that cannot be denied.

In India's claim over the Nagas as a colonial legacy, the history of Naga nationalism tends to be focused on the partial colonization of Naga Hills District, but the truth that the majority of the Nagas were not colonized is not emphasized. The political sovereignty of the Nagas, even in the Naga Hills District demarcated as 'Excluded Area" was manifested in the independent and autonomous villages similar to the ancient Greek city-states. Naga nationalism is deeply entrenched in this history and ideology of "colonial free" people which infuses the Nagas' deep sense of freedom and independence that, for most part, continues to be a lived reality in the predominantly rural Naga society even today, and provides a powerful motivating factor for Naga nationalism.

Naga Symbols

Respondents pointed out other cultural markers, secondary and tertiary surface pointers (Nash 1989), such as the use of the hornbill feather, *dao* (machete), spear, and *mithun* (bison) that were symbolic representative of all Nagas and symbols through which Nagas portray their identity. Some mentioned food habits or cultural practices such as feasts of

merit, monoliths, piercing ear lobes, and collective experience of the Nagas with Indians to illustrate Naganess. While other respondents also pointed out certain values such as hospitality, sharing, community spirit, dignity and the spirit of freedom as characteristic of Naganess. Let me explain briefly three of these common Naga symbols.

Mithun (Bison) Head: The *mithun* is a symbol of wealth in Naga society. It is the most valued, prestigious and the biggest animal domesticated by Nagas. Its confidence, grace, robust and meaty features, give a sense of well-being to the owner. It is also the animal of the *sikyingo* (the spirit of human beings different from the soul). Naga forefathers used the *mithun* for rituals and celebrations in the Feast of Merit ceremonies. The *mithun* sacrifice in the feast of merit series accorded a high status to a man and his wife in Naga society. Carving the *mithun* head on the *Morung* (bachelors' dormitory) and the front porch of a house was a status symbol demonstrating wealth and power (Sanyu 1996:16). Today too, the *mithun* is the national animal of the state of Nagaland.

Great Indian Hornbill: Nagas consider the hornbill the king of birds (Mills 1926:313). It is the biggest bird seen in the Naga country. Its magnificent appearance and graceful movements make it a beautiful bird to look at. It makes a great impression soaring overhead slowly and majestically, whirring its wings loudly, audible even from a distance. Nagas believe that the hornbill courageously chases away its enemies and eats only the best fruits in the wild forests. The hornbill has a multiple symbolism. It is the symbol of valour. Successful warriors are entitled to wear the tail feathers of the hornbill as sign of their bravery, one feather for each head taken. Among the Lotha Nagas, "a man

who has dragged a stone may wear between his shoulders at the back the head of a Great Indian Hornbill, a bird regarded by the Lothas as symbolical of wealth" (Mills 1922:14). And finally, the hornbill is the symbol of the youth of the village especially the brave, young warriors of the *Morung* (bachelors' dormitory). The carving of the hornbill on the central post and side beams of the *Morung* symbolize the youth of the village.

Tiger: The tiger is a symbol of the spirit world and also a symbol of valor and strength. Nagas believe in lycanthropy, and they have a love and hate relationship with the tiger. It is feared and revered at the same time. There is a very strong association with the tiger in the Nagas' belief system. Some tribes believe the tiger is a brother. A Sema, for instance, credits the tiger "with an origin senior to his own, one mother having three children, a spirit, a tiger, and a man whose respective descendents still people the world" (Hutton 1921:128). Most other Naga tribes believe that the tiger is the protector spirit of a man or a woman. Even today, one of the tigers in the zoo at Kohima, the capital of Nagaland, is claimed by a Chakesang man to be his protector spirit.

Egalitarian versus Hierarchical Or Caste System

One of the crucial Naga cultural markers highlighted by the respondents, particularly nationalists, in the context of nationalism is the perception that Naga society is egalitarian *vis-à-vis* Hindu Indian society that is hierarchical or caste structured. Many Naga informants go to the extent of saying that the caste system is the essence of Indian society while the essence of Naga society is a classless society where everyone is equal. I asked informants what this difference means in their everyday experience of India. According

to Naga Hoho President Bendangmayang, “Some of the low caste [people] don’t even have any privilege to enjoy for life. … Low caste [are] not treated like human beings. We don’t have like that in the history of Nagas. All are equal.” Similarly, according to Reverend V.K. Nuh, the caste system or the absence of it is one of the diacritics that clearly distinguish Nagas from India. V.K. Nuh is a member of the Council of Naga Baptist Churches (CNBC), and has been one of the most vocal church leaders in support of Naga nationalism. For the last 42 years, he has been involved in the Naga political struggle. The day Nehru and U Nu came to Kohima in 1953, he was supposed to go to Ukhrul but stayed back at Tadubi, not far from Kohima. In 1951, when the plebiscite for Naga independence was held, he was in High School. Early in his life, he joined the armed nationalists, and later served as a Chaplain for three years. He has been in prison three times. During all these years, he has traveled the length and breadth of Naga inhabited areas. On different occasions, he has served as a mediator for peace and reconciliation between the warring factions. Nuh described for me his personal experience.

> Morally, my conscience does not permit me. I am not comfortable with that. Because the way his (Indian) life is, they cannot eat beef, they cannot eat pork, but I am free to eat this. I have no caste. Each Naga, whether he is small or high, does not make any difference. I am free to go to any village and sleep anywhere, eat what is given. If I go to India somewhere, they will look down. You are not Brahmin, you are coming from outcast society. How can I tolerate as a human being? I cannot live that. I cannot do that. Their way of life, their way of culture, sharing, lifestyle, everything is quite different, no connection. My children cannot live that. That is why I have to see my children should live comfortably.

I asked Nuh if he had been treated badly by Indians because of the caste system. And he replied:

> Nuh: No Indian [has] threatened me or till up to date. Yes, when I was young, when I go to Imphal (Manipur). Meitei people (Manipuris), when I ask for water

> the cup from which I drink they will not drink, the place where I sit, they will not sit again unless they purify. When I was the Headmaster of Bible School in Pfutesro, the head carpenter for constructing my house was a high caste Meitei. When he came to my home, he [would] call me, 'sir', but when I went to his home, he invited me to go to Imphal, the place where I sat they will purify, (sic) the cup also they will purify, the plate also they will purify. They identified I am not from low caste. I was wondering, what it is? Am I [an] animal and they are human beings? That kind of thing, I was very much embarrassed. I never forget. Oh I see. This is the way people live. I never forget.

Nuh's experience of the caste system goes against the sense of equality that is deeply engrained in Naga society. Nagas's sense of all human beings as equal, their pride and independent spirit expressed in Nuh's saying, 'free to eat what I want to eat,' and 'free to go to any village and sleep anywhere, eat what is given,' is a contradiction to the Hindu caste system of considering human beings as superior or inferior to another with religious and moral sanctions, as pure or impure beings leading to defilement and purification rituals, resulting in discrimination and debasement of fellow human beings. What Nuh says is that the Naga way of life and the Indian Hindu way of life are incompatible. The two cannot exist side by side. Naga people's collective and individual experiences of discrimination by Hindu Indians who are the dominant group in India, have only reinforced the Nagas' argument that Nagas are culturally and ethnically different from India and the two are not compatible. Such is the experience of Phantia, a senior official in the NSCN-IM faction. He has been jailed many times by Indian authorities, but that hasn't dampened his nationalist fervor. He has been a regular participant in Indo-Naga political talks since 1997. In an in-depth interview, I asked him to describe his personal experience of caste-based discrimination towards the Nagas.

> Phantia: I was in Tihar jail, Banaras jail, Jabalpur jail, those Brahmins though they were in jail sentenced to serve life in jail still they treated us as something below human being. Even the enlightened people, so-called intellectual people, Benaras Hindu University people, those people sometimes they come (sic) and

> visit jails in groups. I was really shocked. I was surprised. They look at us with fear and curiosity from a distance, because we don't grow beard and moustache, we don't grow hair over our body, they thought that we were picked up from the forest. And if intellectual people could think of us in that fashion what about the people at large? You see the convict Brahmins, just because by accident we touch them how much they shout at us and abuse us. They will resort to so many kinds of ritual processes to purify themselves because we have polluted them. So this kind of mentality is there among the Indians…. They say they have done away with untouchability, they may say there is no more the problem of caste system, but caste system is the basic essence of Hinduism.

Kaks, a Naga bureaucrat, who also experienced discrimination when he was a student in Delhi finds the caste system abhorrent to a Naga way of life. Summing up his opinion, Kaks told me, "And when you can be a first citizen of your own state, to become a secondary citizen of the mainland India, who in his right mind would accept that status?" Some Nagas such as Kaka Iralu, go to the extent of stating that because Indians viewed the Naga "as a casteless non-entity, a beast, and a headhunter, they had no hesitation in raping our sisters in churches. They had no hesitation in desecrating our womanhood and our manhood."

In the current inclusive nationalist ideology of the BJP or Hindutva, tribals are claimed as Hindus (similar to colonial classification of who should be and shouldn't be tribals), a claim resented by tribals especially in the Northeast. Such categorization, of course, goes against the very core ethos of the tribals in the Northeast such as the Nagas who are fiercely egalitarian and independent. For the Nagas, the hierarchical structure of the Hindu caste system is radically opposite to egalitarian Naga society. This factor reinforces the Nagas' self-conception as different and distinct from India and forms a critical marker of the Indo-Naga boundary. For the Nagas in particular, who feel that the spirit of dignity, self-respect, honor, equality and freedom constitute the essence of their

Naganess, one of the driving forces for their nationalist struggle is to defend and protect their identity, culture, resources and their land from the assimilating forces of Indic culture. And because India is dominated by Hindus, it is perceived as synonymous with hinduisation (Dommen 1967:729). Nagas' fear of hinduisation is based on their perception and experience of the caste system which is considered an essential diacritical marker that distinguishes Nagas from Indians.

Topography: Hills People versus Plains People

As one travels east from Assam into Nagaland, the change is dramatic not only in terms of the topography from the plains to the hills, but also racial and cultural. Describing this border to substantiate their argument in the early 1960s, the Naga National Council wrote: "Nagaland is not only a topographical borderline; it is also a cultural borderline. The cultural borderline which separates India from her eastern neighbors runs along with the topography. ... Sudden structures, economic structure, political structure, believes [sic] and even ideals differ widely" (NNC 1964:44). Except for a few areas along the border, Nagas inhabit the Naga Hills on both sides of the Patkai range. In the early stages of Naga nationalism, apart from the geographical spaces associated with the Nagas such as Makhel, Dzuku valley, one area of ethnic boundary making by Nagas was the dichotomisation of 'Hills and Plains.' As Ahu Sakhrie (2006) pointed out, the dichotomy of 'Hill people' and 'Valley people' was already a self-ascribed distinguishing mark between the Nagas and Indians in the pre-colonial period. Depending on the geographical location, the 'Valley people' were the Bengalis and Ahoms in Assam, the Meiteis in Manipur, or the Burmese in the Irrawady plains. On the other hand, the 'Hill people' are

groups such as the Nagas, Garos, Chins, Karens, etc. In the Naga vocabulary, this dichotomy is popularly known by binary oppositions such as 'hills people' and 'plainsmen' or 'local' and 'non-local'. The topographical characteristics have affected the different agricultural practices, habitation practices, and the socio-economic development of the 'Hill people' and the 'Valley people' as well as the nature of relationships between them. For the 'Hill people', in their everyday life, this dichotomy was, and still is, verbalized through labeling 'plainsmen' by such opposing terms as '*osom*' by the Lothas, '*tephrimia*' by the Tenyimias, '*tsümar*' by the Aos, '*khulami*' by Semas or '*mayangs*' in Manipur. As Kevi says, "The Indians we call *tephremia* or *kidimia*. *Tephremia* means outsiders. So it clearly defines that we are a separate people otherwise how can we call these people as a different people from before? It is not a new thing that has emerged." What this did, as Sakhrie (2006) said, was that it had a "great bearing especially on the Nagas in the development of a primordial sentiment of being a different people, affinity amongst themselves while interacting with the others [plains people], and a xenophobic awareness". For the 'Valley people', according to Sakhrie, their adoption of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam was perceived as synonymous with 'civilization' and this affected their treatment and abhorrence for the 'Hill people'. Thus, it is not surprising that in the first official document of Naga nationalism in 1929, the Nagas Memorandum to the Simon Commission stated: "We are looked down upon by the one for "beef" and the other for our "pork" and by both for want in education" (Naga Club). Such perceptions and relationships solidified Nagas' sense of non-Indianness.

Nagas' conception of themselves as Hill people different from the Plains people (Indian) based on the topographical marker is further reinforced by Indians ascription of the Nagas as *pahari* (hill) people. However, Indian's categorization of Nagas as *pahari* people is loaded. As Lanu Longkhumer, a member of the Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights said to me, "*Pahari* means they are saying in a subtle way hill people, but when they say hill peoples, normally hill peoples are all tribals in India, so we are being put into that category so that way the tribe people they are the lower than caste people in India so we are part of that for them." In India 'tribe' is scheduled. According to Article 342 of the Indian Constitution:

> The President may, with respect to any State or Union territory, and where it is a state, after consultation with the Governor thereof by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall, for the purposes of this constitution, is deemed to be scheduled tribes in relation to that state or Union Territory, as the case may be.

With specific reference to the Nagas, based on the above framework, the Constitution (Nagaland) Scheduled Tribes Order 1970 states:

> The tribes or tribal communities, or parts of, or groups within, tribes or tribal communities, specified in the Schedule to this order, shall, for the purposes of the Constitution, be deemed to be scheduled Tribes in relation to the State of Nagaland so far as regards members thereof resident in that state.

India's attitude towards the Nagas as tribals, then, is reflected in the way the Indian government relates to the Nagas. In post-independence India, the concept of 'scheduled tribes' in the Indian Constitution has put the tribals at par, if not lower, than the scheduled castes. In the Hindu ethos, the tribals are, in effect, placed outside the caste system, even lower than the lowest rung within the caste system. Implicit in the process of sanskritisation of tribal people was an evolutionist ideology that conversion into Hinduism was a process of civilization from the savage and primitive periphery or outer

domains into the advanced hierarchy of the caste system (See also Lotha 2007). Influenced by such caste ideology, many Nagas have felt discriminated by Indians. Such was Annie's experience when she went to Delhi.

> Annie: There was in Delhi, it had to do with my son. Just because we are from the NE and we are Nagas, I just got this unspoken kind of signal coming from their side that we are that we are not to be .. that we are dog eaters, dirty people and that kind of thing and they started going back on their words and twisting the situation like that. So, I was there with my son at that time. It had to do with landlord actually. He was a retired officer of Delhi police. I got so irritated with him. I can't speak Hindi but being a police officer he would understand English though he was not very fluent. So I gave him good, you know. I went and scolded him. I said, you are also a police, you are supposed to be just, treat everyone equally as a law keeper. And I am also a teacher supposed to be teaching that kind of values. I am supposed to be a role model as a teacher, you are also a police officer, and you are supposed to be a role model of justice keeping and all that. And when we come from the NE, we think that people in India especially Delhi being the national capital we think that the people are very kind, very civilized, and all. We come with that kind of expectations but then I find that your behavior is less civilized than a Naga. Your civilization is thousands of years ahead of Nagas but when it comes to treating people correctly your civilization is thousands of years behind us. So such kind of experiences … so some people like me with big mouths give them and get satisfaction. We don't have any bent up feelings and we don't keep [hold back] anything but everybody is not like that. So they just have that frustration, inability to do anything about it and just let anybody jump over them and get mistreated. So I think when it comes to the individual experiences I have heard so many Nagas experiences .. not very friendly, hospitable, kind of experience in India.

In the broader context of Northeast India, according to Lalsangkima Pachuau (2005) "the assimilation of people into the Indic culture became a defining factor for what is "tribal" and "not tribal" in the identity of the people in the region today." People in the plain areas such as Assamese and the Meiteis in Manipur valley were hinduized and assimilated into the Indic culture; in the process of their hinduization, they were also detribalized. But the process of hinduisation stopped where the hills began. Thus, Pachuau argued that non-Indicness is the mark of tribal identity in the Northeast because "their cultural foreignness to the Indic cultural system clearly marks off the hill 'tribes' from the rest of the Indians"

(2005:2 of 3). According to Pachuau (2005), ethnonationalist movements in the Northeast are reactions by those in the periphery against the potentially hegemonic dominant Indic culture at the center. As Pachuau illustrated, "a major cause of the ethnopolitical movements of Northeast India is traced to the identity crisis, which is rooted, *inter alia,* in the conflict with the spirit or mindset that imposed "tribal" identity to the otherwise proud, innovative, and freedom loving people" (2005:1of 4; see also Yonuo 1974).

Protection of 'Naga Way of Life'

Naga culture itself has changed much since the beginning of Naga nationalism. For example, Christianity has become the predominant religion of the Nagas today. In spite of this change, however, there is still an emphasis to uphold Naga traditional culture – even essentializing folk art such as music, songs and dance - as different from the cultures of India. This raises an important issue of how people conceive of and define themselves in nationalism. As in the case of the Cree Indians (Braroe 1975:9), the Nagas claim that even though Naga society has undergone changes, such as adoption of Christianity, and lost some of their cultural features, there is no concurrent loss of their 'Naganess'. Scholars, such as Nash argued that the ethnic elements "are organically interactive and take different shapes according to historical and political circumstance" (1989:6). Thus, Nash talked about the malleability of the combination of elements in the construction of nationalism shaped by history, economics, politics, and circumstance (1989:7).

Throughout the political negotiations with the Government of India, the Nagas have repeated the refrain, "Nagas are not Indians." The political is congruent with the cultural in Naga nationalism, and the ethnic cores are considered not as mere boundary making self-ascription blocks (Barth (1969). Naga nationalists and some intellectuals claim that Nagas have an internally shared culture among the different 'tribes,' a shared history, identity, and memories which makes them ethnically distinct from Indians. An overriding fear in Naga nationalism is that assimilation into India will ultimately result in the loss of Naga identity. As Muivah, the Secretary General of the NSCN-IM, commenting on what would happen if the Nagas are assimilated into dominant Indian society said to me: "It will mean the loss of everything." This fear was a major theme from the beginning of the nationalist movement. Early on, pleading with the British Government in 1946 for an Interim Government to enable the Nagas to "grow to a fuller stature', T. Sakhrie, the then Secretary of the NNC, writes, "Thrown among 40 crores[29] of Indian, the one million Nagas with their unique system of life will be wiped out of existence" (NNC Hist:10). Expressing the fear that assimilation into mainstream India would lead to the loss of Naga identity, Phantia, a senior official of the NSCN-IM, said in an interview: "We can be swarmed by Indian nationals unless we maintain our own land by ourselves." Justifying his argument, Phantia explained, "If we give up our right to rule ourselves, naturally the power of law making will be vested with Indians. And once the power is vested in them, then our land and our resources will go." Today, the gravity of this fear is intensified by what the Nagas perceive has happened to states such as Tripura and Assam where the natives have been outnumbered by immigrants from other parts of India and Bangladesh.

[29] Crore is an Indian numbering system. Ten million is equivalent to one crore.

Contesting Ethnic Cores

The usual charges against primordialists – unscientific, unsociological, racist, eternally permanent and impervious to modification by circumstances and naturalizing ethnicity (Gil-White 1999:803) can be leveled against these Naga perceptions. For example, for Keyes "ethnicity derives from a cultural interpretation of descent" (Keyes 1981:5); the 'givens' of social existence (Geertz 1963) that define ethnicity as primordials are not genetically determined but variable factors in social relations. Ethnic identity and the primordial components are learned when "the meanings to which one is exposed certain of these are marked as being intrinsic elements of one's heritage acquired from one's forebears through one's (socially defined) parents" (Keyes 1981:7). Changes in the political-economic contexts of the people also lead to changes in ethnic identity. As Keyes said, in responding to changes or "in adapting to the new situation, new identities may be evolved. Yet, once evolved, these new identities are assumed to define for people who they truly are as descendants of their ancestors or forebears" (1981:28). Black identity in United States, and the concept of pan-Indian identity based on experiences of oppression and suffering, are examples of how social contexts can influence formation and evolution of ethnic identity. Further, according to Keyes, the choice of the cultural elements for particular social contexts "shows that ethnicity is salient only insofar as it serves to orient people in the pursuit of their interests *vis-à-vis* other people who are seen as holding contrastive ethnic identities" (Keyes 1981:10). Similarly, as Jean Jackson's study of Tukanoans in the Vaupes illustrated, ideas about culture held by change agents affect the way a group thinks about its culture, and secondly, "cultural forms that have evolved in highly politicized circumstances can be, and often are, contested: one interest

group claims certain forms as authentic while another group derides these same forms as invented" leading Jackson to "characterize the politics of Indianness as often a problem of 'culture, genuine and spurious'" (Jackson 1995:6). Gurr (1993) also took a conciliatory approach in the study of ethnicity. According to Gurr, communal groups may have cultural bases such as myths, language, religious beliefs, but "the key to identifying communal groups is not the presence of a particular trait or combination of traits, but rather the shared perception that the defining traits, whatever they are, set the group apart" (1993:3). Communal groups are not primordial social entities nor are states inherently artificial entities; all collective groups whether ethnic groups or nation-state are stationary and transitory to a degree. For Gurr, all politically active groups appeal, "to an underlying sense of collective identity based on a common culture and status. … On the other hand, the strategies and tactics by which leaders pursue collective interests are a function of a group's status, organization, and political circumstances and the leaders' goals and skills" (1993:4-5). From another constructivist perspective, Maiz argued that the *ethnic preconditions* of nationalism, namely, ethnic components of a culture such as religion, language, myths, symbols, etc., have their own political history as "contingent result of filtering, selection and invention by previous generations of nationalist elite and intellectuals (2003:200). The problem lies in treating culture and its elemental components as natural and objective starting points. In the context of ethnic struggles for self-determination, as Maiz said, it is important to realize that "ethnicity should be considered not so much as an historical and objective starting point but as the outcome of nationalist intellectuals' efforts at filtering and selecting political and cultural elements" (2003:19). Even though they are not primordial but products of historical processes, the

ethnic preconditions provide the foundational base from which ethnic nationalists draw their resources as the Naga case has shown.

Naga Nationalism Primarily Ethnonationalist

This chapter dealt with some aspects of what makes up the Naga identity, and what is it about the Nagas and their *ethnie* that helped the germination of their nationalism. The Naga nation as a political concept is modern and still evolving, yet the Nagas conceive of themselves as a people 'from time immemorial.'[30] The ethnic core (*ethnie* and self-consciousness) forms the basic foundation for Naga nationalism. Elements of ethnicity, such as clan or those marking genealogical descent, conceived as primordial elements, constitute the cultural markers that Naga nationalists use as real cultural differences that distinguish them from other groups. Are the ethnic elements chosen by the Nagas as salient features mere cultural formulations mobilized in the pursuits of Naga nationalism? Like the rest of humanity, Nagas have multiple identities, and what it means to be a Naga depends on which identity they prioritize (Amartya Sen 2006), and which identity they prioritize depends on their situational context. A number of cultural elements such clan, village, tribe, origin and migration myths, or features such as dress, architecture, festivals, food habits, etc, are chosen to distinguish Nagas from Indians. Naga nationalists believe that ethnic ties between the various Naga 'tribes' are not recent constructions; histories of origin, migration and oral traditions of their relatedness provide strong foundation for the current nationalist claims. These categories are further reified in nationalist narratives. Ethnic resources alone, however, do not suffice for the emergence of Naga nationalism. Ethnic elements that substantiate Naga nationalism are like the metabolic processes

[30] Similar to the arguments by the indigenous people in Perry (1996).

within a seed that trigger the "embryonic dormancy" of nationalism to germinate under certain conditions such as colonialism, education and militarization. According to Smith, "the 'fuller,' and more richly documented, the historical culture which a population unit can claim, the better its chances of achieving political recognition and moving towards the status of a civic nation. Equally important … is the emergence of a relatively secularized intelligentsia, secular enough to promote auto-emancipation and political activism as a communal option" (1996:123). Keyes, for instance, attempted "to develop an approach that takes both the cultural and social dimensions of ethnicity into account" (1982:4). Modern external agencies or elements of social-political contexts such as colonialism, neo-colonialism, education, etc. have also provided *political opportunities* for the germination of Naga nationalism. It is certainly the case that colonialism, post-war anti-colonial liberation struggles, Christianity, and Indian occupation, were the forces that united the Nagas into a political entity. As Sanyu stated, "these factors united the Nagas as never before. The Nagas became more aware of their common ethnic identity" (1997:147). What transforms an ethnic group (with all the elements) into a state or a nation-state is the result of historical processes. According to Maiz, there are three prerequisites in ethnic nationalism: First, the presence of certain distinguishing *ethnic preconditions*, even though these might be the outcome of a historical process conceptualized and mobilized by elites and intellectuals; secondly, an appropriate *political opportunity structure*; and, third, an efficient *political mobilization* (Miaz 2003:196-197). The next chapters will deal with the exogenous factors – *political opportunity structure* and *political mobilization* – with regard to Naga nationalism.

CHAPTER IV

COLONIALISM AND NAGA NATIONALISM

"If I were to choose a country, it would be Nagaland,
my fair Nagaland again and again." T. Sakhrie.

Ethnic preconditions such as language, religion, myths, symbols, kinship, etc., even if they are not inherent and primordial but the result of the historical process of filtering and selection, provide the building blocks and foundational base for ethnic nationalism. But it is exogenous factors such as colonialism or other historical contingencies which provide the *political opportunities* and *political mobilization* (Gurr 1993; Miaz 2003) that engender the formation of ethnonationalism. Colonialism is a salient exogenous factor and an important constitutive element in the development of the Naga nationalism. Like a strong undercurrent beneath the surface of the river of colonialism, Naga nationalism was being formed, directly and indirectly, and gradually gathered momentum. The technologies of the British colonial administration such as the British policies of Inner Line in 1873 in order to safeguard the British subjects from going into Naga areas, setting up administrative posts in the Naga Hills District in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and the declaration of Naga areas as Excluded Area by the British India Act of 1935 following the Simon Commission were crucial for the formation of Naga nationalism. This chapter will deal with one *political opportunity*, colonialism, particularly with how colonialism and the technologies of British colonial administration helped engender the development of Naga nationalism. Secondly, colonial education policies indirectly helped the emergence of educated intellectuals who, influenced by Westernization and global political events of decolonization, especially after WWII,

mobilized the Naga public and eventually spearheaded the Naga nationalist movement particularly from the 1940s. It was these intellectuals who articulated, strategized and promoted the Naga movement.

Colonial Administrative Policies

Some Nagas say Naga nationalism is the product of the historical process that started in 1832 when the British soldiers first set foot on Angami Naga territory. Prior to the colonial period, Nagas lived in their own independent, sovereign villages, and they did not have a unified political identity; they had no pan-Naga political ethnonym. Politically, for the first time in their history, the Naga Hills District was designated as an administrative unit in 1866 by the British. During the Pax Britannica, different Naga groups interacted with one another in an atmosphere of peace fostering solidarity among them. Having found a common enemy, or a shared other, the various Naga communities found the momentum to come together against their common enemy and eventually work towards the making of the Naga nation. Thus, writing for the NNC, Aliba Imti and T. Sakhrie petitioned Akbar Hydari, the Governor of Assam to "take all steps to bring all the Naga regions together, for they all naturally have a desire to be together" (Sakhrie 2006:31). Other elements of colonialism such as Christianity, western education, and technology influenced Nagas' idea of their peoplehood. In a parallel development, the British influence over the Nagas evolved from a mere contact at the borders to the domination of a section of Naga territory. Robert Reid, the Governor of Assam from 1937 to 1941, summarized the British policy in their dealings with the Nagas:

> Historically, our early relations with the Nagas were unfriendly. We went into the country first as a measure of protection for our own people in the plains, beyond

> which in the early days our writ did not run, for the transborder Nagas were constantly raiding the plains, and carrying off heads. And, once the process of penetrating the country on these lines had begun, it had to go on. Starting in 1832 with the protection of the peoples of the plains, we went on inevitably to protecting the peoples of the hills, who had made submission to us and had thereby transferred the responsibility of defence from their own shoulders to those of Government. For, as Lord Cranbrook, the Secretary of State, said in 1878, "the continuance in the immediate proximity of settled districts of a system of internecine warfare conducted principally against women and children cannot be tolerated." I may add that it was in that year that Kohima, a name well known now to the British Army in Eastern India, became the headquarters of the district. (Reid 1944:22)

Colonial administrative policies towards the Nagas cannot be understood as totally divorced from British India. In the broader context of Indian nationalism, Peter Robb (1997) discussed the role of the colonial State as one of the elements in the construction of modern Indian identity. This was achieved in the process of establishing and expanding the role of the colonial state. The process of creating this identity took place, on the one hand, by the colonial state's interrogation and accommodation of Indian conditions. On the other hand, Robb argued, "[modern] Indian identity is validated in no small measure by the struggle against colonial rule, and by a cataloguing of its evils and the damage it inflicted" (1997:247). Robb pointed out three elements of colonial administration that helped create an Indian identity: "The first is the establishment of fixed borders, the second the assertion of undivided jurisdiction or sovereignty within those borders, and the third the assumption of state responsibility for the well-being of the people in a kind of contract between ruler and ruled" (1997:248-249). According to Robb (also see Ainslie Embree 1977), the British, perhaps influenced by their being an island nation, supposed that states ended neatly and that boundaries constituted national peoples such as 'Indians' (1997:249). However, the external border of British India had 'ambiguous edges,' especially at the frontiers. Robb explained the concept of broad and

narrow frontiers: “The narrow external frontier was the one the colonial rulers sought to draw on the map. The broad external border was one in which there were various layers or zones of contestation and influence rather than a definite line of demarcation between one jurisdiction and another” (1997:249).

The Nagas were at the frontier of British India, and their areas fell within the category of the broad boundaries that had different layers of relationship and influence between the British and the Nagas. From 1851 to mid 1860s, the British government adopted a policy of non-intervention in the Naga areas, and confined the governance to protecting the frontier borders and refrained from intervening in tribal feuds and instead encouraged trade with them (Lotha 2007:17-19). Eventually, the British relationship with the Nagas evolved from a non-interference policy to political control in the Naga Hills from 1866 onwards (Lotha 2007:21). Following repeated raids by the Nagas on the plains in Assam, the British were convinced that the only way to contain the Nagas satisfactorily was a gradual establishment of political control over them. Accordingly, an outpost was established at Samoogoodting in 1866 to maintain a conciliatory relationship with the Nagas. But the continual raids by the Nagas on the British subjects in Assam led to further controls. With a view to safeguarding the British subjects from the raids by the ‘tribals’ an “Inner Line” system was introduced with the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, beyond which no British subject could move into ‘tribal’ areas, including the Naga Hills, without a pass from the Deputy Commissioner (Administrative Officer of a district). In the Naga areas, the hills formed a natural boundary at the frontier

of British India, separating the Naga areas from the plains of Assam. The enactment of the Inner Line system reinforced the natural boundary.

Later, guided by the protectionist policy, the principle that normal laws should not apply automatically to the tribals underlay the passage of the Scheduled Districts Act 1874 according to which tribal areas were to have a separate administration. In 1875 the headquarters was moved to Wokha and then to Kohima in 1978. Eventually, with the establishment of Kohima as the district headquarters and Mokokchung as sub-division, the sovereignty of the British over the Naga Hills district took a new turn. Nagas in the Naga Hills District were now subjects of the Queen needed to be 'protected' and 'civilized.' After the establishment of Kohima and Mokokchung as administrative centers in 1881 and 1889 respectively, the British devised an administrative policy of indirect rule in dealing with the Nagas. To the British, the Nagas in the Naga Hills were now tribal subjects who needed to be protected. As Ramachandra Guha pointed out, "the British affected a certain paternalism, wishing to "protect" their wards from the corrosive corruptions of the modern world" (2007:268). In general, the British India government followed a policy of non-interference regarding the Nagas in matters concerning customs, laws, religion and tradition. Earlier attempts at direct interference with Naga affairs had resulted in a backlash against the British such as the one in 1847 when Bhogchand, an Assamese policeman appointed by the British to check the Nagas was killed because of his direct interference in the internal feuds of the Angami village of Mezoma (Yonuo 1974:80). In this indirect rule policy, the criminal and civil codes that prevailed in the rest of British India did not apply to the Naga Hills. The Deputy Commissioner settled

disputes between villages and 'tribes'. The *Gaonburas* or headmen, in most cases the existing leaders, appointed by the British settled disputes in the villages according to the customary laws. Within the courts of the Deputy Commissioner and Sub-Division, disputes were settled through *Dobashis* (interpreters) through customary laws, a practice which continues to this day.

The Government of India Act of 1919 declared the Naga Hills District a 'Backward Tract.' But following the memorandum by the Nagas to the Simon Commission in 1929, and the recommendations thereafter, the Naga Hills were made into 'Excluded Areas" by the India Act of 1935. Sir Robert Reid explained the meaning of "Excluded Areas":

> The title "Excluded Areas" … is, I need hardly say, indicative of nothing forbidden or mysterious, but is a purely official phrase taken from the Indian Constitution Act of 1935**.** It is the lineal descendant of the older phrase "Backward Tracts," and means that the areas enumerated as such in the Government of India (Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas) Order 1936 are excluded from the operation of the said Act. They are directly administered by the Governor, and the elected Ministry have no jurisdiction over them. Finance however and staff have to be found by the province as a whole. (1944:18)

Certain characteristic features differentiated the Naga areas from other Excluded Areas in India. As Reid points out, first, the Excluded Areas of Assam, as the Naga Hills District was called then, was that "they form[ed] a block, irregular in shape if you like, and far from compact, but a continuous block, on the borders of and within Assam itself" (Reid 1944:18). Secondly, as Reid enumerated further, these areas "differ markedly among themselves, but they have this one characteristic in common, that neither racially, historically, culturally, nor linguistically have they any affinity with the people of the plains, or with the peoples of India proper. It is only by an historical accident and as a natural administrative convenience that they have been tacked on to an Indian province"

(Reid 1944:19). Further, it is important to consider the fact that Naga areas were not confined to the Naga Hills District alone. As Reid also mentioned, the Naga areas consisted of "the Naga Hills District, an area of some 4000 square miles [and] a great belt of unadministered Naga country lying between it and the Patkai range, the natural boundary between Assam and Burma" (Reid 1944:21). These administrative categories, "Excluded Areas" and "Unadministered Areas" (the Nagas areas between the Naga Hills District and Burma) formed the 'ambiguous edges' (Robb) of the British boundary.

If the genesis of Naga nationalism was, to some extent, the unintended consequence of colonialism, British attitude towards 'tribals' and administrative policies provided the necessary impetus for its growth. As Mackenzie wrote, in the beginning the British mostly referred to the different Naga 'tribes' with reference to their political relations to the British frontier districts along the Assam border instead of any ethnical differences (Lotha 2007:51). Identification and mapping were a primary concern to the British during the military phase of their encounter with the Nagas (Lotha 2007:50). According to Moffat Mills (1854), Thornton who accompanied Captain Butler on an expedition to the Angami country "surveyed the route, traversed and plotted off on a large scale a most valuable map of the greatest portion of the Naga Hills attached to the District of Nowgong" (Elwin 1969:123; see also Lotha 2007:50-51). Thornton's maps helped to identify the 'tribes'. Later, the British need to firmly locate and identify the local people (West 1994:63-64), informed the Ethnographic Survey of India. The Ethnographic Survey was used to classify the Naga 'tribes' and assign places to them within the

Mongoloid racial type (Lotha 2007:32). The British Association for Advancement of Science suggested the Ethnographic Survey of India be carried out as follows:

> While collecting the ordinary information for the census, to investigate the physical and sociological characters of the various races and tribes of India. Such data would furnish the basis for a true estimation of the number and distribution of the tribes in question, and thus powerfully contribute to a sound classification of the races in India." (1901:139; for details see Lotha 2007:14-36)

Future mappings and classifications followed by British administrative policies reified and essentialized the 'tribes' as rigid categories. According to Julian Jacobs, to some extent, "the British over a period of time 'created' the Naga tribes as relatively fixed groups each with a distinctive kind of social organization and language" (Jacobs 1990:17).[31]

K.S. Singh (1985) suggested the administrators-anthropologists, influenced by prevailing theories in anthropology, took "a placid, even a synchronic view of the tribal society" (1985:104). This view had a great deal of influence on the government in British India to formulate a protectionist policy for the 'tribals.' The British treated the 'tribals' as noble savages, primitive, and vulnerable, and believed that the deterioration of 'tribal' communities was a result of sanskritization or assimilation into Hindu society. Consequently, colonial tribal policies in India were protectionist in intent. Singh described the following main features of protectionism:

> (a) the paternalistic rule of the district officers – the tribes needed a government by men and not by a system; (b) keeping tribal areas out of the operation and of the regulations, laws, etc., which were alien to tribal ethos and undermined it; (c) laying down a set of simple rules to settle disputes, restriction of the jurisdiction

[31] See Lotha (2008) for the amalgamation of Zeme (Zemai), Liangmei, Puimei and Rongmei into Zeliangrong, for the creation of Chakesang 'tribe' comprised of Chokri, Khezha and sections of Sangtam groups after 1945, and the creation of Pochury from the Chakesang group in 1990. These are recent configurations.

> of the courts which enforced normal laws, and exclusion of the lawyers from courts; (d) special agrarian laws; (e) regulation of the entry of the aliens into tribal areas; and (f) strengthening tribal institutions and traditional leadership. (1985:9)

Subsequently, in areas where there were a concentration of 'tribals,' the colonial government adopted a protectionist policy to protect the tribals from being exploited by non-tribals and to gradually 'reclaim them to civilization.' British administrative policies treated the 'tribals,' such as the Nagas, as different from the mainstream societies in the colonized areas and perceived them as people that needed to be protected from the forces of assimilation and exploitation. Hence, the colonial government assumed responsibility for the well being of the 'tribals.' In this discourse, the colonial government was projected as the benefactor of the 'tribals.' Indirectly, this attitude reinforced the tribals' perception of themselves as a different community of people. In the case of the Nagas, like many of the 'tribals' in the Indian sub-continent, British administrative policies treated them as different from other Indians, as people who should be placed under special categories, and thus, indirectly provided them with evidence to substantiate their claims for unique identity or nationhood. Thus, this protectionist policy fertilized the soil and triggered the germination of Naga nationalism. Additionally, the Census, a precursor to the Ethnographic Survey of India, also created new modes of identity politics and self-representation (Appadurai 1996:116-117; Cohn 1987). According to Appadurai, "these enumerative strategies helped to ignite communitarian and nationalist identities that in fact undermined colonial rule" (1969:117, 130-131).

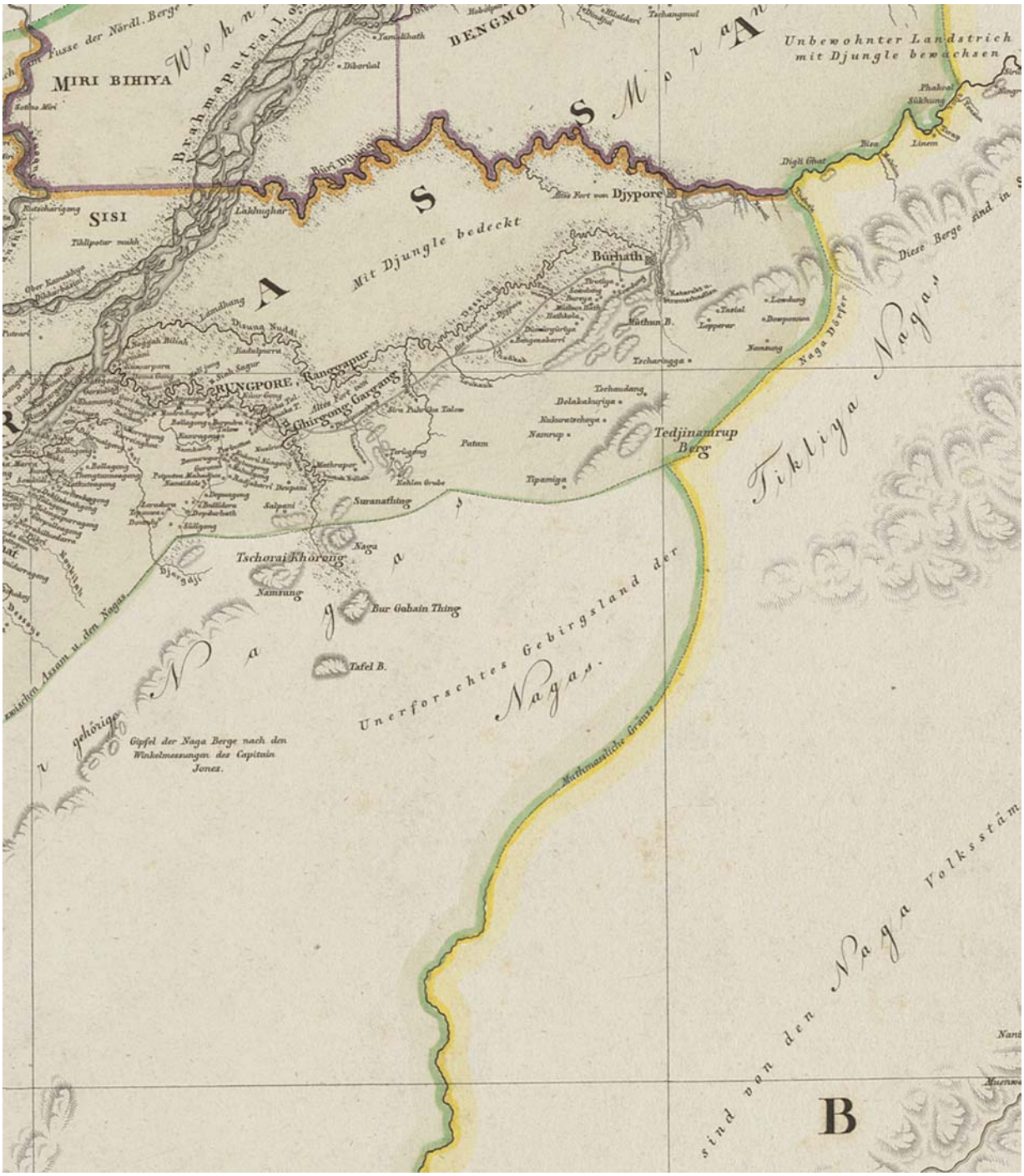

Fig. 12. A section of a German map of Assam in 1834 showing parts of the Naga Hills and their inhabitants that were not yet mapped nor named (Berghaus 1834).

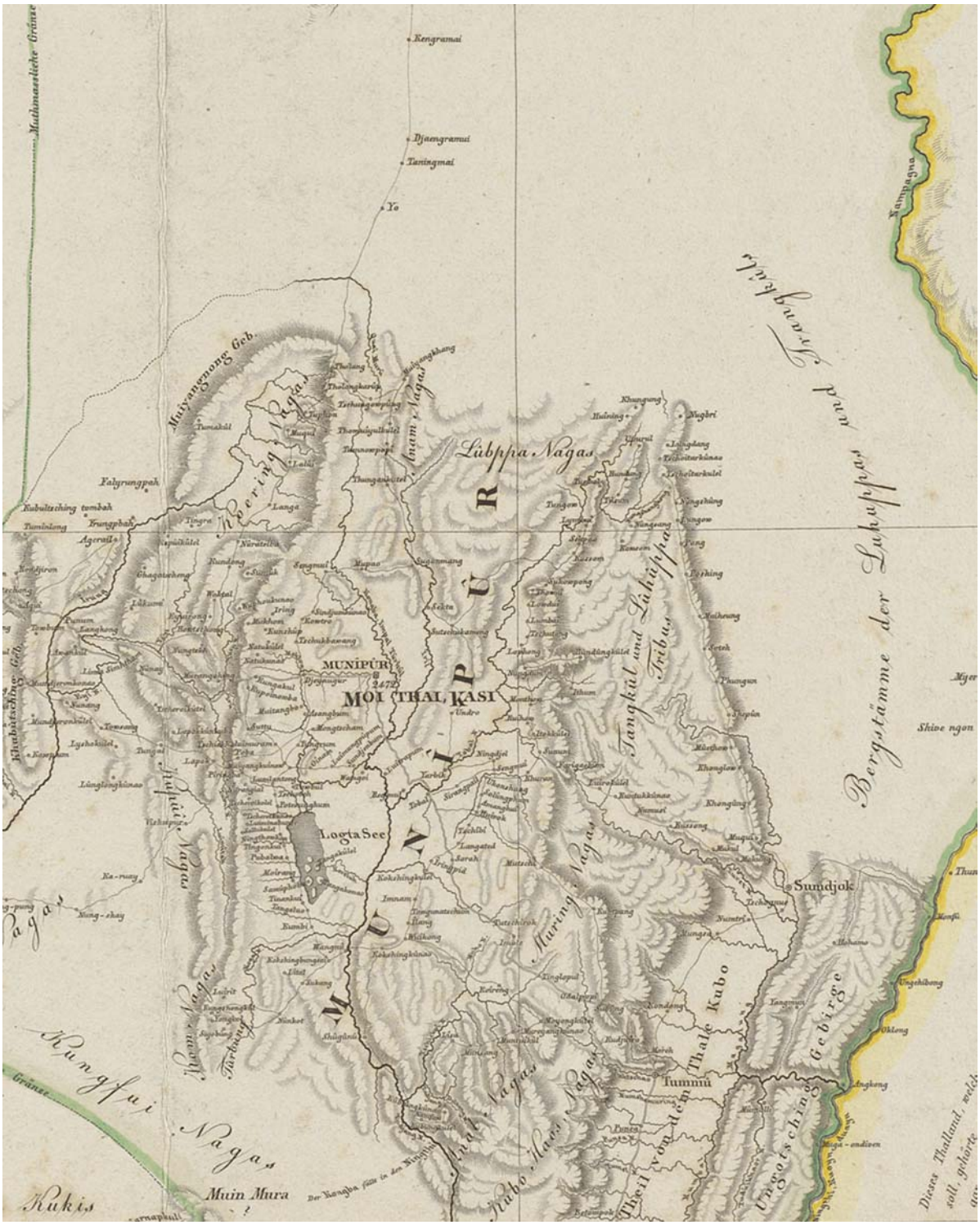

Fig. 13. In this 1834 map, some of the tribes such as the Tangkhuls or Anals were already named even though many tribal names did not yet exist (Berghaus 1834).

In a similar study in the northwestern part of India, Richard Fox (1985) wrote about how social movements in the Punjab during the colonial period helped create Sikh identity. British economic policies created an urban lower-middle class and lower-middle agrarian class from which developed some sense of class consciousness. In addition, British colonial orientalist perception of the Sikhs as a martial race was internalized by the Sikhs and the Singh Sabha movement was able to capitalize on this shared sense of Sikh identity for its anti-colonial uprising. In contrast, the Arya Samaj Hindu reformists did not have an overarching racial identity and could not appeal to a shared Hindu identity (Fox 1985). The concept of the gallant Gorkha soldier is another such example. Both Naga and Sikh nationalism were in existence during the colonial period and, in both cases, British racial perceptions influenced identity formations – a martial Sikh identity and 'tribal' Nagas. But unlike in the Punjab, Nagas were from the frontiers of the Indian state and the British had no economic or developmental policies in the Naga areas. Instead, the Naga areas were under the 'protectionist' policy which was meant to protect the tribals from being exploited by non-tribals and gradually to claim them for civilization. In fact, most Naga inhabited areas were in the "Unadministered" areas on the frontiers of British India. Consequently, Nagas have internalized administrative policies such as 'Excluded Areas', 'Partially Excluded Areas' as part of their arguments for political self-determination. Explaining how colonial administration policies are also partly responsible for the development of Naga political identity, Robb (1997), examining the Ripon papers, argued that in the process of creating a modern Naga identity, Naga political ambitions, interests and rights were also being formed. This argument has become a major content of the Naga self-definition and self-representation.

Thus terms such as 'Excluded Areas' have become the staple of Naga nationalist rhetoric. Through repetition of the historical discourse of the colonial period, this self-perception has been handed down to today's generations of Naga society. Policies or citations from documents of British officials are often parroted by Nagas to justify their claims. The Naga Hoho White Paper stated the absence of treaties or agreements with the British Government:

> The Naga fought the British for their independence. The last battle was fought in 1879 at Khonoma village in which the Nagas were subjugated. By 1881, some Naga tribes were brought under British control effectively with Kohima as its capital. Though, by the end of the 19th Century more Naga tribes were brought under the British control, there was no **instrument of treaty or agreement** by which the sovereignty was transferred to the British. **There was no interference in the day-to-day affairs of the Nagas. No attempts were made to convince the Nagas that they were the British**. The British were colonists and the Nagas knew them to be so. There is no mincing of words as far as this aspect was concerned. The records of engagements and Sanades, Vol VII, Calcutta, 1931, p.91 has categorically testified when it states: No written treaties or agreements by which the sovereignty of the Nagas was transferred to the British. (Naga Hoho 2002:10 emphasis original)

Similar rationalizations are also appropriated by the present-day State government of Nagaland. Nephiu Rio, the current Chief Minister makes the following argument:

> When the British came into contact with the Nagas in the middle of 19th Century, they recognized our separate identity, nationality and uniqueness. Therefore, instead of completely annexing the Naga country to their Indian empire, they kept it as an 'excluded area'. They did not interfere in our day-to-day affairs governed by our cultures and traditions, instead they further protected the area and the people from being assimilated by the more advanced cultures from mainland India by introducing the Inner Line Regulation. After the British left, the Indian Government not only continued the ILP, but introduced more protective measures, such as, '*Protected Area Permit',* to regulate the entry of foreigners to Nagaland. All these are clear indications that the Government of India has recognized the uniqueness of the Naga history. Therefore, as we continue to struggle for our political cause, let us remember to zealously protect our culture and identity, because without it, our political struggle will be meaningless. (NSF 2005:7)

Contending histories by Naga nationalists seem to gloss over the historical colonial effect upon the evolution of Naga identity particularly with slogans such as 'from time immemorial.' That the administration of the these 'Excluded Areas' were executed through the policy of protectionism, administered at least in some way, or that the Deputy Commissioners in Kohima and Mokokchung were Britishers seem to be glossed over in Naga nationalist discourse. Nagas tend to interpret historical events to suit their own nationalist purpose. In most cases, historical events are appropriated and interpreted to substantiate the argument that Nagas were not part of India even during the colonial period. For instance, the interpretation of history by both NNC and NSCN-IM offers a take on the India Act 1919: "According to the government of India Act 1919, the 'Naga Hills District' was declared as a 'Backward Tract' and it was made clear in the above Act that no Acts passed by the Indian Legislature were to apply to this 'Backward Tract' and thereby, the occupied Naga territory was treated as a separate entity from the British India Empire" (NNC Hist:3; nscnonline.org). A second example illustrates this further. According to the Government of India Act, 1935, following the recommendation of the Simon Commission of 1929, 'Naga Hills District', formerly considered as a 'Backward Tract' was declared as 'Excluded Area'. The NNC interprets that this Act "stated that no Act of the Federal Legislature or of Assam Legislature was to apply to the Naga Hills; and thus the Naga area was not brought within the fold of Indian policy" (NNC Hist:6).

Based on these experiences during the colonial era, one could argue that the administrative policies, and the motives behind them, instilled ideas in the Nagas that they were a people different from Indians. Conversely, one can also argue that because

the British realized that Nagas were different, their administrative policies reflected acknowledgement of this truth. In both cases, the idea of Nagas as a separate entity was reinforced more and eventually led to the nationalist struggle. Whether it is the colonial invasion and the consequent resistance against it, or the result of colonial governance, colonialism united the Nagas into a political entity that aspired to get rid of the British and Indians and return to a pre-colonial state of existence. In this sense, colonial history influenced the formation of Naga nationalism. The agency of the Nagas, however, is not to be discarded in the formation of Naga national identity. The task to articulate and disseminate the idea of a Naga nation was pursued with missionary zeal by some of the Naga intellectuals.

Intellectuals and Naga Nationalism

The agency of the colonized 'other' is perhaps seen at its best in nationalism. If colonialism and its hegemonic forces provided a political opportunity for the formation of a nationalist movement, it was the intellectuals and leaders of the colonized or dominated that seized such opportunities and mobilized the community for freedom from political domination leading to nationalist movements.

Intellectuals have been artisans of nationalism (Boyer and Lomnitz 2005; Kedouri 1970), whether it be framing the identity of the nation or framing the nation for the cause of the intelligentsia. Sociologists such as Edward Shils (1960) attributed a significant role played by intellectuals in the formation of the new states in Asia and Africa. While still under colonial domination, intellectuals in these new states "created the political life of

the underdeveloped countries; they have been its instigators, its leaders, and its executants" (1960:330). These intellectuals, according to Shils, entered into the political sphere "because they had a special calling from within, a positive impetus from without"(1960:332). Kedourie (1970) discussed the role played by intellectuals particularly in colonial societies. For instance in India, Kedourie pointed out, educated Indians who experienced discrimination and marginalization for employment realized that such discrimination would continue as long as they were under foreign rule thus engendering nationalism for a society free from colonization in which they would be given a major role or employment. Tom Nairn (1977), discussing nationalism, argued that the intellectuals garner the support of the masses for the nationalist cause by creating markers of common identity that the intellectual elites and masses share. Explaining the ethnic origins of nations, Smith pointed out that it was the "intelligentsia that furnished the new communal self-definitions and goals [which were] derived from a process of 'rediscovery' of the ethnic past" (1986: 1996:119). Of specific cases, Liah Greenfield (1995:website), writing about the Russian intelligentsia, pointed out that, "One could not be a member of the Russian intelligentsia without subscribing to the values of Russian nationalism." Similarly, Montserrat Guibernau (2000) described the role played by intellectuals for maintaining Catalan language and identity during Franco's dictatorship. Toyin Falola (2001) also discussed the role of Yoruba intellectuals particularly in their production of Nigerian historiography. In India, intellectuals such as Gandhi and Nehru played a pivotal role in influencing the directives of the Indian National Congress and in articulating Indian nationalism.

The Nagas had "no idea of common interest or objectives and no concept of a Naga nation before the British appeared on the scene" (Yonuo 1974:154). As the memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1929 put it, Nagas had no unity among themselves and it was the British Government that held them together. The end of inter-tribal warfare saw the strengthening of solidarities between the Naga communities, at least those within the British Government. Naga nationalism, according to Yonuo, "was born under the impact of the British administration and thereafter nourished by the educated Nagas in the early 1940s down till the present day" (1974:154). This does not mean that all the Nagas who had degrees were instrumental in the formation of the nationalist discourse. From the beginning, spokesmen for Naga nationalism have often included the *dobashis* (interpreters) who necessarily did not have degrees to be employed under the British administration. Such intellectuals were nurtured by a prolonged contact with colonial powers and modern culture.

But in what specific way did education influence Naga intelligentsia in matters concerning nationalism? The introduction of Nagamese, a Creole form of Assamese, in Nagaland, and Manipuri among the Nagas in Manipur also enabled the Nagas, who did not speak English, to communicate with one another. But the introduction of English had a wide-ranging effect. To the Nagas, who spoke different dialects, the introduction of English as a medium of instruction and as a common language provided the educated Nagas with a means to communicate with one another and with the outside world that eventually strengthened their unity. As Yonuo said, "theories of the democratic principles and institutions and self-determination introduced by the British were readily accepted by

the Nagas through introduction of English language as the medium of communication" (1974:154). In addition, education opened the doors to a wider world for the Nagas. As Sanjib Baruah pointed out, Nagas' journey to nationhood, like their conversion to Christianity, was "the result of their incorporation into a larger political, economic, and cultural universe" (2003:330). Exposure to histories of the Western nations and revolutions such as the French Revolution and independence struggles such as that of the United States, inspired the Nagas. As the momentum picked up, Naga nationalism was further swept into the wave of Western ideas of liberty, democracy, and progress. Thus, for instance, comparing the Nagas to such standards, T. Sakhrie wrote, "We are all equals. Men and women have equal social status. … We believe in that form of democratic government which permits the rule, not of the majority, but of the people as a whole. We govern ourselves by a government which does not govern at all" (Sakhrie 2006:6).

The effect of education on the Nagas during colonial times was, in some ways, an offshoot of British colonial education policy in India which may be summarized in Macaulay's plea for modernizing India: "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Macaulay 1935:359). Progress was a political strategy which persuaded the native elite to attach themselves to the colonial regime, and then the rest of the populace to gradually coalesce them into a nation (Robb 1997:251-252; Guha 1989:242). With the Nagas, there were no elites that the colonial administrators could persuade upon. The

British saw education as a means to further their political cause among the Nagas. As in India, so too in the Naga Hills too, education was a primary instrument used to 'civilize' the Nagas, even though the main motive of the colonial government to promote literacy among the Nagas "was to create a cadre of clerks to run the revenue and judicial administration in the newly formed Naga Hills District" (Eaton 1997:252-253). Nevertheless, the outcome was the emergence of an educated class of Nagas intellectuals, who together with the *dobashis* (interpreters, literally meaning speakers of two languages) employed by the government, became spokesmen for the people and articulated the aspirations of the Nagas. In 1918, some village headmen, government employees and educated Nagas formed the Naga Club, the first pan-Naga political organization, "to formulate and thereafter consolidate a distinct nationality, to develop fraternal feelings of the various inhabited tribal areas, to look after the welfare and unity amongst the various tribes of Naga area" (Liegise in Nuh and Lasuh 2002: 29). The Naga Club, as a political foundation, is one of the cornerstones of Naga nationalism. A decade later, the first official document to articulate Naga nationalism was the memorandum submitted to the Simon Commission on January 10, 1929. Of the 20 signatories, nine were interpreters, a doctor, three teachers, a messenger, two clerks, sub-overseer, and two others, all employees of the government.

Initially, Naga nationalism was motivated not so much by Western or Eastern paradigms of nations and nationalism as much as by a simple anti-colonial resistance and a desire to "leave us alone to determine ourselves as in ancient times" as expressed by the members of the Naga Club in their memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1929. Even though

by this stage, the Naga Club members were asking to the British to safeguard their right against all encroachment, Naga nationalism was not influenced by Western paradigms of liberalism and modernization. Even in the early 1940s, realizing that Nagas were not developed sufficiently to be viable on their own, even as late as 1946, Naga nationalists even agreed to the Coupland Plan that proposed a Crown Colony (similar to Hong Kong) comprising the 'tribal' areas between India and Burma. When this Plan failed to materialize, Naga leaders were in favor of staying with a developed dominant guardian power for a certain period until such time when they could be on their own. It was based on this kind of thinking that the Naga National Council signed the Nine-point agreement with Hydari for a period of 10 years.

By the mid 1940s, the dynamics and the course of Naga nationalism would change. Nationalist movements in Africa (South Africa in particular) and India, spearheaded by organizations such as the Indian National Congress, and the leadership of charismatic leaders such as Gandhi and Nehru, and the creation of new nations in the formerly colonized parts of Asia and Africa after the end of WW II had a major influence on the way Naga nationalism began to be conceived. Though not with the same intensity, the tides of Indian nationalism influenced Naga leaders such as Jadonang and Phizo to overthrow the British. Phizo went to the extent of helping the Japanese in Burma hoping that Japan's defeat of the British would enable the Nagas to be free once again. Naga nationalists, particularly Jadonang and T. Sakhrie, were influenced by Gandhi (Yonuo 1982; Sakhrie 2006). Naga leaders, such as T. Sakhrie, were influenced by such historical process, and Naga nationalism developed into a vision for the formation of a Naga nation

similar to the formation of states such as India and Pakistan. With the formation of the Naga National Council, colonial plans for the reconstruction of the war-torn Naga Hills were co-opted by the Nagas. Following the devastation of Naga areas during WW II, Charles Pawsey, the Deputy Commisioner, formed the Naga Hills Districts Tribal Council (NHDTC) in 1945 with a plan to unite the Nagas for more autonomy in the post war reconstruction and development of Naga Hills. The aims and objectives of the NHDTC were:

> To unite the Nagas
> To repair the damage done during World War II
> To achieve local autonomy for the Hills
> To train people for self-government
> To encourage the existing tribal councils of the Naga tribes
> To administer their own local affairs
> To consider possible reforms. (Naga Hoho 2002:26)

When the NHDTC met in February 1946, influenced by the political tides of decolonization and Indian nationalism, the members changed the NHDTC into Naga National Council (NNC), transforming it into a political organization "to struggle for freedom and to manifest a new self-assertive quest for Naga identity" (Yonuo 1974:161). Before long, the NNC's objectives were "to achieve the unification and solidarity of all Nagas under one government as their legitimate national aspiration and interests" (Yonuo 1974:161). The demand even at this stage was for an autonomous Naga Hills District within Assam in India.

Naga nationalism was not initiated by traditional leaders or chiefs. The creation of an intellectual community in the Naga society leading to an internal development of

leadership that articulated the Naga cause was an unintended consequence of colonial rule. As Dolly Kikon, a Naga scholar, pointed out:

> …education emerged as an important instrument that started off a political process of developing awareness among the Naga people about their rights but more importantly it brought them together to form a pan Naga identity. Education provided employment to the Nagas that led to the formation of a new class of 'educated middle class' who became concerned about the future of development of the Naga people in the British Indian colonial system. This new class of educated Nagas emerged as an important factor that moulded the political history of the Nagas. (2003:236)

By introducing education, colonialism generated a set of educated Nagas who transcended the borders of villages and particular tribes to a wider concept of Naga nation and instilled in the people that sense of Naganess. Eventually, Naga intellectuals felt the need for educated manpower and the print media to articulate and disseminate their vision and objectives for Naga nationalism. It was against such a background that T.Sakhrie and Vichazelhu Iralu started a journal, *The Naga Nation* in 1946 to conscientize and garner the support of intellectuals for the nationalist cause.

However, the primary agency that facilitated Naga national imaginings was the role played by charismatic and educated intellectuals such as T.Sakhrie and A.Z. Phizo who envisioned a Naga nation. One of the best examples of such a person was Phizo, also known as the father of the Naga nationalism or as Pieter Steyn (2002) rightly calls him the 'voice of the Nagas.' Born on May 16, 1904, Phizo was the son of an adventurous father, Krusietso, who even though illiterate, had conducted business in Burma, Singapore and Cylon (Sri Lanka). Krusietso died when Phizo was 10 years old, but Phizo imbibed his father's adventurous spirit. After completing Elementary School in Kohima, he was sent for high school to Shillong. He did not complete high school but later became

a salesman for an insurance business but became disillusioned because prospects for such business were poor in Nagaland then. Not wont to give up, Phizo followed his father's footsteps to Rangoon in search of business, working at first as a salesman for Sun Life of Canada supplementing his income by selling Bibles. While living in Rangoon, Phizo was exposed to Burmese nationalism, and the effects of the WW II with the Japanese invasion of Burma, the anti-British organizations such as the Indian Independence League (IIL), the Indian National Army (INA) led by Subhas Chandra Bose with whom Phizo had contacts, and the Japanese intelligence. According to his biographer, Pieter Steyn, Phizo even proposed to the Japanese Colonel Iwakuro "that he could assist to infiltrate Japanese patrols into and beyond the unadministered area of Nagaland" (2002:58). After the war, Phizo was imprisoned in Burma by the British for collaborating with the Japanese. After his release, he returned to Kohima where by then the political consciousness of the Nagas had intensified. Equipped with all his experiences in Burma, his networkings, charisma, and organizing skills Phizo became a prominent leader for the Nagas. To his credit, Phizo was the "principal agent to influence the frontier Nagas" (Steyn 2002:87) in the Naga nationalist cause.

If Phizo was a charismatic leader who garnered the support of many Nagas for the nationalist cause, it would take the input of other Naga intellectuals to articulate and disseminate the contents of Naga nationalism. One such Naga intellectual was Theyiechüthie Sakhrie, one of the pioneers of the Naga movement, who is considered a visionary and the architect of the Naga movement in its initial stages. I came upon Theyiechüthie Sakhrie, or popularly known as T. Sakhrie, by chance. I had gone with a

friend to Khonoma to learn about the history of the village's encounter with the British in the nineteenth century. We walked around the different *khels* or sections of the village and studied the Sonoma fort which was destroyed four times as a result of wars with the British. In the evening we stayed at a paying guesthouse run by Tsilie Sakhrie (T. Sakhrie's nephew) and his wife. As a tour guide, Tsilie is quite knowledgeable about the history of Khonoma. After dinner, we chatted with Tsilie on various topics ranging from tourists and tourism to environmental issues. Since A.Z. Phizo hailed from this village it was inevitable that the topic of nationalism also featured in our fireside chat.

"Which village are you from?" Tsilie asked me in the middle of the conversation. I thought he was intentionally trying to get off the topic not wanting to discuss nationalism.

"From Lakhuti," I replied.

"Khodao is from Lakhuti too." There was enthusiasm in his voice. "I like Khodao's writings," Tsilie said.

"What writings?" I was surprised.

"Khodao's writings about the procedure for electing Phizo's successor as the president of Naga National Council," he said, studying my face for any reaction.

Following Phizo's death in 1990, some of the Naga National Council (NNC) members got together and hastily elected his daughter, Adino, to succeed her father as the president of the NNC. But other members felt the proper electoral procedure was not followed in this case. Khodao Yanthan had been a senior colleague of Phizo in London, and he would be the right person, they argued. At their next meeting they elected Khodao as the next president of the NNC in effect creating a split within the NNC. Since Phizo and Adino

are from Khonoma, I thought Tsilie would be a supporter of Adino; instead he was voicing dissension. Why? I asked myself.

The next morning Tsilie introduced me to the legend of Theyiechüthie Sakhrie, popularly known as T. Sakhrie. He informed me of the plans by T. Sakhrie's family members to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his death. Tsilie invited me to attend the function and gave me a booklet on T. Sakhrie written by his nephew, Ahu Sakhrie.
"Learn more about him in the meantime," Tsilie told me.

T. Sakhrie was born in 1923 to Kekhulhu and Pfheno from Khonoma who were both Baptist missionaries. He came from a family that boasted an uncle as the first Naga graduate and his sister as the first Naga woman to have a Bachelor's degree. Early in life, he was exposed to the world of American Baptist missionaries, British administrators, teachers and students of the Middle English School in Kohima. After high school in Kohima he studied Intermediate Arts at St. Paul College, Calcutta. As a student in Calcutta, he thought about a country comprised of the hill people between the Chindwin in Burma and the Brahmaputra in Assam. As a member of the NNC from the time of its formation in 1946, he emphasized the need for education as a first step for nation building. His mantra was: "We need manpower! Educated manpower!" (Ahu Sakhrie 2006:5) echoing Gramsci's call for 'organic intellectuals' even though T. Sakhrie had not read Gramsci. In 1946, together with his friend, Vichazelhu Iralu, he started *The Naga Nation,* a journal to inform the educated Nagas of their political future. According to Ahu Sakhrie, T. Sakhrie was influenced by anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa, and

particularly by Gandhi and his concept of non-violence. India achieved independence through non-violence, and T. Sakhrie assumed that India "cannot and would not oppose or ignore a movement on the same principle" (Sakhrie 2006:9). He had a good command of the English language and drafted most of the early NNC documents as the Secretary of the NNC. It is said among the Nagas that when Nehru read one of T. Sakhrie's letters, he was firmly convinced that the letter could not have been written by a Naga without the help of foreigners, thus beginning his suspicion of foreign missionaries and their consequent expulsion from Naga areas in 1954 (Sakhrie 2006:2). As an intellectual, T. Sakhrie's writings had a major influence on the course and articulation of Naga nationalism in the years immediately before and after Indian independence. In a memorandum to His Majesty's Government and the Government of India on February 20, 1947, T. Sakhrie presents the case of the Naga people for self-determination and makes an appeal for setting up an Interim Government of the Naga people:

1. Ethnically the Nagas are from a different stock.
2. The Nagas have distinct social life, manner of living, laws and customs; and even the method of governance is quite different.
3. In the (sic) religion, the majority of the Nagas are Animists; but Christianity which was introduced by the American Baptists long before the event of the British is now speedingly (sic) spreading. Such factors as the above make it imperative that Nagas have a separate form of government. (Sakhrie 2006:24)

Already at this stage, Naga nationalism was being articulated by positioning differences – ethnic and religious – and reifying Naga culture. In the initial stages of his entry into Naga politics, Sakhrie supported the proposal for a 'Crown Colony.' When that plan did not materialize, he supported the idea of Nagas remaining under the guardianship of a developed nation – be it British or Indian - within a particular time frame. Explaining the possibility for such a relationship with India, he wrote in *The Naga Nation* in 1946:

> Our country is connected with India in many ways. We should continue that connection. I do not mind whether the future India is a Congress government or a league government. But as a distinct community as I stated before, we must also develop according to our genius and taste. We shall enjoy home rule in country, but on broader issues be connected with India. (in Sakhrie 2006:10)

Following the militarization of Naga areas by India, T. Sakhrie was in favor of continuing a non-violent approach, while Phizo adopted a confrontational style with dictums such as 'Fight rather than be oppressed,' and 'Die rather than lose your honour.' Such differences in the methodology of pursuing Naga nationalism ultimately led to T. Sakhrie's assassination in January 1956, allegedly by the radicals within the Naga national movement. On November 18, 2006, at the memorial service of the 50th anniversary of his death, there was a large gathering and glowing tributes were paid to him. A monolith was erected in his memory. Speaking on the occasion, Mhiesizokho Zinyü, the President of Angami Public Oraganization said:

> T. Sakhrie was the most ardent lover of his country, Nagaland. He dreamt of a free Nagaland which is free from fear, hunger, poverty and oppression. He was practical and pragmatic in his approach to the question of Naga independence, and he emphasized what is right rather than who is right. He stood out among his contemporaries as a thinker, a writer, a revolutionary and a dynamic freedom fighter as General Secretary, NNC, in the early 1950s. He was far ahead of his contemporaries in his discernment of the time, and his vision about building a great Nagaland is still bound to be relevant till today.

But T. Sakhrie is not alone in this category of Nagas. T. Sakhrie is just one of the many Naga intellectuals who were an indirect result of colonial experience. Alliba Imti, the first Joint Secretary of the NNC even titled his autobiography as "Reminiscence: Impur to Naga National Council" (1988). Imti's father was a teacher at a school run by the missionaries in Impur where Imti started his education. From there he went on to Shillong for his college education. Imti was active in the formation of the Naga Students' Federation in 1939; he was also an active member in the NNC and eventually became the

President of the NNC in 1947. In post-independence India too, educated Naga intellectuals and leaders continue to direct and shape Naga nationalism. With the exception of Khaplang, the leader of the NSCN-K faction, it is the educated who continue to take up leadership roles in the Naga nationalist movement. At present, T. Muivah, the General Secretary of the NSCN-IM is one of the intellectuals among the armed nationalists spearheading the Indo-Naga talks. Similarly, Kevilevor Phizo is one of the intellectuals for the NNC (Adino) group. Without minimizing the role of Naga educated and intellectuals in the initial formation of Naga nationalism, one can argue that education during the colonial period was limited – confined mostly to the government schools at Kohima and Mokchung and the few schools run by the Baptist missionaries. Since Independence in 1947, India's self-perception as a progressive nation has advocated the expansion of education throughout the country including Naga areas. For example, by 1947, there were 161 Lower Primary schools, 3 Middle Elementary and 1 High School in the Naga Hills (Sema 1992:78-83), but in 2008, in Nagaland alone, there are 418 Middle Schools, 236 High Schools, 40 colleges, and 1 University (nagaland.nic.in). The product of this educational system has had an impact on the Nagas not only in churning out more educated unemployed, but also a new generation of intellectuals – nationalists and non-nationalists – who are voicing the aspirations of the Nagas. Among others, the present generation of prominent Naga intellectuals that articulate Naga nationalism include members of civil society such as the Naga Students Federation, the Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), and the Naga Hoho.

***Naga Students' Federation (NSF)*:** Formed first in 1939, the Naga Students Federation (NSF) has played a consistent role in maintaining the spirit of nationalism. A powerful student organization, the tentacles of which extend not only to Naga areas but also to northeast India, the NSF espouses causes for students' welfare as a watchdog of the Government and as a pressure group on the Government for important public policies. But, as Shils pointed out about the role played by students in underdeveloped countries, the Naga Students' Federation, considered as an *ex officio* intellectual body by the society, has been "a bearer of the spirit of revolt against the foreign ruler", thus gaining "the admiration and confidence of those of his seniors who were imbued with the national idea" (1960:337). Participating as student representatives in the meeting of the Naga Hills District Tribal Council in 1946 at Wokha that led to the formation of the Naga National Council, Shashimeren and T. Sakhrie were instrumental in drafting the resolutions of the meeting that was sent to Nehru. The NSF went defunct for a few years, and when it was revived 1947 with renewed vigor, one of the main objectives of the Federation was to "voice the legitimate aspiration of the Nagas and to seek its fulfillment through peaceful means" (NSF 1997:24). The editorial in the souvenir described the context in which the NSF began in 1947: "Uncertainty, trepidation and sense of insecurity prevailed in the minds of both young and old alike because of forceful domination by the aliens." The preamble of the constitution states that the Federation was constituted "to cultivate and preserve our cultures, customs and traditional heritages; to ameliorate social and moral activities; to safeguard common interest, integrity, fraternity and co-operation among ourselves all over Naga inhabited areas" (NSF 1997:2). In the early 1990s, the NSF adopted a new motto: 'For a unified *lim* (land) and glory of Nagas.' The motto, the

Federation explained, was "to let Nagas everywhere know who their fellow Nagas are as well as their whereabouts in Indo-Myanmar, so that they may understand that if all the Nagas (now scattered in five political regions in two countries) and their lands (now torn into five pieces) are unified they cannot be ignored by either India or Myanmar" (NSF 1995:1). Explaining further the motto and the concept and purpose of 'a unified Naga lim (land)', the NSF stated: "Even more than in the past, there are definite signs blossoming everywhere signaling that a practical solidarity is workable in the midst of diversified Naga tribes. Nagas belong to one single race with a common interest and goal. This is a workable, practical basis for a unified Naga Lim" (1995:2-3). Among their many activities related to the Naga political issue have been ones such as organizing seminars for conscientization, and writing letters to the Indian government. Arguing against objections raised by Indian authorities that recognition of Naga independence might lead to similar demands for separation from India minorities like the Tamils, the Sikhs, the Bodos, etc. and thus to a gradual disintegration of the Union, the NSF stated that according to the Federation:

> Nagaland and its political problem cannot be compared with other areas and their political movements since historically, Nagaland has no connection whatever with India, and even the part of Nagaland which for a time came under British administration was kept separate from British India. The Nagas had already made known their choice not to be a part of the new India before she became independent. Their decision was consistent with their honor as a people who had fought to preserve their identity. The aspiration of the Nagas is a natural outcome of their history and geographical location. (NSF 1997:57)

One would think that the contents for a souvenir of a students' organization celebrating fifty years would contain just a list of their activities; not so with the Naga Students' Federation. Topics relating to Naga political issue took up a major portion of their fifty years' souvenir. A report of the Federation's history reiterated, "the main object of the

Federation to voice the legitimate aspiration of the Nagas and to seek its fulfillment through peaceful means" (NSF 1997:24). Similarly, the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) was formed on 9th September 1978, "in response to the Naga people's long-felt need for an organized movement to protect and further their human rights which have been trampled under the boots of the Indian Military for the last 25 years" (NPMHR 1n 2003:4).

***Naga Hoho*:** Even more influential than the NSF, the Naga Hoho, an apex body of Naga tribes, was constituted on June 25, 1994, as a socio-political body "to uphold the solidarity and unity of the Naga people, to preserve and promote social, cultural, economic and political heritage, to promote fraternity and unity securing lasting peace and justice under a common order and to promote all round growth of the Naga people" (Naga Hoho Constitution 1998:1; see also Naga Hoho 2002:x). The motto of the Naga Hoho, 'Nagas are one,' was clearly adopted in the context of the Naga political situation with the following aims and objectives for the organization: "1. To create a sense of oneness amongst the Naga people by reconciling with one another. 2. To uphold the uniqueness of the Naga political rights. 3. To integrate all Naga inhabited areas and to bring about all round development" (Naga Hoho 1998:1). In 2002, the Naga Hoho published a 'White Paper' clearly stating the political intent of the organization for Naga integration:

> Hence to achieve the aspiration of the Nagas, the removal of the imposed boundaries, government and system is necessary. The Nagas desire to live together as one people under a single political roof for all-round growth of the Naga people. Mere merger to the present Nagaland state is not Naga integration. Integration of all Naga inhabited areas, including the present Nagaland state, by

> removing all the imposed boundaries, government and system is the desired goal of the Nagas. (Naga Hoho 2002:x)

In terms of their stand on the Naga political issue, the NSF, NPMHR, Naga Hoho and Naga Mothers Association (NMA) have been like a family - the Naga Hoho as the father, NMA the mother, NSF and NPMHR as the two children – each a separate entity and yet unanimous in their stand on Naga political issues. Individually and in collaboration, these civil society organizations have been active in articulating and promoting the political cause of the Nagas. In January 2000, they undertook together 'The Journey of Conscience' project[32] as a public relations exercise targeted at Indian civil societies. According to a report, the "NPMHR after a series of analysis and discussion emerged with the concept of peoples to peoples dialogue both with the Indian civil society and within the Naga society." (NPMHR 2003:38). Among others, the 'Appeal to our Friends' for 'The Journey of Conscience' stated:

> Nagas believe that for any viable political solution to emerge and subsequently leading to sustainable peace, interaction has to transcend the confines of the negotiation room and civil society has to contribute responsibly towards forming pubic opinion through broadening of participation. We feel that people in India as part of the larger society cannot remain mere spectators in the movement for peace and must share the responsibility in strengthening the peace initiative that is taking place at the political level. … NPMHR is of the view that dialogue and interaction must now take place at a peoples-to-peoples level to bring about better understanding through mutual respect. It is implicitly a process whereby we recognize the distinction between government and the civil society and the need for intellectuals, human rights groups, and civil and democratic rights groups to participate and contribute to the struggle for peace and freedom. …. to meet with and an appeal for better understanding and to share each others needs and concerns. … we need to come together to call for greater political will, honesty and sincerity on the part of all parties concerned. … the NPMHR … take this opportunity of appealing to the conscience and hearts of India to support and participate in this humble endeavor." (NPMHR 2003:145-146)

[32] This was inspired by the intitiative of the Indo-Pakistan Forum for Peace and Democracy in January 1994

It is the leaders such as these – intellectuals, elites, political entrepreneurs, civil society organizations – who mobilize ethnic bases and political opportunities to pursue the objectives of the group (Gurr 1993; Maiz 2003). A growing trend within the Naga Hoho, NPMHR, and NSF has been to articulate Naga nationalism through the framework of universal human rights and self-determination influenced by global indigenism. Emboldened by the contagion of Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN member states, solidarity among organizations of indigenous peoples from different parts of the world, and with encouragement from Non-Governmental Organizations that lend themselves as support groups, Naga nationalists, civil society organizations and intellectuals are finding new standards and yardsticks to leverage their arguments for Naga nationalism.

This treatment of the role played by intellectuals is far from being exhaustive in understanding Naga nationalism. The end of the British colonization of the Naga Hills District in 1947 did not end the political domination of the Nagas. When the British left India in 1947, the newly independent Indian state took control over the Naga Hills District and the Naga 'Unadministered Areas' as a colonial legacy. A new political opportunity, the domination by the Indian state and its impact, fueled and fanned Naga nationalism with a violent intensity. Naga nationalism gathered the support of the grassroots and gained momentum with the Nagas' experience of the Indian state particularly with the militarization of Naga areas that ultimately galvanized and intensified Naga demand for independence. I shall discuss the Nagas' experience of the Indian state and the impact of militarization in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

INDIAN MILITARIZATION POLICIES AND NAGA NATIONALISM

It's a man's pride.
No surrender, no compromise for our birthright.
This sacrifice is to protect our freedom.
I shall gladly lay for the future Naga generation.
(Chief Thah of Matikhrü before he was beheaded by the Indian Army, September 6, 1960).

Modernists in nationalism studies who argue that nations are a modern phenomenon have argued that factors external to the ethnic core such as print-capitalism (Anderson 1983) and industrialization (Gellner 1983) engendered and galvanized nationalism. Among the modernists, circumstantialists such as Keyes *et al* (1981) have further argued that radical changes in the political-economic contexts precipitate nationalism. One of the results of such radical changes in political-economic contexts is people's experience of oppression and collective disadvantage (Gurr 1993). Among the various external factors, the state is a crucial external factor for the development of ethnonationalism within states. State policies for development, assimilation and integration or matters concerning ethnic minorities in ethnically diverse states can engender ethnic nationalism. Reactions to state policies by ethnic groups who feel marginalized and discriminated against can explode into nationalist movements. Conversi called the focus on such reactions against state intrusions as the homeostatic approach (1995:4). Similarly, Breuilly (1993) also argued that the failure of the state to create a modern nation could result in the rise of nationalist politics. In the Indian context, this argument is similar to what Bernard Nossiter (1970) called the 'soft state' nature of India. According to Gurr, "ethnopolitical activism is motivated by people's deep-seated grievances about their collective status in combination

with the situationally determined pursuit of political interests, as articulated by group leaders and political entrepreneurs" (1993:123). Gurr mentioned 'repressive control by dominant groups' as one of the four predisposing traits that shape ethnopolitical activism (1993:129). Repressions by dominant groups not only are combustible materials that ignite, fan and perpetuate the fire of nationalism, but also provide the political opportunities (Gurr 1993) for political activism to redress injustices (Maiz 2003).

According to Paulus Pimomo (1995), the post-independence Indian state was a mirror-image of the British conquest-state from which India had separated itself politically. This mirror-image, however, has different characteristics. Describing the Indo-Naga relationship in the beginning stage of Indian nation building in post-independence India, Pimomo stated, "sectarian Hindu India and Nehru's secularist India merged their roles in Nagaland; they were united in their view of Naga extraneousness to the Indian 'national culture,' for one because of the Naga belief in Christianity, for the other because of their wish to be politically independent in India" (1995:32). Indian administrative and containment policies that ensued from such conceptions are, however, more than a mirror-image of colonial domination; Indian militarization shattered the mirror-image and brought the Nagas into the reality of the sharp edges of violence associated with militant nationalism. India's policy of forced national integration through militarization has been counter-productive in the case of the Nagas. The Indian government's containment of Naga nationalism by adopting policies such as militarization and enactment of extra-judicial laws such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act have not only reduced democratic spaces (Kikon 2005a; 2005b) but also reinforced Nagas' anti-

India sentiments. Memories of repression and atrocities by the Indian army are very fresh in the minds of the Naga people. The experiences of humiliation and fear brought on by militarization are antithetical to the Nagas' sense of pride that they are a free people, free "to govern ourselves and do what we like" (Naga Club 1929).

The Indian government's technique of containing Naga nationalism through militarization generated an intense emotional and passionate anti-India sentiments motivating thousands of Nagas to risk their lives against a superior Indian military force ultimately transforming Naga nationalism into a mass movement. Indian policies have not only been counter productive but have also effectively infused and reinforced a deep anti-India discourse by the Nagas. No matter how well Naga nationalism was conceptualized and articulated by the intellectuals, it was ultimately the people in the villages whose experiences of repressive Indian militarization not only alienated them from India but also intensified the struggle into a mass movement. Accordingly, for many Nagas, nationalism means to get the Indian army out of Naga areas so they can conduct their daily affairs without any interference and without any fear. Like Fanon's (1961) peasants who, unlike the people in the industrialized areas, were independent enough to revolt against the colonists, it was Nagas in the villages who experienced a traumatic violation of their freedom and dignity that galvanized Naga nationalism into a mass movement. The spirit of nationalism continues to be kept alive through rituals of collective memories such as commemorations, erections of monoliths, and other communal expressions. By ritualizing events of how the Indian Army brutalized villagers, Nagas continue to perpetuate, through collective memories, an anti-India

element in their nationalism cause. One such site of ritualizing a collective experience of Indian repression and atrocity is the Matikhrü massacre.

Matikhrü Massacre

On the eastern side of the Tizu River in the Pochury area of Nagaland, on the western slope of the Patkoi range, nestled in the middle of a jungle is Matikhrü village. Between 1985 and 1986 and then again from 1990 to 1993, I traveled many times between Kohima and Kiphire on a public transportation bus run by the Nagaland State Transport. Along the way, some of the passengers would invariably point to Matikhrü and say: "That is the village where all the men folk were killed by the Indian army." Matikhrü, and the incident of Sept. 6, 1960, were distant in time and space from where I grew up, so I did not inquire or give further thought to it. But late August 2006, I learned that the Naga Students Federation had a plan to hold its Federal Assembly meeting coinciding with the 46th anniversary of the Matikhrü massacre. On September 5, 2007, I joined the Naga Students Federation and went to Matikhrü.

Matikhrü is about seven hours drive from Kohima along a winding road. From the state highway at Akash Bridge to Matikhrü is a very narrow dirt road. About five miles before reaching the village, we stopped for everyone to catch up so we could go into the village in one convoy. When we finally reached Matikhrü, it was about 5:45 P.M. and just about getting dark. Between the main village and the upper *khel* (colony), the villagers had constructed a welcome gate. People were lined up on both sides of the gate – men on one side and women and children on the other side - to welcome us. The road leading to the

gate was cleaned and repaired well even though it was only a dirt road. For all the stories I had heard about the massacre and the village, I was pleasantly surprised by the number of people in the village. We drove through the gate and parked the jeep at one end of the playground. From there we were taken to the Rest House, a sort of gazebo temporarily constructed with wooden planks for the floor and tarp for the roof.

Compared to many other Naga villages and towns, Matikhrü boasts a clean and uninterrupted water supply for the whole village. It seems sickness in the village has been drastically reduced after the village got a water supply. Electricity is also as good as the surrounding villages. Pigs are raised in the sty and so, unlike many Naga villages, there is no pig dung everywhere. The village is clean, and as Dr. Tali Ao, one of the people who joined the students observed, the people have a very urban attitude. Work was divided – the men welcomed the guests and the women took care of the food. Once we got to the Rest House, we were offered tea and then assigned to different homes for the night. I was put up in the house of a teacher.

The next morning, since I had some free time before the program began, I decided to visit the lower section of the village. In the middle of the village, there is a monument, triangular in shape, honoring the nine men who where beheaded that day. A black flag flies near by to mark Black Day. To the west of the monument, there is a space kept empty on purpose. “It is the site on which the chief Thah’s house stood,” villagers told me. Supposedly it was there that the men were beheaded one by one and then burned together with the house.

What exactly happened in Matikhrü on that day and what events led to it are clear. On August 14, 1960, the Naga army attacked an Assam Rifle (Indian Para-military) outpost at Thuda near Phor in the Pochury area of Nagaland. The attack went on for days with both sides running low on ammunitions. On the 14th day of the siege, an Indian Air Force DC.3 that had come to drop relief and ammunition to the para-military was shot down and the Captain, Flight Lieutenant Anand Singha along with three other crew members were captured by the Naga army. The rescue mission and counter insurgency operation by the Indian Army following this resulted in the persecution and deaths of Nagas and the burning of villages in the area. This happened during the monsoon season, and the rivers in the region were in spate. In order to stop re-enforcements from reaching the Indian paramilitary outpost, the Naga army destroyed all the bridges across the Tizu, except one below Matikhrü village on the western slope of the Patkoi range. At around 10:00 A.M. on September 6, 1960, soldiers of the 16th Punjab Regiment entered Matikhrü.

In the morning on September 6, 2006, as I made my way back to the Rest House, I met Riesupa Nyusou, one of the survivors. Riesupa was about 13 years old then. He told me what happened next.

> Riesupa Nyusou: After they [Indian Army] came, they went house to house checking. All the people were assembled in the village center. Men and women were separated. The men were forced to do sit-ups and hop like frogs to and fro to the chief's house. Those who showed any sign of tiredness were beaten with rifle butts and kicked until they couldn't move anymore.
>
> At that time, the young men [thought to themselves]: "Ah, something is going to happen today. We won't survive today. Before we are incapacitated, whether we live or die, we'll grab their guns and do something." But the chief told them: "Aaaaiii, if it is like that, it is in our custom that we die for our land, but the women and children won't be spared. So don't do the usual man's thing."

Abe: And your father? You went to your father when he was being beaten. Were you also beaten?

RN: My father was killed in that place where the others were killed. When I was talking to him, they said, "Your fathers are being beaten, why are you talking to them?" So they grabbed me and beat me up and left me with my mom and the other women. I was a kid then, 12 to 13 years old, and exhausted from the beatings so I slept off in the ground.

When I woke up, it was around five in the evening, the women had fled to the jungle by then, all the houses were burnt down. Some army men were calling me to go over to them but one of them, I think he was a Nepali and felt pity for me, he gestured to me with his hands to run away. So I also ran away to the forest. They shot guns in my direction and I thought they were shooting at me, but they were shooting at my older brother as he was escaping.

One of the women is still surviving now; she couldn't go very far into the forest because she had many children so she hid nearby. When she saw the Indian army leave, she returned to the village to find her husband cut up in several parts of his body with the entrails of this stomach out, groaning and asking for water. "I am feeling very thirsty, where have the women gone?" He told the wife and children: "Take care of each other." The woman gave him a drink of water. And then he died.

A: Did any of the women die?

RN: The women did not die but the kids, because they were in the jungle with no proper food and habitation, no proper water, and drinking bad water, they died in the jungle. My brother's son too died here in our field out of starvation; another died in the camp.

While I was talking with Riesupa and his uncle, his mother, Pounielou Nyusou, also a survivor, came out of her house to listen to our conversation. Pounielou Nyusou is now 80 years old. I asked her if she could tell me her experience of the massacre.

Pounielou Nyusou: At that time, we were just sitting and doing nothing. They came and rounded us up and separated the men from the women and children. Then men were then beaten. We went to see them.

Pounielou looked very frail and sickly. She struggled to breathe as she spoke.

PN: My husband was feeling thirsty and asked for a drink. I went to give him tea, but they said: "Go away, go away." The army threatened to beat me with the gun if I did not go away. I said, "My husband is going to die, I will also die, it is ok." But they told me: "Go away quickly." And they chased me away from the scene.

> After that, the men were closed inside the chief's house, and the women were chased into the jungles.

I wanted to ask her more questions. "I am too old and don't have the strength to speak," she said. She then went and sat near the door under the shadow of the roof.

Fig. 14. Riesupa and his mother Pounielou Nyusou (Photo by Abraham Lotha).

As I interviewed the survivors, I noticed some men with hair knots tied on their heads like the Sikhs, dressed in Indian Army uniform carrying guns and passing through the village. Immediately, a chill went through my body, and I became afraid. For some years in the past, the Indian Army forbade the villagers to observe the Black Day. Was anything going to happen today? I wondered. I felt relieved when Riesupa and his uncle told me that the men in army uniform were their own villagers preparing to perform a skit later during the day.

Another survivor was Zhiwhuotho Katiry. He was seven years old at the time of the massacre. Today, he had come from Kohima to attend the function. As one of the educated leaders of the village, he is a well-respected man. “I feel more comfortable in Nagamese (a Creole spoken through out Nagaland) instead of English,” he told me when we sat down for an interview.

> Zhiwhuotho Katiry: At that time I was about seven years old, I can’t say the exact age. But my mom took me and we waited as our fathers were being beaten. They were beaten the whole day. Then what happened after that, my father was beaten with the handle of a spear and he was bleeding all over his head and down to his body. It was evening by then. “I can’t go on,” my father said. So he called me over. My mom took me by the hand and we went over to my father. “I cannot endure this anymore, but you don’t worry. You look after your mom well.” He said only that much and the Indian army chased us away. I cried and ran. Before we went away, … the beatings of the men by the Indian army, I can see it vividly even now. My grandfather, Chief Thah, was so badly beaten black and blue. My younger father was also beaten so much, even before he was killed, his stomach was badly damaged he could hardly move. In the evening, the women and children were chased away. Some [army] said go others said not to go. So I think those who told us to go had compassion on us.
>
> Before we went far into the forest the sun was already going down, that’s what I remember. Like that, my mom took me by one hand and my brother by her other hand, my older sister took my other brother but she couldn’t go fast. My mom carried my youngest brother; he was still suckling. Like that we went. All villagers went but by different routes. As soon as we had gone down a little below the village we heard the gunshots and the houses started burning. We went down the river and slept there the whole night. There were no beds so we slept sitting.
>
> The next morning, my mom because she had small kids she could not go back to the village but some mothers returned to the village. A traveling pastor, Zashitu, lay dying from the wounds. He was an Evangelist. One mother came upon him. “Mom, I cannot hold on. I will give my life to the Lord. I will pray,’ saying so he prayed with the mother. As soon as he said, ‘Amen,’ he died.
>
> The next day all the women and children searched for one another, and we were gathered in one place. One man he escaped that day, he ran and came. He was also taken to the Chief’s house to be killed. As the first person was beheaded, he got very frightened and didn’t want to be killed with a machete (dao) but rather with the gun [he preferred to be shot rather than be beheaded] so he broke a window and escaped. Many army came and started firing, one army blocked his path but he pushed him down. The army continued to fire at him but he escaped with a minor bullet wound on the tip of the small finger on his right hand. He came and told us what went on in the Chief’s house. “I don’t know how God

saved me," he said. But he also got very sick and died in the jungle after two or three months. His name was Kekhwezu.

Abe: What happened after that?

ZK: It was still monsoon period, the river was full, the suspension bridge was broken, we were afraid to go anywhere, so we stayed in the field around two weeks. When the river subsided we went to the Tangkhul area [in present-day Manipur] and returned here [after] about a month. In Phek, there was Rentsamo, Area Council (AC) administrator, [he] sent men to bring us to Lozami and we stayed there a few days. He gave us some relief – some rice, blankets. It was November by then, the paddy was ripe so he sent us to harvest. Before we could finish harvesting the Naga army came and took us to Sathi camp on the Burmese side. We stayed there till the end of 1961. When we were there Gavin Young, a journalist came there brought by Isak Swu. The pilots of the [Indian Air Force DC.3 that was shot down] Dakota were there. Gavin Young made us stand in line and shook hands with us with two fingers. Phor people came with full regalia and danced. … Gavin wrote about us in his book [*Indo-Naga War: A Journalist Account*].

We stayed in the jungle. The Indian Army was always searching for us. In the last part of 1962, maybe December, some of the people came near the village but the [Indian] army chased us away. So we came to the paddy field again but the Assam Rifle were there and they took us to Jesami and from there we went to Meluri. I think they might have searched for us. But the Naga army they are good. They asked men from other villages to migrate, and our village was re-established in 1963. First there was a long house and we stayed there in partitions. After that slowly we continued to live there again without any problem.

Eventually, Zhiwhuotho Katiry went to school, and after studying theology in Calcutta, he now serves as the pastor of the Pochury Baptist Church in Kohima. I asked him if the villagers had ever been paid any compensation by the army. "No," he replied, "till today we have not been paid anything in terms of compensation. Some villages felt pity for us and gave us something. We also feel how long we can tell our story."

Pre-Independence Indian Policy

Nagas' relationship with India started in the years immediately before India became independent in August 1947. By 1946, the Naga National Council (NNC) leaders were

already in contact with the leaders of the Indian National Congress such as Nehru and Gandhi. But because of the colonial context, with both India and the Nagas fighting a common enemy, there was a certain ambiguity in the Indian policy towards the Nagas up to 1947. These were leaders who were envisioning the future of two countries, and initially their relationship was cordial and uncharted.

In the months before and after Indian independence, it was through Sir Akbar Hydari, the Governor of Assam, acting as the agent of the Government of India that much of the initial negotiations with the Nagas were carried out. Beginning from 26th June, 1947, Sir Akbar Hydari had a series of discussions for a full three days with the members of the NNC, regarding the "Ten Years' Interim demand" put forward by the Naga people. On June 28, 1947, leaders of the Naga National Council and Sir Akbar Hydari and Bardoloi, Premier of Assam, together drew up the Nine-point agreement, commonly known as the Nine-Point Hydari Agreement, for setting up an interim government for the Naga people for a period of ten years. According to the NNC reports, "This was not a clear promise of self-determination, but it was an acceptable start. … and the Nagas were made to understand that the Nine-Point Agreement would be incorporated into the Indian Constitution…" (NNC Hist:14). However, the ninth clause of the Agreement caused contention. This clause of the agreement read as follows:

> The Governor of Assam as the Agent of the Government of the Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of ten years to ensure the due observance of this agreement; at the end of this period the Naga Council will be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga people arrived at.

Nagas' understanding was that at the end of the ten years they would be free to decide if they should continue to be with India or be independent. The Indian government, on the other hand, held that the status of the Nagas could be changed, but they would continue to remain part of India. By then, there were already warnings of troubles that would come. According to the NNC, one evening during their meetings, Sir Akbar Hydari "warned several Nagas that if the Naga Hills District, in fact, refused to join the Indian Union, India would use her force against them" (NNC Hist:14). In order to strengthen their case, a Naga delegation went to meet with Mahatma Gandhi on July 19th 1947, and submitted a representation concerning the future of the Nagas. According to the NNC, Gandhi told the Naga delegation:

> Nagas have every right to become independent. We did not want to live under the domination of the British and they are now leaving us. I want you to feel that India is yours, that this city of Delhi is yours. I feel that Naga Hills is mine just as much as it is yours. But if you say that it is not mine, the matter must stop there. I believe in the brotherhood of man but I do not believe in force and forced unions. If you do not wish to join the Union of India nobody will for you to do that. The Congress Government will not do that." (NNC Hist:14-15)

The Nagas are also supposed to have informed Gandhi that Sir Akbar Hydari, the Governor of Assam, had threatened to use force on them if they refused to join the Indian Union. In response, Gandhi is supposed to have answered, "I will come to the Naga Hills and will ask them to shoot me first before one Naga is shot (NNC Hist:15; Naga Hoho 2002:28). These responses by Gandhi are among the most cited by the Nagas to argue that even Gandhi, the Father of Indian nation, had agreed to Nagas' determining their own independent political future. To the Nagas, Gandhi used the same yardstick of Indian nationalism in dealing with the Nagas' aspiration – to get rid of the British and become

independent. Following the meeting with Gandhi in July 1947, the Nagas felt encouraged to pursue their nationalist demand.

Interactions with Nehru

Perhaps the most crucial Indian leader whose decision mattered most to the Nagas' aspiration was India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. During the transition period of Indian Independence, there was a significant difference of opinion between Gandhi and Nehru on the Naga issue. Both Nehru and Gandhi knew that the Nagas were not Indians but Nehru, from the beginning, was not willing to concede to the Nagas' demand for independence. Writing to T. Sakhrie, the then Joint Secretary of NNC, before Indian independence, Nehru stated:

> It is obvious that the Naga territory in eastern Assam is too much (sic) small to stand by itself, politically or economically. It lies between two huge countries, India and China, and part of it consists of rather backward people who require considerable help. When India is independent, as it is bound to be soon, it would not be possible for the British Government to hold on the Naga territory or any part of it. They would be isolated there between India and China. Inevitably, therefore, this Naga territory must be part of India and of Assam with which it has developed much close association. (Sakhrie 2006:8)

When India first got independence, as Bernard Nossiter said, "Delhi proclaimed an ostensibly enlightened policy, one designed to preserve the autonomous culture of the tribal peoples" (1970:146). Like the British, Delhi at first thought it wise to leave the tribals to themselves and largely neglected them. Influenced by anthropologists such as Christoph von Furer Heimendorf and Verrier Elwin, a hangover from the colonial days with regard to tribal people was crystallized in Nehru's philosophy for North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). In India tribes are scheduled and Nagas were included within the group of scheduled tribes. In an effort to balance between the two extreme positions

of not taking interest in the tribals on the one hand and over-administering tribal areas, especially sending in too many outsiders on the other hand, Nehru sought to follow a middle path guided by the '*panchcheel*', five fundamental principles in the Government of India's policy in tribal areas:

1. People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture.
2. Tribal rights in land and forests should be respected.
3. We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will, no doubt, be needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.
4. We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to, their own social and cultural institutions.
5. We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved. (Nehru in Elwin 1959:Foreword)

Based on the *panchcheel* principles, Nehru initially had a conciliatory approach towards the Nagas. Nehru was not ready to grant independence to the Nagas but was willing to give them a much greater measure of autonomy than the other States in the country. According to Sarvepalli Gopal, Nehru's biographer:

> The Nagas were a tough people who could give much trouble and Nehru saw the danger of any hurried attempt to absorb their areas into standard administration. Between this and the isolation of British days there was a middle way, a friendly rather than a coercive attitude, an acceptance of their social structure, protection from encroachments and advance in such fields as education. They should neither be treated as anthropological specimens nor drowned in the sea of Indian humanity. They could not be isolated from the new political and economic forces sweeping across India; but it was equally undesirable to allow these forces to function freely and upset the traditional life and culture of the Nagas. It was presumptuous to approach them with an air of superiority and try to make of them second-rate copies of people in other parts of India. (Gopal 1979:207)

But this conciliatory approach would be severely tested in the years to come, especially when the Naga nationalist movement threatened the national integrity and security of

India. On December 29, 1951, armed with the results of the plebiscite, the NNC leaders went to meet Nehru aboard the "S.S. Lushai" on the Brahmaputra in Silghat (Assam). The Nagas submitted a memorandum to Nehru and also informed him of the results of the Naga plebiscite (NNC Hist:20). Stating the outcome of the plebiscite, the memorandum said: "The conclusion of the plebiscite reveals in a very concrete form the evidential and conclusive proof of the Naga National aspiration for independence" (NNC, ms; Iralu 2002:416-421). In reply to the Nagas' memorandum, Nehru said:

> No part of India as constituted today including Nagaland can be separated from India. … I consider freedom very precious. I am sure that the Nagas are as free as I am, in fact more free in a number of ways … I am bound down (sic) by all sorts of laws the Nagas are not to the same extent bound down (sic) by such laws and are governed by their own customary laws quite different from individual or group freedom. In the present context of affairs both in India and in the world, it is impossible to consider even for a moment, such an absurd demand for independence of the Nagas. It is doubtful whether the Nagas realize the consequences of what they are asking for. For their present demand would lead them to ruins." (NNC The Case:40)

This, of course, was a response the NNC did not want to hear. But the matter didn't end there. The NNC followed up by sending a delegation consisting of Phizo, Khodao and Imkongmeren to Delhi who met with Nehru on March 11, 1952. This meeting did not have any positive outcome either. According to NNC reports, "the interview as stormy" and Nehru is reported to have told the Naga delegation: "Whether Heaven falls, or India goes into pieces and blood runs red in the country, whether I am here or any other body comes in, … Nagas will not be allowed to become Independent" (Khodao Papers). Disappointed, the NNC at their next meeting back home at Mokokchung on April 21, 1952, resolved "that an appeal be made to the United Nations Organization" (NNC meeting resolution). A copy of this resolution was sent to Nehru along with a letter on May 16, 1952, inviting him to visit Nagaland. The invitation letter reiterated the Nagas'

determination "to continue to appeal to the people of India to appreciate their cause and make it possible for the government to agree to their rightful aspiration to live as a free people and be a distinct nation"(NNC ms). But as far as Nehru and the Government of India was concerned, the national unity of the country was paramount, and, according to Pimomo, "Nagas and their country became in the eyes and imagination of most Indian leaders their Other, a kind of primal scene (along with, and partly because of, Pakistan's break-away) for India's national anxiety"(1995:30). It is against such a volatile background that Nehru emphasized the unity of India.

In March 1953, together with U Nu the Prime Minister of Burma, Nehru went to visit the Naga areas. In Kohima both leaders were to address the Nagas. The Naga leaders wanted to submit a memorandum to Nehru at the meeting but were refused by the Deputy Commissioner and Bishnuram Medhi, the Chief Minister of Assam. The NNC who were already frustrated by the futility of their previous encounters reasoned: "According to Naga custom, the host speaks first. If we will not be listened to, we will not listen either." The NNC responded by staging a walkout from the public meeting. B. N. Mulik, who accompanied Nehru, described the incident on March 30, 1953:

> I arrived at the venue of the public meeting about ten minutes before the Prime Minister was due to arrive. Nearly three to four thousand Nagas were present. In the meantime, the delegation which had gone to the DC's house returned, and by the time the Prime Minister arrived and ascended the rostrum along with U Nu, the entire Naga audience excepting a few government servants left the place of the meeting. I had been to innumerable public meetings with the Prime Minister and he in his life had addressed thousands of meetings sometimes well over a million people; this was probably the first time when a public meeting to be addressed by Pandit Nehru, the darling of India's crowds, to hear and see whom people would trudge scores of miles, was effectively boycotted and he was left to address a few dozens of Government servants and their family members, most of whom were not Nagas but plains people. The Prime Minister was shocked. So

> was U Nu. We could not talk. We came back to the DC's house where sumptuous food awaited us but none had any appetite. (1972: 305)

The walkout by the Nagas in Kohima was, according to Gopal, Nehru's biographer, a "deliberate discourtesy, not so much to him as to U Nu" (Gopal 1979: 208, see also Nehru's letter to Daulatram), which stiffened Nehru's attitude towards the Nagas. Nehru became more and more convinced that Nagaland was part of India and could not be independent. As tensions increased, Nehru began to tackle the Naga conflict as a law and order problem. From then on, the Indo-Naga conflict took an ugly turn of violent repression by the Indian Army. According to NNC claims, from April 1953 onwards, the Indian Government resorted to severe political persecution, mass arrests, beatings and torture to force the Nagas into submission.

Military Phase

With both India and the Nagas refusing to change their position, tensions were building. In August 1948, six Nagas were shot dead at Mao by the Assam Rifles, a para-military force, as the Nagas were protesting the imposition of taxes upon the Nagas in Manipur. By 1950, the Nagas began to resort to civil disobedience. In 1950, the Nagas refused to join the Indian Union and followed this with a Naga plebiscite in 1951. Following the Plebiscite, Phizo met with Nehru and continued to press for Naga independence. In January 1952, Nagas boycotted the first general elections of free India. Later on October 18, 1952, during a peaceful public demonstration to protest the torture of a Naga minor by the police, Zasibito, a judge of the Kohima Central Court who was on his way to work, was shot dead by a sub-inspector of Indian police. To an already charged atmosphere, Zasibito's killing added fuel to the increasing frustration and anti-Indian

elements that further deteriorated the Indo-Naga relations. Matters worsened when Nehru, on October 24, 1952, promised a high-powered inquiry, but later, "the 'Jarmen Committee' which inquired into the incident doubted the veracity of the Naga witnesses and completely exonerated the Indian sub-inspector of Police" (NNC Hist: 21).

India's nation building exercise in the Naga areas, particularly from 1953 onwards, was in the form of militarization. According to Khodao, "India started police operations in Nagaland in March 1953, then followed by military repressions in 1954" (Khodao papers). After the walkout by the Nagas at Kohima on March 30, 1953, an order was issued to arrest eight of the NNC leaders. T. Sakhrie's house was raided by the police on the night of April 4, 1953, following which the NNC leaders went underground (NNC ms 1964:11). Similarly, on April 7, 1953, the Angami villages of Viswema, Jakhama, Kegwema, and Phesama were raided by the police. Another prominent Naga village, Khonoma, was raided on May 30, 1953, by a combined force of the police and Assam Rifles "under the supervision of S.C. Dutt, Deputy Inspector General of Police" (NNC ms 1964:11). By the end of 1953, according to NNC reports, nine police outposts were established in the Naga Hills in order to maintain law and order.

The Nagas' response did not alleviate the problem. On August 15, 1953, the Naga students of Kohima Government High School boycotted the independence celebration in the school because "their elders and leaders were being harassed by the Government police" (NNC The Case:24). As a result, the school was closed for one month and a curfew was imposed on Kohima. The Gaunburas (administrative leaders in the villages)

were also incensed by an order issued by the Deputy Commissioner on June 12, 1953, which alleged that the Gaunburas were "helping the NNC realize subscriptions from the villagers by coercion and intimidation," and the order stated that, "Gaunburas guilty of such activities would be prosecuted and dealt with according to law" (NNC The Case:26). The Gaunburas felt this was a false allegation. This was followed by a promulgation by the Governor of Assam in September 1953, recquisitioning the services of porters in an emergency in the Naga Hills. To the Naga this was an outright insult to their freedom and dignity. Subsequently, the Gaunburas resigned *en masse* on September 29, 1953. In a letter to the DC, Kohima the Gaunburas' resignation letter stated:

> We the Naga Gaunburas, who have been occupying a position between the people and the local government, but with the change of time and circumstances, and seeing the Indian Extraordinary Regulation of FORCED LABOUR against our Naga people to become Indian Coolies [porters] under the threat of severe punishment and heavy penalties, in which, neither can we now be of service to the people and the country as in the former days nor is there room for us to please the local government, whether now or in future, and, since our Naga nation is to be independent for which we the ELDERS in the country are bound to stand on this side of our country and for our people, do hereby tender the RESIGNATION or withdrawal of our name from the roll of the local government. This is a national decision of the Gaunburas and of the Naga people, and from now on we do request you and your office to treat us, the Gaunburas of all the villages as one of the common men and elders of Nagaland. (NNC The Case:26)

Meanwhile, by 1948, India had already dispatched troops to Free Naga territory (not part of Naga Hills) in the Tuensang area. This section of the Naga inhabited area was not part of the British Empire, but the Indian Government presumed that this Free Naga area formed part of India. To defend their territory from the presence of Indian Army in this area, the Nagas of this territory constituted the Sovereignty of the Republic of Free Nagaland (NNC Hist:22). The NNC and the leaders of Free Nagaland alleged that the Indian Army was already forcing them to accept the Indian constitution by intimidation

and threats. On Sept. 18, 1954, the leaders of the Free Naga Government wrote a letter to the President of India describing some of the atrocities committed by the Indian Army. Among others, the letter stated:

> The Indians treat the Free Nagas as their subject and much more like slaves. … and the Free Naga people have no more patience left just to stand by and see the Indian Officers and troops shouting, beating, slapping and kicking the Nagas as if we are their slaves. Women being so often molested and raped that the depravity and lustfulness of the Indians now in Free Nagaland would certainly shame you and the Indian nation.
>
> Naga traditional courtesy demands personal discussion for serious nature of the kind confronting our nation today but our representatives so often felt beaten whenever they approach Indian Political Officers that personal contact became impossible. And we submit our case to you that:-
>
> 1. Our people are being killed for no reason,
> 2. Many people have been tortured and beaten to death,
> 3. Women were raped and so often molested that women feel unsafe wherever there are Indians,
> 4. Our fields were destroyed and houses burnt down,
> 5. Our woodland and forests were cut down just to arouse us,
> 6. Our houses have been raided day and night insulting men and women,
> 7. The houses belonging to our national leaders had been set on fire and the chiefs have been slapped, kicked and beaten,
> 8. Lands are being demanded on pain of death for Air Bases,
> 9. The troops are hunting the leaders and elders of our country; they are roaming in the fields, in the jungles and in the river and the people are being blindly fired at that there is no security for human lives. …
>
> How can we live in peace under constant threat and molestation? Do the Indians want the Nagas become extinct? …The way the Indian troops and officers alike, humiliate the citizens of our Free Nagaland, … makes our people hate you.
>
> So, we, on behalf of the Government of the people's Sovereign Republic of Free Nagaland, and on behalf of Free Nagas, do hereby very humbly and most respectfully request your Excellency's Government to withdraw the Indian troops honourbly from our Free Nagaland." Hongkhin for Kilonsers, Government of Free Nagaland. (NNC Hist: 22-26)

The Nagas accused the Indian army of committing many atrocities on innocent Naga villagers under the pretext of trying to apprehend the Naga leaders and coerced the Nagas to join the Indian Union. Among the hundreds of such cases of atrocities, the Yenpang massacre on November 15, 1954, was particularly detailed by the leaders of Free Naga

area. A report issued by the Public Relations Department, Government of the Peoples Sovereign Republic of Free Nagaland, Kautaga Centre, November 25, 1954, stated the following:

> The Free Nagas have been an independent people since the beginning of the time. And even the British left us alone as a free people. Yet, for a long time, the Government of India have been threatening the Nagas of Free Nagaland. Their diabolic plan of extermination and the execution of a systematic terrorism was not known (or it was not materialized) till the Indian officer Mr. Kar came and took charge of the newly established Indian Military Camp in the area of Noklak village (500 houses). There have already been established innumerable Indian Military Camps throughout the breadth and length of Free Nagaland; and we are virtually being besieged. …
>
> Yenpang village was attacked in the morning on Monday, November fifteen, and the inhabitants were savagely massacred. The butchery took two hours from five to seven o'clock. The body of sixty men, women and children were found. These helpless victims were shot, hacked and all their heads, not only men but even women and children, were cut off and these were taken straight away to the Indian Military Camp, Noklak. Those who escaped the massacre were chased like wild beasts. Some people were still missing. This is the long standing thread of the government of India carried out to its shocking reality.
>
> Yenpang is a small prosperous village with forty-seven houses only; … The ghastly business of this merciless but well planned massacre was directed by Indian Officers Kar and Thangsia of Noklak Camp. Kar had been bragging for a long time that he killed five thousand Abors and made them submit, and he would make the Nagas understand that the Indians are better "Head-hunters" than the Nagas. He had fearfully demonstrated India's skill.
>
> Officer Kar was so pleased with his deed that he held a victory parade at Noklak on that memorable day. All the decapitated heads were lined up and photographs were taken by him to show his government. A feast was held supplying the soldiers extra rations with pork brought from Yenpang kill.
>
> Of the pitiful tales of the women wailing which cannot be fully related here, a woman, Sibonglemla by name, begged for mercy and pleaded to the killers to give all what she had, was dragged on the ground around for a long time crying and crying, and her head was decapitated just the same. She is a graceful woman with beautiful hair of four feet long, and her scalp about the size of 30 millimeters with full hair on is in possession of officer Kar which was flayed out while she was yet crying and pleading for mercy. In his jubilant mood, officer Kar told his confidants that he would plait the hairs into twine and use it throughout his life as his 'holy thread.' …
>
> Yenpang village is no more. All the houses with granaries holding over twenty thousand maunds of grains were burnt into ashes. All animals were killed and cash with other booty worth a quarter lakh rupees carried away.

> Officer Kar visited Shilong, Assam, and after that three secret meetings were held at Noklak Camp on October 31, and November 6 and 7. The first meeting took place through wireless instructions. According to Ngon's replayed message (a Naga interpreter, who attended the secret meeting), officer Kar and Thangsia revealed that the Indian Government plan is to kill the 15 Kilonsers of the People's Sovereign Republic of Free Nagalim, and other Naga leaders and important leaders with all their families and children; and ten to fifteen thousand Free Nagas to be put to death till the Free Naga people submit to the Indian 'authority' and agree to remain under the Indian Union. Kar said that all the granaries were to be destroyed, and he particularly emphasized that all the Naga Christians were to be killed whenever found.
>
> The Government of Free Nagaland and also the people consider the Yenpang Massacre to be only the beginning of worse horror yet to come. The Kilonsers of the Peoples Sovereign Republic of Free Nagaland recently sent a letter to the president of the Republic of India (dated Sept. 18) requesting the Indian government to withdraw their military troops from the territory of Free Nagaland. Since then, the Indian troops intensified their nefarious activities of destroying more of our people's properties, burning houses, killing our animals for their food, destroying granaries and mixing earth and sand into the grains, hunting our leaders and elders, looting the houses and raiding their villages day and night. And, now, the MASSACRE. This is a strange yet unbefitting reply of the President of a great and highly esteemed country to demonstrate his temper: here lied the root of the danger in a powerful country. … We have been silent but peaceful and independent for all these centuries; and now when every other nation in Asia are regaining their sovereignty, we the Nagas are being killed like wild animals and trampled on as a dead worm by Free India. We are sorry.' (Khodao Papers)

The same report continues with the names of 27 males and 26 females including children killed whose identity could be ascertained. However, it was difficult to obtain independent verifications to ascertain the truth to these allegations because there were no reports either from the media or other independent sources due to problems of accessibility to these remote areas and the political climate which prevented even journalists from going to those sites.

With the escalation of violence and the deteriorating situation in the Naga Hills, T. Sakhrie, the Secretary of the NNC sent a telegraph to Nehru on May 3, 1955, requesting

him to meet with the Nagas: “Peace is within men. Accusation of one against the other will not stop an unnecessary fighting. Situation in Nagaland very serious. We believe you are truly interested in abiding peace and Nagas feel the same. We must meet. Please fix date and time” (Khodao Papers). A similar message requesting a meeting was telegraphed to Chief Minister Bishnuram Medhi of Assam on August 9, 1955, informing him of the serious situation in Nagaland. The message requested an “immediate interview – not for question of Naga independence but for the preservation of peace in the country” (Khodao Papers). On October 18, 1955, another telegram was sent to Pandit Govind Vallabah Pant, the Home Minister, Government of India stating, “Naga delegation wish to meet with you any place to your convenience” (Khodao Papers). In reply, the Private Secretary to the Home Minister wrote on October 23, 1955:

> Home Minister has seen your telegram dated eighteenth. He will be prepared to meet any Indian national subject to time and convenience but he is not prepared to receive any delegation from an organisation which has demanded independence. This demand must be clearly given up before he can meet any individual or delegation previously connected with this demand. (NNC ms; Khodao Papers)

By 1956, Naga nationalism took the form of an armed struggle, and the Indian government responded by sending in the Indian Army and the Assam Rifles to counter it. Why did the NNC take up arms? Initially, the NNC was in favor of non-violent means for Naga independence struggle. T. Sakhrie, the Secretary of NNC was influenced by anti-colonial movements in South Africa and India and was convinced that non-violence was the only way Nagas could achieve their aspirations. T. Sakhrie was particularly influenced by Gandhi’s *Ahimsa* and believed that “a nascent India, which attained Independence from Great Britain through non-violence, cannot and would not oppose or ignore a movement on the same principle” (Sakhrie 2006:9). But as the Indo-Naga

conflict intensified, according to the NNC: "The engagement of so much military and policy force for the seizure of guns and the 'apprehension of lawless criminals' … [not only] succeeded to strike terror among the people but also roused the bitter antagonism of the people against Government and Indians" (NNC 1964:24).

The entry of A.Z. Phizo as the president of NNC witnessed the rise of the militant radicals within the NNC. Those Nagas in favor of responding to police and Indian Army repression found an able leader in the charismatic Phizo. Angered by the Indian Army oppression, Phizo believed that "violence would be the lifeblood of Naga politics" (Sakhrie 2006:13). Many Nagas who were victims of Indian militarization responded to Phizo's popular dictums: "Die rather than lose your honour" and "Fight rather than be oppressed." (Sakhrie 2006:13). According to the NNC, Phizo and his followers were guided by the following argument:

> By the beginning of 1956, the Indian Army occupied Kohima and Mokokchung divisions of the Naga Hills District. Indian Army officers began a routine of displaying the bullet ridden corpses of dead Nagas in towns explaining that this fate would overtake any Naga who refused to accept the Indian Constitution. Thus the dead bodies of Thepfucha, Purhielie and Lhouphizhu riddled with bullets were exhibited in Kohima market, and the dead body of Tezengchiba was exhibited in Mokohchung. The situation became very tense in Nagaland. The fire of nationalism started burning in the hearts of the Nagas indicating that a hard time was coming for them. Atrocities and rapes increased hideously; and in defense against the general massacre the Nagas were driven to take up arms." (NNC Hist: 29)

On the other hand, according to Ahu Sakhrie, the rise of militancy in the NNC was due to the actions or inactions taken by the Indian government. Sakhrie lists four causes that fueled the already burning fire of contempt for the unfamiliar enemy:

> 1. Ignoring the intensity of Naga nationalism which was being strengthened by the years ever since the formation of NNC. The concept of belonging to a separate

> nationality was supreme in the minds of the people. 2. Not paying sufficient attention to the views of the pragmatic leaders within NNC, especially when they had full control of the organization. 3. Creating frustration and disappointment in the minds of the people in not getting due respect which to them was loss of honour and dignity. 4. Casually treating the movement in a manner of quelling a domestic discontent. (2006:12-13)

Differences arose within the leadership regarding the NNC policies. Leaders such as T. Sakhrie and J.B Jasokie were in favor of pursuing a non-violent policy. T. Sakhrie believed that by adopting the non-violence "you are placing your opponent in a position where he feels morally wrong to oppose you" (Sakhrie 2006:13). Eventually the moderates such as T. Sakhrie and Jasokie resigned from the General Secretary and Publicity Secretary of the NNC respectively. But the differences between the radicals and the moderates within the NNC came to such irreconcilable positions that T. Sakhrie was abducted on January 18, 1956, and assassinated two days later. From then on Phizo took reigns of the NNC and adopted an all-out violent response to the Indian militarization.

The Indian policy of armed repression in Nagaland can be ascertained from the perception of the Indian leaders towards the Nagas. Leaders of the Indian government inherited much of the British colonial policies and attitudes towards the Nagas. As the NNC wrote, "Although the evils of Police Administration since 1953 is largely responsible for the widening of the gulf separating the Nagas from the Indian, in the final analysis it will be the policy of the Government on which the whole responsibility must be saddled. For the Police and their atrocities are not the cause but the result of the policy pursued by Government" (NNC 1964:24). Initially the Nagas, like other tribals in India, were neglected. But, as Nossiter pointed out, "underlying this neglect is a thinly veiled feeling of superiority. Some Indian officials openly express their contempt for what they

regard as the tribal people's primitive, uncultured ways" (Nossiter 1970:147). The Indian leaders who were directly responsible for administering the Naga areas did not hold back to voice their attitude towards the Nagas. Thus, for instance, Bishnuram Medhi, the Chief Minister of Assam, on December 2, 1953, said he could not "think of any demand for independent Sovereign Naga state raised by a few handful of leaders, mostly Christians. … The British administrators also during the pre-independence days, were greatly responsible for giving the idea of independence among a handful of Naga leaders under the influence of foreign missionaries" (NNC 1964: 41). B.K. Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru's cousin, who was the Governor of Assam in the sixties, had a similar view and advocated violence to suppress the Nagas. According to Nossiter (1970), the Indian government's policy with the Nagas reflected "a deep strain of contempt for the Chritianized tribes." Recalling the "remarkably frank talk" he had with B.K. Nehru in the late sixties, Nossiter wrote:

> The Governor of both Assam and Nagaland, cousin of India's first PM, Nehru is a cultivated and charming man. …. Governor Nehru was incensed that Mrs. Gandhi had met personally with the hostile Nagas, even though the discussions had led to no concessions.
>
> "You can't talk to every damned rebel who comes along with a couple of thousand guns,' he told me in his precise Oxbridge accent. 'Is this the government of India or Bongo-Wongo? We've got a mess in our hands and will have for some time. You can't run a government along Gandhian lines. I agree with Mao. Power comes out of the end of a gun.
>
> The Nagas', he went on, "are petulant and spoiled children. There are times when you have to face things, kill people and be killed. We came along, moralists that we are, and said we must administer these savages. They take on the government of India because they haven't the foggiest idea of what it's all about. Now we've lost a great deal with the Nagas. They've got the idea that rebellion can pay. The Nagas caused the Mizo problem."
>
> But wouldn't the new policies continue the war indefinitely? I asked.
>
> "It is probably a good thing to prolong the fighting," Nehru replied. "Let those people get tire[d] of it." (1970:154-155)

Similarly, the Indian media also entertained the same position. Syed Mushtaque Murshed wrote in *The Statesman* on January 4, 1953:

> We should not give them independence yet for I do not think that they have achieved that degree of social progress as to fit them for self-government. Their case may be compared with that of an ailing child who refuses to take his medicine so that it has to be forced down his throat. The reason for this coercion is that we think it is absolutely necessary for him. To give the Nagas independence now would be betraying their interest and our trust." (NNC 1964: 42)

Irrespective of what the immediate officers believed, the buck stopped with Nehru. As B.N. Mulik, Nehru's personal secretary and director of Intelligence Bureau said, "Throughout the period of the confrontation with the Nagas, Prime Minister Nehru remained steadfast in his views that Nagaland was and would always be a part of India and could not be allowed to go out of the Indian Union" (1972:336). So it was not out of character that in spite of his paternalistic attitude to the Nagas as "barbaric', and vulnerable "tribals" who needed to be protected, Nehru was adamant when it came to maintaining national integrity especially during the formative years of India's nation building. He instructed his Army to "hit hard and swiftly" (Gopal 1979:211) in dealing with the Naga nationalist movement. Perhaps the Indian Government's understanding of the Nagas and the policies adopted to contain them can best be understood through the eyes of the Indian Intelligence Bureau officers such as B.N. Mulik and S.M. Dutt, who were influential in the Indian government's policy towards the Nagas. The Indian government adopted two methods – grouping of villages, and the raising of Naga Militia – to counteract the Naga armed struggle. B.N. Mulik, the then Intelligence Bureau Director, explained the methods:

> Grouping of villages meant that the residents of several villages were brought to one central village, which was fenced round and kept under protection of strong

> security forces. The villagers were allowed to go out during daytime and cultivate their fields under escort but before nightfall they had to come back to the grouped village and there was no permit to go out before daybreak. The plan was to break the supply and intelligence system of the rebels, who, being a guerilla force, depended for their supplies and information on the villagers. This grouping of villages had also a telling effect on the Naga civilian population. Even the uncommitted and peaceful villagers had to be put under this restraint, which was most irksome; and when this went on month after month, it was enough to break their spirit of defiance, if there was any. Another step taken by the Commissioner was to raise a force of Naga militia. (1972:313)

According to a report issued by Federal Gov. of Nagaland on August 12, 1956, 125 villagers were killed between February and July 1956. Between January 1955 and July 1956 alone 23,882 Naga houses were burnt (Khodao Papers). In a letter to Nehru on June 30, 1956, on behalf of the Government of Nagaland, Haigau and J.S. Botlar, Kilonsers (Ministers) updated Nehru on the "latest acts of the Indian Army" in Nagaland. Detailing specific examples of the atrocities between June 6 and 18, 1956, the letter stated:

> What justifiable necessity impelled the Indian congress Government in directing the Indian Army to start killing our Naga people and burning all our houses, we do not know. If these barbarous cruelties are meant for compelling the Nagas to accept the Indian Constitution and be a member unit within the Indian Union, these acts of conscienceless inhumanity are highly improper. Village after village have been surrounded and the people were compelled to give their finger print as a token of their loyalty to India and acceptance of the Indian Constitution. Nagas as a people and the Naga Government strongly condemn your policy now being put into practice in Nagaland. … Naga people made the position of our country very clear to the Government of India from the very inception of the emancipation of the Indians and the starting of the Government of Free India. Nagaland belongs to the Nagas only and nobody else. We cannot feel ashamed to state this simple fact, or get frightened to stand on our national right and defend our honour. …
>
> If the Congress Indian Government is determined to wipe out the Nagas from the face of this earth, WHAT CAN WE DO? You have the capacity to do so. But, is not killing other people a horrible thing in spite of disagreement with you? Is it not contemptible to resort to terrorism for the usurpation of other people's land? ORDER TO KILL TEN MEN in each and every village, and to wipe out big villages have already been known to the Nagas. Zothsüma village of 350 houses 4 miles from Kohima, had already been wiped out with Cannon shells.
>
> The ORDER and directives for DECIMATION and ANNIHILATION must be immediately called off without delay.

> Bombardment with 3-inch mortar shells against our people's camps and people in the fields continue daily. Shelling the villages with Cannon – TYPE: EYR.CE 9719. C.co/2/44. started on June 28, 1956. All these must be stopped.
>
> If killing the people, snipping the workers in the fields of cultivations, raping and molesting women and girls, and burning houses and villages stopped, YOU MAY BE SURE that our Naga people, and our Home-Guards, will full heartedly respond in real faith as these are what we are against.
>
> We are wholly and absolutely at your mercy. And, in the name of humanity, we submit this appeal to you to stop tears and bloodshed. (Khodao Papers)

Nagas commemorate the years from 1953 to 1964 as the time when they experienced the wrath of the Indian Army, when every imaginable form of army oppression and human rights abuses were violated by the Indian Army on the Naga people. Kaka Iralu's *Nagaland and India: The Blood and the Tears* (2000) documents many of the atrocities from 1955 to 1975. A summary report on 'Terrorism in Nagaland" from 1954 to 1962 by the Government of Nagaland issued by the NNC stated the following: "Over 100,000 Naga citizens have been killed by the Indian Armed Forces within this 8 years (since 1954). The round-up figure of people killed puts the credibility of the Nagas' claim at stake. A similar itemized list of atrocities was handed over to Neville Maxwell and other journalists in 1960 (Maxwell nd; for other reports see Frank Reynolds 1970:18-32; George Patterson 1962). Gavin Young of *The Observer* was one of the journalists who visited Nagaland in April-May 1961. Reporting his eyewitness account for *The Observer* Young wrote:

> The tenor of Naga civilian complaints of Indian injustice was invarying. Villagers jostled their way forward to describe personal sufferings in vivid details. The stories of burnt rice-stores and houses seemed endless. Individuals told how they had been beaten and tied up for hours without water; how they had been bound and hung head downwards from trees to be flogged; how sons, brothers and fathers had been bayoneted to death." (1961:29)

Michael Scott (1967?), an English Anglican Minister and an activist, was one of the few persons allowed into Nagaland as a member of the Peace Commission. Scott's eyewitness accounts are described in *The Search for Peace* (1967?). Of his experiences, Scott wrote:

> Every day we had people coming in from the villages to Kohima to tell us what had been happening to them. … Very often they would show scars where they had been beaten. The Indian Security Forces, they said, would arrive in a place and say a bridge had been blown up, or an ambush had taken place, and that they had reason to believe the operation had started from that village. They would say the village had fed or housed the Underground. When the people professed ignorance they would take a section of them, hang them up by their ankles from a tree and start beating them. …
>
> I visited villages which had been totally destroyed. I saw the ashes. Very often crops had been burnt. Most of these burnings had occurred in 1956-1958. The Aung [chief] of the Sema people … was at one of the villages where a demonstration was staged for me to show how the Security Forces would attack a village and assault people. Then hundreds of people were paraded in front of me so that I could see their scars and injuries. … Somehow or other the Indian Government has managed to keep this situation sealed off from the world. These horrendous things have been happening in the villages and the outside world has not been given an inkling about them – nor has the Indian public. (1967?:14-16)

A neutral party has not confirmed the actual numbers of casualties, and the Indian government has maintained that these numbers are exaggerated. But the difficulty in obtaining an objective report has also been made impossible by the Indian government blocking access to journalists and outsiders to the areas of the incidents. Pointing out these state-orchestrated blocks to independent inquiries, Young wrote:

> In December 1960 a group of foreign journalists were permitted to visit western Nagaland. … According to the special correspondent of *The Times*, the nationalist bombarded the journalists with written statements, allegations about atrocities and the like, conveyed to them, for the most part, clandestinely. 'The Press party was rarely out of the amiably curious observation of officials and in retrospect seems to have spent a disproportionate time bumping along motor vehicle and watching tribal dances. Correspondents were not permitted to visit the places where they might have been able to ascertain for themselves which of two contradictory reports was nearer the truth.'" (1961:16)

Given the violent political climate in the Naga areas then, as Maxwell said, "the onus of proof that the charges are *not* true now rests squarely on the Indian government" (Maxwell nd: 12). According to Michael Scott:

> … two of Gandhi's close associates, the warden of the Sevagram Ashram, Mr. Aryanayakam and his wife, Ashadevi, paid a visit to Nagaland of a few weeks and made a personal report to Jawarhalal Nehru which disturbed him; this was probably in part responsible for his anxiety to find some way of bringing the military operations against the Nagas to an end. It probably accounted for the markedly less confidence he later showed in the official reports he had been given both by the military and civil intelligence. (1967?:9).

The confrontations between the Naga armed forces and the Indian Army continued to intensify from July 1956 to 1964, and resumed again from 1968 to 1975 after the failure of the Cease-fire and Peace Talks, and then again from the mid-1980s to 1997 with high casualties on both sides, further aggravating the atrocities on the civilians.

Resumption of Militarization

After the cease-fire in 1964 and the failure of the political talks between India and the Nagas thereafter in the late sixties, the Indian Army resumed the repressive operations. Sensing the desperate situation of the Nagas engulfed by the atrocities of the Indian Army, Biseto Medom Keyho, the Home Minister of the Federal Government of Nagaland wrote at letter to Michael Scott on Sept 11, 1972, appealing for his help to inform the international body, particularly the United Nations:

> The situation in Nagaland is now so tensed and horrible to the people. During the cease-fire period the Nagas have faced the worst situations. The Government of India had applied all possible means to finish Nagas during the cease-fire periods, … they have broken the cease-fire and started this new methods. So unless timely intervention is given from your side, we have no doubt that India will not hesitate to crush Nagas.
>
> On the 15th August, i.e. their Independence Day Celebration, Mr. B.K. Nehru had declared that they will send their armed forces to completely annihilate

> the existence of Nagas, since then Hokishe Sema, GOC, 8th Motn. [Mountain] Division and B.K. Nehru had their secret meeting and passed that their first target of suppressing Nagas will be started from Angami and Chakesang [areas] and afterwards the rest. And since that day the Indian government is (sic) started sending their troops to fill up Angami and Chakesang Regions. Through their Radio broadcast they had their daily announcement about how villagers would face repressions if any clash took place in any village area while the Indian armed forces were in operation duties.
>
> The Indian authorities talk and threaten the villagers much about how they did in Bangladesh last year. …
>
> It is harvesting time, so Indian plan is just to bring famine to the people, because the villagers are very much scared of being preventing from going to the fields. …
>
> In case India want to crush Nagas after 25 years struggle and when the World Organizations fail to give their voices, it will not be Nagas alone to feel but the smaller Nations of freedom loving people have lost their voice before the world." (Biseto Medom Keyho, FGN – Khodao papers)

To cite a particular example of what Biseto wrote about, Seiyhama was one village which witnessed the wrath of the Indian Army. On July 10, 1974, three Naga undergrounds were carrying confidential letters to another camp in the night. Walking through the jungle under the cover of darkness, they were surprised to come upon Indian soldiers who were patrolling the jungles. In the spur of the moment the Nagas fired at the Indian soldiers followed by a heavy exchange of fire from both sides. This incident took place near Seiyhama village. Following this encounter, the Indian Army went into Seiyhama that very night and started torturing the people. The leaders of the village, including the Baptist pastor were taken to the army outpost and tortured. Kaka Iralu, who documented the incident described it as follows:

> All the villagers of Seiyhama, numbering some five hundred souls were next assembled in the village ground. Children and women were separated from the men folk at gun point and lined up on the slopes above the ground. When some wives and children desperately tried to cling to their husbands and fathers, rifle butts and boots were freely used to separate them. Then the men folk were kicked and pushed to the ground where they were ordered to lie down in rows. They were then forced to roll across the length of the football ground. Back and forth, again and again they were forced to roll on the ground. With the exception of the

> younger generation most Naga elders wear nothing besides their traditional kilts. Thorns and brambles lay in the way, but a slightly bent back to avoid these met with terrible blows on the back with thick bamboo poles as hundreds of soldiers with bamboo poles walked among the rows of rolling men striking at those who rolled too fast or trailed behind. Very soon, many were vomiting from the rolling. The kilts of many of the elderly fell off as they continued rolling exposing their nakedness to the women and children forced to stand and watch. (2003: 300)

Luingam Luithui and Nandita Haksar in *Nagaland File: A Question of Human Rights* (1984) have also documented other cases of military repression, including a report of the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights and a report of a fact-finding team to the various Naga villages in Manipur that suffered the wrath of the Indian security forces. The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) has complied and documented a number of cases of atrocities in their book, *The Naga Nation and its Struggle Against Genocide* (1986).

In addition to militarization, another technique by which the Indian Government has tried to contain the Naga conflict has been through extra-judicial laws that have further alienated the Nagas against India.

Laws and Regulations

One of the reasons that the Indian security forces are emboldened to do what they do to the Nagas is the support they get from certain laws and regulations that the Nagas feel are not only discriminatory but also give extraordinary power to the army which makes them feel they are above the law in Naga areas. Nagas feel that "the Acts and Regulations, which had been promulgated for Nagaland in the name of maintaining law and order nullify all the fundamental rights and special provisions given to the Nagas" (Iralu

2003:345). The first of such laws was the Assam Maintenance of Public Order Act, 1953, which initially applied to the Naga Hills District and later extended to the State of Nagaland in 1965. Section 2 reads as follows:

1. The State Government, if satisfied with respect to any particular person that with a view to preventing him from acting in any manner prejudicial to the public and the maintenance of public order it is necessary so to do may make an order –
   (a) directing that, except in so far as he may be permitted by the provisions of the order, or by such authority or persons as may be specified therein, he shall not be in any such area or place in Nagaland as may be specified in the order;
   (b) requiring him to reside or remain in such place or within such area in Nagaland as may be specified in the order, and if he is not already there to proceed to that place or area within such time as my be specified in the order;
   (c) requiring him to notify his movements or to report himself to both to notify his movements and report himself in such manner, at such times and to which authority or persons as may be specified in the order;
   (d) imposing upon him such restrictions as may be specified in the order in respect of his employment or business, in respect of his association or communication with other persons, and in respect of his activities in relation to the dissemination of news or propagation of opinion; …
5. If any person is in any area in contravention of an order made under the provisions of this section or fails to leave an area or place in accordance with the requirements of such an order, then, he may be removed from such area or place by any police officer or by any person acting on behalf of the Government.

Another such law is the Assam Disturb Areas Act, 1955, which gives the State Government the power to declare the whole or part of Nagaland as a disturbed area creating conditions for the police or the army to abuse their power. Sections of this law read as follows:

> **Power to declare areas to be disturbed areas – 3**. The state Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, declare that the whole or any part of the district of Nagaland as maybe specified in the notification as a disturbed area.
>
> **Power to fire upon persons contravening certain orders – 4**. Any magistrate or Police Officer not below the rank of Sub-Inspector or Havildar in case of the Armed Branch of the Police or any officer of the Assam Rifles not below the rank of Havildar, may, if in his opinion, it is necessary so to do for the maintenance of public order, after giving such warning, if any, as he may consider necessary, fire upon, or otherwise use force even to the causing of death, against any person who is acting in contravention of any law or order for the time being in force in a disturbed area, prohibiting the assembly of five or more persons or

> the carrying of weapons or things capable of being used as weapons or fire-arms, ammunition and explosive substances.
>
> **Power to destroy arms dump, fortified positions etc. – 5.** Any Magistrate or Police Officer not below the rank of Sub-Inspector or any officer of the Assam Rifles not below the rank of Jamadar may, if in his opinion, it is necessary to do so, destroy any arms dump, prepared or fortified positions or shelters from which armed attacks are made or attempted, structures used as training camps for armed volunteers or utilized as hideouts or shelters by armed gangs or absconders wanted for offences in connection with the disturbances.
>
> **Protection of persons acting under section 4 and 5 – 6.** No suit, prosecution or other legal proceeding shall be instituted except with the previous sanction of the State Government against any person in respect of anything done or purporting to be done in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 4 and 5.

But an Act most detested by the Nagas is the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958, further amended in 1972, that conferred special powers to the Armed Forces in the disturbed areas in the States of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. According to the Nagas, this Act gives unrestricted and unaccounted power to any commissioned officer, warrant officer or non-commissioned officer or any other person of equivalent rank in the armed forces to shoot, arrest or search anyone in the pretext of maintaining law and order in places that are declared disturbed areas in the above States. The sections that are contested by the people of the northeastern Indian States are as follows:

> **Power to declare areas to be disturbed: 3**. If, in relation to any State or Union Territory to which this Act extends, the Governor of that State or the Administrator of that Union Territory or the Central government, in either case, is of the opinion that the whole or any part of such a disturbed or dangerous condition that the use of armed forces in aid of civil power is necessary, the Governor of that State or the Administrator of that Union Territory or the Central Government, as the case may be, may, by notification in the Official Gazette, declare the whole or such part of such State or Union Territory to be a disturbed area.
>
> **Special Powers of the armed forces 4.** Any Commissioned Officer, Warrant Officer, or Non-Commissioned Officer or any other person of equivalent rank in the armed forces may, in a disturbed area:
>
> a. if he is of opinion that it is necessary so to do for the maintenance of public order, after giving such due warning as he may consider necessary, fire upon

> or otherwise use force, even to the causing of death, against any person who is acting in contravention of any law or order for the time being in force in the disturbed area prohibiting the assembly of five or more persons or the carrying or weapons or of things capable of being used as weapons or of fire-arms, ammunition or explosive substances;
> b. if he is of opinion that it is necessary so to do, destroy any arms dump, prepared or fortified position or shelter from which armed attacks are made or are likely to be made or are attempted to be made, or any structure used as a training camp for armed volunteers or utilized as a hide-out by armed gangs or absconders wanted for any offence;
> c. arrest any without warrant, any person who has committed a cognizable offence or against whom a reasonable suspicion exists that he has committed or is about to commit a cognizable offence and may use such force as may be necessary to effect the arrest;
> d. enter and search without warrant any premises to make any such arrest as aforesaid or to recover any person believed to be wrongfully restrained or confined or any property reasonably suspected to be stolen property or any arms, ammunition or explosive substances believied to be unlawfully kept in such premises, and may for that purpose use such force as may be necessary.
>
> **Arrested persons to be made over to the police 5.** Any person arrested and taken into custody under this Act shall be made over to the officer in charge of the nearest police station with the least possible delay, together with a report of the circumstances occasioning the arrest.
>
> **Protection to persons acting under Act 6**. No prosecution, suit or other legal proceeding shall be instituted, except with the previous sanction of the acting Central Government in respect of anything done or purported to be done in exercise of the powers conferred by this Act.

The problem with this Act is that the decision to declare an area as disturbed can be based purely on subjective grounds by the Army. People in the areas covered by this Armed Forces Special Powers Act believe that the Act gives to the Armed Forces a blanket license to kill. They also argue that this Act is undemocratic and unconstitutional because it violates the fundamental freedom of speech. Charles Chasie, a lawyer and prominent Naga journalist questions the undemocratic and extra-judicial nature of these laws:

> First, normal laws presume that a person is innocent until proven guilty. Under these laws, a person is guilty unless he could prove his own innocence by satisfying the enforcing person (singular) that he has no grounds for "suspicion." Second, normal laws assume equality before [the] law. Everyone is accountable. Under these laws, the Government and its agencies are not accountable unless they decide to be accountable and first give permission. There is no notion of

> equality before law here. … Third, the operational basis of these laws is neither just nor rational … It provides unlimited legal latitude to the enforcing agent. For instance, how does one define and codify the words 'suspicion', "good faith" etc., which are adequate ground to kill a person with full legal justification under these laws. These are 'feelings' we are talking about and if we start killing each other on the basis of our feelings, and legally justify our actions through law, the entire plant life would be decimated within no time. Fourth, in a democracy, the Judiciary is an important arm of Government, fully autonomous and independent of the Legislative and the Executive, providing legal redress, through courts of law, to anyone who is aggrieved. Under these laws, the Government … is the law-giver, the enforcer, as well as the decider as to who deserves legal redress. … Fifth, under these laws, there is absolutely no question of a Government 'of the people, by the people, for the people.' The people and the Government, under these laws, become antagonists, with the former helpless against the latter. (Chasie 2005:86-87)

In the late sixties, after the failure of the cease-fire and political talks, the Indian Army intensified their repressive methods in Naga areas under the protection of these laws. In the 1980s, Operation Bluebird, carried out by the Armed Forces at Oinam was a typical case where the Indian Army co-opted the civilian administration and engaged in a full-scale military operation under the protection of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. On July 9, 1987, following an attack on an outpost of the Assam Rifles, a para-military, at Oinam in Manipur by the armed Naga nationalists of the NSCN-IM, the Assam Rifles countered with the infamous Operation Bluebird on the Naga villages in Oinam and surrounding areas. The entire Oinam area became a concentration camp. A report by the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights and Human Rights report of the Operation Bluebird gives an account of the casualties:

i. The Assam Rifles have killed 27 innocent Naga public after subjecting them to inhuman torture of which 21 were shot dead after torture and the rest died due to forced starvation, denial of medical aids in the concentration camp, and shock of torture.
ii. Three women were raped, five women were sexually molested, two women were forced to get delivered child before the public view, pregnant women were forced to use as porter.

iii. 340 persons were beaten and tortured in third degree methods of various inhuman manners, 96 persons were arrested and detained at their camp for weeks in inhuman condition.
iv. 125 residential houses were burnt and 172 houses were dismantled, 10 churches and 6 schools were dismantled;
v. Millions of rupees worth of property were looted and annihilated. For instance they have looted property of 50,7900/- worth at Oinam, Ngamju, Khongdei Shimphung, Khongdei Khuman, Kodom Khullen and Sorbung villages. More than 50,000 men were forced to labour without wages, used for jungle cutting, camp construction, transporting goods etc. and million of rupees worth of crops were destroyed by un-tended cattles and Jawans. (NPMHR 2003; see also http://www.angelfire.com/nm/nagalim/oinam.htm)

Memorandums were sent to the Manipur government and the Union government of India by various organizations such as students, village elders, journalists and social activists, but the Government was slow to respond. Student leaders and civil society leaders who tried to intervene were arrested and tortured. Expressing his helplessness in protecting the people from the atrocities of the Assam Rifles, the Manipur Chief Minister wrote to the Union Home Minster:

> The Civil Law has, unfortunately, ceased to operate in Senapati District, Manipur, due to excesses committed by the Assam Rifles with complete disregard shown to the Civil Administration. The Assam Rifles are running the parallel administration in the area. The Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police were wrongfully confined, humiliated and prevented from discharging their official duties by the security forces. (NPMHR 2003:27)

Human rights organizations and civil society in Manipur filed petitions to the Gauhati High Court. In October 1987, the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) also filed a petition in the High Court. According to the NPMHR, witnesses were intimidated by the Assam Rifles from giving any statements and even got some of the villagers arrested by filing "false criminal cases," while some others were illegally arrested and given electric shocks (NPMHR 2003:33). Even when the witnesses came down to give their statements: "They walked into the gates of Sessions Court compound

at Uripok, Imphal only to find it full of Jawans (soldiers) of Assam Rifles standing with their self-loading rifles (SLRs) [and] the villagers would walk into the courtroom to find the officers of the 21 Assam Rifles sitting in the middle, in full uniform" (NPMHR 2003:33). Reporting on the incident, Amnesty International issued the following statement:

> In some countries, serious machinery for independent judicial investigation may be in place but its efforts to investigate human rights crimes may be sabotaged. A Court in INDIA has been investigating allegations of reprisal killings and torture of villagers by the Assam Rifles in Manipur State. It is reported that members of the Assam Rifles have reportedly tried to intimidate witnesses, even resorting again to torture, and also to intimidate one of the Lawyers by invading her lodgings and threatening to use force against her. The government of India had regrettably not responded to Amnesty International's request to observe the proceedings. (1990: Also in NPMHR 2003:33)

In April 1990, the case was transferred to Gauhati High Court. Today, twenty-two years after the incident, the case has been adjourned repeatedly and is still pending, and none of the offending soldiers of the Assam Rifles have been brought to justice. During my fieldwork, I asked one of the Naga lawyers about the case and her reply was: "The lawyers representing the Indian Government are always asking for an extension."

In another case, on Sunday, March 5, 1995, while a convoy carrying Indian soldiers of the Rashtriya Rifles was passing through Kohima, one of the tires on one of their vehicles burst. Mistaking it for gunfire, the Indian soldiers went berserk and started firing on civilians. It was a bright sunny day and many people were outside in the courtyard of their homes. The indiscriminate firing, which included the use of mortars and grenades, killed seven Naga civilians and injured many more. The next day I met one of the women injured in the hospital. "I have heard others say, but I never knew that a wound from a

gunshot could make one so thirsty," she told me. Fortunately, she recovered. One of the girls wounded on that day remains disabled to this day. However, no legal charges were brought against any of the soldiers or their commanding officers due to AFSPA.

Efforts by civil society organizations from the Northeast such as the one by the Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights in 1996 to get the AFSPA repealed through the Supreme Court of India has failed except for issuing a few 'Dos' and 'Don'ts' for the armed forces. According to a report in a recent monograph by Chasie and Hazarika (2009),[33] "the army wants the act to be made "more humane" but not scrapped, as civil society and as the Committee to Review the Armed Forces Special Powers Act had recommended" (2009:17-18). In 1997, following an appeal by International and Indian human rights groups to the Indian government for a judicial review of the AFSPA, a five-member Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court upheld the AFSPA as constitutionally valid (Chasie and Hazarika 2009:18). In 2004, following agitations against atrocities by the Assam Rifles (paramilitary) in Manipur, the Government of India appointed a committee headed by a former Supreme Court Judge B.P. Jeevan Reddy (hereafter, Reddy Committee) to review the AFSPA and see whether it should be replaced by a "more humane' legislation or be repealed. The Reddy Committee's suggested that the Act be repealed:

> The Act, for whatever reason, has become a symbol of oppression, an object of hate and an instrument of discrimination and highhandedness. It is highly desirable and advisable to repeal this Act altogether, without, of course, losing sight of the overwhelming desire of an overwhelming majority of the region that

[33] For more information on the Armed Forces Special Powers Act see Chasie and Hazarika (2009). This monograph analyzes how the Government of India has tackled nationalist movements, focusing on Nagaland, its impact on the people, and the subsequent fall-out with the Indian government.

> the Army should remain (though the Act should go). For that purpose, an appropriate legal mechanism has to be devised. (Chasie and Hazarika 2009:21)

However the Army continues to be opposed to the recommendations by the Reddy Committee to repeal the AFSPA insisting that the Army needs "adequate authority" to conduct its operations (Chasie and Hazarika 2009:20). The Reddy Committee's recommendations still need to get a Cabinet consensus, and the Army and the Ministry of Defense continue to strongly oppose it (Chasie and Hazarika 2009:25). According to Chasie and Hazarika:

> The Naga story is proof of the failure of AFSPA and the greater effectiveness of civil power, which includes formal and informal dialogues as well as a growing role for nongovernmental civil society groups. The act has pushed people away from government and the practice of democracy, and instead of reducing insurgency has helped to sustain it by violating people's human rights. It remains an anachronism. … (2009:27)

There has been a feeling among Nagas that India's security concerns continue to guide the policy level in Delhi which, according to Loed, a Naga social worker, projects Nagaland as a dangerous place in such a way that people today continue to think we are the most dangerous people around in the northeast of India. As a result, despite numerous protests, Delhi is unwilling to remove the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. I asked Loed to explain what he meant. He explained:

> The best way for me to illustrate it is, if I have two dogs and I want to kill one dog and all my neighbors know both my dogs are very good dogs and if they are going to complain I have just shot my dog, what I would do is I would chain the dog and put it in a cage and tell my neighbors that my dog is ferocious and dangerous. When you come near please let me know otherwise don't come here. So I put it in cage. The dog may be very good even if when neighbors come, even if it wags its tail, neighbors will be frightened. After one month if the owner just kills the dog and throws it away and if the neighbors say where is your dangerous dog? Well, it has become too dangerous, I finished it off. Then no one will complain. … The situation is something like that, saying Nagas are too dangerous, they are rebels they are insurgents, … don't go to Nagaland, don't go there, beware of Nagaland.

Meanwhile, protests by the people from the Northeasters States of India for the removal the Armed Forces Special Powers Act continued to be staged in the Northeast as well as in Delhi.

Naga Response to Militarization: A Deep Sense of Anti-India

More than just perpetuating domination, Indian militarization of Naga areas is the key to understanding the Nagas' deep rejection of India. Nagas feel that India's domination by militarization has antagonized and alienated them from India and has only reinforced their resolve to be separate from India. On a personal, emotional and experiential level, the repression by the Indian Army deepened the gulf that existed between the Nagas and India. Tamul, a senior officer in the Indian Administrative Service, thinks back on the early years when the Indian Army mounted pressure on the Naga armed struggle. As a young man he grew up witnessing the militarization of Nagaland. He described his sense as a Naga as a deep feeling of being something other than a member of Indian society:

> In our younger years, when we were old enough to understand our surroundings, I have seen villages burn, during the operations in the 1955 or 1956, when the heat was on, several times we have hidden in the jungle, several times we were nearly caught by the Indian army, hiding. … When you see devastation of that nature where the whole villages were burnt down, granaries burnt, and for Nagas at that stage our life, your granary was your wealth. Nagas didn't need anything much more than the granary. And to have everything that you called your own burnt down, you see, people don't understand these kinds of things, but when your roots are being uprooted, how do you feel about that? Anybody would feel a strong sense of feeling that this is absolutely unjust, injustice of the extreme order, no matter what the operation.

As Vinusa Tinyi says, experiences of these atrocities over the years, "accumulated into constructing a very tyrannical and cynical image of Indian identity among rural folks" (Tinyi 2008). Nagas feel that India's militarization policy, whatever the motives, have

played a key role in alienating the Nagas against India to the point of no return. In an interview, Vajo, a well-known Naga scholar, summarized this alienating experience of the Nagas under Indian militarization:

> … it was the mistake of the Indian Government to try to solve through militarization, not only because of human rights; it has touched every family, the grief and the pain that the Naga people suffered. No family [was] untouched. So family [houses] burnt down, granaries burnt down. I was told in Mokokchung area one village was burnt down 19 times. And I went to the village… I was surprised. I thought the record is in Angami but 19 times that is really, … I was really shocked…. It was in the 1950s the old people told me, and all this raping and killing of human, sodomizing our males, brothers and fathers, and all that. It will be very difficult to compare in India. It will be more than Jammu & Kashmir. Just because we did not have media coverage … otherwise the world will not remain silent. ... The Indian military was too strong for us.

Secondly, irrespective of their differences, Nagas became more united against India as the common enemy. As the NNC stated about Nagas' experience beginning from 1953, "if the Government had hoped to terrorize the Nagas into giving up their rights, it failed miserably. Faced with this common danger the different clans became more united" (NNC 1964:12). Or as Tinyi pointed out:

> They [Indian government] forgot that Nagas' love for freedom constitutes part of their lifestyle, a question that cannot be settled by the use of force at any cost. … The forceful occupation of the Indian armies backed by several draconian laws that led to a long history of untold Indo-Naga wars painted a black picture of the Indian image in the minds of the Nagas. It resulted in bringing the various Naga groups closer and the Naga movement for freedom received a great momentum. (2008 kuknalim.com)

Nehru's militaristic approach, instead of integrating the Nagas into mainstream India, made a strong negative impact on the Nagas and strengthened their resolve to fight India. More and more Nagas joined the armed struggle. As Vajo explained to me in an interview:

> Militarization had to do a lot. Had it not been so, the involvement of the mass may have been less, may not have been effective. … Only in 1956 Nagas went

> underground, there were a lot of tortures meted to the underground families and later it was spread to all over Naga areas and every Naga individual. ... Later on Nagas became more bitter against Indians and against the image of Indians. Few years back I went to Jotsoma and when I talked with the elders in the villages, they told me, there are some Naga elders, women, … We asked them, so what do you know of India? Then they replied, what we know of India is only the Indian Army. What else? The armies and armies alone we faced. They have been killing and raping and sodomizing. We don't like such security. … These are all engrained. Even the children will know what is Indian and Indian policy. This is a cycle going on – a vicious cycle. Once they have killed someone how will the family members keep quiet? … Maybe some will join undergrounds for revenge. …. We have heard so many stories of Naga concentration camps, how Naga women were made to give birth in front of the armies… These are open secrets in Nagaland sector, Manipur sector.

It was a no-win situation for both India and the Nagas. More and more Nagas joined the Undergrounds. Kaka Iralu described one such encounter where a son joined the Naga armed nationalists in order to take a revenge on the Indian Army for what they did to his father:

> Many years after this incident (Seiyhama), in 1998, I went to a Naga Army Camp located in the thick jungles. I was very surprised to see a very young soldier aged only fourteen. He was carrying an SLR rifle which was almost as tall as him. When I enquired about his identity, he told me he was Pastor Phimou's son from Seiyhama village. He also told me that his elder brother was in another battalion of the Naga Army. This is how the war in Nagaland continues. A father might forgive, but sons always take up the obligation of having to avenge a father, a clansman or a village. Besides these two, there are also many others from Seiyhama village who are still in the Naga Army. (Iralu 2003: 303)

There are some such as Ahu Sakhrie who feel that Nagas "have hated India so much, sometimes justifiably, but we have overstretched. … With so much hate in our mind, I don't think there can be any peace." Nonetheless, militarization has been counterproductive in the Nagas' case. For Charles Chasie (2005), a Naga elder and journalist, "the traditional wisdom of the mandarins in Delhi has always been to 'contain' and 'control' the problem caused by 'Naga rebels'. But containment and control are not solutions. And they can never be. Policies of containment also betray bankruptcy of ideas

and the lack of statesmanship" (2005:150-151). As Mulik said, "though there was nearly one security troop for every adult Naga male in the Naga Hills-Tuensang area, there never was a time when it could be claimed that the Naga guerrillas had been broken into submission" (Mulik 1972:313-314). Nossiter attributed the Indian Government's inability to solve the Naga problem to the 'soft state' nature of India. Explaining this character, Nossiter said, "Confronted with an opposition it despises, over which it maintains a superior force, the soft state turns brittle. Its yielding nature hardens, and it lacks the security to pursue steadfastly a flexible, temperate approach" (1970:155-156). In the long run, militarization not only drains the resources but also "threatens to inflame hill people elsewhere in the northeast and bring about the very object Delhi is fighting, the permanent loss of national territory" (Nossiter 1970:155-156). Time and again Nagas questioned the rationality and reasonableness of India's military approach. Today, Nagas continue to do so by ritualizing experiences such as the Matikhrü Massacre. Ritualizations of such negative experiences through collective memories continue to fan the fire of nationalism. Writing about a similar case of the Native Americans' experience with oppressions and their utilization of those memories, Ronald Trosper (1981), argued that Native Americans were diverse people but transformed themselves into an ethnic group by mobilizing, with regard to a charter, a shared history of broken treaties in three ways: first by 'primordializing' such events as characteristic symbolizing the cultural givens of a group, secondly, defining the boundaries of the group and, third, by providing a guide to action (Trosper 1981:147-148). As Dolly Kikon, writing about the cultural construction of Naga nationalism stated: "Naga national struggle utilizes both popular stories about origin and oppression along with modern legal expressions in the endeavour

for self-determination and in order to forge political narratives of struggle" (2008:97). Examples of such utilizations for political narratives can be seen in the observances of the Black Day and Naga Integration Day.

Memorializing Black Day, September 6

According to Smith (1986, 1996), a particular importance that memory plays in nationalism is memories of a golden age of a people recalling myths of ethnic election, and attachments to geographical spaces such as sacred sites and ancestral homelands that inspire nationalist aspirations. However, remembering such 'deep resources' (Smith 1996) are not the only way that memories fan nationalism. An aspect of remembering and memory that is prevalent in nationalist movements is represented in Maurice Halbwachs' (1951) concept of collective memory. Influenced by Durkheim's idea of "collective representations," Halbwachs' concept of "collective memory" explains that even though it is individuals who remember, it is within specific group contexts that individuals remember. Particular examples of this are historical memory which individuals remember through the help of common commemoration by the group members. Such collective memories, however, are shaped by contingencies of the present. According to Halbwachs, a *presentist* approach influences a group/community's view of past historical events. As Lewis Coser (1992) commented, Halbwachs stressed, "that our conceptions of the past are affected by the mental images we employ to solve present problems, so that collective memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present" (1992:372). In the context of nationalism, experiences of atrocities, violation of human rights, humiliations and bloodsheds become instant resources that bind people together

for a cause. Collective memories of those events not only provide continuity of a people's nationalist discourse but also are reinforced by such commemorations or festivities. In the Naga nationalism context, each commemoration of military atrocities such as the killing of the villagers of Matikhrü through commemorative functions such as the Naga Black Day, occupation and extra-judicial laws reinforce the historical memories of the massacre and fan the fire of nationalism. The Matikhrü Black Day observance is a typical commemoration and ritualization of what Maurice Halbwachs calls collective memories. It is also a creation. The *presentist* reproduction of today's Naga political context informs the memorialization of history through the Black Day for nationalist needs.

Initially it was only Matikhrü that observed September 6th as "as a day to recall sadness, a day to reckon the sacrifice of selflessness for one's nation and a day to preserve and cherish the noble sacrifice of our fathers who were beheaded." On 13th May, 1993, the Pochury Students' Union adopted under Article II (iii) of their Union's Constitution, that 6th September would be observed as 'Black Day' in all Pochury inhabited area every year. In 1994, the Pochury Students' Union took the initiative and constructed a 'Sacred Freedom Park' just outside the village. The rationale for the construction of the Sacred Freedom Park by the Pochury Students was:

> … not just for the beauty sake or to count and write how many have laid their precious lives for the sake of Naga Freedom Movement, but, this has been brought out to bring awareness to the general public and remind ourselves that many have shed enough blood in the past and hence, we should take more careful steps in every dealing of ours and look forward for peace and create a better place of living for humanity." (Matikhrü Baptist Church 2004:34-35)

The Sacred Freedom Park is located about a kilometer outside the village. A dirt road leads to it. At the entrance, a signboard above the gate reads "Sacred Freedom Park." A footpath divides the park into two sections. The lower portion has a gazebo and an open

space surrounding it for people to gather for prayer services or meetings. The upper section of the park has the monument erected in memory of the people who died as a result of the events on September 6, 1960. On the front side of the monument is an inscription believed to be the last words of Thah, the chief of Matikhrü who was killed that day. It reads: “It’s a man’s pride. No surrender, no compromise for our birthright. This sacrifice is to protect our freedom. I shall gladly lay for the future Naga generation.” The other side of the monument has the list of 46 people who died as a result of that day’s incidents.

Fig. 15. Citizens of Matikhrü placing flowers on Black Day to remember the dead as a result of Sept. 6, 1960 massacre (Photo by Abraham Lotha).

Each year, in the morning, on September 6, Matikhrü villagers pay a flower tribute to those who died as a result of the 1960 massacre. Since 1994, the flower tribute is held at

the Sacred Freedom Park. On September 6, 2006, women, men, children and guests made a single file and placed flowers at the monument. After the flower tribute, everyone gathered near the gazebo and observed a moment of silence and prayer led by the president of the Pochury Students' Union. At the function later during the day, the Matikhrü Youth performed a skit, "It's a Man's Pride," reenacting the events of September 6, 1960. Men, women, and children took part in the skit. As a part of the performance, men from the village dressed up as soldiers of the 16th Punjab Regiment descended upon the village. They separated the men from the women and children. In simulation, the men were 'forced' to perform frog drill and were beaten, kicked and butted with rifles. Their ribs, legs and arms were broken. By the end of it, they were a mess of 'bloodied' bodies. Women and children cried. Those who went to help their 'tortured' husbands were chased away. One by one the men were beheaded. Make believe thatched houses and granaries constructed for the reenactment were all burnt down. Two women mourned seeing the mutilated bodies of their husbands and buried them in shallow graves. Then they too joined the other women and children in the jungle. By the end of the skit, almost everyone in the audience fought back tears. It was a very emotional moment. After the skit, the women of Lephori, a neighboring village sang:

> *Oh, my soul! Echoes of death came into my ear….*
> *I have heard there is abode for the dead people,*
> *I will join them to dwell there with heavy heart. …*
> *Is my tribe Pochury?*
> *Yes, indeed, my tribe is sorrowful among the tribes.*
> *Oh, martyrs, you gave your life for the wages of the Nagas.*
> *You sacrificed your life; the history goes about even to abroad,*
> *And we are going to live now in 'Peace.'*

Efforts have been made to nationalize the Black Day as a sacrifice made by the people of Matikhrü for the cause of Naga nationalism. In his speech marking the 46th anniversary of

the Black Day, Thoshusie Katiry, the President of Pochury Students Union addressed the gathering, and the Naga Students' Federation (NSF) in particular:

> Not only in Pochury [area], not only in Matikhrü but since Naga area has been tortured by the Indian army, and we have a lot of grievances, so I request our NSF President to take up this issue and observe this as a Naga Black Day as a whole. I think this will be much better for our people and Nagaland, to nationalize for the integrity of Nagaland. So I request our President to kindly take up this Pochury Black Day as a Naga Black Day to observe.

The Naga Students' Federation didn't miss a beat. In his speech, Pushika Awomi, the President of the NSF told the gathering:

> For 46 years the story has been told in this village, all the men killed, women sent to the forest, two years sojourn in the forest. We have come here today to let this story be made known to all Nagas. Your organizing this is a landmark in the history of Naga integration. NSF started in 1947 to protect and preserve the rights of the Naga people and this is one event that we would like posterity to continue to remember us in the annals of Naga history. How the Indian army tortured the Naga people, if the freedom fighters are suppressed all will be finished, they thought, and tortured. They failed. They cannot succeed. They are still persisting to crush the spirit of Nagas but I want to tell them that the more they do this inhuman act, … the more they will enable the spirit of the Nagas, the patriots, [and] thousands of patriots will be born. And this is what we wanted to tell the world that Nagas have not stopped or given up the fight. Our coming here today on the day the Pochury people observe Black Day is to show you that all Naga people are in solidarity with you. Young leaders have come here today to be with you. Your hearts should not be small [don't be disheartened]. Naga people, thousands have shed their blood, and lives have been lost. Everyday we are shedding our tears because of the inhuman tortures and inhuman treatment to the Naga people. Indians are using every means to crush the spirit of the Nagas but we wanted to tell them that they cannot succeed. Nagas are not asking anything from them. We are only reminding them that we belong to ethnic people and we have a right to live as people and we the Nagas have every right to live as one nation. If our forefathers were beaten up, their spirit has not been killed, knowledgeable people all have not been done away with. … We will continue to fight till we achieve our goal. ... It is also important to revive how Nagas have been tortured, how the Indians still want this kind of inhuman acts to be concealed. They are still struggling to stop the Naga people from exposing this kind of inhuman act to the world…. On the occasion of our coming here today, Naga people, hundreds of selected leaders have gathered here. I believe these will go and enlighten each other [about] how the Naga people have sacrificed for the Naga people, and we want to assure and remind the Matikhrü people that this is the place that will continue to draw the spirit of nationalism and we will continue

> to keep this up. And the young people will always continue to keep Matikhru as a source of inspiration. (translated from Nagamese)

Naga Unification Day, August 27

Another site of ritualizing and commemoration through collective memory is the observance of Naga Unification Day on August 27th. On this day in 1948, there were protests at Mao Gate against taxation upon the Nagas in Manipur. The Manipur police and Assam Rifles, a paramilitary force, tried to arrest the Naga leaders of the protest but the villagers and supporters formed a human chain around them and blocked the leaders from being arrested. In the ensuing scuffle between the Nagas and the paramilitary forces, six Nagas were shot dead including two who succumbed to injuries later. In the present context of factionalism and tribalism in the Naga society, and the dire need for unity to pursue the ultimate Naga nationalist aspirations, the United Naga Council (UNC) in Manipur decided in 2006 to observe the day as Naga Unification Day. Recalling the common stand taken by the Nagas, and lives that were sacrificed on August 27, 1948, for the political cause of the Nagas was a way for the United Naga Council and Memei Hoho to memorialize and perpetuate Naga unity and its nationalist agenda. On August 27, 2006, the Naga Unification Day was held at Mao Gate. The celebration was an elaborate affair that included escorting the Chief Guest, Bendangmayang, President of Naga Hoho, in a cultural dance procession from the Police Check Gate in the town to the site of the function. Welcoming the people at the gathering, the President of Memei Hoho explained the purpose of the Unification Day:

> There will surely be some general curiosity as to how what was observed as Naga Martyrs' Day till last year has now been changed to Naga Unification Day this year. And I am sure that this [will be cleared after the speech of UNC president]. While the event of August 27, 1948, epitomizes the aspirations of the Naga

> people to live together has been perpetuated in memory by the Mao Students' Union by observing the Martyrs' Day in the past years. The observation of the same last year was taken up by the United Naga Council with the Memei Hoho as the local organizing committee considering that it is a landmark in the history of political movement of the Nagas in Manipur in particular and all Nagas in general. As we continue with our struggle to live together, this year we are observing it as a Naga Unification Day under the banner of the United Naga Council. We had a mind to enhance the emotional experience of that day by having the program at the exact spot on which the incidents of the historic day took place. … However, due to constraints of space, we have chosen to observe the program here as in the previous years. We have plans to preserve the fire of the true happening for posterity. This particular site is where the Naga flag was first hoisted in what is understood as Manipur state and therefore, it is still more historical looking at the present Nagaland Manipur boundary of the arbitrary line of divide, we feel that the observation of the Naga Unification Day adds a lot of experience of the tangible and palatable oneness of the Naga people.

Matibo was one of the persons who was present at the protests that day on August 27, 1947. He suffered bullet injuries as a result of the firing by the paramilitary forces that day. Reliving his experience of that day from a *presentist* perspective, he narrated his story:

> It was in the year 1948, 27th of August that the Nagas of this area gathered together to voice against the exploits of the dominant Meitei communities and also to raise the political voice in a non- campaign activity. The Meitei Maharaja sent the Army, the Assam Rifles and also the Manipuri Police under the aegis of the British, then Indian government to arrest the leaders of the campaign. And the Nagas, the youth and also the volunteers of that day gathered together to oppose whatever movement was being made by the Government to arrest and suppress the will and voice of the Nagas. And so the volunteers came to obstruct the Army and also the police from their leaders being arrested. The magistrate on that day ordered the youth and volunteers to disperse. Three blank fires were shot and three minutes were given before indiscriminate firing began. All the volunteers refused to disperse, they came to protect the leaders and also to voice for the unification of the Nagas. Four people died on the spot, two others succumbed to the injuries later on. Many, many were injured with the bullets. And I, Mr. Matibo, am a surviving man who suffered three bullet injuries of that day.

Matibo then pulled up his trousers and showed the scar from the bullet injuries to the gathering. He then continued to exhort the Nagas present for the gathering to learn to live long. "It is for the posterity of the Nagas that we have to live to show, to prove to the rest

of the world that Nagas are one. And so, those of us who are fighting for the Nagas, let us not be self-centered or selfish but together we will live to rule and also to bring peace and prosperity to our land," he added.

Figs. 16 & 17. Mathibo showing the scar (circled in red) on his right leg from bullet injuries he sustained on Aug. 27, 1948 (Photos by Abraham Lotha).

Obow Ashiho was the brother of Asosu Hepuni, one of the persons shot on that eventful day. Narrating his brother's life history, Ashikho told the gathering how the event unfolded on August 27, 1948:

> I myself am not a volunteer but at that point of time I was reading in Cl. IV.but I was, myself, present on that particular day. Mr. A. Hepuni, my brother, who was shot dead was born in the later part of 1919. … It was on that 27th August, 1948, it was in the morning that I visited his home. I came to his porch and I saw him come out with a plate from his kitchen. He was having lunch. He invited me to partake of the lunch but because I had already taken food, he gave me a piece of meat which I took with pleasure. And after his lunch he had to go away to his work near Khuzama. As a contractor he was purchasing vegetables, the produce of the day.

> By afternoon when people heard of the arrest plan of Mr. Athikho Daikho, one Mr. Kaisu Loli, was also a leader of that day, he was a volunteer, and he came with his jeep and he called Mr. Hepuni and his friends to come forward so that they will obstruct the arrest plan of the government. Mr. Asusu Hepuni also came and then all of them formed a human chain and they tried to obstruct the army from arresting Athikho Daikho and the other leaders. We heard gunshots. Everyone ran helter-skelter. And by evening we heard that Mr. Hepuni passed away from the cruel bullets of the army. His body was taken away by the army. His body was thrown into the trucks and then it was taken towards Imphal. We heard that brothers from Nagaland side also followed the convoy up to Kangkokpi and then they had to come back. And it was only on the third day that his dead body was brought to Punanamai, and it was on the fourth day that his body was buried.

Recalling the events of August 27, 1948, and the death of his brother in the light of contemporary arbitrary boundaries dividing the Nagas into different political units – Indian and Burma, and four states within India – and factionalism that is destroying Naga unity and derailing the nationalist objective, Ashiho continued:

> In the beginning grief struck all of us but it was only later on that we realized that his death was meant only for the good of the Naga cause, and that he stood forward against the occupation forces. Today we are proud of him, and not only him but all those others who had laid down their lives for the unity and the better[ment] of the country. Nagas must be united. We must not fight amongst ourselves because we do that only to the advantage of the Indians. And, therefore, today, I call upon all Nagas to unitedly come forward to struggle for the cause of the Nagas. Only then will we see the goal of our ancestors come to fruition.

It is often the case that student organizations take the initiative to collectively remember events in Naga society and presentize such events through ritualizations and subsequently nationalize such events for the cause of Naga nationalism. The Mao Students' Union, which had been instrumental in observing August 27 as Martyrs' Day witnessed their agenda being nationalized with the change of Martyrs' Day to Naga Unification Day endorsed by their elders, the United Naga Council. Speaking in terms of the current

political movement of the Nagas, the President of Mao Students' Union addressed the gathering:

> Today we salute and remember our leaders who have given their lives for the cause of Naga unification. Naga unification had already originated when the British unit literally divided Naga Hills into Manipur, Assam and Burma with the vile motive of dividing them so they may not be able to revolt against the British. This was done at the time when the Nagas were politically weak and disunited to resist their wills and powers. Indeed, Naga unification movement is not a recent construct politics but has a long historical struggle. For the Nagas, unification and peace process is indispensable political agenda. Indian recognition [of the] uniqueness of Naga history and political situation is [an] important political step. It is understandable that uniqueness and unification is not to be [an] anomaly but share the same political agenda.

Continual Contestation

In some ways, the Indo-Naga relationship is a continuation of a colonial domination that started from the days of the British Raj that has become cancerous in post-independence India. Marcus Franke (2006) argues that the Naga conflict today is a continuation of the imperial conquest begun by the British particularly with the problem of subjugating frontier areas that were not fully integrated into the colonial empire. Franke explained this as follows:

> When European states began to erect world-wide empires, many of these former regional empires and states turned into peripheral colonies from the perspective of the European metropolises. The frontier areas of these peripheries were in many cases pacified, but not really integrated into the administration of the colonies, and when these colonies themselves returned from periphery to centre by regaining their independence, they in turn endeavoured to incorporate the former frontiers that represent the peripheries of today. In this way, what was once the colonized periphery has transformed into a metropolis and now exerts imperial policy on the former frontier, its contemporary periphery. (2006:69)

The Nagas' argument, however, is that their relationship with India was center-center in nature and not center-periphery because, though the Naga Hills may have been a periphery and the frontiers of the British India, they are not the frontiers of the Indian

state because Nagas were not part of India at any point in their history. This position put them at odds with the Indian state right from the beginning of post-independence nation building.

Separationist tendencies are not a new phenomenon in India. Sub-national and extremist groups in the country have existed in India from the moment of its birth; the protests by the Bengalis and South Indians in the 1950s are cases in point. This anxiety for national unity was clearly evident at the time of the reorganization of the states. Commenting on the reactions and dissent of certain linguistic groups to the Report of the States Reorganization Commission, Satish Arora (1956) pointed out that sub-nationalisms of the Indian peoples have proved to be more powerful than most observers had expected (1956:30). The riot in Bombay to fight for the formation of Maharastra state is one such example. In response to the threat of sub-nationalists, a communiqué by the Indian Government read: "The aim and motive behind the reorganization is the formation of units which may lead to greater administrative convenience, facilitating implementation of the national development plans and promoting the well-being of the people of the country as a whole" (Arora 1956:29). Reorganizing the states according to linguistic groups was a strategy used by India for nation-building and containment of ethnic conflicts. As Sardar K. M. Panikkar, a member of the States Reorganization Commission defended the "readjustment of boundaries would not solve any problems unless the whole problem of unity of India was considered from the point of view of Indian nationalism. There was no such thing as Assamese, Bengali or Kerala culture; there was only one culture – Indian culture – which emanated from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata"

(Arora 1956:30). Based on such a rationale, Indian administrative policies, in some ways, had drastic effects in alienating the Nagas.

According to Maya Chadda, India's response to the Indo-Naga conflict is important from the point of managing ethnic identities in order to "balance between domestic and international peace, and for future democratic development" (2002:44). Chadda claimed that the Indian response to the Naga conflict and other ethnic conflicts was to adopt a policy of "integration through internal reorganization" (2002). Thus, the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution created communities with wide-ranging powers over local economy, culture, religion, and customs. From an Indian defense perspective, the state of Nagaland was created in response to the twin problems of governance and national security. Dilip Mukerjee argued that in the early 1960s, the Indian Government responded to the Naga conflict by "efforts on the political plane in Nagaland to isolate the rebel extremists who have turned to China, and plans for giving administrative autonomy to the Assam hills to head off separatism" (Mukerjee 1968). He argued "the best way of containing separatism – at the periphery, at any rate – is to arrive at an accommodation with it by conceding the maximum possible autonomy. This is what has been done in Nagaland…. With a hint that the degree of autonomy enjoyed by Nagaland under the existing Indian Constitution could be enlarged as a *quid pro quo* for dropping the demand for independence" (Mukerjee 1968:669). The Naga undergrounds, armed nationalists, however, did not see Nagaland as what they had fought for. Instead, the Indian state of Nagaland was seen as a betrayal to the Naga cause and so the armed struggle continued.

If there was a gulf between the Nagas and India prior to 1947 because they did not know each other, in the post Indian Independence period, the emotional gulf between them widened and deepened further because of the Indian Army's repression against the Naga people. In the initial stages of the Naga political movement, Nehru and other Indian leaders thought that the NNC leaders had no popular support, and they thought by striking 'hard and swift' the NNC leaders would lose their support base. The Indian administrators also read the negotiations as weakness on the part of the NNC leaders. So they seized the opportunity to crush the Naga leaders. But in reality, the Indian Army struck more on the ordinary people. The military repression made a direct negative impact in the intimate life of every Naga villager and subsequently drew the Naga masses into the nationalist movement and intensified it. Whether Nehru was aware the effect this instruction had on the Naga people or not, on the grounds in the Naga Hills, as Marcus Franke says, the "reality had been shaped in the main by India's major tool for nation-building on the periphery – the Indian Army – which fundamentally resembled its imperial predecessor" (2006:80). The extent of repression by a dominant group may reduce a group's potential for political mobilization, but it also intensifies the group's identity (Gurr 1993:129). As Maiz argued:

> … given a certain level of repression, the movement will increase its degree of organization, possibly to the point of isolating itself as a clandestine movement. This enables it to resist the passage of time, leading to fundamentalist positions that generate very resistant networks. These reinforce the collective identity and foster a willingness to assume risks, justifying the patriot's personal sacrifice of life or liberty through mechanisms such as promotion of the cult of heroes and leaders chosen to speak for the whole people. (Maiz 2003:205; see also Smith 1986 and Guibernau 1996)

Maiz's argument seems to be a classic template as it has been illustrated by the Nagas' case. The repressive militarization and extra-judicial laws by the Indian government have

not only widened the gulf but have made the political body cancerous. As the wounds fester, the pain and agony of the people that feed Naga nationalist spirit continue to be evoked through such mediums as folk songs as the one sung by the Mao women at the Naga Unification Day:

> *In order that Nagas should not be ruled by others,*
> *The elders looked for solution and even shed their blood.*
> *Fearing no deaths, they gave their lives for the Nagas*
> *Not merely by words, but by deeds and actions and we'll go.*
> *That way you are a Naga; that way I am a Naga.*
> *We will go neither with your will nor my will*
> *But we will move forward seeking God's help.*
> *Come let us walk in the path shown by our elders*
> *Come, with unity let us walk together as one,*
> *Come, let us not lead; let us go together with our strong closed fists.*
> (A Call for Unity: Mao Naga Women Welfare Association August 27 2006)

CHAPTER VI

RELIGION AND NAGA NATIONALISM

Religion and nationalism are, in some ways, like conjoined twins. They both construct an identity for their members, share common sets of collective symbols and ritual objects such as cross (a symbol for suffering), sacred sites, collective rituals (Smith 1986), create a horizontal solidarity, comradeship and imagine a communion with fellow-members even those they will never meet (Anderson 1983), and evoke both strong passions and commitment from the members. And like conjoined twins, the separation of religion and nationalism can be simple or complex depending on the degree of their internal connection. Due to the symbiotic relationship between religion and nationalism, religious nationalism is a familiar phenomenon. As a collective representation, "religious nationalism simply makes religion the basis for the nation's collective identity and the source of its ultimate values and purpose on this earth" (Friedland 2001:139). In religious nationalism, religion is politicized (Fox 2004). As Rieffer said, religious nationalism believes that people "with a common heritage should be identified with and have control over their own political unit" (2003:255). Rieffer pointed out situations where religious nationalism might occur. The first instance is "when the population of a territory is religiously homogenous" (Rieffer 2003:225; also Connor 1994; Oommen 1997). Examples of this are Poland, Ireland, and Nepal (as the last Hindu kingdom). Religious nationalism can also occur when the territory inhabited by a population is given a divine sanction as a sacred site, as in Ayodhya by Hindus in India, Black Hills for Lakota, Bear Butte for Cheyenne and Sacred Mountains for Navajo, or those particularly associated

with the population's ancestral land, as in Jerusalem. Religious nationalism can also be a resistance strategy when a people's identity is threatened by another dominant religion such as in Serbia and Kosovo. Or, religious nationalism can also arise as a form of liberation movement from the oppression of rulers who are ethnically and religiously different from the population (Rieffer 2003: 226-227). Irish nationalism was largely motivated by religious oppression and discrimination by the British (O'Brien 1994). Religious nationalism aspires for political self-determination according to religious beliefs/principles resulting in states where religious beliefs provide the guiding principles for the legal and political institutions of a state.

In this chapter, I will examine the role of religion in Naga nationalism. First, I will argue that the Naga traditional belief system was posited as different and incompatible with Hinduism or Islam, the religions of India. Secondly, Christianity, particularly Baptist Protestantism, has not only played a complementary role but also partially provides the *raison d'être* for Naga nationalism. Christianity started out as an external factor but eventually became an internal factor when Nagas internalized the Christian faith and championed it as a Naga cultural marker different from what the nationalists perceive as Hindu India. Thirdly, Naga nationalism has overtones of religious nationalism in the sense that religious beliefs have influenced Naga nationalists, particularly the Undergrounds, who believe that Nagas are chosen by God to be a nation (even though the appointed time has not yet come) with a mission to evangelize the non-Christians in India and neighboring countries. This salient feature of Naga nationalism is encapsulated in the motto, 'Nagaland for Christ.' For Naga nationalist leaders such as Isak Swu, Muivah and

Adino, religious nationalism is not an oxymoron (Lawrence 1998 in Friedland 2001:138). In order to understand the significance of religion in Naga nationalism, I begin with a brief discussion of traditional Naga religion as best we understand it before the arrival of Christianity and its continuing practice by non-Christian Nagas to the present day.

Naga Traditional Religion

Prior to becoming Christians, Nagas practiced[34] a form of religious belief that may be referred to as Naga traditional religion (though, ironically Nagas have now internalized Christianity and made it into Naga tradition) which permeated every aspect of Naga life (Epao ud; Thong 1997). While there were minor differences in names, attributes and rituals from one village to another and from one group to another, the essential features of this belief were the same. When I was growing up I observed my paternal grandfather, who became a Christian only in 1984, say prayers in the fields, garden, and at home. My next-door neighbor was a seer and a medicine man from whom I learned much about traditional Naga beliefs and practices. There was also an elderly man in the village whom I called 'grandfather' who on many occasions taught me about these religious practices. This happens in many situations where oral traditions are handed down. Later on, while studying for the priesthood, I took a keen interest in deepening my knowledge of Naga traditional religious beliefs, particularly Lotha Naga beliefs.[35] As a result, I spent many hours with non-Christian Nagas who are practitioners of the indigenous religion. In my priestly ministry, the Catholic Church's interest in inculturation also motivated me to do further research in non-Christian Naga beliefs. These experiences helped me understand

[34] Many non-Christian Nagas continued to adhere to the traditional religious beliefs even to this day.
[35] The thesis for my Bachelor degree in Theology was, 'Christology in the Naga Context.'

that traditional Nagas believe in a supreme and benevolent Creator God, though much of the religious practices are devoted to the interactions with local gods and spirits. For example, the Lotha cosmology is made up of a supreme God, the spirits, mankind and nature or the rest of creation. According to the Lotha traditional religion, the supreme God is also known as the Creator God, a benevolent God who lives in the sky but continues to be involved with humans by his blessings. As a kid it was normal thing to witness the elders in the village – Christian and non-Christian – pray to the Creator God: "*Oh, Mansuria vanthung potsow, oh, Thungpochera vanathung potsow*" (the God when we were living in Mansuria and Thungpochera) acknowledging his presence and blessings at the various places of habitation in the course of their migration. This Creator God, addressed as *Apo Potsow* (Father God) or *Amotsü Potsow* (Grandfather God) by the people, was believed to occasionally come down to visit the people and when he did he came to the priest or a shaman's (could be a man or a woman) house and brought with him various items that symbolized blessings or happenings in the future. For example, sheaves of rice plant meant a good harvest, and red yarn meant bloodshed (see also Murry 1995:57-67). Villagers observed a day of rest at such visits by God. As a benevolent God, people pray to him for all blessings, especially at important moments in the agricultural year – cutting the forest, sowing, flowering period of the rice plants, and harvest – and stages in people's lives such as naming ceremony, marriage, and feasts of merit. He is not known to be punitive.

The domains of the spirits and created beings overlap and are believed to be within this world. Some spirits are believed to be malevolent and more powerful than humans. These

malevolent spirits can be free-roaming evil spirits or the guardian spirits of a specific object or places such as rivers (*jüpvüo* the guardian spirit of the river), mountains, and particular locales. As these spirits were believed to be capable of causing harm to humans, it is important to appease them with prayers and offerings. The third category, human beings and animals, are also believed to have spirits. Besides the soul (*omon)*, human beings are believed to have *sükyingo*, a benevolent spirit which at times can be seen by others. In some cases, some people are believed to possess protector spirits (*sonyo*) in the form of a tiger or a snake. Animal spirits are called *ngazo*, who are supposed to be less intelligent than *sükyingo*. Stories of sightings of *sükyingo* and *ngazo* abound in Lotha culture. In order to live a harmonious life, it is important to maintain a balanced relationship with the spirits. Thus, spirits are not only appeased but also fought against when they tried to disrupt the domain of humans. The worlds of gods, spirits, humans and nature overlap, but it was important to recognize one's place and maintain the balance.

Nagas believe in life after death; however, the primary value of Naga traditional religion is to have a harmonious life on this earth, and not to attain salvation after death as in Christianity or a rebirth in another form as a result of one's karma as in Hinduism. The Lotha Naga concepts of 'a blessed long life' (*harishi)* and 'a bountiful harvest' (*ronsü*) define the content of the harmonious life. The pervasiveness of traditional religion in Naga society in attaining a harmonious life can be seen in the daily lives of the people. A prayer of blessing for a newly married couple illustrates this:

> *Father God,*
> *Let there be no rough words in their lives;*

May they be blessed with sons and daughters who will be
Like good seeds that sprout and grow in virgin fertile soils,
Like trees in the old growth forests,
Shining like the moon and stars on a clear night,
Like a beautiful sunrise,
Brightening every mountain and plain,
Admired by people of every race and places.
Let there be no scandals in their lives,
May their aims and aspirations be fulfilled in abundance
As when a hunter gets as mithun (bison) or yak.
Whatever pieces of meat they offered to the forefathers,
May blessings like water flow upon them. (self translation)

Guided by the ethos of traditional religion, rituals such as feasts of merit offered individuals platforms to achieve status in the society. The feast of merit consists of a series of feasts, each more costly than the preceding one, and each higher in status and prestige for a man and his family depending upon the number of feasts they give to the village people. The number of feasts and the method of celebrating them vary from tribe to tribe, and in some cases, the number of feasts even varied from one village to another within a group. It is not obligatory for every married man to perform these ceremonies, but often, they are performed by anyone who could afford them. In most cases, even the poorest man in the society performs at least one feast sponsored by his relatives or clan members. In addition to reciprocity that creates social ties through obligation, such practices are mechanisms for maintaining equality within the society (by giving equal opportunity for every man to host the feast, and by using the surplus wealth to perform the feast and becoming like the rest), but they also provide opportunities for individuals and families to cultivate universal values of sharing and hospitality that help build social solidarities.

While the values of equality, sharing, friendship and hospitality have a universalizing dimension there are certain practices in Naga culture that has localizing tendencies. One practice in particular, headhunting, illustrates the atomistic element of traditional religion. Headhunting was widely practiced by all the Naga tribes. It provided the basis for many social and religious ceremonies. Nagas believed that humans and animals possess *ozén* (an innate power) while plants have an *ozèn* (an essence)[36]. For the Nagas, the primary motive for headhunting was not so much to increase fertility as much as for prosperity, power and prestige that an enemy's head was believed to bring to the individual and the whole village. Another reason for headhunting was connected with the status and prestige accorded to successful warriors. Successful headhunters gained prestige, status and influence within the tribe; they were admired and respected by the villagers and tribesmen, and had a better chance to win favor and beautiful girls for marriage (Shimray 1985:73; Hutton 1921:165). Rosaldo (1980) proposed a similar reason for the practice of headhunting among the Ilongots in the Philippines, a society similar to the Nagas. The Ilongot youth, he said, were driven by envy of their peers and elders, those men who were no longer novices because they had taken a head and thus won the coveted right to wear finely curved red hornbill earrings dangling from their upper lobes. Rosaldo explained that Ilongot headhunting was not for one man to take more heads than others, but for all men who were peers to take at least one head and thereby lose once and for all their status as novices and gain equal status with the adult men and adorn themselves with red hornbill earrings, and then gain the admiration of girls for marriage (Rosaldo1980:140). In Naga society, such a practice to gain prestige, status and recognition were at the expense of killing even innocent people from other villages or

[36] The meaning depends on the inflection in the pronunciation.

tribes. Rituals and divinations were part and parcel of Naga warfare. Before going for any war or group raids, elaborate rituals were performed either at the priest's house or at the *Morung* (bachelors' dormitory) in order to ensure success in war or raid. Post war rituals were even more elaborate. Headhunting united Nagas in a common ritual value but disunited social groups by fragmenting intra group relations while ironically binding them together in hostility and violence.

Perhaps the most enduring symbol of how Naga traditional religion is anchored to the local level is the village tree, also known as the head tree (*menkitong* in Lotha), found in Naga villages particularly among the Lothas and Rengmas. Among the Lothas, for example, when a new village was established, a branch of a fichus tree (usually brought from the village tree in the mother village) was planted at the new site. The fichus tree symbolized the village; as the tree grew, the village also grew. Fertility stones depicting the human male and female sexual organs were placed at the foot of the tree. Rituals were performed at the site of the tree at such times as on the eve of going to war, and heads of enemies brought by the warriors were nailed to the village tree after elaborate rituals. Children were not allowed to climb the village tree, and cutting any of its branches was forbidden, as the people believed that it would invite thunder and storm to the village and death to the individual who cut the branch. It was also believed that if the village tree died, there would be no old men and women in the village or if a branch of the tree broke, it was believed that there would be deaths in the village and on such occasions the village observed a holy day. The observance of this tradition goes back to the legend associated with the 'Naga wild pear tree' at Shajouba, an important site of dispersal for Naga

communities. According to tradition, when a branch from the wild pear tree fell, all the Nagas that migrated from there observed a holy day (see also Thohe Pou). Thus, the well being of the village tree symbolized the harmonious life and prosperity of the people.

Based on a belief system such as the above, one wonders if Naga traditional religion could play any role in nationalism. For Pelo Lorin and Emil Spees, nationalism is "an ideological aspect of Naga life in which animism plays its part in the various Naga traditional communities" (1990:359). Lorin and Spees (1990) further claimed that "Christianity would not have had an instant impact on the Nagas had there been no nationalistic elements in their traditional religion of animism" (1990: 369). However, Lorin and Spees did not explain this clearly. The brief discussion above shows that the Naga belief system had qualities shared among all Nagas such as equality, harmony and balance; traditional Naga religion was oriented towards a harmonious life, a primary Naga value. As Jacobs argued, feasting and fertility maximization are two principles that constitute the basis for Naga unity (1990:80). Nagas' belief in fertility, Jacobs stated, "is a central element in the cosmology which unites the diverse Naga communities" (1990:117). Chasie also gave examples of five values to which, he says, Nagas "owe our very souls" (2005:121). The words, *Kenyü* (taboo)*, mhosho* (integrity, honor)*, menga* (shame)*, terhomia* (supernatural)*, peyu* (wisdom) are in Angami, but they are values which shape the psyche of all the Nagas (Chasie 2005:122-123). On the other hand, there is a general tendency to reinforce stability in the society (Durkheim 1912) such as family, clan, and tribal solidarity. Religious rituals were focused on local gods and spirits in order to strengthen the bonds at the local level. In so far as it reinforced local identities such as

clan, village or tribe, Naga traditional religion also had obstacles that worked against unifying all the Nagas for nationalism. Nevertheless, Naga traditional religion was still used by the Naga nationalists even in the memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1929 by the Naga Club members as a diacritical marker that differentiated the Nagas from the Hindus or Muslims in the argument for Naga nationalism. As Nula explained to me in an interview, "Nagas had their own cosmology; they had their own concept of life after death and they had a sense of creation but attributing to a different God which was no in any way akin to the Christian or Hindu or Muslim god. Therein lie the biggest differences."

Nagas' attitudes towards Naga belief system began to change with the introduction of Christianity to the Naga society. Unlike other cases where nationalists are neotraditionalists for the revival of a group's culture including traditional religion, such as German nationalism in the nineteenth century, nativistic movements (Linton 1943), Native Americans revitalization movements (Wallace 1956; McLoughlin 1990), 'Cargo' Cults and millenarian movements (Worsley 1957), or African religious movements (Fernandez 1978), the Naga belief system is considered as an internal 'other.' Naga nationalists, particularly the Undergrounds, and the Baptists reject traditional religion as backward whereas Christianity is seen as forward looking and future oriented. The reason for this goes back in history to the forces of modernity, modernization, and missionization of the Nagas during the colonial period. In the West, secularism has been often equated with modernity. But for Nagas, modernity is equated and associated with becoming Christian, or 'accepting religion,' as Nagas call it. In terms of religion, the

missionaries considered the religion of the hill tribes as 'lower' or demon worship (Clark 1907:3). The pioneer American Baptist missionaries in Nagaland did not consider Naga traditional religion as a religion because the rituals, the missionaries believed, were associated with 'worshipping wood and stone.' A classic example of this attitude is the Lotha Nagas' use of the terms '*dhorum ekhi*' (those who accept religion) and '*otssüng-olung ekhüm*' ('wood-stone worshipper,') to distinguish the Christians from the non-Christians respectively. True worship, for the Baptist missionaries, was to worship the Christian God through Jesus Christ. To have *religion* was to become a Christian. In other words, it was taught that Europeans/Christians had religion but Nagas did not. In this view, Christianity was not just a superior religion; it was *the* religion. Even if one was educated, one was looked down upon if one remained a 'worshipper of wood and stone.' Such evolutionist understanding by the Nagas is similar to the colonial situation in Africa where, as Chidester (1996) has shown, "the colonials who took possession of South Africa insisted that the Africans – Zulu, Bechuana, Xhosa – they confronted on the colonial frontiers had no religion" (Friedland 2001:128). Eventually, the Nagas bought into this evolutionist discourse preached by the missionaries that made inroads into the Naga habitus. If Naga traditional religion was seen as backward, the advent of Christianity in the Naga society, Baptist Protestantism in particular, was seen as a shift from primitivism to modernity, and from the local to the national, however inadequately.

Nagas' Encounter with Christianity

The Christian population of the state of Nagaland grew from a mere 13 individuals in 1881 to 90.02 % of the population of 1.98 million in 2001 (Census of India 2001),

gradually transforming Nagaland into a Christian state. Of the Christian population in Nagaland, 85% are Baptist, 10% are Catholic, and the rest are comprised of Christian Revival, Pentecostal, and Assembly of God. There has been no census taken of the Nagas as a whole. The Nagas in Burma are mostly Baptists, evangelized by the Naga Baptist missionaries and the Naga nationalists. The Nagas in Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh are predominantly Baptists and Catholics. Among the Zeliangrong in Nagaland and Manipur, a small minority belong to the Haraka movement, a religious movement started by Jadonang in early 1930s combining nativistic elements with Hindu influences. The Catholic Church in the state of Nagaland began in 1951 and has been very influential in the field of education and social services. Officially, the Catholic Church has had little or no say in Naga nationalism because of their emphasis on evangelization and partly because the Catholic clergy, most of whom are missionaries predominantly from South India, have stayed away from Naga nationalist issues. On the other hand, the Baptist church has been very pro-active and vocal in Naga nationalism.

Various factors engendered the transformation of the Nagas into a Christian society, the genesis of which goes back to colonial times. Christianity was an important concomitant of the British colonial expansion among the Nagas. The missionary movement in the nineteenth century, particularly that of the Protestant Evangelicals, was the result of European religious fervor and revivalism, European expansion and their encounter with people of different cultures and religion in the colonized worlds. In India, missionary

societies became part of the gradual colonization and expansion of the British Empire.[37] In 1875, Johnstone, a Captain in the British India Army, wrote:

> I pointed out that the Nagas had no religion; that they were highly intelligent and capable of receiving civilization; that with it they would want a religion, and that we might just as well give them our own, and make them in that way a source of strength, by thus mutually attaching them to us … It cannot be doubted, that a large population of Christian hillmen between Assam and Burmah, would be a valuable prop to the State. (in Eaton 1997:250)

Major Francis Jenkins, who succeeded David Scott as the second Commissioner of Assam, had a good knowledge of the tribals in Assam, including the Nagas. He felt that, "the tribes on the Assam frontier should be brought within the scope of missionary activities as early as possible as the influence of persons skilled in the language of these tribes, and devoting their time and attention to humanize these rude races could not fail of being useful to us and to them" (Yonuo 1974:113). Following such advice, the British colonial administration invited the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society to Assam to work among the Naga tribes and the colonial administration promised to give all possible personal and official assistance. Subsequently, in 1876, E. W. Clark and his wife Mary Clark, from New York, established his mission among the Ao Nagas.

In order to understand the impact of Christianity, particularly Baptist Protestantism, on the Nagas, it is important to examine the background of the pioneer missionaries, their religious affiliation, what they preached, and how Nagas' responded as active agents in using Christianity to their advantage brought about transformation of the Naga society. The pioneer Christian missionaries to the Nagas were American Baptists, and it is important to understand the religious tradition of these missionaries. Based on the

[37] Catholic missionaries were in the Indian State of Goa by the late 1500s.

historical experience of the Puritans who sought to separate themselves from the Church of England and formed churches on their own, Joseph Puthenpurakal defines a person as a Baptist "when he, accepting the 'gathered church' idea as the only pattern of the New Testament church, resolves to profess his faith in Christ freely and unhindered by any authority placed over him in this world, and seals this resolve by a pubic act of baptism"(1984:44). The anti-establishment (anti-Church of England) "free church" character of the Baptist church is important in understanding the impact of the Baptists on the Nagas, as I shall explain shortly.

It is important to know the content of what the Baptist missionaries preach to the Nagas. The message of E. W. Clark's and his wife Mary Mead Clark's preaching was to "tell the old, old story about Jesus and His love" to the 'savage' Nagas and baptize them (Puthenpurakal 1984:129). John Boradus's *A Catechism of Bible Teaching* (1892, hereafter, the *Catechism*) was translated into Naga dialects for religious instruction. The *Catechism* covered such topics as God, Providence of God, The Word of God, The Saviour, Justification and Sanctification, and The Lord's Day. Basically, the *Catechism* contained the Baptist distinctive principles of *Sola Scriptura,* the individual's competency to interpret the Scriptures, and to observe the Lord's Day (Puthenpurakal 1984:128-146). However, the encounters of the pioneer Baptist missionaries with the Nagas was more than a meeting of Christianity and Naga culture; culturally, it was also a meeting of American Baptists and the Nagas whose rituals, festivals, dances and songs were looked upon by the missionaries as heathen and so had to be gotten rid of for the well being of the Nagas (Puthenpurakal 1984). In terms of religion, Mary Clark wrote,

"they [Nagas] have some crude and indefinite conceptions of a Great Spirit, and an evil one; farther than this, they have no religion" (Bendangybang Ao 1998:48).

Baptist teaching brought about a change in the cosmology from a collective or communitarian harmonious life to an emphasis on individual salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Two questions from the *Catechism* articulated this salvation through Jesus Christ. Question 4 in Lesson VII on The Atonement of Christ reads: "For what purpose did the loving God give his only Son? God gave his only Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16." Further, question 5 in the Lesson IX on Repentance and Faith asks: "What do the Scriptures mean by faith in Christ? By faith in Christ the Scriptures mean believing Christ to be the divine Saviour, and personally trusting in him for our salvation." Further, Baptist emphasis on autonomy and individual competency in matters of faith had a crucial effect in rejecting human authority and traditions. Question 14 in Lesson III on Inspiration and Authority of the Bible in the *Catechism* explained this: "What authority has the Bible for us? The Bible is our only and all-sufficient rule of faith and practice." In Nagaland, this had the effect of Baptist converts rejecting the authority of the village for the sake of the Bible and personal salvation. Protestant Baptist ethics is based on a personal faith in Jesus Christ, but Naga traditional ethics was based on the community's well-being and cooperation with spirits. Baptist Protestantism rejected the Naga religious cosmology and tradition and the community's role, and instead, focused on each individual as responsible for and arbiter of one's faith and practice. Thus, while Naga traditional religion, on the one hand,

is related to a harmonious living of the individual and community, Baptist Protestantism was oriented toward personal faith and individual salvation.

For Nagas, conversion to Christianity called for a cultural transformation. Life as a Christian required a moral turnabout (Eaton 1997). Colored through her own cultural lens, Mary Clark writes of her experience among the first group of Naga converts:

> Every form of demon worship, open or suspected, was attacked – Sunday-breaking, rice-beer drinking, licentiousness, and all social vices. …Instead of congregating promiscuously at different houses to sleep at night, singing objectionable songs, telling doubtful stories, and engaging in lewd conversation, these young reformers separated themselves and built a dormitory for their own accommodation, in which purity and holiness should reign. Here at morning and evening time the voice of prayer and songs of praise are heard. (1907:138-139)

Perhaps the best examples of the subtle colonization and cultural transformation as a result of missionization can be illustrated by looking at some popular terms used by the Nagas to describe the difference between the Christians and non-Christians. Among the Lotha Nagas, non-Christians were called *soko eyui* (rice-beer drinkers). Consumption of rice-beer, a staple Naga drink, was banned by missionaries. "Total abstinence from all intoxicants is required," wrote Mary Clark (1907:140). To the Naga converts, not drinking rice-beer was a defining criterion for being a Christian. Clark (1907) cited the example of a young new convert who had built his house but would not marry the bride until she promised to give up drinking rice-beer. It is no surprise then, when J. P. Mills wrote, "an Ao Christian, when asked his religion, often defines himself, through what he considers to be the essential, simply as a "non-drinker of '*madhu'* [rice-beer]" (1973: 416). Naga Baptist belief, though puritanical, was not associated with Weber's Protestant ethic and the 'inner-worldly asceticism' of the Calvinists. Discouraging participation in

traditional Naga festivals was not so much because of asceticism but because they were looked down upon as heathen practices. Eventually, the increase in the number of Baptist converts and the influence of free-church and anti-establishment character of Baptist Protestantism hastened the demise of age-old traditional Naga institutions such as the *Morung* (bachelors' dormitory) and some festivals. The dual characteristic of Baptist Protestantism – universalistic character of Christianity and the autonomous, free-church trait of the Baptists – helped accommodate the universal and the local at the same time.

The introduction of Christianity by Baptist missionaries from 1872 brought about fundamental changes to the Naga society; Nagas also used Christianity for their socio-economic and political gains and thus contributed to the transformation that Christianity brought about in the Nagas society. Along with the colonial administrators banning headhunting and discouraging inter-tribal feuds, Christianity was also instrumental in reducing inter-tribal enmities by creating a sense of solidarity and unity among the Baptist converts. Secondly, influenced by the evolutionary approach of Edward B. Taylor and Victorian Christianity (Tambiah 1990), Nagas employed Christianity as a vehicle to modernity, as a transition "from darkness to light" (NBCC 1997). Like Weber's (1963) concept of religion as a vehicle of social change, Baptist Protestantism was perceived as playing a significant role for social change from the 'primitive' to the modern, and from local to national, particularly during the missionization and colonial periods. As Yonuo, a prominent Naga scholar, wrote, "it was Christianity that pushed the Nagas out of the thought of seclusion and isolation from which they were suffering for centuries into open ideas, ideals and civilizations of the peoples of the world" (1974:120).

In order to examine further the role of Christianity in Naga nationalism, I will investigate the Nagaland Baptist Church Council's (NBCC) role in Naga nationalism and the influence of Christianity on the armed factions such as NCN, NSCN-IM and NSCN-K. In the next section I will describe a meeting of the NBCC for reconciling the nationalist factions at which I was a participant observer. I will then follow up with interviews with the nationalists on the role of religion in their struggle.

Nagaland Baptist Church Council and Naga Nationalism

The Baptist church in Nagaland has been proactive either as a staunch supporter of the Naga national movement or as a mediator to peace broker between the Naga armed nationalists and the Indian Government or between the Naga armed factions. In 1964, at the height of militarization of the Naga areas by India, the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) brokered a cease-fire between the Indian Government and the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN). The talks following the cease-fire did not bring about an amicable solution, but Nagas experienced a respite from the intense oppression by the Indian military. Again in 1975, following the resumption of militarization, the Shillong Accord was signed between some members of the Naga National Council (NNC) and the Indian government facilitated by the NBCC. In the 1990s and after 2000 the NBCC has again been in the forefront of trying to broker reconciliation, unity and peace among the armed Naga factions. In the current climate of factional fights for territorial dominance, prestige and superiority, efforts by the NBCC to reconcile and unite the warring factions seem futile. The NBCC and nationalists each seem to either talk past each other or their

agendas are incompatible. I took part in one of the NBCC's peace initiative programs during my fieldwork. This provided important analytical insight into this process.

On September 14, 2006, I was in the Naga Hoho office chatting with Bendang, the president, and other officials. A little after 2:00 P.M., Reverend Zabu Theruja, the NBCC Secretary, and Kari Longchar, the Head of the NBCC's Peace Committee walked into the Naga Hoho office. The two of them wanted to meet with the Naga Hoho and officials of the Naga Students' Federation in order to garner support for a 'Healing and Reconciliation Movement' the NBCC was planning to launch in order to broker peace, unity and reconciliation between the Naga factions. Theruja and Kari provided copies of the NBCC proposal paper and Kari proceeded to explain.

"It is a healing and reconciliation proposal. The civil society and churches are all working hard, but still now there is no break through. The NBCC sat four times with the Executive Committee and Peace Committee and decided to start a movement – Healing and Reconciliation of Naga People," Rev. Kari said. According to the proposal, Kari continued, "we all have committed mistakes. We must confess to God, search our heart. We are becoming expert in finding others' faults, but we hide our wrongs/faults. So we want to open ourselves before God and search our hearts. So we will know who we are, so God will touch us. For this we must admit our mistakes and confess to God. We (the NBCC) seek a right path in order to consolidate us as a great people of God. For all this the church (NBCC) came out with a paper." Kari also informed the group that the Healing and Reconciliation initiative would be launched on Sept 29th in Dimapur. At the

launching ceremony, they would ask two or three people to address the meeting and spend the rest of the time in prayer. “We (NBCC) want to let you know and solicit your response. It will be a coming together of Nagas in reconciliation,” Kari said.

Zabu Theruja, the NBCC Secretary read out the third and fourth paragraphs of the proposal. “There may be many ways and NBCC’s is not the only way,” he added. The NBCC was putting forward the proposal “but we are not sure how to go about it (in terms of a course for implementation). The Paper is a platform to listen to people,” Theruja said. But Theruja’s input had an added motive – a platform for people to express their dissatisfaction with the factional killings. This became clear when he gave the history of how this proposal came about. Apparently he had gone to Tseminyu, a town about 50 kilometers away from Kohima, for a church function and the people there told him, “We are looking for a platform to express ourselves. If we say something against NSCN-IM, they think we are against them. If we say something against NSCN-K, they think we are against them.” Based on such conditions expressed by the people, Theruja clarified, “the proposal is a platform to express and listen to what people say. People are to read and react.” Reconciliation, as the NBCC understood, was needed not only among the factions but also among different communities. But for reconciliation to happen, there must be healing of hurt feelings among the factions and various communities. “This is a spiritual approach to repent and return to Christ according to the Bible,” Theruja emphasized. “We want people at the national level, district and village and community level to participate, to search the heart of the Naga people so that the word of God will reach all cadres. So

we will explain to them what we want. We do not have any answer or solution. Our objective is: Let us search God."

Responding to the NBCC delegate, Bendangmayang, the Naga Hoho President said, "The church is the right body to initiate. The right organization is the church because 95 % of Nagas are Christians." Chuba Ozukum, another Naga Hoho official appreciated the effort of the NBCC but was less forthright to commit to the NBCC's proposal. "Today, only two members are here," he told the NBCC, "so we will go through [the proposal], try to understand and at the coming meetings, we will decide." The representative of the Naga Students' Federation (NSF) was also calculative. Appreciating the NBCC's initiative as very spiritual, the NSF representative said, "We have not gone through [the proposal] yet, but we appreciate your thought and initiative. … We are also discussing at the Federal level, and take the matter very seriously. We plan to go and meet all the factions but not yet finalized."

So on September 29, 2007, the launching of the Healing and Reconciliation Movement by the NBCC was held at the auditorium of the Christian Higher Secondary School in Dimapur, Nagaland's commercial city. I was part of the team of five that represented the Catholic church. At the beginning of the function, The Reformation Singers and Imti John led the people in singing praise and worship songs as an overture to the program. "Don't be powerless Christians. Become powerful Christians," Imti said to the gathering of about two thousand people, representing the different denominations and Baptist churches in Dimapur. To the youth, he said, "It is for freedom He set us free. … Jesus is

going to finish the factions in Nagaland. We are the Lord's in life and death. … In life and death we are the Lord's. To die is to gain." The function felt like a typical Baptist Sunday worship service. What does all this mean? I asked myself. If Jesus is going to finish the factions, why even have the gathering at all? Was there a disconnect between the reality of the Nagas and religious practice? Or was it an effort to temper Naga nationalism by religious ethic and make the nationalists face reality for their future?

"From 'forgive and forget' to 'forgive and remember it well'" Zhabu Terhüja, the NBCC Secretary, introduced the proposal for Healing and Reconciliation to the gathering. "The church is not a political entity," he said. "It is the moral and spiritual guardian of the land. The priority is to create understanding between different leaders. And the basis of the [Healing and Reconciliation] movement is: We must accept one another." Theruja talked about healing as a prerequisite to reconciliation, and recognizing hurt in order to heal. Theruja continued to exhort the gathering:

> The national house of the Nagas is divided today. Nevertheless, the NBCC recognizes all different groups as having contributed to and sacrificed for the Naga national cause. The Church understands the serious differences that have produced the 'factions.' … Fully aware of the difficulties involved in the healing process, NBCC maintains that unless the factors dividing the Nagas are adequately addressed no real progress towards the needed solution will be possible. … Will the Naga struggle become known to future generations for giving them a cursed legacy of vengeance, fear and bloodshed because its leaders used guns and greed instead of God's guidance to solve their problems? A peace process is taking place. What the NBCC looks at is what the future generation will say on the actions taken today, and that whatever settlement is reached should be supported by all. The result will not be in a fortnight. It requires participation of every responsible Naga.

The function was highly charged with emotions. Rev. Kari the moderator of the NBCC Peace Committee said a prayer that symbolized the state of Nagas' confusion. Behind

me, one man often responded, 'Amen' to Kari's prayer. Rev. V.K. Nuh, another prominent Baptist church leader, also wept and prayed: "Lord, heal our nation. Lord, heal our people." Chingmak Kejong, the Master of Ceremonies told to gathering: "Say sorry to each other for the future sake of the young people." The day's collective self-repentance was to echo in all the churches throughout Nagaland.

Besides spiritual exercises such as prayers for healing the hurts, the NBCC's Healing and Reconciliation initiative set some steps as a 'way forward' which, among others, proposed the following:

> 5. All the different national groups give an adequate hearing to the voice and conscience of the public.
> 6. Series of round-table talks, at the level of Kilonsers (Ministers) who have party plenipotentiary power from their parties in a place proposed by the Church. It is presumed that all the factions shall not be able to agree with one another so easily at first. But the first step required is to accept one another for a start. It is hoped that later the topmost leaders of all groups shall be able to sit together. … The different groups must agree that there would be no more killing among them. (NBCC 2007)

In response to the proposal, the Naga Hoho President, Bendang, said the Naga Hoho was committed to reconciliation and the Hoho supported the cease-fire between the Naga armed factions as well as between the Nagas and the Indian Government. The next speaker, the representative of the Eastern Naga Peoples' Organization (ENPO), also appreciated the initiative of the NBCC and pledged their support for healing and reconciliation among the Nagas. I thought it was well calculated that the ENPO representative was given a chance to be one of the speakers. I spoke on behalf of the Catholic Church in Nagaland, exhorting the gathering on the need to forgive and reconcile, " What we need today is more than platitudes. We live in a historic moment or

a *kairos* moment with a golden opportunity to create a harmonious future. The most outstanding truth is that Nagas are united in their desire for Unity." I was conscious all the while not to set the agenda for the Catholic Church in Nagaland which, so far, has remained non-vocal in matters of Naga nationalism.

The launching ceremony of the Healing and Reconciliation ceremony was quite stretched out. There was a lot of prayer and preaching which, even though given a spiritual base, almost seemed to drown out the real purpose of the event - reconciliation. But it was not purely a religious function; the immediate concern was to address reconciliation through religion. The thrust was national and nationalistic in the sense of fostering unity among the Nagas to stand together for their common cause. In the end, the program did illustrate that the Baptist Church in Nagaland is pro-active in vocalizing the Nagas' political aspirations and softening the rough edges of the process. But the Naga armed nationalists' justification of their positions based on the Bible compounds the difficulty faced by the Naga churches to resolve the factional conflicts.

'Nagaland for Christ': Between a Slogan and a Principle

In order to find out the motivating function of religion in Naga nationalism, I will trace how Christianity was used as one of the defining markers of the Naga struggle from early on. In the first official statement of Naga nationalism, the Memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1929, the Naga leaders wrote, "we have not (sic) social affinities with the Hindus or Mussalmans." Clearly, in their relationship with the Hindu and Muslim neighbors, the Nagas found no commonality and did not want to be ruled by Hindus or

Muslims. A later document, NNC President, Phizo's Plebiscite speech May 16, 1951, contains one of the earlier articulated connections of Christianity with the Naga movement:

> Someone may tell us that Nagas are Christians following a foreign religion. The Indians publicly say this. We do not take Christianity as foreign religion any more than we consider the light of the sun as foreign origin from outer world. There is a father-creator (*Ukepenopfü*) as we call it. He is God. The message of the Gospel fulfils our Naga conception of religion – *Nanyu* – which literally means "anguish of mind" for which we do worship. Once we came to know that there is a personal Saviour to whom one can talk to or pray directly, the real light dawned on us, and the weight of man's anguish of mind greatly vanish away. It is the end of the beginning of our personal realization in relieving the anguish of mind in this world and for the next world after death. Whatever the Indian may say of us, there is no foreignness in relationship between father and child, that is between God the Father and His children. (Khodao Papers)

Influenced by such perception of Christianity, the Preamble of the Constitution (Yezabo) of NNC states: "We, the people of Nagaland, solemnly acknowledging that the sovereignty over this earth and the entire universe belongs to Almighty God alone, and the authority of the people to be exercised on the territory is a sacred trust from God, who sustained our forefathers, the national workers and our people through the years of trial" (NNC Yezabo; Luithui and Nandita 1984; Nuh and Lasuh 2002: 77). Article 136 of the Yezabo further states, "Protestant Christianity and Naga Religion are recognized religions in Nagaland" (NNC Yezabo). Later on, the NNC would affirm the connection of religion and nationalism. In a Joint Statement issued by Tatar Hoho for the Federal Government of Nagaland concerning Nagaland and the Church, on February 19, 1970, the NNC stated:

> To say that Nagas are not Indians is God's own creation. Man cannot go against it. …After the second world war, the British government, overwhelmed with domestic and colonial difficulties, decided to pull out of Nagaland altogether and leave the country to her fate. So it was that on August 14, 1947, Nagaland declared her national independence with the motto, "NAGALAND FOR

> CHRIST". It is quite probable that the heathen would have laughed at such declaration, but the national faith of Nagaland from the very first day of its national existence had acknowledged Christ as the Supreme Ruler of both heaven and the earth with a commitment, "Thy kingdom come to Nagaland." This is a creditable proof that Nagaland has got Christ committed to herself. In a moment of trial, Nagaland may have been subjected at times to severe reverses and setbacks because of her disobedience and rebellion to God's ways, and yet our nation cannot help believing that God, in His own time and by His divine power, will work out the destiny of this land before long. (Khodao papers)

After the split from NNC, the Manifesto of NSCN, adopted in 1980 also reads: "We stand for the faith in God and the salvation of mankind in Jesus, the Christ alone, that is NAGALAND FOR CHRIST" (NSCN Manifesto).

Perhaps the clearest expression of attempts by the nationalists to link nationalism with religion is encapsulated in the slogan: 'Nagaland for Christ.' In the past, I had always perceived the motto, 'Nagaland for Christ' as a naïve expression of aping the West, a simplistic spirituality, and a blind adoption of a slogan without understanding its meaning religious or social, and certainly not political. In the course of my fieldwork, I felt it was important to investigate the rationale for 'Nagaland for Christ' as a principle adopted by the armed nationalists. Instead of dealing with just peoples' reactions to the slogan, 'Nagaland for Christ' and the hypocritical actions of killings contrary to Christ's teachings, I was more interested in exploring the background and the rationale for the adoption of such a slogan for a political agenda. More than historical shapings, I tried to find out how 'Nagaland for Christ' was understood and articulated by the nationalists in their everyday life and struggle. I wanted to get to the source of the supposed Christian foundations for Naga nationalism. Fortunately, the NSCN leaders who coined the motto

'Nagaland for Christ' are still living, so interacting with them allowed me to more fully understand the religious dimension of Naga nationalism.

Meeting with Isak Chishi Swu, the Chairman of NSCN-IM.

January 22, 2007: I met with my friend, Frank, and we were to go together for my appointment with Isak Chishi Swu, the Chairman (President) of NSCN-IM, scheduled for 10:30 A.M. at Hebron Camp, the Headquarters for the NSCN-IM faction in Nagaland which functions as the administrative nerve center as well as the army headquarters of the NSCN-IM. A little after 8:00 A.M., Frank said, "It is better to eat and go because you may not get anything to eat for long once you go there." There were two cadres of the NSCN-IM group and the father of another cadre was going with us to Hebron Camp to see his son.

We drove through villages and fertile fields. We kept going and going, farther than I had expected. The Camp is well fortified. Outside the gate, on the right side of the entrance there were shops and a small market place, with houses mostly of thatch with bamboo walls. The gate for Hebron itself is constructed like the gates at the entrance of Naga villages. The architecture of the façade was typical Naga. The impression one gets on entering Hebron is like entering an army camp.

A little distance after we entered, we turned towards the left and passed by a ground that had a rostrum and a wooden stage. After driving past the ground, there was the Tatar Hoho (Parliament Assembly) building to the right, and as we drove down a slope there

were a couple of houses with tin-roofs on the right. We stopped next to the last one. Behind the house, there were a few men sitting outside near a fire. One of the men was a high-ranking officer who said he had recently defected from the NSCN-K group. The other three were Lothas, and I was informed that one of them was the Tatar Hoho (Parliament) Speaker. After chatting for some time, at about 10:15 A.M., we went up further to the security zone. My appointment was supposed to be the second one. After waiting for a while, those of us waiting were told that there was an emergency meeting of the Tatar Hoho, and the two leaders, the Chairman and General Secretary, would be able to meet us only after the meeting was over. They had not met any visitor that morning.

So I sat down in the *machang* (gazebo) to wait. There were about six people there waiting. One group was the Zeliangs from Manipur and two others were from Jalukiekam village in the neighboring area. The other people were Poumais and among them was one member of the NSCN-IM faction who told us that he was with the NSCN-K group for six years and then defected to the NSCN-IM in 2000. We chatted and waited. At one point even we asked for tea. From where we sat, we could look down the slope to where some of the cadres were working. There were two mess kitchens. “Wherever you see a smoke from a house, it is a mess kitchen,” one of the men told me. I ventured to visit one of the mess kitchens. There must have been about four or five cadres. They all seemed to be in their mid twenties except for the officer in charge there who looked like he was in his late thirties. One of them sat beside the fire and was warming his back. Another was cleaning vegetables, another doing dishes, while another was making *chutney* (hot sauce) – smashing ginger, garlic and then lots of Naga king chili. The youngest among them was

cutting up onion stems and getting ready to cut up dog meat. The officer in charge of the mess inquired if the group had taken the ration, but they replied they had not due to lack of time. “When you to get the ration, tell the quartermaster to give more food because my family is coming. I have already spoken to him.” They offered me coffee.

When it finally came time for me to meet the Chairman, it was 3:45 P.M. After being searched I was taken to the house where the Chairman met people. The door was ajar, and I saw three young men inside. I knocked. One of them answered and came out. I introduced myself and told him, “I have an appointment with the Chairman.” But he looked puzzled. For all the security formalities and waiting the whole day, the people manning the Chairman’s office did not seem to have a clue about the list of visitors and the timings. I repeated that I had an appointment with the Chairman. “Let me check and see,” the young man told me. He went in and after a minute or so came out and said, “Sir said he is very tired after meeting people since morning and is taking rest. He will not meet people anymore.”

“But I had an appointment. I was supposed to meet him at 10:30 A.M. and have been waiting since 9:30 in the morning,” I told the young man.

“Let me ask and see,” he said.

He went in. The Chairman’s wife came out to check and see who were waiting in the portico. I greeted her. She nodded and went back in.

After a while the young man came out.

“The Chairman was resting. Would you mind waiting for sometime?”

“Don’t worry, I will wait,” I told him.

Anyway, the wait was not long. It was hardly another five minutes when the door opened and the young man ushered me in.

After the initial greetings, Chairman Isak Chishi Swu and I sat down to chat. His wife came in as well and joined us. President Swu motioned her towards a book on the desk. She took the book and sat to my right. She seemed to be reading it or so I thought. I sat across from President Swu. He looked aged and frail. He wore glasses with a white frame. His shirt was light gray, and over it he wore sleeveless sweater. His pants were dark blue. He had socks on and wore plastic slippers. On the desk, closest to him was a copy of the NBCC Peace initiative booklet. "I am going through this," Swu said. Next to that booklet was a Bible. To his right, there was a black laptop carrying case.
Between us there was a portable *mephu* (charcoal heater).
"Which village are you from?" he asked me.
"From Lakhuti," I replied.
"Oh, uncle Khodao is from there," he commented. Khodao Yanthan is the Vice President of the NSCN-IM faction.
"Yes, I saw him the last time I went home to Lakhuti in September. He was very sick then. But I heard he is better now," I told him.
I explained to him that I wanted to interview him concerning my research. He replied: "It is only with prayer that we will succeed. God is telling us in a vision and prayer." Swu told me the example of Brenda, a Jewish woman. According to Swu, there is a prayer house or something of the sort in Israel. Flags of every nationality are hoisted there. On one occasion at an international prayer session at the place, when all the flags

were being hoisted, there was a Naga who tried to hoist the Naga flag. There was an Indian representative at the session who objected to hoisting the Naga flag saying that the Nagas were within India and not a nation. At this Brenda, who was deep in prayer and apparently does not know the existence of the Nagas, supposedly intervened saying, "Nagas will become a free nation so hoist the flag." She emphasized that the Spirit inspired her. As a result of her prayerful intervention, the Naga flag is hoisted at this prayer house in Israel. Then Swu added that Grace Collins, Honorary Ambassador of NSCN-IM in the United States, informed him that a church of about fifteen thousand congregation in the U.S.A. has begun to pray for the Nagas every Sunday. "God's spirit is leading us," he said.

He gave me a copy of the press release he gave out regarding reconciliation and forgiveness offered to the other factions. "We are all for forgiving and reconciling," he said, "but that does not mean we have to accept the Shillong Accord. That will be stooping down very low. We need the church leaders to help us."

"Do you have any plans to meet with Khaplang (leader of NSCN-K) to reconcile between the factions?" I asked him.

"Now we leave it up to the church leaders to do their work."

Since he has other appointments, we decided to meet another day.

The next time I met Swu was at a meeting convened by the NSCN-IM leadership with the Naga church leaders on January 26, 2007, in connection with reconciliation with other factions. At the beginning of that meeting, Swu addressed the gathering:

> Politically it [reconciliation] is not possible, but only through Christ it is possible. So we fasted with the reverends and explained in detail. We wish for reconciliation, forgiveness and compassion in our land in the name of Jesus Christ. Since Nagalim is for Christ, we have to show it through action because God has promised a [nation to the Nagas], and commissioned the Nagas to preach the gospel around the world. So we have to pray for India because India will be our evangelical field. But unless we are united, compassion is not possible. Because the Holy Spirit is working in us to proclaim to people around us, it is our duty and responsibility. The Philippines have sent 200,000 missionaries. Nagas have to send 10,000 missionaries but even that we have not succeeded.

Earlier, on August 23, 2003, in an interview with Dan Wooding for the ASSIST Ministries in Beverly Hills, Isak Swu expressed the connection between the missionary vision of the Nagas and the nationalist movement. "We want to penetrate China, Cambodia, Burma, Vietnam and Laos and Nepal with the Gospel," Swu said, "and we have 10,000 missionaries who are ready to go." What was holding up the missionary outreach, Swu continued, was, "the finalization of peace talks between the Indian Government and the four-million people of Nagaland, which borders China, Burma and Bangladesh, who have been in military dispute for many years" (Interview with Assist Ministries 2003). What Isak Swu has done is to co-opt the mission of the NBCC's Missionary Movement and make it a religious and political mission of the Nagas. The idea of sending 10,000 missionaries to evangelize South and South East Asia stems from the workings of the Nagaland Missionary Movement, the mission wing of the NBCC, that began in 1962. Initially it began with an aim to "complete the unfinished task of evangelism remaining after all the foreign missionaries had withdrawn [from Nagaland]" (NBCC 1997: 117). In 1971, the NBCC voted to merge the Home Mission and Foreign Mission Works under one mission and named it Nagaland Missionary Movement. During the mid-1970s there was a revival movement in the Baptist churches in Nagaland, and the revival, as the NBCC says, "fueled the missionary sending vision of the ministry as many

individuals surrendered their lives to God for service on the mission field" (NBCC 1997:121). From those revivals came about the idea of sending 10,000 Naga missionaries to evangelize the area. The Missionary Movement's rationale was defined in the following report:

> God's work in Nagaland of building His body into a powerful mission force, can be seen as an instrumental key to unlock the doors of bondage throughout the Mongolian peoples of Central and South East Asia. God never changed His vision given to the initial American missionaries in Assam. His strategy is to use Nagas as the Gateway of the Gospel to Asia. (NBCC 1997:127).

Apparently, Swu, who professes to be a born-again Christian, has been influenced by the revivalistic trend in the Naga Baptist churches and has taken upon himself and the NSCN-IM, the task of the Naga Missionary Movement, the mission program of the NBCC to evangelize Asia. But Swu goes even further to politicize and nationalize the NBCC's mission program by claiming that God has given the Naga nation the task of evangelizing peoples from neighboring areas such as India, China, and Burma. More than just co-opting the mission of the Nagaland Missionary Movement, Isak Swu aims to make Nagaland a Christian state. As Sean O'Driscoll commented on Isak Swu's interview with *The Washington Diplomat*, Swu's "main preoccupation will be creating a Christian State, which comes higher on his list of priorities than socialism, nationalism or even democracy" (2003). Swu has also expressed that religion will not be imposed on people and the rights of other religions will be respected (O'Driscoll 2003). But in his interview with the *Washington Diplomat*, he expressed his vision for Nagaland as a State where only Christianity will be tolerated. For, Swu, Nagaland government will be run according to the will of God: "We shall stick to what God will show us. What the Holy Spirit will tell us" (Interview with O'Driscoll 2003).

My next meeting was with Thuengaleng Muivah, the General Secretary of NSCN-IM. Since he is the main intellectual force of the NSCN-IM, I was keen on interviewing him. He had come from Amsterdam in December 2006, and was stationed at Hebron Camp, the Headquarters for the NSCN-IM camp in Nagaland, for practically the whole of 2007. I was told by his assistants that Saturdays were the only days he was free for personal meetings. My chance came on Saturday, April 21, 2007.

Meeting with Muivah, General Secretary of NSCN-IM

My appointment with Thuengaleng Muivah was supposed to be at 11:00 A.M. I arrived at 10:30 a.m. and decided to wait in the gazebo near the gate, but one of Muivah's personal secretaries came to invite us to go inside and wait. About forty-five minutes later, I was called in. Muivah wore a short-sleeve white shirt, gray pants and brown shoes. He sat on a revolving chair, and I sat facing him. After initial pleasantries, I began to interview him. He appeared a little foggy at first and didn't sound optimistic about the meeting. Perhaps for him it was 'just another meeting' and another Naga to be taught about the national cause. He straightaway started talking about religion. I let him talk only interrupting him occasionally. It was the subject I wanted to ask him, and I was not disappointed. Actually I felt that I was being given what I wanted on a platter. Muivah explained to me the religious rationale for Naga nationalism:

> For me, God has created heaven and earth and in this creation a portion for the Nagas is also there because for the most of the people there is homeland and there must be a piece of land for the Nagas which can be called their home. This is most precious. To me what is most precious is what God has given to us. That is most precious. God has given to you your homeland. Do you think God has created heaven and earth without a portion for the Nagas? …. And that portion particularly is this Patkoi range because we were made to settle down there. This

> becomes very clear to me. So Nagaland becomes homeland, this Patkoi ranges. Most precious. Why we cannot tell this?

Muivah argued that the present land inhabited by the Nagas is a promised land and their reaching this place was the purpose of an unseen God. He sees the hand of an unseen force (God) guiding for the Nagas. Muivah's argument smacked of a predestined political theology as he continued:

> So God has given us two things, let me say: eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, and then if it is so, then Christ died for the Nagas also, for Nagaland also. So Christ must be chosen. This is the reason why for me Nagaland for Christ. ... But our leaders, they do not say Nagaland for Christ on this basis, on the basis I am explaining. But according to their understanding, their interpretation of the Bible, I mean from the preachers. But that is not enough. To make yourself totally committed to the cause, we must be fully persuaded of this. It is not their will; it's not my will, but the will of God. This must be. *Achhhh itu ki?* (what is this?) *Pani to nije te keri thakishi apna laka kushi kote ase?* (The water is flowing downstream, where is your wish?). See, everything is conditioned according to God's will. So when we think of all these things, tradition, customs, traditional practices all these things, God is not against it, but the will of God is the first. But here on earth we cannot help talking about identity. I don't want to be everybody. Even Jesus himself said, I am a Jew. So something of that is to be done. For what? For identification. For understanding. Even God called night, night, light, light, day, day. … So now applying this to the case of the Nagas, there is nothing wrong when we say that the Nagas are one. ... So the basis [is], God has created for our existence … [it] must be … then God's will.
>
> A: Any story of God's plan for the Nagas in the story of the Nagas?
>
> M: For me I am convinced, Naga *mati* to Indian *manu pana nahoi to, britishkhan pana nahoito, naga nijor bi pana nahoi to. So kaun ha kaun banaishe to malik thakiboto* (Naga land was not created by Indians, not created by the British, not created by Naga people too).
>
> A: Besides this religious perspective what else drives Naga nationalism?
>
> M: Naga nationalism is good but it is raw. During NNC's time it was raw. But raw nationalism can do something beyond that [initiating the nationalist movement] it cannot be a force to decide. The Nagas in the beginning said 'Nagaland for Christ.' Very good. I agree with them. But when I dug into it that was not out of understanding, not out of conviction, not out of persuasion. Naïve. Because they were Christians and so they want to make Nagaland Christians. But here the greater question is, if Nagaland is part and parcel of God's creation and

> God's purpose is to save this, then we are becoming a part of God's plan. And Christ also died for Nagaland also. So Nagaland becomes highly essential, very indispensable because it is created, God has purpose to save this for eternal salvation.

It is clear from Muivah's explanation that the rationale for Naga nationalism, at least for NSCN-IM, is a process towards the fulfillment of God's will for the Nagas which is to achieve the goal of a Naga nation, a Christian state, and ultimately to glorify God in the next world. As a people, Nagas were being oriented towards a vision. I realized that Muivah's vision was very much influenced by a Christian ideology of purpose and meaning in life. Just as an individual is supposed to have a purpose and meaning in life, so too the nation is supposed to have a purpose. According to Muivah and Swu, God was saving them for a purpose – Naga nationhood. In the NSCN's reasoning, the purpose of Naga nation is not just to be independent but also to glorify God (for Muivah) and to evangelize Asia (for Swu).

I wanted to find out if Muivah's own religious upbringing and personal experiences had any influence on his religious rationale for Naga nationalism. He went on to explain to me his understanding of God, and the role of God in the life of the Nagas.

> Muivah: My experience is this. One day while I went out into the jungle and I prayed. I fell into a trance and I saw Jesus standing a [distance] away, dressed in white cloth .. almost same as in the picture. A boy was there clenching, holding his hand and his arms. I said, this is Jesus, this is Jesus. I wanted .. but at that time earthly force, like the Indian army [was at] my side, [so I] could not go. I was scared. There were so many. Jesus turned and looked at the armed forces. They became nothing, frightened, as if [they had] no spirit at all, as if dry leaves and they just shivered back. I said, what is this? Then Jesus turned to me, looked at me and I saw the boy [was] not frightened. So I just wondered why this boy is so strong? Even in this situation I could see through his heart. … Armies came again and I was frightened again. Jesus turned again and they became frightened. Jesus looked at me tenderly and they just left. I thought, mmm why Jesus should come? What is this? That made me to think a lot for a long time, more than 30 years.

> Now I have completely understood the purpose of God, the purpose of Jesus in saving.
>
> A: Have you experienced in real life what you saw in the trance?
>
> M: Yes I have. You know when Khaplang attacked our forces, … just before the sunrise, … started firing from two directions. I walked out, I thought I was finished but fortunately … did not get hurt… It is not possible for human being to escape from such situation. … And in case of Khaplang also it is like that. … How many times he came and ambushed to kill … asshhh this is too much. … And [again] when I was saved from the terrible ambush from the Burmese, no way out, no way out there, but it did not hit me. I escaped then I promised to God. Why He saved me? … International communities did not save me. You have come to my rescue, you have saved me. Thank you so much. ... Then I promised to God, I will seek your kingdom first, your righteousness first… so I promised. After that I became the strongest man. As if I could defeat… That kind of feeling came.
>
> A: What about being saved from India Army?
>
> M: And whenever Indians ambushed, … a feeling came to me - must be from God. Some feeling would come and I would at once warn my friends… and somebody would come running, "Indians are waiting here." [It was] this way most of the time. So though I am a fool, cannot understand anything, God knows. God is working and he cares for me. … God has saved me because he has a purpose for me. I believe that. … human being cannot survive [ambush] like this… cannot.

I tried hard to understand the religious element of Naga struggle, and it occurred to me that it is not so much the NBCC or institutional religious organizations that are setting the agenda, but the nationalists' personal convictions and experience of God that is motivating the movement. Muivah pointed out the religious experiences of people like him, of being protected and saved by God in the jungles and in their encounter with enemies in warfare. Many of the armed nationalists have lived in the jungles fighting the enemy for years without proper food, security or comfort. Many of them have cheated death on a number of occasions. Muivah and other nationalists attributed such saving experiences as miracles by the power of "our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." These

nationalists have strong religious convictions in their personal lives that guide their nationalist spirit.

Conversations like the ones with Swu and Muivah validate the conclusion that 'Nagaland for Christ' is not just a false or cheap religiosity of the leaders but vital to Naga nationalism. On numerous issues, Muivah, Swu and other nationalists stressed the fact that Nagas are Christians and so 'Nagaland for Christ' is not a misnomer. I countered one of the senior nationalists with the NBCC's protest march on January 27th 2007, denouncing the use of the slogan 'Nagaland for Christ' by the armed nationalists. "They went too far," he said. "They don't understand that is why they are saying that." But, how were such convictions played out in the NSCN-IM's daily struggle for Naga self-determination? Among many examples, there was one consultative meeting called by the NSCN-IM leadership that I was invited to attend.

Religiosity Transforms Naga Political Issue

On July 27, 2007, the Sixth Naga Peoples' Consultative Meeting was held at Hebron Camp called by the Collective Leadership of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM). The main agenda for the meeting was whether the ceasefire between the Government of India and the NSCN-IM should be extended or not since the political talks that had been going on for the last 10 years had produced no solution. The next round of talks were to be held from July 30-31 in Dimapur, the commercial city of Nagaland.

I wasn't sure how many invitees would be there, so I went early enough to reach Hebron Camp, a distance of about 40 kilometers from Dimapur. When I reached the meeting site on the grounds, many of the invitees were already taking their seats. At 9:05 A.M. Isak Chishi Swu, the Chariman of NSCN-IM arrived accompanied by Thuengaleng Muivah, the General Secretary, and their wives, secretaries and bodyguards.

"Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!" Swu said, introducing the agenda for the meeting. "The ceasefire should be extended or not. If yes, for how long? We need to know. What does God want to do with the Naga people? We have to do it all in the name of Jesus Christ. If we don't do in the name of Jesus Christ, we will face big problem. We offer it all into God's hands. If we don't understand 'Nagaland for Christ,' we can't [succeed]. Praise the Lord!" Immediately following Swu, Muivah spoke:

> What the Nagas want, Nagas have to decide. I don't have doubt that God gave Naga land to Naga people. This is God's promise. I believe in Nagaland; I believe in God, too. We can do all things through Jesus Christ. We are not a people without [a] promise. Have no confusion; we have been shown the way. … If we believe in Jesus Christ, we will be shown our way everyday. … Who will represent the Nagas? God created the Nagas; He gave them land. One who doesn't believe in God will not represent the Nagas. Me, do I believe in God? [Do I believe] in Nagas? I questioned myself. … God called me to represent the Naga cause. God did not forsake the Nagas. We need to understand each other. We cannot make mistake. Let us try to understand together how much we have done and the position of India. If we don't understand our position, there is no saving Nagaland.
>
> In the beginning we did not make mistake because God knows the issue of the Nagas. God will do His own work in His way. We have to do our work. God has changed India's mind. … Nagas should understand our limits. God wants us to understand our limits; God wants us to realize solution cannot be achieved by us. Or are we still offending God? Nagas have to realize that our faith in God is weak. We need to examine ourselves now. Israelites faced the problem of crossing the Jordan. "Sanctify yourselves today, I will do wonders tomorrow" God told them. God helped Israelites cross the Jordan. Problem with God and Nagas: How much do Nagas have faith in God? … Let us examine the problem like the Israelites. Can we come forward to sanctify ourselves? Perhaps that is the

> demand. ... Your weakness is standing in the way if you want to be free. Confess your sins then God will fight for us.

What was interesting was that other than whether the cease-fire should be extended or not, neither Swu nor Muivah said on what points the Naga people should be consulted. From the tone of what was said by Swu and Muivah, it felt like a religious meeting rather than a political consultative meeting. What was clear, though, was that a fundamentalistic understanding of the Bible, and the religious convictions of the leaders provide a powerful motivating force in the way Naga nationalism is being articulated.

Fragmentations

No matter how religious, ethical, and God-fearing the Naga nationalists such as Swu and Muivah may sound, the ongoing rampant factional killings between the various factions, killing of innocent people, extortions, forced taxations, rule by the might of a AK-47 rifle, fear and intimidation, and oppression by the Undergrounds tell a contradictory story. To say that the Naga public are incensed is an understatement; there is anger and frustration, and many Nagas hate and despise the Undergrounds. During my fieldwork, I witnessed some of the ordeals that the Nagas are going through.

One of the persons who shared with me about being beaten by the Undergrounds was John whom I have known since he was a child. I took one look at John. He was in pain. When he spoke, he held his right palm over his left chest as if to reduce the pain and speak louder. At other times when I met him, he would be smiling and kidding around. "I have come to ask you for some help," he said somewhat reluctantly. "I spent all my money on treatment and have no money to buy food for my wife and children."

I hoped that it wasn't a scam. I inquired why he was in pain and needed treatment.

"I was released yesterday from confinement after being beaten up by the Undergrounds." It seems some of the Undergrounds belonging to one faction had forcefully taken shelter in his house and after they went away, members of a rival faction came to interrogate John. They found a copy of a letter used by the other faction to extort money from people and John was implicated in it. Apparently John had been forced to write the letter, but the rival faction would not believe him. John was blindfolded and taken to another town. There he was interrogated, put into a sack, and then kicked and beaten with the butt of a rifle. On the third day, family members bailed him out after paying Rs.10,000 ($240). However, there were three conditions for his release: he would be under house arrest for one year, he could not continue working at his job and he would be shot dead if he indulged in drinking and anti-national activities.

"How am I to support my family if I don't work?" John asked them.

After hours of meeting and negotiations, they allowed him to work again but retained the other two conditions. The rectification order read: "… in respect of John, the undersigned do hereby rectify/revoke the serial No. 2 of the terms and conditions and has been allowed to stay in Kohima Town to resume his duty on humanitarian ground. The terms and conditions of Serial No. 1 and 3 remains *status quo*." It was signed by the NSCN-IM Commander, Kohima Town.

On October 3, 2006, two months after I met John, I had had a full day and was walking back home in the evening. It was just getting dark. There were a couple of mini-buses and vans parked near the petrol pump below the Japfu Hotel in Kohima. As I approached the

footpath, I heard gunfire. Since it was the day after Durga Puja a festival celebrated by some Hindus in Kohima, I thought some kids were still playing with fireworks. Then came a second round of gunfire. I looked to my left and a woman and her daughter were crouching and running in my direction. To the left, about ten feet away from me, there was a man in brown jacket who was firing his pistol at another man on the other side who was ducking behind a van. More shots were fired, and then two men chased the other man inside a house next to a small grocery store. I ducked, ran for cover and hid until the firing stopped. Later that evening I learned that a policeman was shot. The next day's newspapers reported that the man shot by the unknown gunmen was Hovizol Puyo, an employee in the Wireless section of the police department. The gunmen wanted to take his van and get away, but Hovizol refused. As a result he was shot. The next day the funeral of Hovizol was held in the center of the town stopping all vehicular movements for more than two hours. The Angami Public Organization organized the pubic funeral attended by dignitaries from the state and tribal organizations. Every speaker denounced killings and intimidations by the factions. Almost a year later, the names of the 'unknown' gunmen were published in the newspapers, revealed by NSCN-IM, a rival faction.

A number of times the NSCN-K has issued a 'Quit Notice' to the Tangkhul community residing in the state of Nagaland to return to their homeland in the state of Manipur. One of the reasons for this 'Quit Notice' is because the Tangkhuls have a predominant presence in the rival faction, NSCN-IM. These factional turf wars have also spilled over to tribal and communal conflicts with strong undercurrents of factionalism. This was

clearly exhibited between two communities – Tangkhuls and Sumis - on April 22, 2008, in what was termed by the media in Nagaland as 'Black Sunday.'

On Sunday April 22, 2008, I was at a meeting in the afternoon in Dimapur when a phone call came informing me that the Wungram colony in Purana Bazaar, Dimapur, populated mostly by the Tangkhuls was being burnt down by the Sumis. Apparently, a number of Tangkhuls belonging to the NSCN-IM lived in Wungram colony. Quickly I joined a friend and we drove down to the spot. The black smoke from the burning homes could be seen from the highway in Purana Bazar. As we drove inside, there was a surreal sense. Vehicles were going in and out, and there seemed to be no blocking off the street to control the situation.

We passed by the Sumi Baptist church in Purana Bazar where was a church service going on inside. At first I thought I was mistaken. But I was right, there was a church service going on inside. "How can this be?" I asked myself. A few yards from there, the mob belonging to their own community were on an uncontrollable rampage, destroying all the houses belonging to the Tangkhuls and setting them on fire. The scene was something like from a movie.

What started as a fight among three drunk Tangkhul youth and the Kachari auto driver and the Sumi passenger was the immediate cause and just the tip of the iceberg. Apparently, as a Naga elder described it, the tension between the two communities had been building up like steam in a pressure cooker. It was bound to explode eventually.

On the way we met Rev. Kari Longchar, a Baptist pastor and official of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC). He was returning exhausted.

"Ah, we tried to talk with the mob, but we cannot reason with them and they don't listen to anybody so we just went inside the church and prayed for them," Kari said.

One of the Sumi leaders from the NBCC team apparently had been negotiating with the mob early on but found it a hopeless situation. His voice was hoarse from trying to talk to the mob and he looked very frustrated.

At the entrance of the colony there were throngs of people gathered at different spots, including some on the water tank and on the terrace of a building under construction. I stood there for some time trying to get to a better position for surveying the scene. I wasn't sure if I was in the midst of the onlookers or another mob, but certainly those near me were cheering the mob. Some were laughing, some trying to instigate the mob, and others wanting to help but feeling helpless.

The Sumi mob had come close to where I stood and was trying to demolish one of the houses. They had *daos* (machetes), crowbars and pieces of wood to destroy the house and set it on fire. I tried to get closer to where the mob was destroying the house. There was a green iron gate at the entrance of the house. A young man in his late teens or early twenties struck the wall of the house several times with a crowbar. Another man cut up whatever was in front of him while another one broke the windows. Then there was an older man in his late fifties or early sixties who signaled the mob to close the iron gate

and get in so they could destroy the house without being seen. So before I got closed in with the mob, I decided to stay out of the gate and joined the helpless spectators.

Two fire trucks were there on site but the road to the colony was blocked off by the mob so they couldn't get in to put out any fire. There were a few Naga policemen of the Indian Reserve Battalion standing with guns. There were also Indian paramilitary personnel watching. But they all just stood there like statues. It was unfathomable why the policemen were not controlling the situation.

Perhaps the two most helpless persons at the scene were the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and the Superintendent of Police (SP). The D.C. looked like he was in a total state of shock. He looked blank and incapacitated. Even worse was the S.P. who looked very indifferent, passive and unaffected by the gravity of the situation. His presence there in full uniform seemed like an oxymoron. In this case, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the District Administration and the police force were ineffective and passive spectators. At least the police did not fire any guns or even teargas. Had there been any gunfire, the whole area would have erupted into a battle zone because there were many Undergrounds there besides the police and paramilitary who had guns. Had that been the case, there would have been many casualties.

Among the onlookers there were some people who were discussing ways to diffuse the tense situation. They were a mixture of leaders from Dimapur Naga Council, Sumi leaders and leaders from other tribes and NGOs. Someone brought a microphone. In

order to bring the situation under control, the Deputy Commissinoner told one of the leaders to make an announcement for the crowd to disperse. But the microphone had a near-dead battery. So whatever minimal sound emanated from the speaker was crackled and jumbled. They gave up the idea of making any announcement. We were told that the women and children were gathered inside the church. Some were crying and others praying for their safety.

After a while, one of the Sema leaders came and told the Deputy Commissioner and some of the leaders that he had negotiated with the mob to allow the women and children to go. "It is against international law to harm innocent women and children," he said.
There was a real urgency to get the women and children out before sunset. After some arguments and pressure from the public, the DC and SP agreed to go in. Two police buses were sent in to evacuate the women and children. The DC, SP, some of the concerned Sumi leaders and NGO leaders also walked behind the buses negotiating with sections of the mob along the way as we went in.

The heat from the burning houses was intense at some stretches of the walk to where the women children were. It was risky because there was no one dousing the fires, and some gas cylinders were exploding. After what seemed like eternity, we finally reached the women and children and men. There had been a real chance that the fire might spread to the church building, so by the time we reached there, the women and children along with some men had been evacuated from the church and they were gathered in the open field. Some IRB policemen were guarding them. Seeing them I was reminded of the movie,

"The Killing Fields" about Cambodia. If there had been any indiscriminate firing, all the women and children would have been easy targets. Some of the women looked terrified, others crying, still others breast-feeding their babies. All of them worried. The men were even more worried because they feared for their lives if they were left behind.

"If we die, we will die together. If we live or die, we will not be separated from our women and children," one of the Tangkhul leaders told the administration and the leaders present there. There were more arguments and negotiations with the mob to get the men, women and children out. The urgency was to get them out before dark.

Fig. 18. Women and Children from Wungram Colony waiting to be escorted out to safety. In the background, their homes are being burnt down by Sema mob (Photo by Abraham Lotha).

The women and children were put into two buses. As they were about to leave, a message came from the mob saying they would not be responsible if any man was found inside the bus. When the buses were about to leave for a second time the road was blocked because

of the fires on the street and nearby houses. Maybe this delay was a blessing in disguise. By then it was decided that everyone, including the men, should be evacuated. So a third bus was called in. Finally, after 6:00 P.M., the women, children and men were evacuated and taken to safety at the auditorium of the Police camp. What happened there and after that is another story.

Such instances of killing and intimidation are not abnormal in Nagaland. Since the time I completed my fieldwork, one of my close friends was picked up one evening by the NSCN-K group as he went to buy a takeout dinner. He was taken to an undisclosed location and beaten. Out of fear that the group might come for him again, he went to a neighboring state to recuperate. Another friend who was on his way to his job site was way laid by the NSCN-IM and shot on the spot. Similar occurrences are routine and people have become tired of forced taxations, intimidations, extortions and factional killings. Naga nationalism seems to be on the verge of getting drowned in the whirlpool of factional rivalries instead of focusing on the negotiations with India as a united front.

Reactions to 'Nagaland for Christ'

On January 27, 2007, the NBCC and Kohima Baptist Pastors Fellowship (KBPF) organized a prayer and peace march in Kohima against the factional killings in Naga areas and demanded the factions of the armed Naga nationalists to stop killing and extortion in the name of 'Nagaland for Christ'; the organizers also demanded that the factions stop using the slogan. In his address, Rev. Kari Longchar, the NBCC Director of Peace Affairs said, "Using the holy name of God to do satanic works is abominable to

God." He appealed to the factions "to repent and ask God for forgiveness" (*Nagaland Post*, January 28, 2007; *Eastern Mirror*, January 28, 2007). In reply, Rev. Seksim Kasar, General Secretary, Council of Naga Churches (CNC) for the NSCN-IM, wrote an article in the local newspapers in which he stated:

> Yes, our lips may be too unclean to utter the phrase, "Nagalim for Christ.' Please understand us that way. But allow us to say at this point that because of human weaknesses, don't undermine 'Nagalim for Christ' and the just cause of the people altogether … But know this that the national workers whom you held responsible for violence in Nagalim, and whose works do not progress because of sin, are also loved by God. He has been using them in saving Nagas' rights from all tragedies. Through them, he has also raised the Naga issue from zero point to the highest level. … Now it is very clear that there is a big difference between your understanding of 'Nagalim for Christ' and that of ours. For you, it is only a slogan, but for us it is a principle. Know that there is immeasurable gap between a slogan on one side and a principle on the other. … You have said to stop using 'Nagalim for Christ' for killings as you accused us. We agree, this phrase 'Nagalim for Christ' must be used with all its purity…. But what kind of future do you see without 'Nagalim for Christ'? As for us we cannot imagine a bright future without 'Nagalim for Christ'. Without it we can only see darkness and doom." (Seksim Kasar, *Morung Express* February 18, 2007)

However, many Nagas continue to be bothered and affected by the contradiction of the motto 'Nagaland for Christ' upheld by the armed nationalists (NNC, NSCN-IM, NSCN-K) amidst factional killings, extortion, forced taxation and intimidations. According to Wati Aier (2008), 'Nagaland for Christ' is a marriage of Naga political ideology to Christianity and the union of the two is a form of Civil Religion wherein "Christ is co-opted to one's political ideology, which in turn justifies every action in the name of Christianity" (2008: Morung Express). Charles Chasie, a Naga writer and journalist also voiced discordance in an interview:

> I think it is humbug. First of all I don't agree with the concept that you want to create a religious state. I believe in secularism. And so, you know, what does it mean to be 'Nagaland for Christ?' What should a state like that be? Nothing has been worked out; it's just a slogan, and a slogan that profanes Christianity and

> Christ. … We claim to be one people, one nation and we are killing each other all the time; I don't think that reflects Christianity at all, even to a person like me.

Similarly, Eyingbeni Humtsoe, a Naga doctoral student in Systematic Theology at South East Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEAGST), part of Trinity Theological College, Singapore asked:

> The motto of the "nationalists" with the slogan, "Nagaland for Christ," poses the question of which Christ the Nagas are alluding to? Is he the eternal Christ, the Son of God and the Prince of Peace, as projected in the Bible? Or is 'Christ' just another name created to gloss over human blunders to give those responsible the look of "martyrdom?" The latter spells disgrace on two counts. First, it is a blatant mockery to Christianity in general that the name of Christ is abused. Second, the 'object' of our faith as Christians becomes highly suspect! … "Nagaland for Christ" cannot be simply propagated by the Nagas without assuming responsibility to live and act according to the values of the Kingdom that Christ has established with his own life. (2007)

Commenting on Humtsoe's article, Paul Pimomo, another Naga scholar added:

> It would be great if it ["Nagaland for Christ"] meant Nagaland for justice and peace and neighborliness among all the people in our land, regardless of tribes, ethnicity, religious affiliation, [and] political party. It would be great if it meant caring for the natural resources of Nagaland, educating the people and augmenting our immensely varied talents, and using the economic and human resources for the uplift of all sections of our society. … As for "Nagaland for Christ" being revealed to someone in a prophecy, we're yet to hear his/her voice and see his/her works. One thing we cannot, must not, do is to turn Nagaland into a theocracy – Christian or otherwise. (2007)

Negative reactions by the Nagas against the motto 'Nagaland for Christ' has not been unfounded. Many Nagas see the increasing factional violence and the loss of many lives as actions contrary to the Christian principles of love and forgiveness. 'Nagaland for Christ' continues to be seen as an empty rhetoric by some, and many Nagas have developed an aversion to the motto even though others such as the Undergrounds continue to see it as meaningful. However, despite these unChristian-like evidences, religion continues to be a legitimizing device for Naga nationalism.

Role of Christianity in Naga Nationalism:

Christianity fostered a greater solidarity and interaction among the Naga Christians of different communities (Yonuo 1974; Lorin and Spees 1990). As a global religion, Christianity mostly Protestantism in the Nagas' case transformed Naga local identities by strengthening solidarity among different groups and unified the Nagas. Charles Chasie said in an interview, Christianity has been instrumental in "bringing our people together, removing the barriers, creating more fellow-feeling" among the Nagas. Or as Yonuo points out, "it can also be said that Christianity was an inward machinery which brought modernization, western ways of life, education, the renaissance of Nagaism and unity among Nagas" (1974:120). Han, a Baptist pastor, described the changes brought on by Nagas' conversion to Christianity and the resultant influence on nationalism in a more down-to-earth fashion in an interview: "Those days we were headhunters, satanic people, warrior people, seeing other people we come to realize to retain our human dignity – respect our own life, and automatically become nationalist." In Naga nationalist discourse, traditional religion is looked upon as backward and primitive while becoming Christian and nationalism are seen as processes of becoming modern.

Secondly, the universalistic character of Christianity allowed Nagas to have a broader sense of self. Writing about the Ao Nagas' conversion experience, Eaton stated, "the incorporation of the Naga Hills into a larger political and economic universe – a function of colonialism – was paralleled by the region's incorporation into a literate universe, and by the Ao's own incorporation of a more powerful and permanent conception of a high god into their cosmology" (1997:263). Eaton called the Ao Nagas' example a "fusion of

literacy and religion" (1997:263). Thirdly, Christianity was responsible for introducing western education and ideas to the Naga society that ultimately produced educated Nagas who were influential in beginning the nationalist movement. As Udyon Misra summarized the impact of Christianity on Nagas nationalism: "Christianity and western education brought a section of Naga youth into contact with the liberal ideas of the West and, in the process, helped the growth of nationalistic forces by reducing to a great extent the rivalry among the various tribes (1978: 621 in Lorin and Spees 1990:360).

Thirdly, Christianity played an important ethnic marker for defining who Nagas are. This self-identification of Nagas as Christians further unified the various Naga communities for the formation of a pan-Naga Christian nation state. In this discourse, pan-Naga identity is positioned in terms of 'Christian Nagas' *vis-à-vis* what the Naga nationalists perceive as 'Hindu Indians.' Christianity is, in this sense, deeply implicated in Naga identity and nationalism. Maku, one of the respondents, narrated a story to illustrate this:

> Just recently I was in Mokokchung and there I met this reverend must be [in his] 70's 80's, I do not know. … And he made a very interesting comment: Part of the reason Nagas became Christians was [to make] a political statement, a political statement in the sense to tell the world that they are different from Indians. And so [adopting] Christianity was not necessarily along the lines of faith but more in terms of a political statement.

Broadly, it may be argued that Christianity in India is a tool of opposition to the Hindu mainstream for both the Dalits and Nagas. With the Nagas, however, this opposition was not like the emancipation movement by the Dalits as a reaction to oppression by the Hindu caste system. For most Nagas, especially those in what was known as 'Free Naga' area, their first introduction to India and Indians was through the Indian Army, and albeit some Nagas' experience of Hindu customs in neighboring Manipur and Assam, most

Nagas did not experience the oppressiveness of the Hindu caste system in India. In some ways, their antagonism was brought on by Nagas experiences of relating to Hindus. For Yonuo, there were two religion-related reasons that helped in the rise of Naga nationalism: First, the "separatist tendency had evolved mainly because of the treatment meted out to them by the converted Hindus and Muslims in Assam and Manipur who regarded them as 'untouchables' or 'dirties' for their religion and food habits[38] since the Hindus in the plains of Assam and Manipur despised them for their eating beef and the Muslims pork, for the Nagas ate both", and secondly, "the Christian missionaries whipped up the inveterate prejudices against the Hindus, describing them as inimical to animism and Christianity, since many Nagas had lately embraced Christianity as a superior and more civilized religion than Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam" (Yonuo 1974:168).

At a deeper level, according to Pelo Lorin and Emil Spees, Naga nationalism is based on "the fear of Hindu domination over Christianity" (1990: 357). Even today, one of the reasons that continue to motivate the Naga nationalists to bank on the Christian factor for protecting Naga identity is the fear that assimilation into the dominant Indian (Hindu) society would result in the loss of Naga identity. Annie, a college lecturer told me in an interview:

> Basically [we are protecting] our distinctive identity, cultural identity, the Naga identity. We don't want to be assimilated into the great Indian culture, … we realize the smallness of our minority in comparison to India. … and this is one reason why we took to Christianity in a big way so quickly because India is basically Hindu.

[38] For Hindus and Muslims, food has religious sanctions. Thus difference in food habits in this case is not only cultural but also religious.

This fear of assimilation into Hindu India is clearly a primary factor that motivates Naga nationalists such as Muivah and Phantia. At my second meeting with Thuengaleng Muivah in Dimapur, on April 28, 2007, I wanted to interview him on the politics of Naga nationalism but ut he immediately connected it with religion. For Muivah, assimilation is "the most dangerous insidious word." Illustrating a parallel experience from the Old Testament, Muivah argued that God knew this very well, so he warned the Israelites, "when you reach Canaan, you have nothing to do with this or that" [Deuteronomy 7, 8, 11, 12, 14:2]. "How does it parallel with the Nagas' case?" I asked him. To which Muivah responded:

> In our case, … we gradually realized the danger from outside, especially assimilation. So in order to be free from the danger of assimilation, nationalism is also very essential. … I am very much moved by what God said to the Israelites when they were to reach Canaan: "You have nothing to do with the people living there," he said (in reference to Exodus 19:5-6; Deut. 7; 8; 11; 12; 14:2). Because He knew what would happen. The struggle will always be there between the evil force and the forces which are the fear of God. *Hotai thakibole ase to, na?* (Won't such struggles will always be there?) It is eternal in its nature. Therefore it will be wise for you and me to see into the danger of this and keep ourselves, our people guarded against this kind of danger. Hinduism, we know the good and the bad of Hinduism. Muslims, we have heard, or any religion alien to us, very strange or new to us. Forces will come and those forces will have influence over the Naga people. This is very dangerous.

Nagas' fear is not unfounded given the recent anti-conversion laws passed in some Indian States. On February 19, 2007, the Governor of Himachal Pradesh, Vishnu Sadashiv Kokje signed the state anti-conversion law that was passed by the State legislature on December 19, 2006, making it the eighth state in India to pass an anti-conversion law. According to the Himachal Pradesh anti-conversion law, which was targeted primarily towards the Christians in the state, a two-year prison term and a fine of Rs. 25,000 ($450) will be imposed on persons found guilty of conversion to Christianity (*Nagaland Post*

February 22, 2007). In addition to such laws going against the fundamental freedom of religion in India, what makes the Himachal Pradesh anti-conversion law discriminatory is that in "case of conversion of women and persons belonging to Dalit and tribal communities, the punishment will be three years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine for Rs. 50,000 ($1,000)" (*Nagaland Post* February 22, 2007). Nagas interpret such instances as a fulfillment of what their forefathers feared. In an interview, Humsha, a Naga scholar, clarified this for me further: "Yes, … someday they [Hindus] may force the Muslims or even tribals to follow the Hindu code. Because in India the uniform civil code may be coming from Hindu ethos may not be exactly dormant because Hindus will impose and those who oppose will be just like a dog barking because they (Hindus) have the number in the parliament. We don't have the number. So these are the things our forefathers sensed." For Nagas, then, the defense of their Christian faith is a crucial factor in their nationalist struggle to protect their culture and identity from the assimilating forces of Hinduism and the dominant political forces of India.

Some Naga writers have also tried to provide Judeo-Christian foundations for Naga nationalism. For instance, for Kaka Iralu (2000), a Naga author and a political activist, Naga sovereignty and independence are based on three universal laws that govern the origin and existence of all nations. The universal laws, according to Iralu are the following: "1. No nation on earth exists without a concrete geographical land. 2. The national identity of a nation is inseparable from the geographical identity of that nation. 3. The national and geographical identities of a nation are indestructible and unchangeable" (2000:1). For Iralu, the "premise upon which the three universal laws are built" is Acts

17:26, which says that God, "made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation." The Indo-Naga war, says Iralu, is "a result of India's violation of these universal laws with respect to Nagaland" (2000:2). When I asked him to justify the arguments for Naga nationalism based on the Bible, Kaka Iralu insisted, "It is the only reasonable and logical argument for Naga nationalism."

Debates by Naga theologians have also taken up Naga nationalism from the perspective of liberation theology (Nuh 1996, 2003; Aier, 1997). Rev. V.K. Nuh, in an interview told me: "Christianity is majority [in Nagaland] so we cannot isolate from [the] society. As Christians the church is there when public is there, so [the] church should have big role." "So, how does Christianity help Naga nationalism?" I asked him. "[Christianity] plays a major role because of [the] concept of liberation in the gospel. Jesus said, I will liberate from all slavery, sin, and hunger [in reference to Luke 4:18-21]. Similarly, writing to the Naga Baptist churches marking the celebration of 125th anniversary of Christianity in Nagaland, Wati Aier, a Naga Baptist theologian, stated: " The present situation of the Naga socio-political order challenges the churches to move beyond mere liberal rhetoric and harmless neutral stance, devoid of any theology of bringing changes, involvement and action" (1997:78). Aier wrote further that in the present context, Naga churches "need a bold and incisive response that is prophetic because it speaks to the particular context of Naga history, a response that does not give the impression of being 'neutral' but to clearly take a stand. In the war between right and wrong, there are no neutrals. We are either dead or alive" (1997:178).

Challenges

Even though Christianity united the Nagas at a national level by superseding local identities, it has also served as a cause for divisiveness amongst the Nagas. Baptist Protestantism plays a divisive role among the Nagas in two ways: First, Baptist Protestantism reduplicated the Naga social structure. As Gordon Pruett points out, "the Baptist polity meshes happily with Naga tribal policy… Both polities are 'congregational' and solidly committed to the concept of local autonomy" (Pruett 1974:60). Baptist Protestantism's 'free church' spirit and notion of personal salvation encouraged fragmentation of groups through sectarianism and denominations. This is particularly evidenced by the formation of the Naga Christian Revival Churches as a breakaway splinter group from the Baptist church following revivals within the Baptist church in Nagaland. These splinter churches and the existence of other denominations among the Nagas such as Pentecostals, Assembly of God, Seventh Day Adventists, and Catholics parallel in some ways the various Naga communities. The autonomous nature of these denominations further divided along tribal lines such as Ao Baptist Church, Angami Baptist Church, Lotha Baptist Church causes fragments within Naga society. The Catholic Church is beginning to make some unifying impact across tribal lines, but is still too small a minority to have a significant impact. When Baptist Protestantism's individualism, based on the priesthood of all believers and personal salvation, is transferred to the priesthood of all political believers, (i.e. Naga nationalism), the result is a potential fragmentation of the nationalists into different factions, unable to unite because of personal agendas such as power, prestige, and economic opportunism as seen in the Nagas' case.

Secondly, division amongst the Nagas is also caused by the incompleteness of conversion to Christianity. Through conversion to Christianity and modernity, missionaries and colonialism brought about changes in the cosmology (Eaton 1997) and world-view (Comaroffs 1986) of the Nagas, but one can't claim a complete change in the deep structures in the Levi-Straussian sense. Christianity enhanced certain values of Naga society such as love of one's neighbors, equality, honesty, hospitality, and concern for the poor. But Christianity did not uproot the other elements of Naga society such as tribalism or violence. Puthenpurakal said that one of the reasons why some scholars suggest that Christianity among the Nagas, Baptist Christian in this case, is only skin-deep:

> … may be found in the fact, that the great block of conversions – the results of the first People Movements in the Naga Hills - were made through the work of untrained evangelists, for the majority of whom becoming a Christian meant in a vague manner becoming part of a new society rather than any serious consideration of Christianity's ethical or moral demands. (Puthenpurakal 1984:144)

While, according to Ezamo Murry, a Naga Baptist theologian, "conversion among the Nagas has tended to be of a 'sudden nature' rather than of a 'progressive or maturational' nature" (Murry 1995:82), and the outcome is a pathological religion. Murry explains further:

> …in spite of the effort to abstain from the practices of animistic culture, the Nagas have not been able to shake off their old superstitious beliefs. In a sense, the Nagas have a double-tiered system of beliefs. They were believing in two kinds of deities, benevolent and malevolent. When Christianity came, they adapted themselves to two types of beliefs – the old animistic belief and the new belief in the benevolent God of Christianity, living practically in the former and theoretically in the latter. The old ways, which were deeply ingrained, could not be erased from the new Christian ways of the Nagas. (1995:79)

While Christianity has the potential to undermine the local and nationalize by unifying (a collection of) individuals, the incompleteness of conversion breeds confusion within the

Naga society because the norms of traditional social system continue to exert a strong hold. In other words, the majority of Nagas continue life in rural areas, living local existence, and limited conversion has left intact strong local attachments. Christianity is confined to church services on Sundays, and on some weekday evenings, but for the rest of the week Nagas are guided by their traditional ethos. This has left much of the traditional social system wherein clan, village, and tribal identities continue to be reinforced, consequently leading to the recurrences of localism, tribalism and factionalism. Unitive Christian ideology is unable to make a dent in the current factional violence because such tribalistic forces are dominantly at work. Christianity is still just one of the many garments used strategically by the Nagas. So too, with the Naga nationalists, it appears that no matter how many people one may have killed, if one accepts Jesus as the Lord and God of all, one will be saved. Thus, at numerous functions, nationalist leaders cry and weep in prayer, but those tears do not soften the hearts hardened by factionalism, prestige, power, money and revenge.

As illustrated by the current heightened factionalism, the means to achieve the political aspiration is anything but united; at the implementation level, Naga nationalism is dictated by the politics of power and guns. As far as achieving the nationalist aspiration is concerned, the Christian ethics of 'turning the other cheek,' as Weber said, is seen as an 'ethics of indignity' fit only for saints (Weber 1948:119). Nationalists such as the NNC and NCSN are like Weber's parties who plan to achieve a goal. In claiming to follow the 'ethic of ultimate ends' (Weber 1948:120), the NSCN members don't feel they have to be responsible for their immoral actions or 'unprincipled opportunism.' Naga nationalists

may claim ‘Nagaland for Christ,’ but Naga nationalism is not religious but political in which the power dimension (violence as the decisive means) co-opts the Christian ethics (of indignity). At the level of power play, Naga nationalism is still guided by traditional ethos of tribalism, power and might, status, prestige, as well as contemporary forces of money, and ‘floating culture’ (Sakhrie 2005), intensified by the manipulations of Indian Intelligence’s politics of divide and rule, which, of course, is the normal strategy of any nation-state. In the struggle for power and domination and turf war among the Underground factions, the AK-47 seems more effective than the Bible. For the commandment of politics as vocation is: 'thou *shalt* resist evil by force,' or else you are responsible for the evil winning out” (Weber 1948:119-120). Thus, in spite of meetings for reconciliation, to forgive and forget for unity, as NSCN-IM Chairman Isak Swu says, “Politically it is not possible” to reconcile because, as General Secretary Muivah also adds, “We can’t compromise with traitors” (NSCN-IM Meeting with Church Leaders Consultation and Interaction Meeting, January 26, 2007). Such attitude reflects Weber’s definition of power as “the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the same action” (1946:180). In their attempt to achieve their plans, parties, for whom politics is a vocation, follow the path of violence because Christian ethics such as the one found in the Sermon on the Mount or ‘turning the other cheek’ is an ethics of indignity fit only for the saint (Weber 1948:119). Social groups, then, achieve their planned, rational goals not just by an ideology that inspires the groups but in practice, through power play and the use of force and violence. Localizing forces of clanism, tribalism, and factionalism are crippling elements that have continued to define contemporary Naga

nationalism. As a Naga friend told me in jest, “We claim we are saved by the blood of Jesus, but Naga blood is thicker than the blood of Jesus.” The challenge is to go beyond the tribe and factions.

Christianity started in Nagaland as an external factor but has been internalized by the Nagas and has become an internal factor for Naga nationalism. Another external factor which Naga use to reinforce an internal ethnic factor is the rights of indigenous peoples based on the declaration of universal human rights which compounds and legitimizes their nationalist claims as the next chapter will show.

CHAPTER VII

GLOBAL INDIGENISM AND INTERNATIONALIZATION OF NAGA NATIONALISM

"Towards our rightful place through the healing of our spirit"
(Theme of Naga Week celebrations, December 1993)

Modernist proponents of the 'constructivist' or 'instrumentalist' model of nationalism hold that forces other than primordial ethnic elements engender nationalism (Anderson 1983; Kohn; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1983). Nagata (1981) also argued the importance of external conditions as critical for ethnic nationalism. Gurr (1993) also pointed out that the potential for acting on grievances by minorities depends on *political opportunities* that influence communal decisions. *Political opportunities* can be global process such as the expansion of the state and development of a global economic system. Examples of such macro level *political opportunity* are two international factors that have facilitated political mobilization for action: International diffusion of political action among transnational kindred which affects political action in adjoining countries, and contagion of conflict which "refers to the processes by which one group's actions provide inspiration and strategic and tactical guidance for groups elsewhere" (Gurr 1993:132-134). In the latter case, as Gurr pointed out, "networks of communication, political support, and material assistance have developed among similar groups that face similar circumstances" (1993:134). Gurr (1993), discussing why minorities rebel, cited the 'extent of group cohesion and mobilization' as one of the predisposing traits of disadvantaged groups and their potential for acting on their grievances. But Gurr also added that, "foreign sympathizers can contribute substantially to a communal group's

cohesion and political mobilization by providing material, political, and moral support" (1993:128). Examples of this are Indigenous rights organizations such as the American Indian Movement and the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. Similarly, Maiz (2003) also suggested the availability of new alliances as one of the *political opportunity structures* that prove decisive in nationalist mobilization. Among such *political opportunity structures* or diffusion and contagion of political action are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the member states of the United Nations, the UN Commission on Human Rights, replaced by the Human Rights Council (HRC) in 2006, and the phenomenon of global indigenism articulated through informal and formal networks of indigenous peoples and activism at the United Nations such as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII).

On December 10, 1048, the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizing that "the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." This document affirmed, among others, that, "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (Article 1), and that "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (Article 2). Since the adoption of this Declaration of Universal Human Rights as "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations" (UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights), states and non-states have sought to comply with this universal standard of human rights by setting up monitoring and fact-

finding commissions. Though these rights are sometimes seen as deriving from Enlightenment ideals that tend to be Western ethnocentric, they are looked upon as universal yardsticks to respect, guarantee, restore and restitute the right of people in the world. Based on these universal rights, indigenous peoples all over the world have also sought nation-states to respect the right of the indigenous peoples (Messer 1993; Anya 1996; Kingsbury 1998; Muchlebach 2001). Their efforts culminated in the UN General Assembly adoption of the Declaration on the Rights for Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) on September 13, 2007. Politically, indigenous peoples base their political activism on Article 3 of (UNDRIP) which says: "Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their common, social and cultural development" (UNDRIP).

In this chapter, I will examine how external factors such as global indigenism have influenced Naga nationalism and how Nagas use global indigenous activism such as WGIP and UNPFII to define and articulate their aspirations, lobby their case, and what this process does to the Naga nationalist movement. It is not within the scope of this chapter to deal with defining indigenousness or to research the discourse of global indigeneism; my intent is, rather, to examine how international indigenism activism at the moment, particularly at the UN, has influenced Naga nationalism and the way it is being articulated. Naga indigenism is not so much about globalizing an essential indigenous culture but rather that of utilizing the UN principles of human rights for self-determination. The primary objective of Nagas' involvement in global indigenous activism is to internationalize the Naga cause, garner support and solidarity from other

indigenous groups undergoing similar problems, and legitimize their demands using international laws and rights, to pressure the Indian government into recognizing the rights of the Nagas, and through the right to self-determination, to attain a global identity as a distinct nation state among many other member nation states represented at the United Nations.

Human Rights and Self-Determination

Issues of human rights violations by India have served as the trope from which Nagas lobbied to pursue their primary agenda of self-determination through full independence. Like most other indigenous peoples' representations at the UN indigenous peoples' forums, allegations of human rights violations by the dominant society, India in the Nagas' case, have been a recurring theme concomitant with the demand for right to self-determination. In the Naga Hoho President's office there is a poster prominently displayed on the wall directly above the desk. The poster uses the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the standard yardstick to measure the violation of human rights by India in relation to Naga political issues. The poster alleges that India has violated 25 out of the first 30 Articles (except for Articles 4, 24, 25 and 27) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Posing the question, 'Is India really the world's largest democracy?' the poster alleges that there are three main reasons for the Human Rights violations by India upon the Nagas:

> Armed Forces Special Powers Act of 1958 (AFSPA) grants the Indian army legal immunity as well as powers of arrest, search and seizure without warrant and entitlement to 'shoot and kill' on mere suspicion of being involved in a freedom movement. The Nagas have no right to approach any court to seek justice for atrocities committed by such officer.

> Restricted Area Permit (RAP) was enacted in the early 1950s by India to restrict the in-flow of foreigners and cover up the unspeakable crimes in Nagalim. Today still very few people are allowed into Nagalim. Journalists and politicians usually are automatically turned down for a visa. People wishing to apply for the RAP may have to wait for approval and if they are lucky to get the visa may only stay a maximum of 10-15 days.
>
> Caste-based discrimination and Christian persecution is a part of the Hindu belief system. Caste is a division of people based on the belief that people are born into a certain level of society based on their 'Karma.' The lowest caste the 'Untouchables – the Dark skinned – Blacks of India' suffer the most degradation. Since the Nagas are minorities they are considered outside the caste system and "an untouchable." The Nagas have suffered a "double whammy" of discrimination by Hindu extremists because they are also Christians. Currently India has made three states[39] in India anti-conversion states. Giving out a bible tract, bible or preaching about Christ could get one kicked out of India, thrown in jail, raped, tortured or killed. One favorite practice is stripping the missionary or new convert and publicly parading their nude body in public.

The poster concludes with the following appeal: "India is a member of the UN therefore they are supposed to adhere to the Declaration of Human Rights … America and other member states of the United Nations should … start holding India accountable for all of their human rights violations on the Naga people!!!"

The poster on the wall in the Naga Hoho office is not banal nationalism (Billig 1995) but a dominant political statement in Naga nationalist discourse. It is not a surprise then that the NSF and NPMHR call upon the international community "to continuously strengthen the Naga People's relentless efforts for FREEDOM and JUSTICE" (2004 emphasis original).

[39] Since the publication of this poster by the Naga Hoho, other states in India have enacted similar laws.

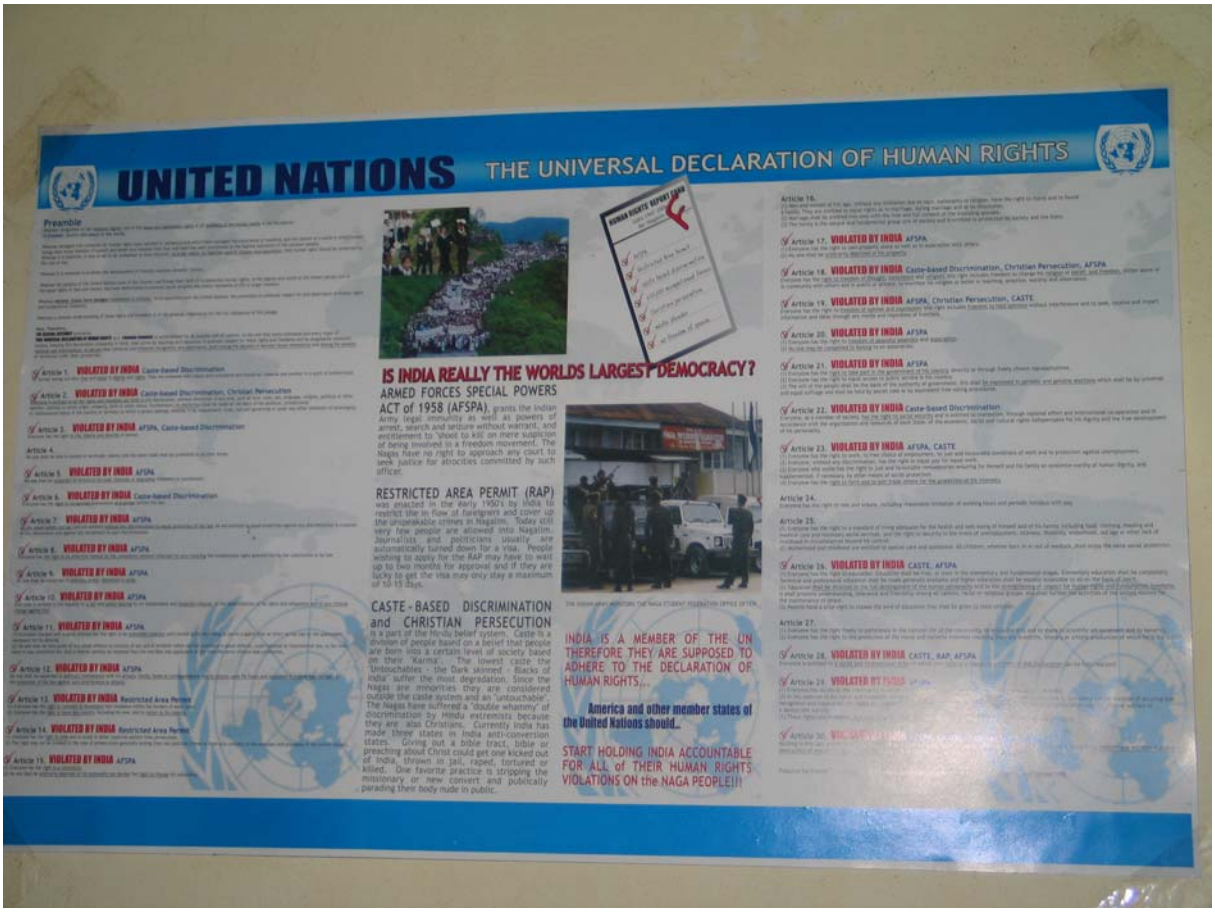

Fig. 19. A poster in the Naga Hoho Office illustrating the various articles of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights violated by India in the Naga political issue (Photo by K.T. Thomas).

Nagas' efforts to internationalize their cause at the UN level actually began in 1947. When the Nagas declared their independence on August 14, 1947, the Naga National Council (NNC) sent a cable to the UN Secretary General that read: "Benign Excellency. Kindly put on record that Nagas will be independent. Discussions with India are being carried on to that effect. Nagas do not accept Indian constitution. The right of the people must prevail regardless of size" (NNC Hist:15). Since 1947, from time to time, the Nagas sent reports to the UN about the prevailing situation in Nagaland. At a meeting in Mokokchung on April 12, 1952, reacting to Nehru's response to the Naga delegation in New Delhi on March 11, 1952, the NNC, resolved the following:

> … that an appeal be made to the UNITED NATIONS organization, before the Naga case became a complicated issue and a source of danger to Peace, to assist:
> 1. in helping India and Nagaland to conclude a settlement whereby a Naga Independent State may in Nagaland be established forthwith; or failing to achieve which,
> 2. in Nagaland being placed under the Trusteeship of the United Nations of a limited period of years before complete Independence is established; or everything else failing,
> 3. in creating in Nagaland – part or whole – a nucleus from which the ideal of the United Nations' One-World Government may be established. (Khodao Papers)

In 1960, A.Z. Phizo, then President of the NNC, reached London in order to internationalize the Naga issue, particularly to bring the Nagas' cause to the attention of the UN, to seek help from other countries, and to put pressure on India. In October that same year, enumerating cases of atrocities by the Indian Army on the Naga people, Phizo made an appeal to Frederik H. Boland, the President of the 15th UN General Assembly: "Unless the UNITED NATIONS intervene, the Naga citizens will continue to die all because they wanted to live as a Free Nation. Nobody's life is safe anywhere throughout Nagaland. Therefore, I am appealing to Your Excellency to circulate this Memorandum among the Member Nations of the United Nations" (NNC Hist:37). Four other members of the NNC joined him in London two years later with the intention of proceeding to the UN to influence upon the international body. But apart from receiving an acknowledgement of a telegram, Phizo was not successful in making inroads to influence the UN body. Allegedly, the Indian Government sent Hokishe Sema, the Chief Minister of Nagaland from 1969-1974, as a member of the Indian delegation to the 27th UN General Assembly to "convince the western press and UN delegations about the 'baseless claims' of the Naga nationalists" (Shimray 2005:290). Kaka Iralu, a political activist and author told me in interview, "Phizo succeeded in raising the issue once in the UN, but the

Indian government sabotaged that by taking Hokishe and one Khasi lady to the UN General Assembly where Hokishe stated [that], Nagas had asked for a state under India. The Indian government said, that state has been given [so the] Naga problem has been solved." One of the informants alleged that this was one of the reasons Hokishe Sema was ambushed by the suspected armed nationalists near Kohima on August 8, 1972. Phizo and other Naga nationalist leaders had tried to take the Naga cause to the UN, but no tangible results were seen. In the 1970s and 1980s, many Naga nationalists would say in hushed tones, "Only one more signature is needed." But that 'one more signature' was not coming. Efforts to internationalize Nagas' cause intensified after Phizo's death in 1990 through global indigenous activism.

Global Indigenous Discourse

Global indigenism or indigenism at the UN is a discourse that guides transnational networks of indigenous people to maintain solidarity with one another to pursue their 'common' struggle for self-determination. Numerous scholars (Bowen 2000; Cobo 1986; Colchester 2002; Daes 1996; Kingsbury 1995; Gray 1995; Li 2000; McIntosh 2002; Muehlebach 2001; Niezen 2003; Rosengren 2002) have examined the history and development of the discourse on indigenism. In global indigenous activism, the UN and its arms like the UNESCO, and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) are looked upon as sources for new ideas as platforms to internationalize indigenous causes and add leverage to legitimize their claims and redress their problems. The United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) has been a "unique exercise in international affairs" (Burger 1994 in Muehlebach 2001), or as

Andrea Muehlebach has pointed out, an important global site that has offered the indigenous peoples "the possibility to comment on local, regional, national, and international developments pertaining to the situations of indigenous peoples, and to participate actively in the development of international legal standards for the protection of their rights" (2001:415). Among some of the outcomes by indigenous peoples, for instance, on September 19, 2003, the Supreme Court of Canada made a landmark decision in R. v. Powley recognizing the existence of Métis as a distinct Aboriginal people with constitutional rights. Commenting on this decision, Audrey Poitras, the then Interim President and Spokesperson for the Métis National Council said, "To all the Métis people watching I want to say two words: We won. We won! … This decision is a great victory for the Métis Nation. The governments of Canada can no longer refuse to negotiate with the Métis Nation and treat us as though we don't have any Aboriginal rights. Those days are over" (www.metisnation.ca). Similarly, on May 11, 2005, an agreement was signed between the Sámi people in Norway and the Norwegian Government. As Johan Lovald said:

> According to the agreement, the Norwegian Government is obliged to inform the Sámi Parliament as early as possible of the commencement of any relevant matters that may directly affect the Sámi or where Sámi interests and conditions may be affected. After the Sámi Parliament has been informed, it shall notify the Government as to whether further consultations are desired. The Sámi parliament also has a right to request consultations on other matters that they consider will affect the Sámi. (Statement by Johan L. Lovald Ambassador, Permanent Representative, New York, 23 May 2006)

The struggles by the indigenous peoples have been about who decides the future of the people or the area. The contention is that political self-determination will bring about resolutions for ethnonationalisms.

Among indigenous people in India, Karlsson (2003) examined the politics of self-identification indigeneity by groups in India such as the Indian Council of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ICITP), Bodos, Nagas, and their mobilization at the United Nations. Even though in theory the Indian Constitution provisions entitle certain rights and privileges to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, gaining an indigenous slot at the UN provides an added advantage of access to internationally approved rights to lobby indigenous peoples' cases. Thus, in spite of contestations about indigeneity, particularly by the Indian state, the indigenous delegates from India have asserted the importance of securing "'collective right of self-determination' and thus restore 'land and forest rights to their people'" (Karlsson 2003:407). Among the indigenous groups in India, the Nagas have been prominent by their presence at UN indigenous functions.

Nagas joined the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) in 1983 to lobby their case and since then their representatives have been traveling the world, attending conferences and seminars, participating at the UNPO meetings and other UN forums for political advocacy and international lobbying to seek interventions at the highest level possible for their self-determination. Nagas have continued to be active participants in global indigenism in their struggle for self-determination. In a letter to Michael Van Walt, the president of Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organizations (UNPO) in 1991, Mhonchan Humtsoe, Private Secretary to the President, NNC, enumerated the points of the cable sent to the UN in 1947 and requested the UNPO, "to note and recognize the Naga Nation as a SOVEREIGN NAGALAND." The same letter also asked the UNPO to send them "detail formalities [of] how to become a member of UNPO"

(Khodao Papers). Through the NSCN-IM, the Nagas were admitted to the UNPO at its Third Assembly on January 23, 1993 (Shimray 2005:286). Alleging human rights violations, Swu informed the UNPO about the "untold sufferings and the bitter state of affairs that Naga people have been subjected to in the past forty years on account of the preposterous occupation of their homeland by the Indian and Burmese (Myanmarese) armed forces" (Shimray 2005:286). According to Shimray, the Indian government tried to discredit the Nagas' membership at the UNPO by trying to send Shikiho Sema, the then Minister for Higher and Technical Education even though it did not materialize due to technical problems (2005:290).[40]

When the UN declared the year 1993 as International Year for Indigenous Peoples, the Nagas jumped at the opportunity and joined a "new partnership" with the UN indigenous organizations and indigenous peoples worldwide in their struggle for self-determination. To mark the occasion, the Naga Students Federation (NSF) and Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) organized a weeklong celebration called Naga Week at Kohima, the capital of Nagaland, in the first week of December 1993. I was in Kohima then and attended the Naga Week celebrations.

Naga Week

It was downtown Kohima. The jeep clunked through the heart of the city. At the traffic point, the police directed us to the local ground. For December the ground was wet. It must have rained the night before. The ground, ordinarily dry and dusty at that time of the

[40] For a detailed list of the Nagas' participation at the UN Human Rights sessions in Geneva and New York, including participation at the UNPO, and WGIP see Shimray (2005).

year, was transformed into a model Naga village except that none of the houses looked alike. There was a big pavilion in the middle that represented a traditional *morung* (bachelors' dormitory) and surrounding it were model houses representing the various Naga 'tribes' from Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Burma. The model houses were not empty; there were various shawls, food items, and other artifacts on display. Some items were for sale and others were for exhibit. It was December but the weather was kind to the people. Many were dressed in their traditional festive attire. Folksongs, war chants and *nzaka* (a typical Naga chant-like loud shout to sign one's presence, homecoming or victory) echoed from different houses. There was an air of euphoria and hope as people went from one house to another taking in all the cultural expressions. Towards the southern side, immediately behind a row of houses, there was the main stage and an arena where various cultural programs would be performed. In one corner of the arena, the Yimchuger warriors were dancing.

The chief guest, the Maharaja of Manipur, arrived. Rosemary Dzüvichü, the master of ceremonies, announced that the Naga flag would be unfurled by the chief guest followed by the beating of the logdrum by the Konyak warriors from Chui village in Mon District. As the chief guest ascended the stage and proceeded to the flagpole, the Yimchung warriors danced and chanted in the background. The Naga flag was unfurled and the audience erupted into shouts of joy. The Konyak warriors beat their logdrum. The sounds of *nzaka* and the chiming of the small bells swaying on the warriors' regalia blended with the rhythm of the logdrum. Introducing the Naga Week celebrations, Dzüvichü told the audience:

> The past few Naga week seminars have been initiating a healthy dialogue among our people and it has shown that discrimination is still standing its ground. Our people are going through a systematic program of exploitation by dominant and mainstream society. Our people like other indigenous people in the world are being denied the right to determine our own future. ... It was also seen that self-inflicted wounds and not just wounds from without are important aspects to be questioned and analyzed by the Naga people seriously. There is a great anticipation and hope of what this Year of Indigenous People will bring about in the years to come. The potentialities of the human rights movement and the students' movement in sustaining our people's struggle against exploitation and discrimination have been reinforced. The year 1993 as the Year of Indigenous Peoples is the beginning of a new era for the Nagas and the world's indigenous people. And it is our hope and vision that we are marching towards our rightful place through healing of our spirits.

After Dzvüchü's introduction, Neingolo Krome, the Convenor of Naga Week, welcomed the gathering and addressed them:

> … as the UN declared 1993 as the Year of World's Indigenous Peoples, the Naga Students Federation and Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights went into a series of discussions to review the stand of the Naga people as indigenous people on this small corner of the globe and to share this opportunity with other indigenous peoples of the world. Following the various deliberations, and the decisions arrived at various phases, the organizers of this Naga Week in the past many months could reach out to a lot of people at the international level, to the international communities who have known the Nagas for ages, and to other communities who have already come to know the Nagas. During this period we were able to reach out to fellow Nagas who are divided into the different political boundaries, geographical demarcations, under places where the Naga people were divided by colonial rulers of the past who had not even the decency to consult the opinion of the Nagas nor had given an inch of respect to the wishes of the Naga people to stay together as a people. … We are 26 Naga tribes gathered in this gathering. … However, beginning from today, with our gathering, we form the part of the 300 million indigenous peoples of the world. Out of the 300 million indigenous people of the world, the Naga people of Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal, Assam and Burma, numbers approximately around three million people. We are a small people, yet a distinct people. ... And with the celebration of this Naga Week to commemorate the UN Year of Indigenous People, Nagas shall not only continue to live as indigenous people in our own land, but as the sons and daughters of the Naga land in Naga area. We shall re-assert our rights at all levels possible, and we shall continue to live as a distinct people in this corner of the world. And to do that, as the theme of the Naga Week tells you, "Towards our rightful place through the healing of our spirit."

The Naga Week celebrations culminated in the erection of a monolith at the Solidarity Park. Much like a traditional stone-pulling ceremony, the monolith was pulled from the local ground in Kohima to the Solidarity Park, a distance of about five miles. A traditional Naga ritual to portend good or evil was performed by a Tangkhul elder by strangling a rooster. The elder squatted, said a prayer and with his right hand he held the rooster tightly by the neck, and as the rooster convulsed in its death, the elder watched to see which leg of the rooster would cross over the other. Those assembled around him watched in anxious silence. The rooster's left leg went limp first, and the right leg crossed over it. Three times the rooster flapped its wings in convulsion, and all three times its right leg crossed over the left. This was a good omen. The elder smiled and stood up. At the end of the sacrifice there was a Baptist style communal prayer by all those present. Then Neingolo Krome, the Convener, read out the declaration:

> During this short Naga Week, we have shared our minds, our thoughts and our heads. We have shared our arts and cultures, have shared our traditional dances, we have shared our traditional games, and most of all, we have shared the pleasure of each other's company and the expression of Naga people as a distinct people in this part of the world. And as we come to this Solidarity Park, from today this very spot on which we are standing will be called Naga Solidarity Park. From now onwards we will speak of the Naga people as one, and this very Park will speak of Naga solidarity.

The Naga Week celebrations marked the beginning of a new chapter in the Naga national movement. Internally, it reinforced the solidarity of the Nagas as one people. For the first time in their history, the various Naga 'tribes' came together to celebrate their cultural heritage and indigenous identity for a common aspiration – towards a rightful place as a distinct nation among the other nation states in the world through the healing of their spirit. Secondly, Naga nationalism seemed to have transcended the borders of India and

the United Kingdom[41] to the international arena, particularly networking with other indigenous peoples at the UN. During the celebrations, there were speeches underlining the rights of the Nagas that needed to be protected in solidarity with the rest of the indigenous peoples in the world, and the International Year for Indigenous Peoples was a fitting starting point. A letter was read out to that effect by the organizers stating that Nagas are partners of the world indigenous peoples. At one of the sessions, Luingam Luithui, a Tangkhul Naga, spoke on behalf of the Asia Indigenous Peoples' Pact about representing Naga issues to the United Nations. The grandiose celebration of Naga Week instilled hope in the Nagas that their fight for self-determination was nearing fulfillment. Thirdly, beginning with the Naga Week celebrations, Naga nationalism was no longer just the privileged domain of the armed nationalists; it saw the entry of Naga civil societies such as the Naga Students Federation (NSF) and Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) in the nationalist movement and participate in a major way. The NPMHR was active in the formation of Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), International Alliance for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests (IAITTF), and participation at such UN forums as UNCHR, IWGIA, UNPFII, etc. (NSF 2005:90). Nagas now take pride that they have been active partners in global indigenism, especially from early 1990s. But how were Naga aspirations articulated at their participation in the global indigenous forums such as the Working Group for Indigenous Peoples (WGIP) and United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)?

[41] Phizo and a few of the NNC leaders were in London since the early 1960s with the intention of taking the Naga cause to the rest of the world but with little success.

WGIP and UNPFII Sessions

Indigenous activism at the WGIP and United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) represents a "carefully crafted discourse production" (Muehlebach 2001:421) in which indigenous delegates learn the UN lingo to make persuasive arguments in their interventions at the WGIP, UNPFII or other UN forums. According to Muehlebach, the WGIP has been a privileged site for indigenous cultural politics for "making place" at the UN. Muehlebach used the concept of "place making" as a transnational locality in terms of "indigenous place" where indigenous peoples articulate their specific way-of-being-in-the-world. Secondly, "place-making" also points to articulations about "a specific meaningful relationship indigenous delegates portray their peoples as having to their territories, and the political solution that is advocated, namely the right to self-determination" (2001:416). Muehlebach also examined how the indigenous politics of place has shifted from an earlier 'politics of morality' (as a counter attack to moralities that legitimized exploitations and oppressions), to an alternative morality based on the politics of knowledge, culture and biodiversity, particularly of knowledge in the service of biodiversity in the context of current global discourses such as environment, globalization and sustainable development (2001).

In 1993, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) joined the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) at Geneva for the first time. In his first address at the conference of the Working Group (WGIP), Isak Swu, the Chairman of the NSCN-IM, called the association with the WGIP the finest opportunity for the Nagas "choked up without any outlet to the outside world, … to speak out against the flagrant violation of

our inalienable right of self-existence and subjection of our people to untold bitter state of affairs for the past 40 years on account of preposterous occupation of our homeland by the Indian and Burmese armed forces" (Swu 1993). Swu also urged the WGIP, "that the right of the weak people and the indigenous to self-determination be safeguarded at all costs" (Swu 1993). Another international platform for voicing indigenous issues is the UNPFII. At the Fifth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples Issues in May 2006, New York, I had a chance to observe how indigenous peoples, Nagas included, represented themselves at the Forum.

New York, May 15, 2006: I am at the opening of the Fifth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) at the UN headquarters in New York. There were thousands of indigenous peoples assembled in the hall wearing hats with feathers, an assortment of necklace, beautiful embroideries, and dress of all types and colors. A taped message from Kofi A. Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations called the occasion a "day of celebration." In his welcome speech, Jose Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and the Coordinator for the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, hoped that the final draft of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples would be adopted by the General Assembly. He also called for the inclusion of indigenous peoples in all policy processes to promote their participation in decisions that affect their lives and to promote the culture and identity of indigenous peoples. I expected that representatives of the Naga people would be present and was curious to see who would be there. As I sat listening to

the speeches and thought about Nagaland, a woman wearing a Naga *mekhla* (sarong) walked by and sat in front of me. After the session I asked her where she came from:

"From Nagaland," Atina Gangmei replied.

"What about other Naga people? Are they also here to attend this Session?"

"No, this year they did not come. I am alone. I am representing the Rongmei Naga Women Organization (Rongmei Luc Phuam) of Assam, Manipur and Nagaland."[42]

"But why represent only the women?"

"Because a lot more women are being victimized these days, and we have to tell their story."

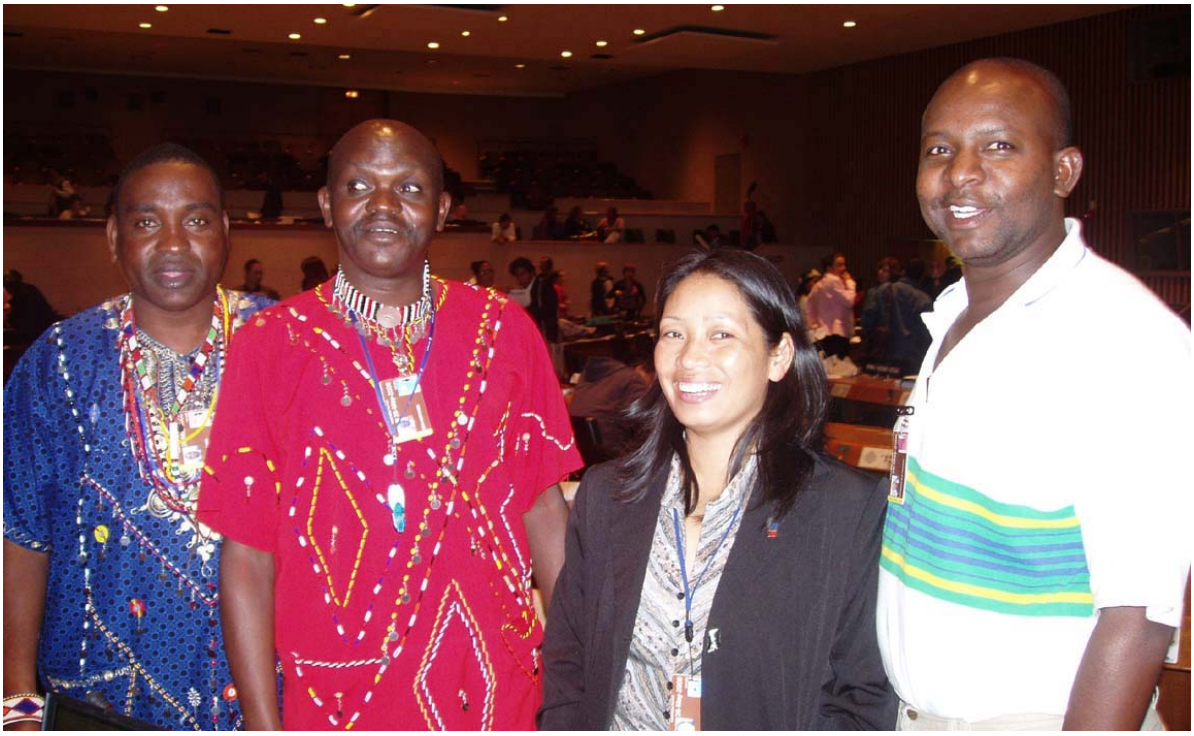

Fig. 20. Atina Gangmei of Rongmei Naga Women Organization with delegates from Africa at the Fifth session of the UNPFII, 2005 (Photo by Abraham Lotha).

[42] More than a year later, some members of the NPMHR privately expressed dissatisfaction that Atina's representation at the UNPFII was self-styled. They felt that she was not representing the Naga cause properly and that her participation made it problematic for the Nagas to make a coordinated representation at the UNPFII.

At her intervention during the Session, citing recent killings of women and children and indiscriminate firing upon innocent Naga civilians in Manipur by the Indian paramilitary forces, Atina made three recommendations to the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples. The first two of the recommendations urged the Permanent Forum to:

1. Support the **ongoing Indo-Naga political talk** and recommend the Indian government to ensure the recognition and respect for Naga indigenous people right to Self-determination.
2. Recommend States to provide befitting protection to indigenous women and children, condemn human rights violation against indigenous women and girls in situation of armed conflict and take necessary measures to stop these violations and insist on the investigation of acts of violence against indigenous women and those responsible be found and brought before the court. (Gangmei 2006, emphasis original)

Two years later at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples Issues in 2008, Athili Sapriina, representing the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), attended the UNPFII session. In his intervention, Sapriina stated that even as the dialogue process between India and Nagas was going on, the Indian Intelligence Agencies were monitoring the Naga people, especially the leaders. He further stated that the Indian state uses the media and propaganda machinery to create fissures among the Nagas through false propaganda. Among others, Sapriina recommended that the UNPFII urge:

1. the Government of India to take bold positive steps on the Indo-Naga issue towards an acceptable and just settlement of the political issues.
2. India to halt her policy of using the Media, Intelligence Agencies and not resort to using the Military Civic Action (MCA) and Army Development Group (ADG) to do counter insurgency.

A point of contention in the Indian context, as Karlsson (2003) points out, is that though people in India have been representing the indigenous peoples such as the WGIP since 1985, whereas the Indian Council of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ICITP) states that

they aspire to self-determination within the nation state, the Naga delegates have insisted on full independence. As Swu said in his speech at the WGIP conference in 1993, the Naga case was different. Unlike the other indigenous groups at the WGIP conference:

> … the Indo-Naga issue is neither a question of 'separation' nor 'secession' from India. But it is a war of resistance against invasion. Because separation or secession comes only when there is a union. Nagaland was [never] and is never a part of India nor that of Burma either by conquest or by consent. And as such ours is a case of resistance against the invasion of Nagaland by India and Burma and a case of recognition of the inalienable right of self-existence of the Naga people. (Swu 1993)

Similarly, sensing the problems that could arise from the working definition of 'indigenous,' the NPMHR as early as 1993 also stated, "our case is different and distinct in itself while the problems of most of the other indigenous peoples relate to recognition of their rights within nation states and they seek (redress) of their problems with Governments concerned, our case is an indigenous people under forced occupation and seeking recognition of their right of place as a sovereign state" (NPMHR 25 yrs. 2004). The focus of the Nagas at the UN indigenous forums, from early on, was for the right to self-determination "towards our rightful place through healing of our spirit" as the NSF and NPMHR define it.

Nagas joined the WGIP in 1993 represented by Isak Chishi Swu with a plea to the international body to save the Nagas from invasion by India and Burma. "Will the international community allow India and Burma to continue to exterminate the Nagas and their rights to self-determination? Out nationhood and our right to self-determination [are] inalienable and non-negotiable," stated Swu (1996) in his speech at the forty-eighth session of Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and on protection of

Minorities. Meanwhile, in global indigenism, Naga nationalism continues to be articulated as "a people struggling for self-determination" (Shimreichon Luithui 2001; Vashum 2003). However, Nagas's insistence on self-determination as independence has not been without problems.

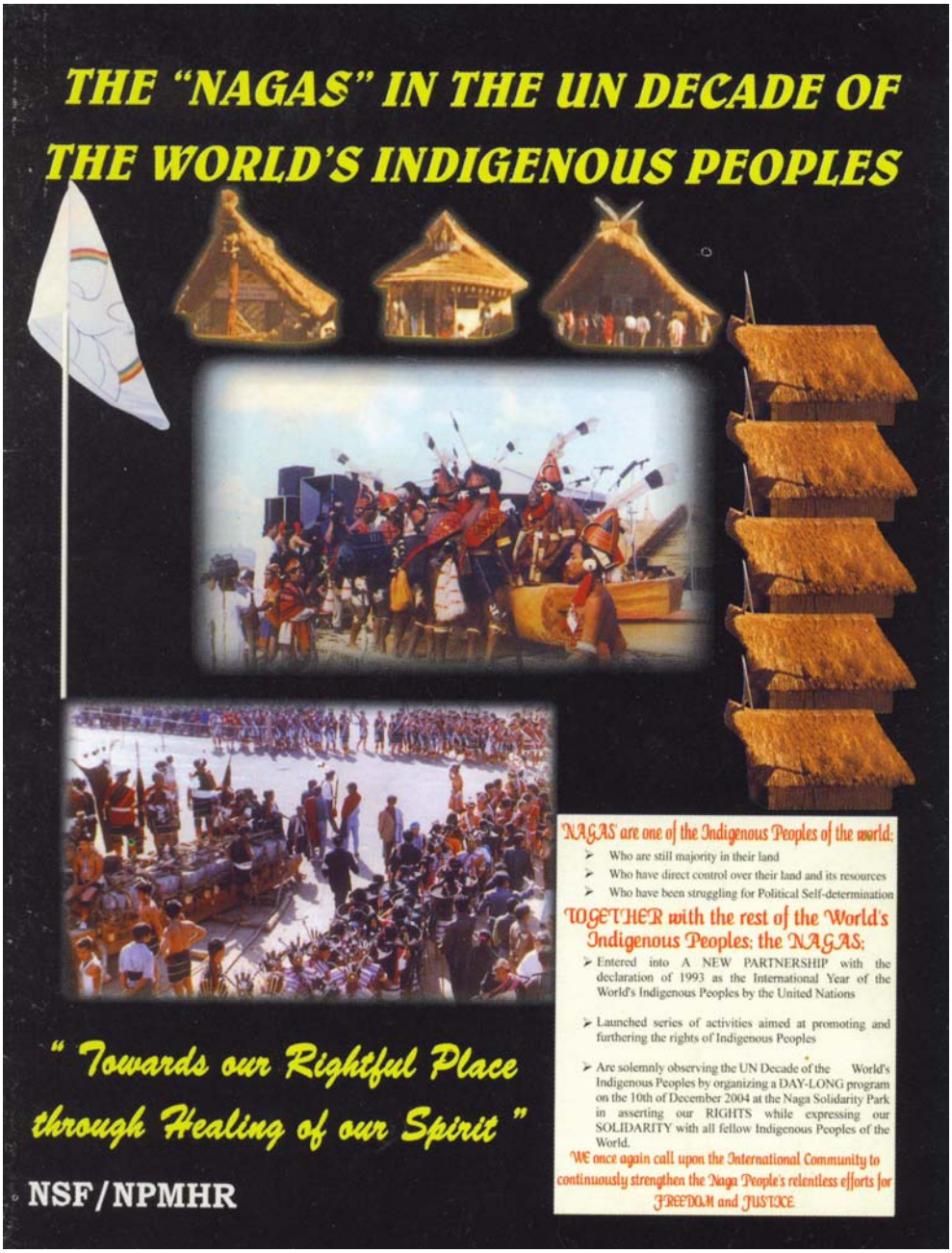

Fig. 21. The front cover of the brochure for a "Day-long Program" on 10th December 2004 at the Naga Solidarity Park organized by the Naga Students' Federation and the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights celebrating the Second United Nations Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

Contestations Encountered

The Nagas' representations at such forums as the WGIP and UNPFII have not been without problems. The first issue was whether the Nagas could rightly claim to be indigenous people. In the absence of a precise UN definition of the term 'indigenous', what is often used is a working definition by Special Rapporteur Martinez Cobo in 'A Study of Discrimination Against Indigenous Peoples.' Cobo offered the following definition:

> Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from the other sectors of societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems. (1986:379)

The problem with this definition is to distinguish who are indigenous and who are not. Cobo's definition, representatives from Asia and Latin America argued, concerned only native peoples in USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia leaving out groups of people in Asia, Latin America, and Africa who were undergoing similar problems. Kymlicka (1999) also problematized the definition further by making a distinction between stateless nations and indigenous peoples within the category of national minorities:

> … stateless nations were contenders but losers in the process of European state formation, whereas indigenous people were entirely isolated from that process until very recently, and so retained a pre-modern way of life until well into this century. Stateless nations would have liked to form their own states, but lost in the struggle for political power, whereas indigenous peoples existed outside this system of European states. (1999:282)

Accordingly, Kymlicka places the Catalans, Puerto Ricans, Flemish, Scots and Quebecos in the domain of stateless nations, while communities such as the Sami, Inuit and

American Indians are categorized as indigenous peoples. Subsequent international activism by many groups from Asia, Africa and Latin America have made it possible for 'indigenous' to be more inclusive. To deal with this definitional contestation, Swu, in his first speech at the WGIP in 1993, introduced the Nagas "as a distinct people and nation" to the "congregation of different nations and peoples of the world" (1993). Though Swu did not explicitly refer to the Nagas as indigenous people, he implied their indigenous status by describing them as "the first settlers of the land" (1993).

Arguments have also been made for objective and subjective elements in the definition of indigenous peoples. Article 1.2 of the same ILO General Policy states: "Self-determination as indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which the provisions of this Convention apply." Cobo also states that there are two factors in the definition of indigenous: objective elements such as culture, ancestry, language, etc., and subjective elements such as self-identification and acceptance (Cobo1986: para 21). Cobo stated self-identification or self-ascription as an important criterion for the definition of indigenous peoples:

> It must be stated in this respect that the question of a definition is one that must be left to the indigenous communities themselves. The fundamental assertion must be that indigenous populations must be recognized according to their own perception and conception of themselves in relation to other groups; there must be no attempt to define them according to the perception of others through the values of foreign societies or of the dominant sections in such societies. (para 368)
>
> The right of indigenous peoples themselves to define what and who is indigenous must be recognized. (para 369)

Self-identification, thus, is a fundamental principle for defining who is indigenous. According to this principle, Nagas' self-definition of themselves as indigenous peoples makes their claim valid. Keenly aware that defining themselves as indigenous peoples

might give rise to criticisms in their partnership with the UN Decade of Indigenous Peoples, the NSF/NPMHR defined the Nagas as "one of the indigenous peoples of the world who are still majority in their land, who have direct control over their land and its resources, who have been struggling for political self-determination" (2004). In a recent press release, the Naga Hoho reaffirmed this position by stating that the Hoho will "always reiterate and remonstrate that Nagas are indigenous people" and are ever ready "to share in any platform the definition and political beliefs of indigenous people within or outside the Naga context" (*Morung Express* Oct. 10, 2007). Further, as Benedict Kingsbury pointed out, "the fact that *indigenous peoples* has become an appealing term which many groups (or individuals speaking for them) choose to apply to themselves is largely a result of the currency given to the category by the international activities of nonstate and interstate organizations (1995:13).

Another problem concerns questions raised especially by the Indian state that the UN working definition of indigenous peoples does not fit the Indian context. The Indian government has contested the claims made by those representatives from India, including the Nagas, as indigenous people. For example, in a statement on behalf of the Indian delegation to the WGIP in Geneva in 1993, Debashish Chakravarti said:

> India has been a melting pot of races and ethnic groups from the earliest periods of recorded history. The application of the term "Indigenous People" to the situation in India would be inaccurate because the entire population of India has been living on its lands for the past several millennia. All these people are indigenous to the country and any attempt to make a distinction between indigenous and non-indigenous would be artificial and spurious, where India is concerned. There have been several statements in the Working Group dealing with the subject of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. There has been an attempt to equate these terms with the term "Indigenous People". For the reasons cited above, this is incorrect. (1993)

The government of India has taken a position that neither Scheduled Tribes nor any other groups can be singled out as indigenous peoples since most of the peoples of the subcontinent have been there for thousands of years. The problem in India is that it is not easy to identify who is indigenous because at issue is the question of who came first because the 'tribals' and non-tribal populations have existed side by side for centuries. Instead, the Constitution, adopted by the newly independent Republic of India in 1950, recognized the marginal peoples of the subcontinent as *scheduled tribes* and required each state to prepare lists of such tribes and to report on them periodically to the central government. Thus, Andre Beteille argued, "anthropologists in India, both before and after independence, have been concerned more with the practical problem of designation than with the theoretical one of definition" (1998:188). Or as Virginus Xaxa said, determining whether a particular community is indigenous or not is extremely arbitrary and controversial (1999:3591). In many cases there have been cross migrations, usurpation and assimilations. Also, as Beteille points out, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries "communities were often categorized as tribal by reason of the habitats in which they were found at the time of the first ethnographic surveys" (Beteille 1998:189). In India tribes are scheduled by the state and have the sanction of the Constitution. Article 342 of the Constitution defines Scheduled Tribes as "tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within these tribes and tribal communities that have been declared as such by the President of India through a public notification." According to the Schedule in Article 342 of the Constitution of India, there are 533 tribes. Other Articles in the Constitution safeguard the interests of the tribes. Article 46, for instance, says, "the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections

of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustices and all forms of exploitation." Schedules V and VI of the Constitution of India make special provisions for the 'tribals.' Echoing the position of the Indian government, Y.K. Subharwal, the Chief Justice of India said, "India always presented a unity in diversity and diverse cultural identity is no insignia of the existence of indigenous group" (2006). On the other hand, as Karlsson pointed out, it is important for Indian 'tribal' groups to be recognized as indigenous peoples because indigenous peoples' "status has a wide range of internationally approved rights and safeguards attached to it, above all the right to self-determination, which is regarded as empowering in negotiations or conflicts with the state and other powerful interests (2003:415). Indian tribal groups' claim to indigenous status and partnership with global indigenous associations is seen as a step forward in their struggle for self-determination.

Perhaps the core issue that is most problematic is self-determination. Article 3 of the Declaration for Indigenous Peoples which states that "indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination" has been the most contentious by indigenous peoples' representatives and states at the UN forums such as the UNPFII. Self-determination in Article 1 of the UN Charter has often been restricted to the 'salt-water thesis,' i.e. self-determination rights are restricted to overseas colonies (Kymlicka 1999). Two justifications are usually cited for granting self-determination rights to indigenous peoples. One is based on historical sovereignty which sees self-determination as restoring to indigenous peoples their inherent right. As James Anaya (1996) argued, indigenous peoples can be distinguished by the *remedial* aspect of self-determination, that is, the

rights of the indigenous peoples were violated and so self-determination was a remedy to undo past violations. The other argument says that self-determination was necessary for indigenous peoples to preserve their pre-modern way of life (Anaya 1996; Kymlicka 1999). But this argument is rejected. If anything, most indigenous peoples are not struggling to preserve their pre-modern way of life despite some cases of efforts to globalize an essentialized indigenous culture (Sylvain 2005).

According to Kymlicka, a reason more important than the remedial argument is "the belief that the cultural differences between majorities and indigenous peoples are much greater than with stateless nations. Indigenous peoples do not just constitute distinct cultures, but they form entirely distinct forms of culture, distinct 'civilizations,' rooted in a premodern way of life that needs protecting from the forces of modernization, secularization, urbanization, 'Westernization' and so on" (1999:289). The basis for this argument is not so much on the "scale of mistreatment in the past but rather the scale of cultural difference … cultural 'Otherness' – in particular, their isolation from, and repudiation of, modern ways of life" (Kymlicka 1999:289-290). This point is perhaps the strongest argument in the Nagas' perception of themselves as radically different from Indian society and culture. Naga nationalism is conceived as a struggle to defend this cultural identity and resist being assimilated into the Indian (Hindu) culture. The paradox of course is that Nagas do not seem to have a problem of assimilating into the global culture. The trend in the Naga society is to preserve Naga identity and yet be part of the global culture. This can be evidenced from a letter by Phizo to Frederik H. Boland, UN General Assembly on Oct. 8, 1960:

> I am not unmindful of the negative attitude and arguments so often heard that Nagas are too small a nation to exist by themselves alone in this 'modern' world and that Nagaland may easily be absorbed by Communist China. Nagaland is not seeking isolation. We want to be assimilated in the world community of nations as a family and we want Nagaland to be a country for all people and nations but not to be exploited by India alone." (NNC Hist:37)

The contention lies in the interpretation of what self-determination means. Many indigenous groups insist that their fight for indigenous rights have been misunderstood as a fight for secession from nation states. They argue that many indigenous groups are seeking self-determination within the states. In response, states with large populations of indigenous peoples such as Canada and Denmark (Thomsen 2006) have sought to develop partnership among indigenous peoples and state governments. Canada has a been a strong proponent of participation in decision-making with the indigenous peoples such as the Inuits and the Métis (Delegation of Canada 2006). On the other hand, some of the nation states fear that granting the right of self-determination to indigenous peoples will result in instability and fragmentation. At the Fifth Session of the UNPFII, United States, Australia and New Zealand stated in their intervention that some provisions of the Draft Declaration, particularly the provisions for self-determination for indigenous peoples contained in Article 3 "could be misrepresented as conferring a unilateral right of self-determination and possible secession upon a specific subset of the national populace, thus threatening the political unity, territorial integrity and indeed the security of existing UN Member States" (Australia, New Zealand, and the United States of America 2006). These three States also argued, among others, the provisions contained in Article 34 of the Draft Declaration seem to assume "that the rights of all individuals, which are enshrined in international law, are a secondary consideration" (Australia, New Zealand, and the USA 2006). However, these states are not alone in their fear, and the fear of many States is not

unfounded. It is true that some indigenous groups are seeking secession from nation states as the ultimate expression of their self-determination. Political victimization of indigenous peoples as a result of this threat is also real as was illustrated at the Fifth Session of the UNPFII by the case of the man who sat cowered down next to me. "Is anything wrong?" I asked him. "I am trying not to be noticed by the representative of my government because I am afraid I may be persecuted when I return home." Apparently, members from that country who attended the UNPFII the previous year were allegedly taken to task by their government upon reaching home and banned from foreign travel.

In the current on-going peace-talks between the Indian government and the NSCN-IM, some Nagas' idea of self-determination has shifted from complete independence or secession to a federal type of relationship with India outside the Indian Constitution. As Isak Swu, the Chairman of NSCN-IM, said to me at one of our meetings: "In today's times of interdependence, no country is totally independent. Nagaland and India have to recognize each other's positions." As Muehlebach pointed out, such "indigenous endeavors were aided by shifting debates on concepts such as 'sovereignty" that are occurring at this particular historical moment, and have made marginal "places" in the international legal imaginary emerge" (2001:440).

Meanwhile, within Nagaland, Naga involvement in global indigenism is symbolized in the establishment of a Solidarity Park on the northern outskirts of Kohima. According to Achumbemo Kikon, a former President of the NSF:

> It was in 1993 when the Naga Week was celebrated, it was jointly celebrated [organized] by the NSF and NPMHR. This park was actually donated by the government of Nagaland to the Naga people. However since the Naga Week was

> celebrated commemorating the UN Decade of Indigenous Peoples in 1993, so as a mark to that celebration, we were trying to locate a place, [and] Nagaland government was generous enough to donate [the land]. It is now under the custody of the Federation and NPMHR. But it belongs to entire Naga people. … We held a conference there signifying both the [Second] UN Indigenous decade as well as the NSF conference. (Interview)

In the Solidarity Park stands a large monolith. The monolith itself stands for the unity of the Nagas. As Vimeto Rutsa, Chairman of Kohima Village, said in the pronouncement of blessing at the Naga Week in 1993: "As with oneness a stone shall be erected during this occasion. Let Nagas remain a people as Nagas so long as the stone remains a stone." An inscription on the monolith reads: "Go and live out what you have heard from the other side of silence." Asked about the meaning of the inscription, Kikon, a former President of the NSF, said, "People don't know actually how long we have suffered and how hard our life is. So [the] monolith itself will speak." The NPMHR had a clearer explanation of "the other side of silence" by providing some historical background to it. Following the mood for freedom of expression in the aftermath of the Emergency in India in the mid 1970s, members of the NPMHR felt that "Nagas for the first time voiced, expressed and articulated the other side of silence, the story of a long military and propaganda war waged against the Nagas" (NPMHR 1983:2). The brochure of the NSF Conference in 2004 commemorating the Second Decade of Indigenous Peoples explained the significance of the monolith and the inscription on it:

> "Go and live out what you have heard from the other side of silence." This monument represents a milestone in the history of the Nagas as a people. We have walked together to bring this ancient rock to a spot where it will stand to inspire and challenge the life of Nagas for all time to come. It symbolizes the determination of Nagas to rise to a standard to which all Nagas can and must rise. Therefore, be it known, that henceforth this spot has become sacred. We go from here today as countless generations will do from now on to match the silent challenge the monument has spoken to us. As we do so, we will go towards our

rightful place. (NSF: Program for 'The Nagas in the UN decade of the world's indigenous peoples 2004)

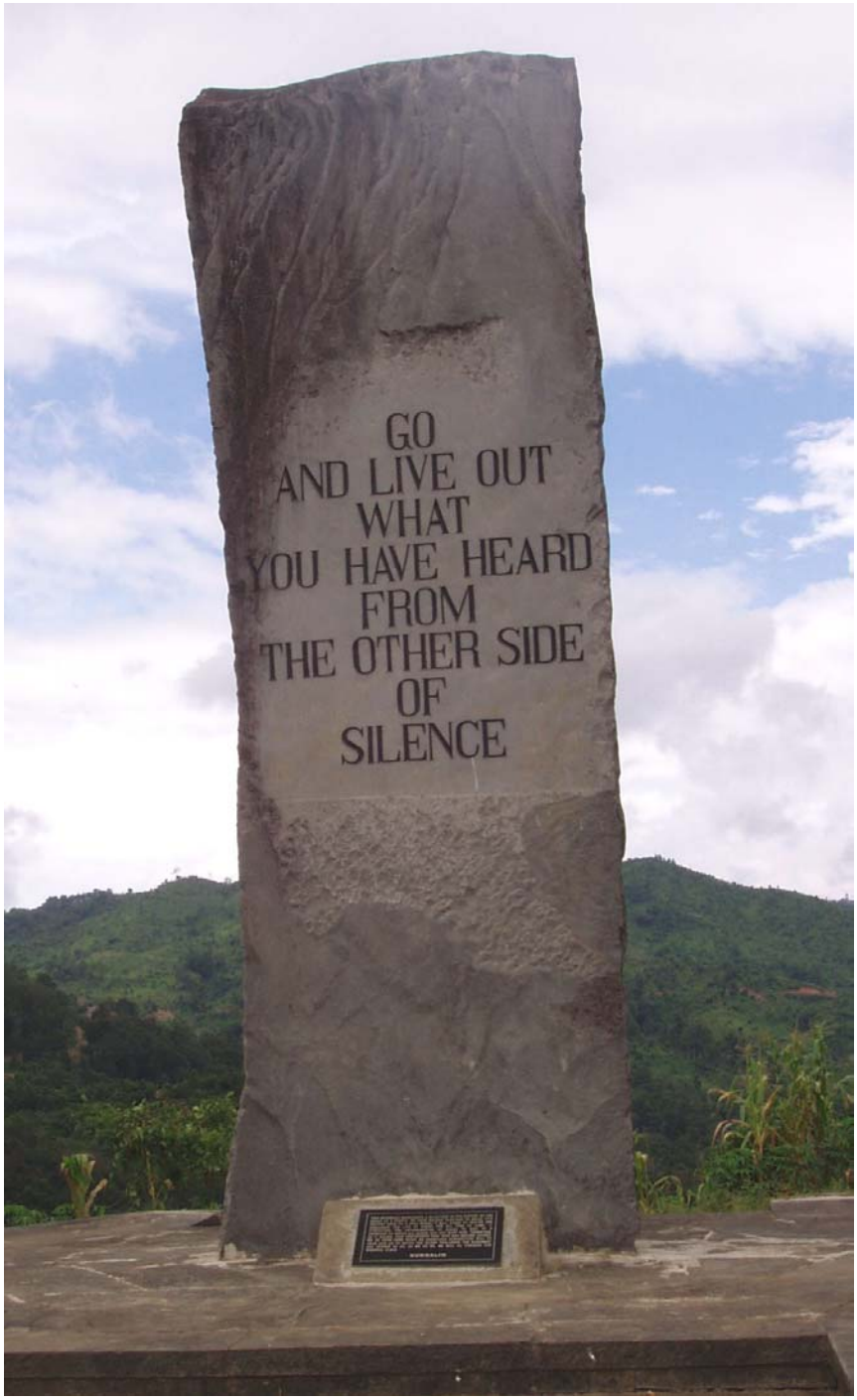

Fig. 22. The inscription at the bottom of the monolith reads: This monument represents a milestone in the history of the Nagas as a people. We have walked together to bring this ancient rock to a spot where it will stand to inspire and challenge the life of Nagas for all time to come. It symbolizes the determination of Nagas to raise to a standard to which all Nagas can and must rise. Be it known, that henceforth this spot has become sacred. We go from here today as countless generations will do from now on to match the silent challenge this monument has spoken to us. As we do so, we will go towards our rightful place (Photo by Abraham Lotha).

On August 14, 2006, I learned from a friend that the NSF was organizing Naga Independence Day celebrations at the Solidarity Park. It would be my first time to attend such a function. In the past, August 14th and August 15th (Indian Independence Day) had often been tense days in Nagaland. Any celebration of Naga Independence Day or hoisting of the Naga flag was considered a subversive action by the Indian state. Shootings between the Indian security forces and Naga armed nationalists were frequent on these two days. On August 14th and 15th 1995, Kohima was like a battle zone with Indian security armored tanks patrolling the streets of Kohima. Based on such experiences, I wasn't sure what to expect of the celebrations in the Solidarity Park.

The gathering was small. This time, though, the immediate problem was how to address the violent factionalism that had engulfed the Naga nationalists and subsequently sidetracked the talks with India and the primary common agenda for independence. In his speech, Pushika Awomi, the NSF President told the gathering: "For 59 years this is a significant day which we all celebrate … We are still under struggle and many are now having a mixture of opinion. … How to give our best to the nation? … It should be another reminder day for all of us to give more of our energy and time towards the national cause." Highlighting the pessimism caused by factional violence, the NPMHR spokesman added: "On this [disunity] aspect I'd request all the organizations, let us forget the past, let us see to the future ... It is high time that we also reach out to all our Naga brothers wherever it be, including the factions. … [The] opportunity will come for us to discuss, to sit down and talk so that we can sort out our differences." Factional violence has become the predominant salient feature of Naga nationalism today. If self-

determination for the Nagas means that factions such as the NSCN-IM and NSCN-K must continue to fight and kill each other in order to dominate sections of Naga territories and tribes (reminding one of scenes of armed gangs in places like Somalia and Ethiopia), then Nagas ought to seriously redefine their notions and methods of self-determination.

Fig. 23. Members of Naga Students Federation, Naga Peoples Movement for Human rights, and Naga Hoho celebrating Naga Independence Day on August 14 at the Solidarity Park in 2006. Photo by Abraham Lotha).

Outcome or False Hope?

Nagas' involvement in the UNPFII has had mixed purposes: Solidarity with other indigenous people, self-determination, and independence. Nagas' ultimate aim for involvment in global indigenism is to attain a global identity among the community of

nation states. But according to Tiwa, one of the informants, searching for a global identity is a later addition. What has emerged, instead, "is Naganess emerging out of globalization." On the other hand, there is a change in the semantics of Naga nationalism. From "leave us as we were" voiced by the Naga Club members in 1929, to a struggle for independence from 1947 onwards, to addressing human rights violations and a struggle for self-determination from the early 1990s, Naga nationalism has seen shifts in its conceptualization. The last moment has focused on self-determination, influenced by the discourse on global indigenism, particularly through The Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP), Unrepresented Peoples Organization (UNPO) and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). I asked Kaka Iralu, an activist and author, if Nagas were being naïve in their hope that the UN would intervene for the Nagas and he replied:

> Israel got their freedom through the UN, East Timor got their freedom through the UN, and therefore the Indo-Naga issue is not an Indian internal affair. If we had started speaking after 15th Aug. 1947, then it is an internal affair. We started speaking from 1929. All the records are there. Six memorandum submitted to the British before they departed, ten memorandum to the Indian government before India was born, and then defense of those statements for half a century, so this is a case deserving UN intervention.

The Nagas believe they have found consolation in the international community's support for their fight against violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Naga areas, and have not left unnoticed any endorsements and statements for their cause by the UN Economic and Social Council highlighting (1995) resolutions and press releases by the UNPO, and other groups such as Support Group for Indigenous Peoples (KWIA). One such endorsement in favor of the Nagas was the resolution by the Fourth UNPO General Assembly at The Hague in 1995: "Recognize the historical sovereignty of the Naga

people over their territory to determine their own government and the illegality of the invasion and continued occupation by the Indian and Myanmarese armed forces" (in Shimray 2005:297). Nipuni Pikhu, a former president of the NPMHR wrote about the impact of global indigenism on Naga nationalism:

> Nagas' participation in the international forum for lobby and advocacy works have facilitated the highlighting of different aspect of Naga concerns such as: promoting Naga aspiration for the right to self-determination, against militarization and human rights violation in Naga homeland through anti-democratic and anti-peoples legislation *viz*, Armed Forces Special Powers Act, Nagaland Security Regulation Acts; Lack of effective participation and 'prior informed consent' in projects such as Naga Genome determination project, UNICEF appreciative enquiry 'Imagine Nagaland' Project, Mega Tipaimukh Dam; confronting and exposing the 'state terrorism,' initiating and promoting peoples to peoples dialogue for understanding and peace to India proper, northeast region within Naga homeland, protesting against systematic state sponsored land alienation policy through conservation and large infrastructural projects and policies of demographic engineering; debating on the exploitation and meaningful use of natural resources, tourism; informing international community about recent development such as Indo-Naga ceasefire and initiatives for political dialogue and peace process, understanding together the process of conflict transformation, Naga Reconciliation process, Naga peoples' movement for integration/unification of their homeland, etc. (NSF 2005:91)

Similarly, I asked Krome, an activist and a Naga Hoho official, in what way associating with other NGOs and global indigenous forums have affected the Nagas for good or bad. Krome responded:

> Well, in the first place catching their attention is good and giving them the passion to work for us. When they are not asked and even if we want how far they will benefit for themselves we don't know. But since we have made known our plight to them and they have taken up our plight ... is their concern for us. That has made our case better. Why should they support us? They see us genuinely suffering. That is the first message they put to other people. … In that sense it has really impacted us in many constructive elements. Otherwise for themselves, India doesn't see very kindly about those people. On the other hand we feel that our cause has been promoted or highlighted through them.

In the meantime, despite the internal factional violence, events at the UN affecting indigenous peoples continue to fan Nagas' hopes for self-determination will ultimately be

realized. On September 13, 2007, at the 61st session of the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights for Indigenous Peoples after more than twenty years of deliberation and negotiation. Hailing the adoption as a historical milestone in the United Nation's long history of developing and establishing international human rights standards, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, the Chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples, called it a "major victory for Indigenous Peoples" that will forever be etched in indigenous peoples' history and memories as a significant gain in their long struggle for their rights as distinct peoples and cultures (2007). The Declaration, according to Tauli-Corpuz, "sets the minimum international standards for the protection and promotion of the rights of Indigenous Peoples" (2007). Among others, the Declaration affirms the equality of the 370 million indigenous peoples in the world and their right to self-determination, right to own and control their lands, territories and resources, and right to free, prior and informed consent. One of the most important rights is contained in Article 3: "Indigenous people have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."

The adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the UN General Assembly on September 13, 2007, raised hopes and expectations for Naga nationalism. The UN Declaration "immensely boosted the morale of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM)" (*Morung Express* Sept 15, 2007). Commenting on its historic adoption, the NSCN-IM stated, "the Nagas' case for the last 61 years has been vindicated" (*Morung Express*, Sept 15, 2007). In a statement stating that, "Article 3 of the

UN Declaration has added a new dimension to the Indo-Naga issue," the NSCN-IM said, "with this declaration, the Nagas' demand for integrating all contiguous Nagas areas into one administrative unit can no longer be treated lackadaisically" (*Morung Express* Sept. 15, 2007). Another Nagaland daily called the UN adoption a 'standard' for Indo-Naga political settlement. Other Naga civil society organizations also reacted positively. Calling the UN adoption a positive sign in the Naga context, Lanusashi Longkumer, an official of the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), said, "It would show that our struggle is not in vain" (*Morung Express* Sept. 14, 2007). The NPMHR even organized seminars to inform and educate Nagas about the significance of the Declaration and the need for the Nagas to affirm their rights. Encouraged by the UN adoption of the Declaration to the Naga political issue, Chuba Ozukum, the Publicity Secretary of the Naga Hoho, issued a statement saying: "Naga people will be counting the United Nations system and the Indian sub-continent towards bringing out permanent settlement to the age-old Indo-Naga political imbroglio based on the momentous UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" (*Morung Express*, Sept 21, 2007).

A year later, September 13, 2008, at a celebration of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) in Manipur organized a program at Ukhrul attended by a host of people including the United Naga Council (UNC), the All Naga Students' Association Manipur (ANSAM), the Naga Women's Union, Manipur (NWUM), and local NGOs. According to a news report, the gathering reaffirmed the declaration made by Nagas as one of the struggling indigenous peoples of the world during the Naga Week celebrations in

December 1993, and "a pledge led by Samson Remei, President, UNC, was taken by all participants undertaking that they would do everything in their powers to ensure the realization of the rights and freedoms enshrined in the UNDRIP" (*The Morung Express* Sept. 15, 2008). Such programs, the organizers hoped, would be a part of the continued process whereby the rights of Nagas and other indigenous peoples are respected and honored. In this way, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples continue to be upheld by the Nagas as universal standards of 'high culture' which function as external factors that provide a rationale for and sustain Naga nationalism's objectives for self-determination 'towards their rightful place.'

CONCLUSION

Nationalism is inherently political. Attempts to resolve non-state ethnic nationalist movements such as the ones of the Métis, Basque, Kurds, Catalans, and Sámi continue in spite of economic growth and greater autonomy. Why does this happen? This thesis argues that ethnic nationalist movements persist because their objective is to have the ultimate political power for self-determination. Ethnic national movements seek to achieve political power to self-determine the future of ethnic communities, whether it be autonomy within states, or as a separate independent state. What is important is not the amount of power one has, but the limit of power of larger political groups. It is the extent and the limit of political power – that political right for self-determination for autonomy within a state or to establish a sovereign state – that motivates and sustains ethnonationalism. Assertions or negations of this political goal have resulted in violence in many parts of the world. Secondly, this thesis argues that the claims of ethnic nationalists have credibility and legitimacy because the genesis of such ethnic movements are founded on ethnic cores that have deep historical roots, sometimes considered natural realities by nationalists, that modern constructivist factors have further reinforced, formalized, fueled, influenced, and given shapes to their current manifestations.

Similar to other non-state ethnic nationalism such as Basque and Kurds, Naga nationalism is a political issue, and not an issue of economic egoism or economic internal colonialism. The demand for change of status is political, and it needs a political framework to resolve it. As a case of ethnic nationalism, Naga nationalism is not the

product simply of recent constructivist forces such as colonialism, dominant state politics or global indigenism. Through slogans such as 'from time immemorial,' Naga nationalists claim a cultural peculiarity that has pre-existing ethnic origins and other pre-modern pedigrees that are different from those of India. As Smith (1986, 1996) says, nations have existed for a long time during pre-modern period and nationalists are like political archaeologists rediscovering and reinterpreting the communal past to create the present. In spite of the fragmentations within the movement, Nagas aspiration for nationalism has credibility because Nagas have an ethnic core with deep historical roots that predate modern factors and legitimize and sustain the movement. More than as a product of colonialism or a struggle against a neocolonial socio-economic exploitation or repression by the Indian state, the overriding objective of Naga nationalism for political self-determination, like most non-state ethnonational movements, is founded on an ethnic core that predate recent modern forces. The presence of the ethnic core provides the rationale and symbolic weight for Naga nationalism.

Similar to the other nationalist struggles in Asia and Africa in the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, Naga nationalism was anti-colonial. But unlike the others that were successful in establishing nation-states, Naga nationalism has continued to this day amidst unresolved conflicts and factionalism. Naga nationalism was contemporaneous with Indian nationalism during the British colonial period and has countered India's claims since slightly before the birth of the Indian nation in 1947. After Indian Independence in 1947, several ethnic groups came together to form the Indian Union without much problem. The Nagas, however, did not join the Union of India and have, instead, held on to their

claim as independent people arguing that they were never, at any point in history, under the British or part of India. On the other hand, India claims she inherited the Naga Hills from the British and considers the Naga conflict as a law and order problem led by misguided persons. Because of its persistence and influence, Naga nationalism has been labeled as the 'mother of insurgencies' in India's northeast by the Indian government. But the problem is more complex than that. As was illustrated in the foregoing chapters, a mono-causal approach does not fully explain Naga nationalism. External factors alone do not fully explain Naga nationalism; ethnic factors rooted in history are crucial for understanding Naga nationalism.

The chapter on Naga ethnicity discussed the emic perspective of how Nagas themselves articulate their nationalism using ethnic elements such as kinship, origin, race, symbols, village polity, and territory. Nagas have a long common history; they share a communal experience dating back centuries before the unsuccessful colonization of their territory by the British. 'From time immemorial' is a slogan frequently used by the nationalists to describe Nagas' history of their relationship with one another and their habitation of the present Naga territory. Nagas claim that according to oral history, they are related to each other and migrated together but eventually dispersed to the present sites of habitation. Unlike Bankimchandra's proclamation, "We have no history! We must have a history!" (Chatterjee 1993:76), Nagas have an acute sense of history even though Naga oral history narrative, their sense of history and conception of themselves may be different from a Western concept of history (Fogelson 1989). A Lotha Naga saying goes, "If you don't know your history, even if others call you a bastard they can be right." This saying

certainly has to do with genealogy and inheritance, but it also has much to do with establishing the foundations and the past of a person and the legitimacy of the community's identity. Additionally, knowledge of one's history empowers one to defend and represent oneself. Thus, the Nagas' claim that they have been living together in the present Naga territory 'from time immemorial' is a political and cultural statement to stake historical and legitimate claims for Naga sovereignty from antiquity. It is the strong ethnic cohesion and solidarity, a shared history of attempted colonization, a continuing shared experience of domination and repression by Indian security forces internal factionalism, and the potentials of leaders including intellectuals for political mobilization that has motivated and sustained Naga nationalism.

The importance of religion in Naga nationalism cannot be underestimated. Religion was a diacritical marker that differentiated Nagas from Indians according to the pioneers of Naga nationalism. Naga nationalist leaders such as Isaac Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah have a strong conviction that Nagas are a chosen people with a chosen destiny. Their legitimating arguments for Nagas as a 'chosen people' are based on Acts 17:26 in the Bible. Naga nationalists also propagate Christian socialism as the political theoretical framework that informs Naga nationalism. Christianity is also employed as the main modernizing agent for the Nagas and the religious marker that separates 'Christian Nagaland' from 'Hindu India.'

But why does Nagas nationalism persist predominantly as ethnonationalism even when the ethnic elements may be constructed or the result of recent historical processes? As

illustrated in the chapter on Naga ethnicity, the social organization of the Nagas along the segmentary lineage system and the village system are still a living reality. Clan relationships even across 'tribal' boundaries remain a powerful ingredient so much so that, as Temsula Ao says, "if an inter-tribal marriage is being contemplated, care is taken to avoid an incestuous marriage between couples belonging to the same clan" (2006:7). Even today, life in most Naga villages continues to be guided by the traditional social organization; in many cases, the rights of the clan, village or 'tribe' supersede individual rights. Naga society is still very rural, and the village continues to be the anchor of Naga society. Though national identity and tribal loyalty are increasingly being reinforced, initially, as Pimomo points out, "tribal loyalty came only second to village loyalty. The village, not the tribe, was the foundational unit of Naga society" (Kuknalim.com May 12, 2008). Most Naga villages even today do not have policemen, and for the most part, legal systems depend on customary court. Thus, Naga independence struggle is seen as protecting the Naga 'way of life.' But, can this way of life be protected in the absence of political independence? The nationalist Muivah articulates the response clearly to me: "If Nagas are assimilated into India, our way of life, our identity will be lost; everything will be lost."

Internal factors do not tell the complete story. External factors such as colonialism, education, religious proslytism, modernization, Indian nation building policies and militarization, universal human rights and global indigenism have had a major impact on Naga nationalism. It is the reactions to the nation building projects of the colonial British Empire, and later of India and Myanmar, and other modernization processes that have

also shaped Naga nationalism. Nagas' response to British colonialism can be traced back to 1832 when the British first encountered the Nagas. Later on, British administrative policies such as the institution of Inner Line in 1873 in order to safeguard the British subjects from going into Naga areas, tribal policies, setting up administrative posts in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and the declaration of Naga areas as an Excluded Area by the British India Act of 1935 following the Simon Commission, reinforced Nagas' perception of their unique identity, their non-Indianness, and paved the way for the formation of Naga political activism. Colonialism also helped the formation of educated intellectuals who, influenced by paradigms of modernization, eventually mobilized and spearheaded the movement particularly from the 1940s onward. It was these intellectuals who articulated, set strategy and promoted the Naga movement.

The Indian and Myanmar states are another external factor, though, for the purpose of this thesis, I have dealt only with the Indian state. India inherited the Naga 'problem' from the British and to some extent has perpetuated the impass by her response. The evolution of Naga nationalism after Indian Independence has much to do with how the Indian government has managed the conflict and how Indian containment policies have fanned the fire of Naga nationalism. From the 9-point Agreement signed between the Government of India and the Naga National Council on 9th June 1947, to constitutional amendments and the current cease-fire political talks, the Indian government has tried to manage the Indo-Naga conflict. The state of Nagaland is the only state in India that came about as a result of political negotiations, the only state in India that has special status guaranteed by an Act of the Parliament and the Indian Constitutional (Article 371A), and

the only state to be placed under the External Affairs Ministry (Foreign Affairs) of India until 1972. But Nagas still remain divided, and the nationalist movement has intensified. India's attempt at containing Naga nationalism, particularly through military oppression, has been counter-productive. Epitomizing events (Fogelson 1989) such as experiences of humiliation and fear deepened Nagas' sense of their uniqueness and reinforced their anti-India feelings. The intense suffering, humiliation, anger, and hatred following the militarization of Naga areas were antithetical to the Nagas' deep sense of pride that they are a free people, free "to govern ourselves and do what we like," experiences that eventually galvanized grassroots support for Naga independence. Such experiences have intensified Nagas' struggle for self-determination as an independent nation. A nationalistic articulation born from such experiences is best illustrated by a saying attributed to Phizo the 'Father of Naga Nation,' inscribed on his tombstone: "Our land is our heritage, to none shall it be surrendered. As whetstone our opponents sharpen us."

In addition to the moral content of Naga nationalism such as addressing human rights violation issues, it is because political rights have been denied that Naga armed nationalists, intellectuals, civic society organizations such as the Naga Students Federation, Naga Hoho and Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights have sought to internationalize the Naga cause through the UN human rights forums and global indigenous peoples organizations such as the UNPFII, UNPO, IWGIA to redress the wrongs. The UN and its arms like the UNESCO, UNPFII are sources for new ideas and platforms to internationalize their cause and add leverage to legitimize their claims and redress their wrongs. As recently as December 9, 2008, the NPMHR "appealed to India

and ‘her people and the powers of the world’ to respect the human rights declaration in letter and spirit” adding further that, “the global culture of rights … should be a unifying force within and among all cultures” (*Morung Express* December 10, 2008). Naga nationalism is predominantly an ethnonationalism, but the ultimate aim is not isolationism. For if it is solely a local oriented ethnonationalism, why would the Nagas go to the UN? Through international networks, indigenous organizations maintain solidarity with one another to pursue their ‘common’ struggle for self-determination. Nagas political advocates at these UN forums collectively negotiate with nation states and use the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Declaration of Rights for Indigenous Peoples as universal standards and norms to legitimize their political aim and objective to attain their ‘rightful place’ as a member state in the world body of nations. Such articulations have helped shape Naga nationalism today. However, reactions to colonialism or against the Indian state oppressions or global indigenous activism that take the form of nationalism have credibility because of the ethnic bases. Ultimately however, it is their ethnic core that maintains Naga impetus.

Even though there are current talks for a federal type of relationship with India, Naga nationalism has was not always associated with independence from India. But how is independence perceived by the Nagas today? Perhaps, Rev V.K. Nuh expresses what this independence means in its basic rudimentary form. Nuh was born before Indian Independence. In an interview he told me he “was born a Naga and brought up as a Naga” and “lived as a Naga” before Nagaland became a part of India. According to Nuh:

> I came from independent life. Nobody ruled me. My own village ruled me. I contributed [to the village] … I don’t’ want to be controlled by someone. I am a

> free man. I don't like Indian people to come and rule me. A Naga ruled himself. I know how to control, to rule myself. That is the reason I want to be independent. Nobody likes to be under control. ... Independence means I can stand on my own feet. I can control myself, I have freedom to do anything; I have no need of other's help. I am self-sufficient.

Similarly, Phantia, a senior official of the NSCN-IM, told me in an interview that independence means self-determination. Phantia explained further:

> My people should have the power to make any law that is best suited to them. They should have the freedom to exploit their resources and use them for the welfare of the people. And [be] acceptable by the other people that, yes, Nagas are different, and yes these are the Naga people, this is the Naga region, this is the Naga government. So whether we make good government, good state, good people, it is all [up to] us because we will be the decision makers, we will decide our own fate, we will determine our own state and the culture, and the people. ... A state for our own people.

Modern and external constructivist factors increasingly influence and enhance consciousness of Naga identity and strengthen their ethnonationalism aspirations (Connor1994). In other words, there is an attempt to legitimate the ethnic core. In the course of its struggle, Naga nationalism sought to adhere to certain standards similar to Gellner's standardization of high culture. The pan-Naga identity itself is one standard homogenizing Naga identity and Naga culture as yardsticks whereby ethnic membership is 'by blood.' kinship, shared origin, symbols, history and experiences. Ethnically, the nomenclature, 'Naga,' and other homogenizing and essentializing concepts such as 'Naga history,' 'Naga identity,' and 'Naga culture' have become similar to Gellner's standardized culture which motivate the different Naga 'tribes' to unite under a common Naga nation-state. Following Gellner's model, Naga nationalism is a struggle to make the culture congruent with the political – to integrate all contiguous Naga inhabited areas and bring them under one political administration whether it be within the Indian state or as an independent nation-state. In other words, Naga nationalism claims that Naga culture is

unified and attempts to make Naga culture congruent with the Naga political identity. Additionally, in the process of globalization and modernization, ethnic communities become more self-conscious of their own identities in relation to other communities leading to mobilization of the community to protect their identity and culture which, they believe, can be best achieved by self-determination and sovereignty. All the external factors contribute to the conflict. But what is finally pushing this ethnonationalism model is the aspiration for political self-determination based on a legitimate ethnic core that predates modern constructivist factors. Ethnonationalism, as illustrated by the Nagas' case, is not the product of the state; rather, it is a defense of an ethnic identity that has pre-state ethnic foundations. In ethnonationalism, ethnic members are the active agents and not merely reactionary.

Not all Nagas agree that self-determination should necessarily mean total independence or the only option. So for example, Kwo suggests to the NSCN-IM that a separate nation-state is not the only alternative. Kwo asserts that, "Nagas could also exist peacefully in India, or for that matter in Myanmar or with China, and still be Nagas within the system through mutual respect and recognition." (2008). Along the same line, Annie, a college lecturer, stated in an interview:

> Even if we stay with India if we know how to make use of those constitutional protective measures, we will not allow to be mistreated or over run by India. … we can still maintain our distinct culture and people even if we stay within the Indian union. And even if we get our independence, if we know how to make use of that independence it will be nice but if we don't, it could be worse.

At a conceptual level Akum, a journalist and a research scholar pointed out in an interview, "we talk of sovereignty and we assume that everyone thinks of sovereignty in

the same way but, no. … Now if we had a more concrete sense of what sovereignty would be I think it would have been easier for us to negotiate." There are renewed calls for a new way of understanding concepts such as 'independence', 'sovereignty', and 'federalism.' Another emerging trend among Naga intellectuals today is to talk of peoplehood as a broader and deeper level of defining Naga nationalism than just the concept of nationhood. Chasie, a prominent journalist and author, explained this to me: "I think at the moment most people are only thinking and talking in terms of political nationhood, meaning an independent country. But at the level of the people, how do we become one nation?" What this peoplehood means exactly is not defined clearly but part of a dynamic ongoing process.

Ethnic cohesion and solidarity are like a two-edged sword; while they provide a sense of belonging and passion to the movement, the trappings of ethnic factors can also be detrimental. Naga society is not a modern, industrial or bureaucratic state, but continues to be anchored on a form of social organization that is seen as 'from time immemorial,' as the Nagas say. Naga nationalists' frequent affirmation of their 'unique history,' 'culture,' 'worldview,' 'territory' and 'geography' signify that we are dealing with a case of ethnonationalism in which, even when modern influences come into particular historical context, the forces of the cultural tradition are still very strong and continue to shape Naga nationalism. The very forces that sustain ethnic nationalism can also undermine the movement. Atavistic proclivities of ethnic groups such as tribalism can cause disruption not only to society but also the to the nationalist movement. Thus, in spite of the modern, external influences, the frequent factional clashes between the Naga

armed nationalists and rivalry between certain 'tribes' are constant reminders that divisive elements in ethnic groups are not completely done away with. In the current context of factional violence that has dominated Naga nationalism since the cease-fire with India from August 1997, the armed nationalists seem to have dragged the whole nationalist objective into the murky waters of factional dominance. Many Nagas are disenchanted by the factionalism while some have joined the factions for various reasons; they are angry, fed up and frustrated by factional killings, extortions and forced taxations, and a need for a reorientation is called for.

Unity in Heterogeneity

Nationalism by its nature is internally heterogeneous. Within a nationalist movement, there will be conservatives, progressives and traditionalists, and moderates. Just as a person continues to have an individual identity in spite of having multiple identities, so too national movements are politically and culturally diverse, and never a uniform phenomenon. Naga nationalism is no exception. The intention of this thesis is not a deconstruction of Naga nationalism; it is not meant to be nihilistic. Showing and highlighting the fragmentations within Naga society does not mean that there is no Naga nationalism. My intention is, rather, to show the ways in which the conflicting forces – unity and fragmentation – of Naga nationalism can be meaningfully understood. The fact that there are different positions or factions does not mean that there is no nationalism. This pluralism doesn't disqualify Naga nationalism. Fragmentation generates dynamism that can be helpful even towards greater unity and integrity. In the process of the nationalist movement, Naga identity is fluid, procesual and complicated. The

fragmentations themselves, however, are Nagas' way of constructing their identity. In the end, Naga nationalism is like an orange. Internally, the different segments of the fruit that have skins around them are derived from the same ovary and are held together by the pith. Externally the segments are held together as one fruit by the wrappings of some pith and the rind. The pith may be compared to the ethnic core that stores all the ethnic resources, and the rind may be likened to nationalism that holds the Nagas as one. Even though Naga nationalism is divided on the inside, nationalism holds the whole together. Ideologically, they are all saying the same thing from the beginning onwards – Naga nationalism has credibility because of Nagas' ethnicity, history and culture.

Future Challenges

Since August 1, 1997, the Government of India and NSCN-IM have signed a cease-fire and political talks have been initiated. However, after a decade of the cease-fire and more than sixty rounds of political talks, the Government of India and NSCN-IM have not arrived at any solution. If anything, the talks have reached an impasse. The political will that first brought them together has waned. However, most Nagas are still overwhelmingly for the nationalist movement. It would benefit India and the Nagas to seriously ask WHY this is the case and seek to resolve the conflict. One of the first steps would be to accept the present political impasse and seek alternative solutions.

The role of the Indian state to negotiate Naga nationalism and its relation to India and the world community is crucial. At the moment, there seems to be an apparent lack of political will by the Government of India to settle the Naga issue. If the British see the

Irish question as a process of decolonization, and the Spanish see Basque as integral part of its state, India sees the Nagas as a colonial legacy and the Naga territory as an integral part of India, and Nagas' demand as leading to the breaking up of Indian Union. Based on the political context of Indian nationalism and the partition of India, Nagas have been seen as a threat to Indian nation building. And, as Kwo says, India sees Nagas' conflict as a "resistance against its rightful dominance" (2008 Kuknalim.com). From the start, India has approached the Naga issue with a colonial mindset towards minorities and ethnic groups. At the time of Indian Independence, Nehru felt that in the context of affairs both in India and in the world, it would be impossible to consider even for a moment such an absurd demand for Naga independence. Nehru doubted whether the Nagas realize the consequences of what they are asking for. But that was how other colonialists argued too. Nehru's misjudgment of Naga issue as a law and order problem and his policy to 'hit hard and swift' led to militarization of Naga areas that resulted in antagonizing the Nagas even more. Independence or integration is not a guarantee that Nagas will be worse off than they are now. It could also turn out to be beneficial too; one never knows. Nagas' condition before 1947 was not better than today, but that can be said of India and most other countries in the world too. And, true, Nagas should be grateful for the historical processes and to India for all the developmental works in Nagaland after 1947. But to argue that for this reason Nagas should not stand up for their rights is spurious.

The Indian government, bureaucrats, and army officers have consistently used the same arguments from Nehru's time onwards to counter the Nagas – 'Nagas are backward people who require considerable help,' 'you can't stand on your own so stay with us we

will give you this and that for your good,' 'your culture will be respected,' 'your natural resources remain with you,' 'you have more autonomy than many others in India,' etc. But the truth is that after sixty years of such policies based on such arguments, the Naga problem remains unresolved. Could there be something wrong with this kind of approach that has added to the problem instead of helping solve it? To make any meaningful negotiations India has yet to understand the core issue of why the Nagas have been holding out for so long.

For a while, Indian policy was to allow the Nagas to 'develop according to their own genius' (Elwin and Nehru 1959) and yet, when Nagas do just that and develop their political rights 'according to their own genius,' – whether it be to integrate and remain within India, or to work out autonomy or independence – India continues to say NO. The state refuses by militarization to allow democratic movements for reform creating a political vacuum in the process. A welcome step would be for India to end the militarization of Naga areas (Kikon 2005a, 2005b). Indian security forces are looked upon as occupiers who terrorize the people at any given opportunity and are not looked upon as defenders of their country. The reality of oppressive militarization upon what India claims to be her people has not been brought into the homes of Indians. Indian media have not brought into the homes and lives of the Indian public the realities of what militarization looks like. The media has to assist in this process. A true cease-fire and peace process is between the state and the people (between the Indian state and the Naga people, not just the factional leaders). The victims should not be ignored in the political dialogues.

If Nagaland is a colonial legacy, as India argues, the divide and rule policy is another inheritance from the British. It is understandable that India as the dominant state will counter nationalistic claims by groups that threaten to undermine the integrity and security of the state. Allegations by the Naga Underground factions that India tries to undermine their nationalist movement through counter-insurgency programs and by the divide and rule policy have made the Nagas suspicious of India's motives. The present 'Gotcha' policy of India trying to outsmart the Nagas in and through the Intelligence departments has not yielded a solution. Nor does the Indian government's insistence to continue to uphold the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, in spite of recommendations by the Reddy Committee to do away with it altogether, help to reduce the tensions in any way.

As was set initially by both parties, the on-going dialogues should be without pre-conditions. The Government of India and the Nagas should not underestimate the other, nor should they ask people to give up their dream; at the moment, both parties are asking the other what each won't yield. The stand of the Indian government to consider the Nagas as part of India should be respected. So also the concept of Nagas' right as a people be respected. At this juncture, both the Government of India and the NSCN-IM want to know in advance the last step or the outcome of the talks.

Within the Nagas, at the moment the NSCN-IM feels that they have the monopoly over the Naga issue and have excluded the other factions and even the civil society leaders from the negotiations. The political talks should be inclusive. All the groups that represent the people on the ground should be at the table for negotiation. The leaders

represent the people on the ground, and so should be included in the negotiations even if the NSCN-IM does not like them. What the Nagas need are negotiators, not spoilers.

There is also a growing interest in the political process among the Nagas themselves. Increasingly democratic voices are emerging on the scene – voices of intellectuals, civil society organizations, churches and commissions, including the government of the state of Nagaland. There is a call for greater participation, a call for people owning the process (Kwo 2007). For instance, Kwo points out that, "unless local people own the process with their indigenous capacities and help shape sustainable outcomes, peace would elude us again" (Kuknalim.com). Hence, there is a continuing concern for popular consultation involving the participation of the civil society and peoples' voice to be incorporated into the political negotiations. The theme for the Naga Students' Federation's 21st General Conference in 2005 was 'Structuring Vision' which, as Achumbemo Kikon, the then President explained, "voluminously speaks of our people's struggle against aggression, against occupation, against brute force of might and, above all, for freedom and justice" (NSF 2005:1). According to Kikon the theme, 'Structuring Vision' was chosen "keeping in mind the Naga people's commitment to build a better relationship with India and Burma as well as to strengthen the relationship with our neighbouring community." Among such voices for reconstruction are some Naga intellectuals today who speak of redefining the aims and objectives of Naga nationalism. As Tiwa said to me: "We have not shaped it [Naga nation] yet. Nagas will have to decide what we like it to be." Similarly Akum, a journalist pointed out in an interview, Naga nationalism focuses, "so much in terms of state building, in terms of the demarcation of the territory but we have

not dwelt enough in nation building which is building good relationship between different nations."

The Naga issue has now become cancerous to India. In the past, such as at one point during Indira Gandhi's time, there were opportunities where Nagas had a chance to get much of what they are asking for today. How long can this go on while the Naga masses suffer and India continues to bleed? Both India and Nagas seem to lack political wisdom and maturity to arrive at a peaceful solution. Either that or India, as the dominant player, does not have the political will to solve the Naga problem. I think the greatness of India as a country will be proven when she, as the dominant powerful nation, can reason WITH and not against the Nagas and help resolve the issue. On the other hand, it's time Nagas and India think about a win-win kind of deal. A positive, radical, creative and imaginative approach to resolving this problem can be one of the political frameworks both India and Nagas can contribute to the world.

If the current trends are any indication of what the future might be, the increasing involvement of the general Naga public is beginning to have a greater impact on the Undergrounds and on the direction the nationalist movement ought to take. The efforts of the Forum for Naga Reconciliation, a committe formed to negotiate peace and non-violence between the warring factions, has had positive results. Factional killings have reduced dramatically especially since July 2008. The active involvement of the public also brought about a positive result at a recent incident in Shirui, a Tangkhul Naga village in Manipur, where there was a stand off between the NSCN-IM and Assam Rifles from

January 19, 2009 that lasted two weeks. During that period, the Assam Rifles surrounded the NSCN-IM camp with electrified barbed wire and disconnected water and food supply to the NSCN-IM cadres in the camp. The women of Shirui and the surroundings villages positioned themselves between the Assam Rifles and the NSCN-IM cadres, and negotiated a peaceful settlement eventually avoiding a bloodbath. These women were also backed by other organizations such as Tangkhul Shanao Long, Tangkhul Hoho (apex organization of the Tangkhuls), United Naga Council, and Naga Hoho.

In another case, the Chief Minister of the state of Nagaland, Neiphiu Rio, and the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) held a three-day Naga Consultative Meet at Kohima from March 5-7, 2009, with various Naga organizations including the Naga Hoho, Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights, Naga Students' Federation, Overseas Nagas, Churches, Forum for Naga Reconciliation, and representatives from the factions to deliberate on the Naga political process. The Meet resolved for all Nagas to work together under one transformative vision of 'one dream, one voice, one future.' Among others, the Meet also resolved, to set up a common platform, inclusive of all Nagas, to arrive at a "realistic position that is also honorable and acceptable to the Nagas, as well as to India" (*Morung Express*, March 9, 2009). The current negotiations between the NSCN-IM and the Government of India have featured suggestions for a consociational relationship or a federal structure through the Constitutions of both India and Nagaland with any changes possible only by a bilateral agreement. But other factions such as the NNC continue to hold on to sovereignty as the only option. What the future will be is

hard to tell. However, the present increasing role of the civil society and general public indicates that Naga nationalism as a peoples' movement is gaining strength.

Anthropology and Non-State Ethnonationalism

This thesis is not meant to be prescriptive. In conflict resolution, it is important to see the history, possible causes, and the different facets of the problem. There have been trends to treat ethnonationalism as non-rational, and underestimate the passion it generates. However, ethnonationalism continues to cause instability in many parts of the world. Besides other approaches such as from sociology or political science, there is value of anthropology in understanding nationalism. As is seen in Naga nationalism, anthropology helps us see heterogeneity where homogeneity is assumed, and examining the heterogeneity helps us understand the dynamism of ethnonationalism. There is value in understanding the symbols of people, in understanding the culture of people. Anthropology helps us understand the subjective self-awareness and how ethnic groups construct their own identity by using elements such as myths, origin, symbols, language, race, and territory, and how these cultural aspects are utilized for nationalist cause. Subsequently, anthropology helps us understand what a group considers as important to protect and fight for. Understanding these dynamics also explains the passion, tragedies and ill effects of ethnonationalism. Thus one can see the rational agency of the ethnic subjects at work in ethnonationalism. As illustrated by the Naga example, anthropological analysis helps us to understand why, even though ethnic elements have been questioned as 'inventions,' 'spurious,' 'filtered,' and 'fabrications,' they continue to exert passion, inspiration and a reason to fight for. In short, anthropology is helpful in

understanding how people think, and such insights can help in the resolution of ethnonational conflicts such as the Indo-Naga problem. Among other explanations for ethnonationalism such as economic differentials, modernization, geopolitics, or globalization, anthropology is also helpful in explicating the historical, ethno-symbolic ethnic core, and ethnic ideological bases of ethnonationalism.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1

NAGA MEMORANDUM TO THE SIMON COMMISSION

Dated: 10 January 1929

To:

The British Statutory Commission
Camp-India

Sub: Memorandum of the Naga Hills

Sir,

We the undersigned Nagas of the Naga Club at Kohima, who are the only persons at present who can voice for our people have heard with great regret that our Naga Hills is included within the Reformed Scheme of India without our knowledge, but as administration is continued to be in the hands of the British officers and we did not consider it necessary to raise any protest in the past. Now we have learnt that you have come to India as representative of the British Government to inquire into the working of the system of Government and the growth of education and we beg to submit below our view with the prayer that our hills may be withdrawn from the Reformed Scheme and placed outside the Reforms but directly under the British Government. We never asked for any reforms and we do not wish for any reforms.

Before the British Government conquered our country in 1879-80, we were living in a state of intermittent warfare with Assamese of the Assam valley to the North and West of our country and Manipuris to the South. They never conquered us, nor were we ever subjected to their rule. On the other hand, we were always a terror to these people. Our country within the administered area consists of more than eight regions quite different from one another, with quite different languages which cannot be understood by each other, and there are more regions outside the administered area which are not known at present. We have no unity among us and it is only the British government that is holding us now.

Our education is poor. The occupation of our country by the British government being so recent as 1880, we have had no chance or opportunity to improve in education though we can boast of two or three graduates of an Indian University in our country, we have not got one yet who is able to represent us in any council of a province. Moreover our population numbering 1,02,000 is very small in comparison with the population of the plains districts in the province; and any representation that may be allotted to us in the council will be negligible and will have no weight whatever. Our language is quite

different from those of the plains and we have no social affinities with the Hindus or Mussalmans. We are looked down upon by the one for "beef" and the other for our "pork" and by both for want in education, is not due to any fault of ours.

Our country is poor and it does not pay for its administration. Therefore, if it is continued to be placed under the Reformed Scheme, we are afraid that new and heavy taxes will be impose on us, and we cannot pay, then all land will have to be sold and in the long run we shall have no share in the land of our birth and live will not be worth living then. Though our land at present is within the British territory, Government have always recognized our private rights in it, but if we are forced to enter the council the majority of whose number is sure to belong to the other district, we also have much fear the introduction of foreign laws and customs to supersede our own customary law which we now enjoy.

For the above reasons, we pray that the British Government will continue to safeguard our right against all encroachment from other people who are more advanced than us. By withdrawing our country that we should not thrust to the mercy of other people who could never be subjected; but to leave us alone to determine ourselves as in ancient times. We claim not only the members of the Naga Club to represent all those regions to which we belong, viz., Angamis, Kacha Nagas, Kukis, Semas, Lothas and Rengmas, but also other regions of Nagaland.
Signed by:

1. Nihu Angami, Head Interpreter
2. Hisale, Peshkar,
3. Nisier Angami, Master
4. Khosa, Doctor
5. Gebo Kacha Naga, Interpreter
6. Vipunyu Angami, Potdar
7. Goyiepra Angami, Treasurer
8. Ruzhukhrie Angami, Master
9. Tikhrie Angami, Sub-Overseer
10. Zapuzhulie Angami, Master
11. Zepulie Angami, Interpreter
12. Katsuno Angami, Interpreter
13. Nuolhoukielie Angami, Interpreter
14. Inzevi Sema, Interpreter
15. Apomo Lotha, Interpreter
16. Resile Renga, Interpreter
17. Lengjang Kuki, Interpreter
18. Nikhriehu Angami, Interpreter
19. Miakrao Angami, Chaprasi
20. Levi Kacha Naga, Clerk.

Appendix 2

THE NINE-POINT AGREEMENT (THE HYDARI AGREEMENT) ARRIVED AT BETWEEN THE NAGA NATIONAL COUNCIL AND THE GOVERNOR IN JUNE 1947

The right of the Nagas to develop themselves according to their freely expressed is recognized:
1. Judicial: All cases whether civil or criminal arising between the Nagas in the Naga Hills will be disposed for by duly constituted Naga courts according to Naga customary law, or such law as may be introduced with the consent of duly recognized Naga representative organizations, save that where a sentence of transportation or death has been passed there will be right of appeal to the Governor.
In cases arising between Nagas and non-Nagas in (a) Kohima and Mokokchung areas, and (b) in the neighboring plains districts, the judge if not a Naga, will be assisted by the Naga assessor.

2. Executive : The general principle is accepted that what the Naga National Council is prepared to pay for the Naga National Council should control. This principle will be applied to the work done as well as the staff employed.
While the district officer will be appointed at the discretion of the Governor, sub-division of the Naga Hills should be administered by a sub-divisional council with a full time executive president, paid by the Naga National Council, who would be responsible to the district officer, for all matters falling within the latter's responsibility, and the Naga National Council for all matters falling within their responsibility.

In regard to:
Agriculture – The Naga National Council will exercise all the powers now vested in the district officer. PWD – The Naga National Council will take over full control. Education and Forest Department – The Naga National Council is prepared to pay for all the services and staff.

3. Legislative : That no laws passed by the Provincial or Central Legislature which would materially affect the terms of this agreement or the religious practices of the Nagas shall have legal force in the Naga Hills without the consent of the Naga National Council.
In cases of dispute as to whether any law did so affect this agreement, the matter would be referred by the Naga National Council to the Governor who would then direct that the law in question should not have legal force in the Naga Hills pending the decision of the Central Government.

4. Land: That land with all its resources in the Naga Hills should not be alienated to a non-Naga without the consent of the Naga National Council.

5. Taxation: That the Naga National Council will be responsible for the imposition, collection and expenditure of land revenue and house tax, and of such other taxes as may be imposed by the Naga National Council.

6. Boundaries: The present administrative divisions should be modified so as to (1) bring back into the Naga Hills District all the forests transferred to the Sibsagar and Nowgong Districts in the past, and (2) bring under one unified administrative unit, so as far as possible, all Nagas. All the areas so included would be within the scope of the present proposed agreement.
No areas should be transferred out of the Naga Hills without the consent of the Naga National Council.

7. Arms Act: The district officer will act on the advice of the Naga National Council in accordance with the provisions of the Arms Act.

8. Regulations: The Chin Hills Regulation and the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations will remain in force.

9. Period of Agreement: The Governor of Assam as the agent of the Government of Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of ten years to ensure that due observance of this agreement; at the end of this period the Naga National Council will be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period, or a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga people arrived at.

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