

POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF NAGALAND

Dr. Chandrika Singh

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Political Evolution of Nagaland

The Naga insurgency not only posed a threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country but also created law and order problems in Nagaland. In the recent past, the problem of insurgency in Nagaland had become so dangerous and complex, that the issues involved in it become relevent, as that will help in restoring peace in Nagaland.

Today Nagaland is on the threshold of new prosperity and this book is the unbiased story after years of research by the author of the political evolution and democratic systems of a society which was enveloped in an unprecedented turmoil. The author carried out on-the-spot survey of the different areas and interviewed important Naga Leaders.

Price Rs. 95/-

Dr. Chandrika Singh, b.1 June 1944, served as a instructor for a decade in the Educational Corps, Assam Rifles. Twelve years old association with Nagaland has established an excellent rapport with the people. By virtue of his intimacy with the Nagas, the author has developed a rare insight into the political and military happenings in this sensitive region. He is at present, the head of the Political Science Department of Tuensang College, Tuensang, Nagaland.

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Dr. CHANDRIKA SINGH



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198688.

18/7/97.

11/6/98

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First Edition : 1981

Publishers : LANCERS PUBLISHERS,
Post Box No. 4235,
New Delhi-110 048, INDIA

Printers : Patel Enterprises
at Sunil Printers,
1067 Ajay Palace, Naraina,
New Delhi-110 028

To

**My elder brother
Maj. J. N. Singh
from whom I always
get inspirations
and my younger brother
Mahesh who is the base
of my success.**

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Early History

Nagaland, the sixteenth State of the Indian Union, is the most picturesque as well as the most rugged of the Indian States. It is situated in the north-eastern corner of India and is bounded by Arunachal Pradesh on the north, Assam on the west, Manipur on the south and Burma on the east. Nagaland has a total geographical area of 16,527 square kilometres.¹ Its rolling mountains, enchanting valleys, swift-flowing streams and evergreen forests speak of the scenic beauty of the land. The terrain of Nagaland is mostly hilly, mountainous and rugged. The hilly terrain is covered with green forests but "it forms an irregular plateau with the elevated ridges and peaks."² The peaks of the Naga hills vary in height from 350 metres to 3,000 metres above sea-level.³ The highest peak in Nagaland is Saramati in Tuensang district, whose height is 3,826 metres.⁴ The second highest peak is Japfu, 3,014 metres high,⁵ in Kohima district. Nagaland does not have much plain area. This is evident from the fact that Dimapur, with an area of 150 square kilometres, is considered to have the largest plain area. The Dhansiri is the largest river of the State which flows through North Cachar and Kohima before it falls into the Brahmaputra. The other two rivers—the Dikhu and the Doyang—are not big, but they have their own importance as they make the land fertile and picturesque. While the Dikhu, flowing through Naginimara in the Mon district, joins the Brahmaputra, the Doyang originates near Mao, and finally falls into the Dhansiri river.

While India in general faces three seasons in the year—winter, summer and monsoon, Nagaland has two seasons—winter and monsoon. Rain starts in Nagaland in early April

and continues upto October. The rainfall is almost equitably distributed throughout Nagaland and the average temperature in winter falls to as low as 3⁰ centigrade. The soil of Nagaland is acidic, rich in organic matters but poor in phosphate and potash.

During 1975-76, 11,600 hectares of land were put under cultivation out of which 3,200 hectares went under terrace rice cultivation and the rest under *jhuming*⁷ or shifting cultivation.⁸ The chief agricultural products of Nagaland are rice, maize, kauni, onion, millet, chilli, mustard seeds, soyabeans, cotton, sugarcane and a variety of vegetables. In addition to these, orange, pineapple, papaya, bears, banana and other fruits are also grown there. The hill State is, however, very rich in forest products such as bamboo and timber, and is also the home of some wild animals like elephants, tigers, deer, monkeys etc. Nagaland may soon provide the country with precious petroleum products, as the Geological Survey of India which is actively exploring the country for oil and coal, hopes to find them here.⁹ Some quantity of superior quality coal has been found in Borajan near Naginimara. It is also available in some quantity in Tuensang and Mokokchung districts.

The People

Nagaland presents unity in diversity in matters of race and language. The social and cultural heritage of the Naga people might have been the same had they one common language. But the Naga people do not belong to one tribe but to more than twenty. There are nearly thirteen major Naga tribes and not less than seven minor tribes. While Ao, Angami, Chang, Konyak, Lotha, Sema, Chakhesang, Phom, Rengma, Sangtam, Yimchunger, Kuki, Zeliangroung etc. may be grouped into major tribes, Chankru, Chiru, Kheza, Pchury, Shamnyuyang, Tikhir, Wancho etc. may be classified as minor tribes. This multiplicity of tribes in Nagaland is due to the fact that the Naga people migrated to this part in different groups and they remained confined to their ridges and mountainous terrain.¹¹ This also resulted in the multiplicity of languages in Nagaland. The various tribal Nagas used to speak their own dialects which were essentially different from one another. But recently the

Naga people have developed a language which is known as Nagamese.¹² Nagamese may be called broken Assamese. It is not only the lingua franca of the Nagas but also a link between the different tribes of Nagaland. But as soon as Nagaland became a constituent State of the Indian Union, English became the State language. The medium of instruction in schools and colleges of Nagaland is English. Thus, while other States of India are laying emphasis on their regional languages and wanting to do away with English, Nagaland has accepted English as the State language. This departure from the main trend is due to two factors. Firstly, the Naga people did not have a common language for did they have any common script of their own.¹³ Nagamese has been developed very recently when the Assamese came into contact with the Nagas. Secondly, the British Missionaries influenced the innocent Nagas to become Christians. They tried to change the social and cultural outlook of the Nagas.¹⁴ The Britishers, in fact, made a deep impact on the social and cultural life of the Nagas.¹⁵ The simple and innocent Nagas were dazzled by the English culture and way of life.¹⁶ English, thus, became very popular among the Naga elite. It was regarded as the language of the socially, economically and politically advanced Nagas who were of the notion that the key to advancement lay in learning English. Years after independence when Nagaland was given statehood, English was accepted as the State language by the people of Nagaland.

The Naga people are simple, friendly, hard working and self-respecting. They could be called egoists, because the moment they feel they are being let down, they become ferocious and dangerous. The most praiseworthy thing about the Nagas is their belief in a casteless society. They do not harbour any prejudices related to caste and creed.¹⁷ There are no social outcastes in Nagaland. All are equal there and they do not make any distinction among themselves on the basis of caste, creed and colour.¹⁸ Mostly, the Nagas are Christians. The Christian Missionaries had been working for a long time in Nagaland and they succeeded in making the Nagas Christians. The Nagas are deeply religious and every village has a Baptist Church.

The written history of the Naga people before the arrival of the British in India is not available. Since the Nagas in the ancient time and in the medieval period were far from the centres of civilization, they had little idea about writing any history.¹⁹ Moreover, they lived in such inhospitable mountainous terrains that the people from the plains could not establish any contact with them with the result that very little is known about the early history and origin of the Naga people. Though a number of paleolithic tools recently discovered in Nagaland and Manipur throw some light on the early history, culture, religion and social life of the Nagas, they do not give a clear picture about the origin of the Nagas.²⁰ How the Nagas came to this part of India is not recorded. This, however, does not mean that the Naga people do not have any written or unwritten account of their origin and their early history. There are, in fact, many legends and mythological stories which speak about the origin of the Nagas.²¹ In modern times the British Missionaries and adventurers made some attempts to know about the Nagas. Their writings throw much light on the origin, social and political life of the Naga people.²²

Here it will not be out of place to add a few words as to why the people living in this part of the hills are called Nagas. John Buttler believes that the people in the plains used to call the persons living in the hills, Nagas.²³ Some other writers, however, believe that the word 'Naga' has been derived from the Sanskrit word *nag* which means a snake.²⁴ But the Nagas did not themselves know that they were the descendants of the snake spirit. Hence, it is not convincing that the Nagas are the descendants of snakes. L. W. Shakespear and Robert Reid think that the word "Naga" is the deformed Hindu word of *Nanga*, meaning naked.²⁵ A Greek scholar of second century A.D., Ptolemy holds the same view. He has referred to the Nagas as *Nanglong*, which means naked people.²⁶ According to Helcombe and Peal the term "Naga" has its origin in the word *Nok* which means folk and as the Naga people used to live in groups, they came to be known as Nagas later on.²⁷ This view of Holcomb and Peal appears to be logical and nearest the truth.

The origin of the Naga people is also shrouded in mystery. Different scholars hold different views. Some believe that the

Nagas belong to the Indo-Mongoloid race.²⁸ There is yet another version which suggests that the Nagas were no other than the Kiratas of India. During the Vedic period the Kiratas migrated to their hills and later on they came to be known as Nagas. The chief exponent of this view was Dr. S.K. Chatterjee. He writes : "The Kiratas were known to the Hindu world as a group of peoples whose original home was in the Himalayan slopes and in the mountains of the East, in Assam particularly, who were yellow in colour and presented a distinct type of culture. They had spread all over the plains of Bengal up to the sea."²⁹

This view of S. K. Chatterjee, however, does not appear to be very sound. No doubt, there are some references of Kiratas in ancient Hindu Vedic literatures and religious epics but most of the scholars do not subscribe to the view that the Kiratas were none else than the Nagas.

The Nagas have some legends and stories of their own which throw some light on their origin. The Chakheshang, Sema Rengma and Lotha (major tribes of Nagaland) believe that the first Naga came out of stone in a place known as Khezkenoma. Thus, as the Christians believe that Adam and Eve were the first to come on the earth, and that later their sons and daughters spread all over the world, the Nagas think that the first Naga who came out of the stone gave birth to several sons who left their original places of birth and went away to different places to settle. There is still another legend in Nagaland which suggests that the first Naga emerged from a lake.³¹ These stories and the legends do not, however, seem to be very convincing because they are based on superstition and religious belief.

It, thus, appears that there is a lot of controversy regarding the origin of the Nagas. But the view which states that the Nagas belong to the Indo-Mongoloid race appears to be very near the truth.³² This is simply because the Naga people did not come to this part of India from a very far off land. Some of the people living in the plains from either side of the Himalayas might have come to this part and the mixture produced the Nagas. Hence it will be more appropriate to say that the Nagas belong to Indo-Mongoloid race.

Migration

Another issue that needs scrutiny is whether the Nagas were the original inhabitants of these hills or whether they came to this part of India from a far away place. It does not appear that the Nagas have been living in this area from time immemorial. The reasons are not far to seek. The terrain is so inhospitable, the climate so rough and unproductive that the people cannot think of settling there in normal circumstances. It appears more plausible that people came to this part from some other places. Most of the scholars believe that originally the Naga people came from central Asia.³³ These people of central Asia were known as the non-Chinese Chinang Tribes. They first came to north-west border of China many centuries before the Christian era and later on these tribes spread over to China, Indonesia, Philippines, Bhutan, Burma and Nagaland.³⁴ This is evident from the fact that the Nagas bear similarity with some tribal groups such as Dyaks and Koyans of Indo-Chinese countries. Smith has also written that the social customs and culture of the Nagas resemble those of Dyaks and Koyans—the tribal people of Indonesia and the Philippines. Smith is of the view that the Nagas belong to the same blood which is found in the people of Burma, Sikkim, Bhutan and other hilly areas of north-east India.³⁵

Different Naga tribes came to Nagaland after crossing the Irawaddi and the Chindwin rivers of Burma. Some of the allied tribes of the Nagas like Caren, Shan, Chin, Singpho and others who had come from the western China settled in Burma.³⁶ S. K. Chatterjee believes that these Indo-Mongoloid group of people came to India in the tenth century B. C. and confined themselves only to the north-eastern part of India.³⁷ Since the place where they settled down was covered with dense forests and rugged hills, there could not be any communication between the people of the plains and the Nagas for a long period. These Nagas, after having settled in the north-eastern part of India, established their respective tiny sovereign village-states.³⁸ The Naga people of ancient times earmarked their territories with stones, rivers and mountains. They started *jhum* and terrace cultivation also. They established their rule on the basis



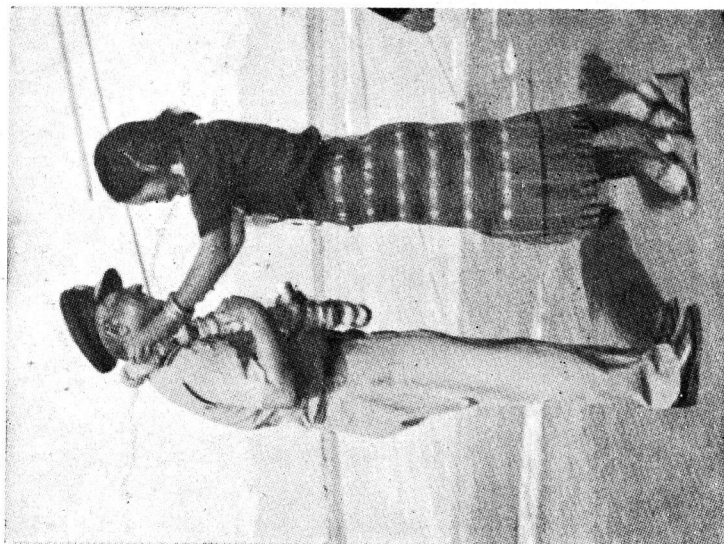
A Naga girl receiving presentation from the Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi on the eve of 31st Republic Day Celebration at New Delhi.



Home Minister Giani Zail Singh among a team of the Naga girls who participated in the 31st Republic Day celebrations at New Delhi.



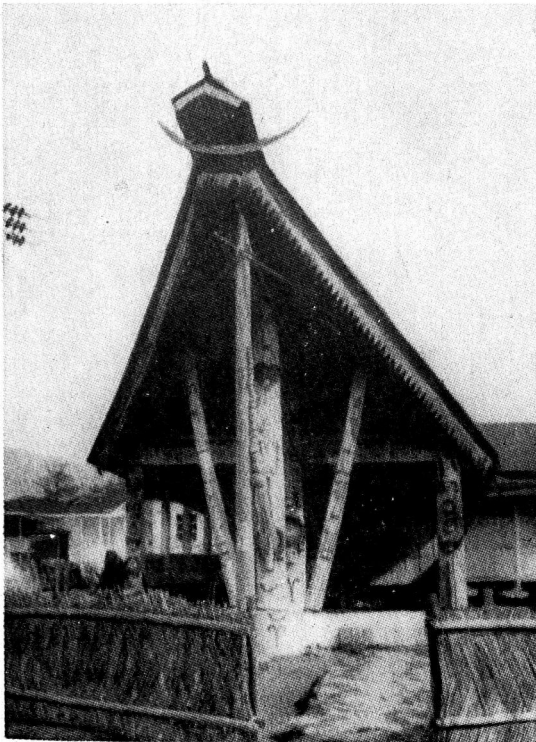
COAS, General O.P. Malhotra, PVSM being received by a Naga girl at Tuensang during his visit in 1979.



Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal I.H. Latif, PVSM welcomed by a Naga girl at Tuensang in 1979.



The Minister of State for Home Affairs Y. Makwana with Tochi Hanso, a Minister of Nagaland at the guard of honour when he visited Tuensang in 1981.



*A
Naga
Morung
house*



A view of Sangtam Nagar festival.



Sangtam Nagar in traditional costume on the occasion of their festival.

of ancient Greek city-states in the sense that a village-state contained an organised political community.³⁹ The base of their organisation was republican sovereignty or aristocracy. The customary laws and traditions were their code of conduct.⁴⁰ As they were still far from civilization, they never managed to establish a single sovereign State of all the tiny village-states.

Thus the Nagas have a chequered history. The primitive Nagas must be appreciated for their local self-government which was based on customary laws, though fights, head-hunting wars, rivalries and petty tribal feuds very much prevailed among them. Nowadays, the Nagas believe in such virtues as unity at the time of outside invasion, obedience to elders or chieftains, peaceful settlement of their quarrels and faith in customs and traditions.⁴¹

Now the question arises as to why these tribal people migrated to this inhospitable and mountainous part of the land. No definite reasons can be assigned, but it appears that they might have come to this area in search of livelihood or just to satisfy their sense of adventure. These people could not settle in the plains because the area had already been inhabited by other people. The only vacant space was the hill area and so they decided to settle there comfortably without any disturbances.

There might have been some contact between the people living in the plains of India and the Nagas in the early period but during the Mughal period, it appears that the contact between the two was almost nil. It is a fact that the Mughals could establish their control over Bengal and proceeded towards western Assam at the close of the twelfth century but they did not establish their control over Assam. Since the Mughal kings did not get a foothold in Assam, the question of any kind of contact between the people of the plains and the Nagas does not arise.

Contact with the Assamese

In fact, contact was only established after the rise of the Ahom kingdom in Assam in the thirteenth century.⁴² The Ahoms were the original inhabitants of Burma.⁴³ They came to north-eastern Assam through the Patkai

range and North Eastern Frontier Agency, and later on they spread over the plains of the Brahmaputra valley.⁴⁴ The first Ahom king was Sukapha who established the Ahom kingdom in Assam in 1228. He was ambitious and so he wanted control over neighbouring areas. It is said that the Ahoms first attacked the Naga village in search of food. The Nagas resisted with the result the Ahoms tried to suppress the Nagas by force. This created enmity between the two. The Nagas, in retaliation, also made several attempts to raid the areas under the control of the Ahom king.⁴⁵ Thus, there was a war between the Nagas and the Ahoms. In this war the Ahoms could succeed in establishing control over some of the Naga tribes such as Nocte and Konyaks. Later on, the Lotha and Ao Naga tribes were also brought under the control of the Ahoms. The Ahoms compelled these Naga tribes to pay tribute in the form of *mithuns* (a kind of buffalo) and other commodities as a token of their allegiance to the Ahom king.⁴⁶ In return the Ahoms granted to the Nagas exemption from rent over the lands and the areas meant for fishing. They recruited Naga youths in their army and administration.⁴⁷ Thus, it is evident that some of the Naga tribes had been in contact with and under the control of Assam when the Ahoms were ruling over Assam. J. F. Michell has also written that the Nagas were under the control and jurisdiction of the Ahom Kings. He writes that "present inhabitants are the remains of the hill legions enlisted by the Rajas of Assam and given their present lands as their reward of good services."⁴⁸

It is, thus, obvious that the Nagas had been in contact with the Ahoms of Assam. It is a fact that there was some sort of understanding between the Assamese rulers and the Nagas concerning matters which affected both the parties. The Nagas had accepted the supremacy of the Ahoms but they were allowed freedom in internal affairs. They agreed not to encroach upon the Ahoms' territories.⁴⁹ They also promised to pay some tribute to the Ahom king.⁵⁰ There were occasions when the Nagas stopped the payment of tributes to the Ahom kings. But such deceitful activities of the Nagas did not go unpunished. The Ahom kings used to send expeditionary forces for punishing the Nagas for non-payment of tributes or other

deceitful activities. The Lotha Nagas became rebellious in the last decade of the seventeenth century. They challenged the authority of the Ahom king and made several raids in his territories.⁵¹ An expeditionary force of the Ahoms under the command of T. C. Phukan was despatched to the Lotha area to punish the rebels. Phukan's army dealt with the Lothas ruthlessly. Many of them were killed and their houses were burnt to ashes. The Lothas, thereupon, prayed for mercy and peace. This is evident from their prayer to the victorious commander, Phukan: "We are your slaves, we do not know what is right and what is wrong. We are *abors* (ignorant). Now we shall offer two girls to the king with two female slaves and other articles. We hope that Phukan will save us."⁵²

Thus, there is no denying the fact that by the end of the seventeenth century the Ahoms of Assam had established their authority over the Nagas who were living within the borders of the Ahom kingdom.⁵³ But in the eighteenth century the Ahom kings became weak because of their quarrels with Burma. The Burmese invasion of 1728 made the Ahom kingdom weaker. The Nagas took advantages of the weakness of the Assam kings and started once again their raids upon the plains of Assam.⁵⁴

It thus becomes obvious that the Nagas had been subdued by the rulers of Assam in the seventeenth century. Some of the Naga tribes had also accepted the supremacy of the kings of Assam. This, however, does not mean that all the Naga tribes were under the control and jurisdiction of Assam. In fact, they were brought under the control of India when the British came.

British Expeditions in the Naga Hills

While the process of the consolidation of the British rule in India was going on, the British Indian Government came into contact with the Nagas. The British annexed Cachar of Assam area in 1832 and in 1839 and with this annexation the process of integration of the Nagas in the mainstream of India started. This is evident from the statement of A. Mackenzie who has written that "We were brought into contact with Angamis (a Naga tribe). . . . by the acquisition of Cachar with its hill

territory running up between the Angami hills and the Khashi hills. . . .the very confines of Nowgong.”⁵⁵

What were the factors which compelled the British Indian Government to come into contact with the Nagas and assert their authority over them? It appears that the British Government was influenced by five major factors. Firstly, the Indian Government was very much concerned about the safety and security of the Indian borders. The British wanted a safe and secure frontier on India's north-eastern border. They wanted to have influence and control over Himalayan territories from Tibet to Burma. The snowy Himalaya was itself a strong barrier against the invaders from the north. But logistics and strategy demanded that the territory south of the Himalayan watershed should be in the control of the British. There is the legend that one who sits over the roof of the world (Tibet) will dominate the southern side of the Himalayas. The British Indian Government was aware of this⁵⁶. Since the Naga hills were on the southern side of the Himalayan watershed, it lies in the logic of circumstances that the British Indian Government had to have control over this area.

Secondly, the frequent Naga raids on the plains of Assam also compelled the British Indian Government to establish their control over the Naga hills. The British at first had tried to befriend the Nagas as the Ahom Kings had done. But this move did not bear any fruit. So they adopted the policy of sending military expeditions to subdue the Nagas. The British Indian Government sent ten military expeditions between 1839 and 1850. The objectives of these military expeditions were mainly two. The British wanted to overawe the Nagas so that they might stop raids on the plains of Assam. Secondly, the British Government wanted to be acquainted with the topography of the Naga hills.⁵⁷

Thirdly, the British came to India to establish a flourishing trade in this country. But soon they became the political masters of India. It was, therefore, natural that they should extend their commercial interest in every nook and corner of the country. The British had already made a secret agreement with the King of Manipur which gave them a better scope in the field of trade and commerce.⁵⁸ Since Nagaland is adjacent to Manipur, the British could not remain inactive.

Hence, they went on subjugating the Naga territories one after another in the following years. This became evident when they opened new markets and established salt depots in the British occupied Naga territories.

Fourthly, the British needed a direct route from Assam to Manipur for developing trade relations with the Manipuris and for protecting their commercial interests in Upper Cachar, north Assam and Burma also. This was, however, not possible until a new road had been constructed from Assam to Manipur via the Naga hills. Mackenzie has also written that "the importance of opening up a direct communication between Assam and Manipur was at that time much insisted upon, and it was in the course of exploration directed to this end that we first came into conflict with the Nagas of these hills."⁵⁹ Since a passage to Manipur, however, was possible only through the Naga hills, the Nagas had to be subdued first. That is why Captain Jenkins and Pemberton with seven hundred Manipuri soldiers and eight hundred coolies marched from Manipur to Assam in January, 1832, with an intention to open direct communication between Assam and Manipur.⁶⁰

Fifthly, it appears that the British authorities at Calcutta were reluctant to penetrate into the Naga hills in the beginning because of its dense forests and non-availability of proper communications. When the British Indian Government came to know that the King of Manipur was in favour of extending his sway over the Naga tribes, they (British) became cautious and alert soon. A. Mackenzie writes that "Facts came to light which made it clear that the object which Gambhir Singh (King of Manipur) had in his view was the permanent conquest of the Naga hills... and the Government began to feel uncomfortable in prospect of Gambhir Singh's operations."⁶¹ Thus the desire of the King of Manipur to extend his influence to the Naga hills compelled the British to adopt a new policy. Consequently, the British entered into the Naga territories with an expeditionary force. When the Nagas resisted, the British suppressed them. Thus, the result of the new British policy, in the words of John Buttler was "one long sickening struggle, enough open insults and defiance, bold outrages and cold murders on the one side, and long-suffering forgiveness, concession and unlooked-for favours on the other." According to him, the British were recognised as the friends of the Nagas and the Angami

varied now and again with tours, immovable deputations and expeditions."⁶²

It is, thus, obvious that the British in the middle of the nineteenth century developed both commercial and political interests in the land of the Nagas. To realise their objectives the British Government asked their officials in Assam to establish a military post in the North Cachar hills near Naga territory.⁶³ The British organised a small Cachari levy also with a view to helping the British force because the Cacharis were well-acquainted with the hilly tracks of the Naga hills. The British Government sent ten military expeditions into the Angami Naga areas between 1839 and 1850 with a view to exploring the Naga areas and establishing their control.

After having annexed North Cachar to the district of Nowgong in January 1839, the British Government directed E. R. Grange, the Sub-Assistant to the Sub-Commissioner at Nowgong, to make an investigation into the causes of the Angami raids and to punish the chiefs of the two warlike Naga villages, Khonoma and Mozema.⁶⁴ Consequently, Grange marched to the Naga areas with an expeditionary force. He succeeded in persuading the Naga chiefs to stop raids and plunder of Assam. He opened a new way from Chumukedima to Dimapur. He also found that the cause of the Naga raids was slave trade carried on by the Angamis with Bengalee merchants who used to induce them to procure such slaves. Grange recommended the setting up a military post at Chumukedima so that this slave trade could be stopped.⁶⁵ If that trade was stopped, Grange believed, the Naga raids would also diminish.

Grange was in favour of creating only a military post in the Angami Naga area just to control the raids and malpractices of the Nagas. This would have provided protection to the people living in that area. But the Government did not accept Grange's proposal because the expected income from the taxes, tolls etc. would have been much less than the expenditure incurred over the establishment of the military post.⁶⁶

the captain Jenkins, Commissioner of Nowgong, also proposed with the Government to attach the Angami tract to Nowgong and in the then Extra-Assistant Commissioner for the Angami adjacent to ^{1.67} But the British Indian Government did not

accept the proposal because at that time it had not been decided to bring the Naga territory under British rule.⁶⁸ This time the British Company Government agreed to set up a new post in the Angami Naga area which would make communications with Assam or Cachar easy. Thus the British officials in Assam were entrusted to open a market and garrison at Chumukedima.⁶⁹ It appears that the local British officials of Assam were in favour of subjugating the neighbouring Nagas as soon as possible. But the British Government was not yet ready to establish civil rule in the Naga areas because it would have incurred huge expenditure.⁷⁰ The Government, however, agreed to set up a military post in the Angami Naga area in order to protect the proposed market and garrison and to control the Naga raids upon Cachar and Nowgong.⁷¹ On instructions, Grange set out for the Naga hills (Angami areas) in January 1840 with an expeditionary force. His purpose was to choose a suitable place for the opening of the new military post in the Naga hills.⁷² But Grange could not succeed in establishing such a post. However, he managed to arrest some Nagas and set their houses on fire.

When Grange visited the Angami area, he came to know that the Angami Nagas were against the Manipuris.⁷³ The reason for this hostility was the exploitation of the Angamis by the Manipuris. The British seized this opportunity to develop a friendship with the Angami Nagas. This is evident from the instructions sent to Lieutenant Bigge, the Principal Assistant to Nowgong. He was asked to "enter the hills and make leisurely and, if possible, friendly progress from village to village conciliating the Chiefs by personal intercourses."⁷⁴

In fact, the British Indian Government were not trying to administer the Naga hills. They just wanted to exercise general political control over the hill tribes and establish a military post to prevent the Naga raids. In pursuance of this policy the Government asked Bigge for the second time to lead an expedition to the Naga hills to achieve the desired results. Bigge undertook this expedition in 1841. Surprisingly enough, he faced no resistance and succeeded in concluding a friendly agreement with most of the leading Naga tribes.⁷⁵ According to the agreement, the Dhansiri river was recognised as the boundary line between the British district and the Angami

tract.⁷⁶ The Dhansiri was also earmarked as the boundary line between Manipur and the Naga hills because of two reasons.⁷⁷ Firstly, the British wanted peace on their borders. This peace was endangered because of constant quarrelling between the Nagas and the Manipuris. The settlement of the boundary was intended to restore peace on the border. Secondly, the British were against the expansionist designs of the Manipuris. They did not want the Manipuri kings to extend their territories in the Naga hills.

The Nagas were in short supply of salt, so they wanted to have a salt depot on their land.⁷⁸ On the request of the Nagas, Bigge agreed to open one at Dimapur. The friendly visit of Bigge to the Naga hills produced the desired result.⁷⁹ So the British Indian Government thought that such continued visits by British officials would not only improve the relation with the Nagas but also prevent the slave traffic carried on by the Nagas with the Bengalees of Sylhet.

Establishment of British Authority

Captain John Buttler, the Principal Assistant of Nowgong, visited the Naga areas in 1845. He succeeded in concluding a non-aggression pact with the Naga chiefs on 11 December, 1845. The treaty was concluded in a very friendly and cordial atmosphere. Buttler has written: "All the Chiefs were summoned. . . . They promised not to molest their neighbours in future, to abstain from plundering, excursions and cutting of heads of Nagas or other clans, to refer all disputes to the British authorities to pay annual tributes as a token of allegiance to the British Government."⁸⁰ This agreement made the British Government virtually the sovereign masters of the Naga people. They even undertook the responsibility of settling internal disputes of the Nagas.⁸¹

The Nagas, however, failed to observe the provisions of the agreement. In spite of their undertaking to remain peaceful, they continued to loot, plunder and kill the British subjects. The notes and tour diaries of the British officers who visited the Naga areas in those days reveal that the Nagas not only killed British military personnel, but also looted and murdered the civilians living in Assam districts.⁸² The British

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Government, therefore, opened a police post at Chumukedima. Bhogchand, an Assamese of extraordinary courage, was made in-charge of this police post. A market was also opened near this post.⁸³

The opening of the trade mart and a police post had two purposes. Firstly, the British wanted to impress upon the Nagas that they were genuinely interested in establishing trade relations with them. Secondly, the British intended to let the Nagas know that they meant business and that no violation of agreement would be tolerated.

These objectives, however, could not be achieved. The police post at Chumukedima failed to check effectively the Naga raids on the British subjects nor could the trade mart do brisk business. Two reasons may be assigned for this failure. Firstly, the Nagas did not attach much sanctity to the agreement and secondly, they became irritated with, and to some extent apprehensive of, the police post at Chumukedima. Their apprehensions became real when in pursuance of the agreement the British officers tried to settle the internal feuds of the Nagas. The British Government had undertaken this opportunity with a view to maintaining peace and order on their border and also to keeping the Nagas under their lordship. This policy of interference in the internal feuds of the Naga tribes, however, did not produce the desired result.

The case of the assassination of Bhogchand is very illustrative. There was a dispute between the Jibili clan of Mozema village and the Nihili tribe of Khonoma village. The Jibilis of Mozema village sought the British assistance against the Nihilis of Khonoma.⁸⁴ Since the British Government had undertaken to settle the internal feuds of the Naga tribes, Bhogchand, in-charge of the British police post at Chumukedima, went to Mozema along with forty constables to settle the disputes. There he not only mediated but also tried to arrest some of the troublemakers. Bhogchand was attacked by the Nagas. He was ultimately killed because some of his sepoy's fled in panic when the Nagas attacked the party.

The assassination of Bhogchand made it quite clear that the Angami Nagas did not like British interference in their internal affairs. The British Government also realised the futility of excessive involvement in the affairs of the Nagas. But

the assassination of their officer had to be avenged. If the Naga culprits were allowed to go unpunished, it would not only embolden them to do further mischief but would also create the impression that the British were afraid of the Nagas. Hence, the British Government decided to take the most stringent and decisive measures in order to deter them.⁸⁵ In pursuance of this policy, Lieutenant Vincent was deputed to lead an expeditionary force to Kikerima to avenge Bhogchand's murder and to arrange for the "surrender of those who were known to have been concerned in the recent attack upon the British officials."⁸⁶ Vincent had to face stiff resistance but ultimately he succeeded in suppressing the turbulent Nagas of Kikerima.⁸⁷ Many Nagas were killed and some of them were taken captive by Vincent. Bhogchand's killing was avenged.

Policy of Non-Interference

The policy of military expeditions and involvement in the Naga affairs which the British had adopted from 1835 to 1851 was, however, given up after the bloody battle of Kikerima. The British Government realised the futility of the policy of military involvement in the Naga hills after 1852. Hence, they adopted the policy of non-interference. Thereafter, Buttler, the Principal Assistant of Nowgong, had recommended the complete abandonment of the Naga hills.⁸⁸ Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General, accepted the recommendation of Buttler. He noted in the minute of 20 February, 1851: "I dissent entirely from the policy of taking possession of their hills and establishing of our sovereignty over savage inhabitants, our possession could bring no profit to us; and would be as costly as it would be unproductive."⁸⁹ The British Government, therefore, ordered for the withdrawal of British troops from the Angami areas. Consequently, Dimapur was abandoned and the British force was withdrawn from the Naga areas.⁹⁰

Here a question may arise as to why the British gave up the policy of military expeditions. The reasons are both economic and political. The British had entered into the Naga hills with the hope of increasing their trade and commerce but it is a well known fact that trade and commerce can flourish when all the parties are willing and the atmosphere is suitable.

But in the case of the Nagas the situation was quite different. The Nagas were apprehensive of the British. They were not civilized and educated enough to understand the complexities of business. Moreover, there was no proper administration in the Naga hills. The British could have established a flourishing trade in the Naga areas had these Nagas been under their administrative control. But administering the Naga hills was not only expensive but militarily difficult.⁹¹ Hence, trade in the Naga areas was considered an impractical proposition. Political expediency also demanded the policy of non-interference in the Naga affairs. In 1852, the British were involved in the Second Anglo-Burmese War. They were not in a position to spare military personnel for the Naga hills. Hence, a policy of non-interference at the time lay in the logic of circumstances.

This British policy of non-interference in Naga affairs from 1851 to 1865, however, resulted in the loss of British prestige in that area. The passive attitudes of the British made the Nagas all the more aggressive and they started to raid and plunder of the British subjects. The Nagas made twentytwo raids on British subjects in 1851 in which fiftyfive persons were killed, ten wounded and one hundred and thirteen taken prisoners.⁹² From 1854 to 1865 there were nineteen incidents of raids and plunder by the Angamis which caused the death of many British subjects.⁹³ Thus the whole British territory adjoining the Naga hills became disturbed during that period. This state of affairs forced the British to go in for reappraisal of the whole policy concerning the Naga hills.

The local British officials of North Cachar were putting pressure on senior officials to pursue an active policy in the Naga hills. Lieutenant Gregory, the Officer-in-charge of North Cachar, was of the view that "unless he was allowed to adopt more vigorous measures than were permitted to his predecessors, he could not guarantee the safety of his sub-division."⁹⁴ In 1862, a new Lieutenant Governor, Sir Cecil Beadon, succeeded to the office. He believed in an active and forward policy. He maintained that "in the course of a few years Assam would be divided amongst the Bhutias, Abors, Nagas, Garos, Mishmis and other wild tribes. . . ." and that if petty outrages were to be allowed by withdrawal of the British frontier, they, the British,

would soon find themselves driven out of the Province.⁹⁵ He continued to put pressure on the Government of India to adopt collective measures to assert the British authority over the Naga hills.⁹⁶ He noted in one of his dispatches to the Governor General that the British policy of withdrawal from the Naga hills had proved to be a great mistake.⁹⁷ Sir Beadon, therefore, suggested that the only way to protect the British officers and subjects in Assam was "to reassert our authority over them and bring them under a system of administration suited to their circumstances and gradually to reclaim them from the habit of lawlessness to those of order and civilisation."⁹⁸ Beadon's proposals, in fact, aimed at bringing the country of the Angami Nagas at once under the control of the British Government. The Governor General of India, however, was not in favour of such a drastic step. He expressed aversion to any attempt to subdue the Nagas. But he agreed with Beadon that some steps had to be taken "to protect low-lands from the Naga incursions."⁹⁹ He, therefore, instructed the Lieutenant Governor to display moderate physical force so that the portion of the hill tract adjacent to the plains could be brought into order.¹⁰⁰ Thus the Government of India gave no sanction to occupy the Naga hills as the Bengal Government had desired but merely allowed the establishment of a strong central station at Samaguting (now called Chumukedima), the Officer-in-charge of which was to endeavour to maintain conciliatory intercourse with the Nagas.¹⁰¹

Gradual Extension and the Naga Resistance

In pursuance of the new policy a new administrative zone was created in 1866 at Samaguting (Chumukedima). This hill district was to comprise the entire Angami hills and the area lying west of the Dhansiri.¹⁰² The British headquarters at Asaloo was abandoned and the office shifted to the new headquarters at Chumukedima. Lieutenant John Gregory was made the Deputy Commissioner of the new district at Chumukedima.¹⁰³ A police contingent was placed under him for the protection of the newly established headquarters. The British Government forbade the king of Manipur to send expeditions to the Naga hills in future.¹⁰⁴

The British Government wanted to survey the entire area of the Naga hills and so a number of survey parties were sent.¹⁰⁵ The Nagas offered resistance but they were suppressed. Thus, the British got a firm foothold in the heart of the Naga hills. The over-zealous local British officials wanted extension of British jurisdiction beyond Chumukedima. The Home Government, however, was not in favour of extending the line of the British frontier to the interior of the Naga hills. But when Captain Johnstone, the officiating Deputy Commissioner of the Naga hills, annexed two villages of the Lotha Nagas, (in Wokha) in 1875 on the pretext that they repeatedly attacked the British survey parties and threatened the tea gardens in Upper Assam, the Government had to approve the measure.¹⁰⁶ Thus the British systematically pursued the policy of extending their authority to the Naga territory and the occupation of the hill area after 1866. In July 1875, Colonel Keating, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, had even recommended the transfer of the British administrative headquarters from Chumukedima to Wokha. Keating's plan had two objectives. Firstly, exploration and survey work would have been all the more easy if Wokha were made the British headquarters. Secondly, the British administrative jurisdiction would have extended further in the Naga hills. The Government of India, however, did not agree to Keating's proposal. It preferred to await the result of the next season's survey operations before moving the headquarters from Chumukedima.¹⁰⁷

The establishment of administrative headquarters at Chumukedima and the gradual extension of the British power to the hills made the Nagas very apprehensive. They wanted to check this at any cost. Hence, the Nagas increased raids on the British posts and survey parties. The Angami Nagas of Khonoma and Mozema villages were leading the resistance movement against the British. From 1874 to 1876 they plundered six villages, destroyed wholly or partially nine villages which were friendly to the British and killed nearly 334 persons.¹⁰⁸ In December 1875, Buttler, the Deputy Commissioner of Chumukedima, was killed while he was engaged in survey work at Pangti, a Lotha Naga village.¹⁰⁹ The Naga raids on the British administered areas continued throughout 1876. In February 1877, the Angami Nagas of

Mozema attacked the Cachari village of Gamaigaju and killed six British subjects and wounded two persons.¹¹⁰ In short, by 1877 the Naga hostility against the British reached its zenith. The Governor General of India acquainted the Secretary of State for India with the Naga outrages. The Governor General in a despatch to the Secretary of State in June, 1877, wrote that till then the British objectives had been the maintenance of peace on British India's border. Previously they had not taken the responsibility of civilizing the Nagas or maintaining order among them. But if peace was to be maintained in that troubled border area, they would have to acquire effective control and influence over a large section of the Naga hills.¹¹¹ The Governor General, however, sought the permission of the Secretary of State for India to shift the British headquarters from Chumukedima to Kohima.¹¹² Since Chumukedima was too far from the heart of the Angami area, an effective control over the Angamis was not possible from that place. Hence, the British headquarters had to be shifted to some place which was in the heart of the Angami areas and that was none else but Kohima. The Secretary of State agreed to the proposal of the Governor General and even that no time should be lost.¹¹³

(In pursuance of this policy, Stuart Bayley, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, directed Damant, the Deputy Commissioner of Chumukedima, to occupy Kohima and make it the British headquarters.¹¹⁴ Consequently, Damant occupied Kohima in spite of stiff resistance of the Angami Nagas and moved his headquarters to Kohima on 19 March, 1879.)

The occupation of Wokha and lastly Kohima by the British made the Nagas all the more hostile. Hence, they made a last desperate attempt to dislodge the British from their territory. They smuggled a large number of firearms and collected such weapons as spears, daos, bows and arrows in large quantities to fight the British. Damant came to know of the Angamis' warlike preparation. He, therefore, personally went to Khonoma on 14 October, 1879, with an escort of eightyone men to avert the situation. When he tried to enter the village gate, a Naga sentry shot him dead.¹¹⁵ The men who were escorting him fled away. This encouraged the Angamis to attack the British post at Kohima. Thousands of the Naga warriors

fought against the British Indian army and they would have gained control over Kohima but for the reinforcement which arrived from Wokha and Manipur.¹¹⁶ The Angamis could not succeed in their effort because the British had sent reinforcements to the besieged Kohima post. The British wanted to crush the Angami resistance for ever. Hence, they sent Brigadier General Nation to Khonoma on 17 November, 1879, to subdue the Angamis. The Nagas who were expecting the British counter-attack faced the British with great courage and patience. James Johnstone who physically took part in the Kohima battle has written: "The Nagas met us with heavy fire and showers of spears and stones. One of the spears struck Forbes and Redgeway was badly wounded in the left shoulder by a fire shot at ten places."¹¹⁷ Ultimately, the Nagas could not meet the heavy force of the British for long and left the battle. Though the British succeeded in defeating the Nagas, they suffered a great loss. Three British officers were killed, four wounded and fortyfour rank and file were either killed or injured.¹¹⁸

The defeat of Khonoma, in fact, "marked the end of serious trouble and hostility in the Naga hills."¹¹⁹ The Government set up military posts at Wokha and Kohima. The villagers were severely punished, mainly in the form of manual labour, which helped the Government in constructing roads and buildings.

Inclusion of the Naga Hills in British Territory

After the defeat of the Angamis, the question of evolving a British policy towards the Nagas arose. Sir Bayley, the Chief Commissioner, proposed to place the entire area from Burail on the south to Nowgong on the north under the Naga hills district. The British Government had no alternative but to extend their control over the Nagas from some central position. Hence, the Government of India approved that the district should be administered as British territory.¹²⁰

The formation of a full-fledged Naga hills district is a remarkable landmark in the history of British India's relations with the Nagas. (The downfall of the Angami Nagas in the Khonoma battle gave the British a golden chance to establish their rule over the Nagas.¹²¹) Their main objective was to bring the

strategic area of the Naga hills under their control and when this objective was achieved in 1879, Charles Illiot, the New Chief Commissioner of Assam, prepared an exhaustive memorandum on the future administration of the Naga areas.¹²² He proposed the laying down of a permanent boundary and division of the district for the convenience of the administration. Illiot favoured the imposition of house tax, appointment of village headmen (Dobhasis) and the opening of dispensaries, village schools and other possible facilities for the well-being of the Nagas.¹²³ He directed the British officers and his assistants to maintain direct contact with the Nagas by going to their respective villages.¹²⁴

Illiot's proposals reveal that the British were in favour of bringing the western and central portions of the Naga hills as a settled district in the new province of Assam which was approved by the Home Government.¹²⁵ As a result, the British succeeded in controlling the Nagas. The district witnessed "the progressive establishment of peace and good order and the quiet submission of the Nagas to our rule."¹²⁶ The Nagas were pacified because of two reasons. Firstly, the British managed to establish their firm hold over the Nagas. Secondly, the British officers personally toured the Naga areas and developed cordial relations with them.¹²⁷ Christian Missionaries also played a vital role in civilizing the Nagas and making them live peacefully. Consequently, the head-hunting by the Nagas ceased and the fighting among the Nagas and their inter-village feuds gradually came to an end.

The defeat of the Angamis in the Khonoma battle made the British masters of the Lotha and Angami areas in the Naga hills.¹²⁸ The other Naga hill areas, such as Mokokchung and Tuensang, however, remained outside the British administration and control. The British policy was to consolidate their authority over the areas already occupied, while simultaneously acquiring unoccupied Naga territory. Hence, after 1879, the British tried to bring Mokokchung and Tuensang areas under their control. Survey parties sent to these areas were followed by military expeditions.¹²⁹ The Ao, Phom, and Konyak Nagas of Mokokchung offered stiff resistance to the British but this soon broke down. The British not only established their control over Mokokchung but, made it a

separate sub-divisional headquarter and by 1908, the entire hill area between the Dikhu and Sarai rivers comprising Borjan, Wackchung, Wanchang and Liangkha was annexed and put under the newly-created Mokokchung sub-division.¹³⁰ Thus, by 1908, the British had become the sovereign masters of both the Kohima and Mokokchung areas.

Now the only Naga tract that remained outside British jurisdiction was Tuensang, which lay in the east of Mokokchung and touched the western border of Burma, the Chindwin river being the line of demarcation between the Naga hills and Burma. As early as 1907, A.W. David, the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga hills district, had commented that they would not have real peace until they absorbed the whole area between Assam and the Chindwin river.¹³¹ Archdle Earle, the Chief Commissioner, had also said in 1914, that the process of the British expansion in the Naga hills had to be continued "until the whole of the country between Assam and Burma has been taken over."¹³² The Government of Assam as well as the British Indian Government agreed to the views expressed by the local officials because the subjugation of Tuensang not only would have completed the process of occupation of the whole of the Naga hills area between Assam and Burma but could have also provided an opportunity to exploit the coal-bearing areas of Tuensang.¹³³ Hence, vigorous efforts were made by the British to annex the villages of Tuensang area one by one and by 1922, the entire Tuensang area passed into the hands of the British.¹³⁴ Thus the whole Naga hills area came under the sovereign jurisdiction of the British by 1922. The Nagas also, sometimes willingly and sometimes unwillingly, accepted the overlordship of the British.

Policy of Isolation

While the process of bringing the whole of the Naga area under the British jurisdiction was going on in the beginning of the twentieth century, the British Government was also contemplating how to carve out a proper place for the hills in the administrative system of the British India. The Naga hills district with its headquarters at Kohima had already been created and this was made a part of the province of Assam.

The administration of the hill areas, however, was not only difficult and arduous but also different from that of the plains. The British Government was alive to this fact and hence the Government of India Act, 1919, gave special power to the Governor General of India with respect to the hill areas.¹³⁵ The British had made the Naga hills district a part of Assam but little efforts were made for the integration of the Naga people with the people of the mainland. The freedom movement had already been started by the Indians under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The British Indian Government tried to keep the Naga people away from this nationalist movement which had been launched by the people living in the plains. The British made all efforts to keep the Nagas in isolation. That is why, when the Government of India Act 1935, was enacted, the Naga hills district was declared an excluded area.¹³⁶ The British wanted the Nagas to have a separate identity. All this goes to suggest that the British established their sovereign control over the Naga hills and made it a part of the administrative system of British India but the people of the Naga hills were kept aloof from the mainstream of the country.¹³⁷ Perhaps some British officials wanted to make the Naga hills area a British colony even after independence. This is evident from the proposal of Robert Reid, the Governor of Assam, which was submitted to the Governor General of India. Robert Reid had proposed that even after granting independence to India, the Naga hills, North-East Frontier Agency, and the Chittagong hill tract of East Bengal should be retained as the Crown Colony.¹³⁸ It is a different matter that the Home Government did not approve of Reid's proposal but the British policy of treating Nagaland as excluded territory and keeping the Naga people away from the national mainstream encouraged some misguided Nagas to demand an independent Naga State which, in fact, became a bone of contention ever since India became independent.

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