

Naga Tribes of North East India



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M. Rizvi
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“When you go home, tell them of us, that for their tomorrow, we gave our today,” reads an epitaph in the Second World War Cemetery of Kohima-the capital of Nagaland. This state is the home of the brave and daring, yet simple and innocent, Naga tribes. Lapped in the eastern frontiers of the Himalayan mountain range Nagaland is marked by an unhurried pace of life, calm and serene environs and fresh, unpolluted air, which make a welcome change for a jaded city dweller. The Nagas belong to the Indo-Mongoloid family. The major Naga tribes are the Angami, Ao, Chakesang, Chang, Khemiangan, Konyak, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sangtam, Sema, Yimchunger Zeliang. Each tribe has their own languages and cultural features. They are living in the present Nagaland, Hills of Manipur (Senapati, Tamenglong, Ukhrul, Chandel districts), in the North Cachar, Mikir Hills Lakhimpur, Nowgaon, Sibsagar in Assam, in the North-East of Arunachal Pradesh, in the Somra-tract and its contiguous parts of Mayanmar.

As the Naga seek to renewed their sense of self-respect in a modern world, they are embracing the past to shape the future. Nagas attempt to deal with the concerns of a modern society, a consensus has grown that the solutions to many of the present problems lies in the abandoned traditions of the past. The present study emphasizes this by giving ethnographic details.

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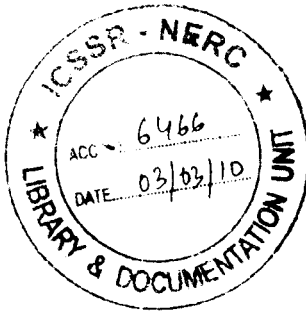
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Ethnogenesis

Naga is a generic term used to refer to an agglomeration of tribes living in present day Nagaland, Manipur, South eastern Arunachal Pradesh and South western Cachar of Assam sharing certain common socio-cultural components which distinguish them from the Kuki and Mizo constellation of tribes. In Manipur the Naga term includes tribes such as Tangkhul, Mao, Maram, Kabui, Kachha, Koirao, Koireng and Maring while in Arunachal Pradesh we have Nocte and Wancho Naga. In Assam the tribes such as Jeme, Rongmei, Liangmei (North Cachar Hills), and Sema in Dibrugarh district fall under this term. The largest Naga population having sixteen different groups are in Nagaland. These are Ao, Angami, Chakhesang, Chang, Chirr, Khiaimnungan, Konyak, Lotha, Makware, Phom, Rengma, Sangtam, Sema, Tikhir, Yimchungre and Zeliang. The latter term, for politico-administrative reasons include the Zemi or Jemei and Liangmei communities of Nagaland while in neighbouring Manipur state the Rongmei are referred to as Kabui. The Zemei and Liangmei are collectively known as Kacha Naga. Later when a socio-political movement started under the leadership of Jadonang and Rani Gaidinliu the idea of Zeliangrong fraternity was implanted due to claim of common ancestry of Zemei, Liangmei and Rongmei groups which was embedded in their legends and folklores. We will give glimpses of this movement later.

The origin of the Naga is a vexed question and its racial emergence is veiled in obscurity. The Naga Hills

later known as Nagaland exhibit racial-admixtures in a great range. It forms a melting pot of the Himalayan, Burmese, Japanese, Thai, Malaysian, Phillipinian, Polynesian, Indonesian and Melanesian cultures. Its history provides instances of bio-cultural assimilation of the different strains among the varied tribes. According to racial classification of Mongolid race done by physical Anthropologists it has been revealed that all the Naga groups may be classified under the South Mongoloid branch. The other branches such as Premongoloid includes three strains; Palaeosiberian, Tiben and Puran (in the interior regions of Indonesia and Indochina). Thus Naga group falls along with Tungus and Chinese strain within this physical type. However, due to physical isolation influence of natural environment in the early stages of group formation and increasing role of admixture in later stages of development of group a new 'physical type' was developed. Thus to systematize the racial characteristics of Naga group of tribes we need more elaborate and extensive data from all the breeding isolates within Naga constellation to derive a conclusive picture of racial affinities of the group. However, certain rudimentary cultural features may be helpful in indicating the racial admixture of the Naga with the neighbouring south-eastern cultures. As for example the Nagas point out to the linkage of their founder tribes with the sea-shore. In Rengma's oral history it has been claimed that once they had ruled over the coast for ages and thus the Nagas are still used to wearing conch-shells as part of their ceremonial dress. The use of conch-shells is a prominent feature of the people who live on or near the sea-shore. It has further been claimed that some Naga tribes came a long way from Indonesia and some as far as from the Phillipines. this claim is further validated by the studies of linguists on the structure and formation of Naga group of languages. Similarly the Angami show closer affinities with Igarots of Phillipines in the method and technique they use for terrace type of cultivation. Moreover, the practice of head-hunting by certain Naga

group of tribes is an extension of similar tradition noticed among Dyaks of Borneo besides resemblance in village lay out, architectural design of houses, language and preference to marine-ornaments like shells etc. Furthermore the megalithic erections another characteristic feature of Naga culture show closer resemblance with similar features found among Indonesian tribes. The wood carvings of the Naga remind the beautiful and exotic similar wood carvings of the Maori of Newzealand. The head dress of Naga can be compared with similar head dress used by aborigines of Melanesia. The renowned linguists have assigned the principal Naga languages (Rengma and Angami) to the Tibeto-Chinese family of languages.

The term Naga is said to be derived from the Assamese Noga applied by the plains people for referring to the hill tribes in the hinterland of the Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts. This term when assimilated within Naga languages (Konyak, Ao and others) became *noka* and *nog* which means 'folk', 'men' or people. The noga term of reference for the hill people has been extensively used in Assamese *burunji* (chronicle) from the period of thirteenth century onwards. One of the leading anthropologist Verrier Elwin during 1961 stated that the Assamese term of Noga has some linkages with the Sanskrit term *loka* meaning people. It may be interesting to note here that in the early literature it was claimed that Naga term has been derived from the Hindustani and Bengali word *nanga* meaning naked used to refer to the people who had scanty cloth to cover their body. But this word having an inherent value of shame was later disowned by the hill people which reflect a new sense of dignity and self respect of the Naga people, who gradually realised the inherent meaning of the word. Hutton in 1921 stated that the earliest reference to the Nagas is found in the *Geographia* (Vol. VII, ii p. 18) of Claudius Ptolemaium written in the second century A.D. when he depicted the position of Naga hills and described it as "the realm of the naked". The Assam *burunji* describe the

encounters of Ahom Sukhapa with the Nagas of Patkoi hills as early as during 12th century A.D. The waves of immigration is a noticeable feature of the early history of Naga. Robinson in his book on Descriptive Accounts of Assam (1841) stated that a number of Naga tribes migrated from the east during sanguinary conflicts which took place between the different members of Tartar dynasties during 14th and 15th century A.D. Further, another wave of immigration took place for political reasons from Assam and Bengal and these immigrants brought with them the languages very different from each other. Thus whilst some of the tribes may have dialects from a common source, others speak languages of perfectly distinct stocks. The above statement can be corroborated in the tradition of the Lhota which locates their original home somewhere between Tibet and Burma. The medium complexion of an Angami with his tall physique, square shoulders and stalwart body build looks like a Thai of South East Asia. The Chakhesang with a more brownish complexion and a stature of five to six feet looks more handsome than man from South East Asia. The northern Naga tribes use log drums which are akin to the style of drums used by Melanesian. It has been conjectured that the similarity of log drums with the canoes tempt to assume that the forefathers of the Naga were once a sea-faring people. A Negroid or Negrito substratum present among the western Nagas such as Zeliangrong and Rengma indicate their assimilation with other Bodo groups of people scattered in Cachar district, Tripura and parts of Bangladesh. Their wind instruments are similar to those used by the sub-Himalayan Bodos. the admixture of Negrito or Negroid substratum with Mongoloid features is evidenced in the morphology of western Naga tribes such as Zeliangrong and Rengma. The prominent features of this admixture are dark-skin and curly hair. This type of strain is also found among population of Oceania including Melanesia, Phillipines and Indonesia. The Sema group exhibit Austro-Asiatic elements. It is conjectured that the former group may have had at one

time closer ethnic linkages with Fiji islands although their linguistic and racial traits are mixed with Bodo groups of tribes. The above statement regarding their bio-cultural affinities affirm the historical evidence of migration of southern tribes in a cluster although each had distinct origin, linguistic and racial affinities, before their emergence in the present habitat. It is further deduced that for sake of protection against pursuing the foe these groups must have dissolved their differences and on the basis of ancient treatise established their co-existence through inter-ethnic linkages which still persist. This has resulted into common cultural aspects, traditions and other social institutions. In spite of sharing common cultural heritage internecine feuds also flared up amongst them. However it is not established that for how many generations Nagas have settled in their present habitat. The only antiquarian remains which may suggest about the first settlement of a particular village, are stone monuments. Some of the monuments suggest Naga settlement for about ten centuries. In 1875 James Johnstone was told at Chumukedima,—an Angami village, that the people had settled there for seven generations which approximately covered 500 years. Some stone memorials in the Rengma area which are household, burial places are said to have existed for fifteen generations. Thus the ancient history of these tribes remain an oral history the glimpses of which can be found in their folklores and folktales. The mediaeval history of the Naga begins along their relations with the Kachari rulers of the Assam plains. Their early phase hitherto remains an unrecorded past but by the close of fourteenth century with the efforts of emissary cultural relations had grown with the Kacharis. The latter had their capital at Dimapur which is now a district of Nagaland. The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (Part-I) History, Literature No. 4 published in 1875 gives a reference as early as 1375 A.D. to one Khasi expatriate who fled from Jaintia Hills and came to Dimapur. He later was absorbed in the Angami Naga group, through marital relations. He was a

well known sculptor and was called U Sajar Nangli. He was running away from his elder brother who had sent a large force to capture him. He was given shelter by the Kachari king in the vicinity of Dimapur, known today as the Angami Hills. His influence and admixture can be traced from the way the Angami women wear the cloth tied each over the shoulder in a particular manner which is a distinct feature of Jaintia women of Meghalaya. The same mode of wearing an apron of this kind is also common among Chakru and Khezha groups of Naga. Hamlet Bareh a prolific writer on Khasi history stated that U Sajar Nangli along with his followers, mostly males, fled to Burma via the modern Chakhesang tract sowing the seed of pine trees wherever he reached.

The remains of a fortress lying scattered over a large area at Dimapur are witness to the strained and sometimes amicable relations between the Angami and Kacharis. It is claimed by the scholars that the above fortress was constructed to protect the city dwellers from Angami raids. Dimapur was a vibrant city with flourishing industries such as textile, cotton ginning and pottery. Its products reached to far places such as Golaghat and Rangpur. Its suburbs had colonies of Rengma who were expert sculptors besides supplying steel implements to the Kacharis and in return obtained salt. The Kacharis also acted as middlemen in supplying Rengma products to Zeliangrong Naga. With this trade link developed process of cultural assimilation. Its evidence was oblong V-shaped stone pillars of Kachari at Dimapur and similar V-shaped posts protruding from the roof of the house of a well to do Angami family. Similarly the megaliths varying from thirteen to sixteen feet in height with a circumference of fourteen to twenty three feet were originally for Naga rituals associated with fertility cult and the same type of megaliths were used by Kachari sculptors who engraved animal figures and flowers thus exhibiting Kachari-Hindu symbolism. Thus the megalithic culture of the Naga had influenced their neighbours too. Dimapur is the gate way of Naga Hills

and thus played a distinct and important role in Naga history.

The first Ahom invasion of Dimapur took place in 1490 A.D. but it was repulsed. But in 1536 A.D. during another invasion the Kachari king Detsing was killed and the city was almost destroyed. The Kachari fled and reached Maibong where they came into closer contact with Zeliangrong Naga. During this invasion the Rengma king Nzon Tegibo Raja was also slain and his followers after migration established relations with the Ahoms. But the strained relations between the Naga and Ahom kingdom continued unabated till the sixteenth century A.D. The later Naga-Ahom relationship is a mosaic pattern of hostility and friendship between the two. During inter-tribal feuds help and counsel was sought from Ahom kings while in certain areas clashes between the Ahom and Naga continued. Naga used to go to the plain areas to get their necessities of daily life such as salt, dried fish, rice and iron made agricultural implements and in exchange brought their products such as chilli, ginger, cotton, etc. In the Seventeenth Century during the reigns of Suchinpha (1644-1648) and Jayadhray Sinha (1648-1663) the relationship between the Naga and Ahoms improved and there were exchanges of gifts such as gongs, spears and *dao* from the Naga and ear-rings, beads, cotton, etc. from the Ahoms. This phase of friendship lasted till the later part of eighteenth century. During early years of nineteenth century (1807 A.D.) fresh hostilities brokeout in which number of lives were lost on both sides. Consequently, a treaty was finalised under the supervision of Kamaleshwar Singha the ruling Ahom king. The last raid by Naga was during the last Ahom king Purandar Singha (1832-38) and before the invasion of the Burmese. The coming of British on the scene was due to a invitation extended to them by the Ahom king to check the invading Burmese columns and by middle of nineteenth century Assam valley was brought under the control of Britishraj. Salt was rare in the hills and imported from the plains which had many brine wells even

in the foot hills. The Nocte Naga of Namchang area also had a good number of salt wells within their territory. The neighbouring tribes used to pay tribute to the chief to make use of those wells. Similarly the Naga living in the hills made use of the brine wells in the foot hills which were under the control of the Ahoms. Thus to ensure a constant supply of salt they not only maintained good relations with the local people but also paid annual taxes to the Ahom kings. The Ahom kings endeavoured to maintain friendship or at least a no-war pact with the Nagas not only for the security of Ahom kingdom since the Naga areas were of strategic importance but also for the economic considerations. During Ahom's struggle with invading Burmese columns the former wanted to protect its frontiers and that could be achieved only by maintaining cordial relations with the Nagas. The Nagas also gave shelter to some Ahom kings such as Gadadhar during the latter's exile. This cordial relationship also helped in spreading Assamese language among the tribes. It was also used to converse between the Naga groups who had their own language and sometimes intelligible to each other. In due course of time the Naga words and Assamese words intermingled and emerged a new version popularly known as Nagamese which later became lingua franca of Nagaland state. English remained a link language between the educated section of the Naga while others communicate through Nagamese. The Naga youth were recruited in Assamese Army to put resistance against the invading Muslim Army during Seventeenth Century. Although this invasion was repulsed but by the middle of eighteenth century the Ahom kingdom became a veritable house of rebellion. In order to quash the rising rebel activities British help was sought and the latter sent a party of soldier under the leadership of Captain Welsh in 1792. Later due to Burmese invasion a situation of confusion prevailed over Assam, and the British government in 1824 declared war against the Burmese. The Latter were defeated and Assam became a part of British Raj. According to the Treaty of Yandabo

concluded in 1826 between the king Ava of Burma and British government, they agreed not only to abstain from interfering into the affairs of Assam but also accepted the independence of Manipur. Similarly the king of Burma ceased to have control over the states of Cachar, Jaintia and Assam. During these years of uncertainty the British government wanted to establish direct communication between Assam and Manipur to enable them to administer the states more effectively. This could only be possible by finding out routes via the Naga Hills. Moreover the Manipur king and Senapati of Kachar expressed their inability to control the Nagas. The latter did not make any expedition through hills and the former could not prevent the Naga from committing raids in their neighbourhood. Consequently the British seized the opportunity and thus began the exploration of hitherto unknown land—the Nagaland. This state's boundary in the south not only mingles with Manipur but also with north Cachar of Assam. The Naga raider not only captured people but also plundered. The Anglo-Naga relations may be divided into three broad phases viz; exploration, expedition and control. The first two British explorers were Captain Jenkins and Pemberton who in 1832 January set off from Silchar with a Manipuri levy and traversed the Zeliangrong hills. They had to face stiff resistance posed by the Naga inhabitants. Their attempt was a bold exploration across an inhospitable and difficult mountain terrain full of constant harrasments from the side of the war-like Nagas who continued to raid the British territory intermittently. Angami and Zeliangrong were carrying out raids into Cachar in the south and south-west of the present Nagaland state. Simultaneously in the north western side similar raids were being carried out by the Konyak, Phom, Ao and Lotha into the plain of Sibsagar. Consequently British decided to curb such activities of the Naga and in 1833 Lt. Gurdon with Gambhir Singh the head of Manipur state embarked upon an expedition which again had to face a strong Naga confideracy which was constituted to oppose the advance

of expeditioners. The major brunt of confrontation with the Manipuri was shouldered by the Angami villagers. It was probably this reason that Manipuri-Angami feuds were intense until the formation of Naga Hills District later in 1866. During this period Angami raids into Manipur border were more frequent. It was in January 1839 the British sub-Assistant Grange commanding a detachment was directed to investigate into causes of Angami deprivations on the plains and to punish the chiefs of the large villages Khonoma and Mezomah who were known to be responsible for such raids. He passed through the Zeliangrong route from Asaloo (in Cachar Hills) to Birema and thence northwardly to Dimapur. He found that the raids by the Angami were mainly to capture men and use them as slaves. Moreover, slave trade existed in these hills. The slaves carried off by the Naga were sold to the Bengalee dealers at a premium price. This slave trading prevailed in the hills till the formation of Naga Hills District. Grange could persuade chiefs of Khonoma and Mezoma to respect a British territory and not to commit acts of violence anywhere outside the jurisdiction of their hills. Next year Grange again visited the Naga hills during succeeding year and he reached a truce-agreement with the Nagas. The latter agreed to pay annual tributes to the British. However Grange had to face the Naga resistance in the impenetrable cliffs and crags. But in spite of heavy casualties on his side his shrewdness and capable leadership inspired his troops to hold grounds against the insurmountable difficulties. In 1841 Lt. Bigge visited many Angami villages and some chiefs agreed to settle the demarcation of their territory with Manipur. Many Nagas attended the conference held by him, where it is said, written agreements were entered into by Angami chiefs promising them to become tributary to the government. But the agreement had not much efficacy since it was violated from time to time although some Nagas had gone as far as Nowgong to repair their friendly relations with the government. In 1844 acts of aggression again precipitated and the British

government intensified both retaliatory and defensive military action. During 1850-51 as many as ten expeditions were sent under the command of Lt. Vincent. This was followed by a Treaty of 'Non-Interference' policy which lasted fifteen years. The text of the policy was laid down by Lord Dalhousie the then Governor-General of India. He desisted from obtaining a control over these hills since it could bring no profit to the British government. He further stressed that 'we should confine ourselves to our own ground, protect it as it can and must be protected, not meddle in the feuds or fights of these savages, encourage trade with them as long as they are peaceful towards us and rigidly exclude them from all communication either to sell what they have got or to buy what they want if they should become turbulent and troublesome'. It was expected that the policy of non-interference would lead to peace or withdrawal of raids into the British territory. But such hopes were belied because the Naga continued their raids unabated. From 1854 to 1865 there were as many as nineteen raids resulting in the loss of 232 British subjects including some officers. In order to check further frays a headquarters was established in 1866 in Samaguting with an armed police post. Their control in Naga Hills was mainly motivated by the general principle of consolidating their subjects, to levy taxes and to check incursions into British territory. In the same year i.e., 1866 the Naga Hills were brought under a district which had its headquarters at Samaguting and John Gregory was its first Deputy Commissioner. The newly formed district was extended from the plains of Assam to the Burma border because according to Yandabo Treaty of 1826 this hilly part of the country was under British control. But in practice the borders of the district converged at Dikhu river on the east. During the period 1869-73 there was rapid growth of tea gardens along the frontiers of Naga Hills. Although the British claimed control right from Assam to Manipur and Burma but for the purposes of administration Naga Hills were always

treated as separate from the rest of Assam. The extension of reclaimed land to develop tea gardens caused frictions between tea planters and the Naga. This resulted in promulgation of a regulation called 'Inner Line Regulation of 1873'. This provision was mainly to prohibit British subjects from going beyond a certain line without a pass or license issued by the Deputy Commissioner. Conciliatory measures simultaneously were adopted by opening a salt market in the frontier, by distributing agricultural implements amongst those Nagas living near the foot hills, by developing the existing means of communications on the frontier by pushing tea gardens towards their hills. Moreover decisions were taken to enter into formal agreements with Naga chiefs to settle inter-tribal feuds and to establish the government's influence as a mediator. These circumstances led to the abandonment of policy of non-interference. In 1875 the British headquarters was shifted to Wokha which was inhabited by the Lotha Naga. The main aim for this shift was to protect the adjoining district of Nowgong and Sibsagar in Assam from in-roads of the Nagas on the border of the British Indian territory. A permanent site for the future political officer's headquarters was finally selected and thus the later was shifted from Wokha to Kohima, the capital of present day Nagaland state, in 1878. The Kohima and Wokha areas were Christened 'Naga Hills' and eventually the British expanded their territory by capturing Ao and Tuensang Naga areas. It is important to note here that no written agreements were made with the Nagas. When the district was formally established as the British had done in case of the Garo or Abor tribes. All the communications with villagers were done through headman, since there was no guarantee that any agreement made by them would be ratified by the Naga clans over which they had little social or political power. The coming of the administration put a check on the inter-tribal feuds. The Naga tribes were, by a Regulation of 1880, 'Excluded' from coming under such laws as may be complex or in any way unsuitable to them.

The Nagas have traditional laws to guide their conduct and village courts to deal with crimes both civil and criminal. Later the area under the Act of 1919 was proclaimed as "Excluded Area". They were excluded from general constitutional arrangements. The main aim was to protect the people of such areas from possible economic exploitation. There was opposition from some quarters because it was feared that this policy of isolation and segregation would do more harm in the long run. Nevertheless, from April 1837 the Naga Hills district along with the North-East Frontier Tract (present day Arunachal Pradesh) the Lushai Hills (present day Mizoram) and North Cachar Hills (present day a district of Assam) were declared "Excluded Areas" of the Province of Assam. However, the British had to face resistance from some Naga groups. One of the important incident was Angami uprising in 1879 which lasted for six months. It was evident that some Naga villages were opposed to any measure of administrative control over their land by the aliens. During one of such attacks in October 1879 Mr. Dumont the political Officer during his visit to Khonoma with an escort of 87 men was killed and only 50 men of his team could escape to Kohima out of which 19 were seriously wounded. Kohima was the target of Naga warriors and it was besieged in spite of a garrison a force with 90 Frontier Police personnel and 80 Rifles under Captain Reid. For 12 days the station remained cut off from the outside world and the families had to go half-starved as the stock of food stuff was gradually exhausting. It was with the arrival of Lt. Col. Johnstone, Political Agent, Manipur on October 26, with the force equipped largely with the Manipuri levies, the Cachar Police and the 34th Native Infantry that the station was relieved and the warriors dispelled. During these skirmishes, the Kohima garrison had obtained a great deal of assistance from their friendly Angamis who carried the message for reinforcements to other nearby headquarters. The Manipur Raja who helped for quelling the movement was honoured with the title of KCSI by the government.

Among other events worthy of note at the close of the last century were the punitive expeditions undertaken against Tetcholumi for its raid upon Khonoma trader in 1886. In 1890 occurred the Manipur uprisings, security measures being adopted to check Nagas from joining the Manipuri belligerent parties. Kohima became another base of operation upon Manipur. Thus the process of consolidation of administration in Naga Hills district was gradual. It started in 1866 and was more or less completed by 1923, but that also in respect of former Naga Hills excluding the present Tuensang and Mon districts which came under administrative control of Naga Hills district by 1957 when three districts of present Nagaland were born. It will not be out of context to mention the Zemei or Zeliangrong movement in 1930 which serves as a great land mark in Naga freedom struggle. It was started at the instance of Jadonang, the newly emerging Zeliangrong Messiah. He belonged to Rengmai (Kabui) family who revived Naga traditional religion. He attracted a number of people from Zemai (Jemei), Liangmai and Rengmai groups living in Manipur, Naga Hills, Kachar and North Cachar-Mikir Hills of Assam along with a number of *maiba* (priest) and *maibi* (priestess) among whom the chief priestess was Rani Gaidinliu who worked under him. Thousands joined under his banner and tendered him tithes and tributes. He was considered as a supernatural being and welded the Kabui and Zeliangrong tribes into an organization with the objective aimed at restoration of Zemei Naga independence and the extermination of British rule. It was not until February 1932 that his movements were intercepted after enormous difficulties encountered by the British government in tracing his hide-out. He was arrested in Kambiron by Higgins the then Political Agent. Later he was sentenced to death but the movement initiated by him was continued by Rani Gaidinliu an acting priestess of Jadonang. She eluded the arrest during intensive searches in North Cachar and Zeliang Hills. She made successful escapades but finally nabbed at

Pulimi by Captain N. MacDonald and was deported. The movement was well organized and withstood government pressure. She was later released after Independence of India and awarded the title of Rani. It may be noted here that Jadonang's appeal to his Naga brothers to stop paying taxes to the British government, to disobey the unjust foreign laws, to fight the British and other aliens with their might and arms and to establish their own kingdom, were taken earnestly by the people. They dreamt for establishing a Nagaraj. The priestess Gaidinliu also urged the people not to pay the house and other taxes which were proofs of submission and loyalty to the British government. Incidentally, at this time Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience movement led by Mahatma Gandhi was going on in full swing to pressurise the British government to quit India and leave it free. In her fervent appeal for Naga freedom she often used the name of Mahatma Gandhi.

Then came the two world wars. The first did not affect the Nagas much except that they provided 2000 volunteers to form the Labor Corps which went upto France. But Naga Hills and Manipur suffered disastrous results during the second World War when their area was literally a battle field with the presence of Japanese and Allied Forces. In the Japanese invasion the Nagas considerably aided and assisted the Britishers. After securing the bases of operations at Jessami and Khorasam in north Manipur the Japanese forces advanced to the interior of the Naga Hills and were it not for the prompt defence measures, the Naga Hills would have also fallen. Nagas in the eastern villages and northern Manipur still preserve stories of the Japanese invasion. Some of the Nagas were compelled to befriend the Japanese and even shelter them. The INA at Kohima and Manipur were assisted by the Japanese against the British government. It is claimed by many knowledgeable persons who witnessed the battle of Kohima during April-June 1944 that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was present along with columns of INA and Japan and came upto northern Manipur. Shri Lakshmiswaminthan of INA came upto

Kohima which was the main battle field to halt the Japanese advances. The Japanese seize of Kohima began on April 3-4, 1944. In this fierce battle some 2384 soldiers died and for them has been raised a war cemetery at Kohima now maintained by Commonwealth War Graves Commission and claimed to be the best maintained one in the country. In front of the cemetery a tall stone has been erected and engraved the famous lines "When you go home tell them of us and say for your tomorrow we gave our today." The siege of Kohima could be averted only after valiant efforts of Nagas and Allied soldiers. The successful encounter at Kohima actually saved the whole of Eastern India from the Japanese invasion. Several commanders and officers recall the valuable assistance and unflinching loyalty of the Nagas to their Forces and pay glowing tributes to their gentlemanliness and characteristic hospitality. On such a contribution Field Marshal William Slim commended the Nagas by saying that the gallant Nagas, whose loyalty, even in the depressing times of the invasion, never faltered, despite flogging, torture, execution and burning of the villages by the Japanese when villagers refused to aid the latter and betray the Allied troops. He further commended that many British and Indian soldiers owe their lives to the 'head-hunting' Nagas and no soldier of the Fourteenth Army who met them will ever think of them but with admiration and affection. The Naga not only guided the Allied columns, collected information, ambushed every patrol of Japanese Army, carried the supplies but also brought wounded soldiers, under the heaviest fire. And for all this they even refused any payments. Shortly after the Japanese had retreated, resettlements of evacuees were made in the Angami-Chakhesang area. The Japanese had received considerable assistance from the Indian National Army. A negligible Naga group is said to have joined the Japanese and the Indian National Army during the invasion. With the alleged exception of A.Z. Phizo along with a few of his followers the entire Nagaland was on the side of the Allies. Thus Kohima proved to be

the Waterloo for the Japanese as they retreated in complete disarray many died on the way due to starvation and exhaustion. C.E. Lucas Phillips in his memoirs wrote that Kohima was to Burma what Stalingrad was to Russia and Alamien to the Desert. The British control of the Naga Hills came to an end with the transfer of power in 1947. But strife was not yet to end in these hills. With the war several calamities appeared. Many Naga villages in Manipur and southern Nagaland were affected by epidemics and hundreds of people died due to inadequate medical reliefs on account of difficulties in transportation and complexities developed out of the Japanese invasion. Villagers in interior places went on starving owing to a shortage of food-stuffs after their villages were cut off by the retreating Japanese who butchered all live-stock available and confiscated the crops wherever found. Moreover, many villages around Kohima were evacuated but when the residents had returned, they found it difficult to settle down to their old way of life owing to prevailing disturbed state. Furthermore another transformation was taking place with the introduction of heavy mechanisation which came along with the war. The administrative control was expanded upto Tuensang, along with extension of communication. There was an upsurge of diversification of economy and new patterns of business consciousness emerged. The war also acted as catalytic agent in fostering a sense of community oriented unity among different shades of Naga tribes. The Naga Hills District Tribal Council was formed after the war which in 1946 changed into the Naga National Council to guide the Naga politics. Its main objective were to achieve local autonomy for the hills, within the Province of Assam and to train the Naga people for self government. This council received official patronage. However, June 1947 witnessed the growth of demand for the separation of the Naga Hills from India, after the latter achieved independence. But this demand was not unanimous. One group favoured immediate severance of all ties with India and

independent land for the Nagas. The second group advocated continuance of relations at government level with India till the Nagas were in a position to take up the reins of self government. The third group wanted Naga Hills to be a mandatory state under the British government for a specific period of time. Furthermore many Naga opposed the idea of being subjects of a British colony and also did not wish the Indian government to rule over them.

Just after independence important administrative arrangements followed in Naga Hills. The administrative control was extended into the remote areas in the eastern and northeastern Tuensang which was hitherto unadministered. The Naga Hills along with other hill districts of Assam were grouped in the Sixth-Schedule of Indian Constitution. According to its clauses, provision was made to form an autonomous District Council. Under this arrangement the Naga Hills District was also entitled to send three members to the Legislative Assembly of Assam. But due to certain difficulties the above arrangement could not be worked out. While a Naga delegation in 1947 was visiting Delhi to impress upon the government the demand for an independent Naga Hills in the meantime the then Governor of Assam Sir Akbar Hydari held discussion at Kohima with some Naga leaders and drew a nine-point memorandum better known as Hydari Agreement. Its preamble recognized the rights of the Nagas to develop themselves according to their own free wishes. This agreement too could not withhold the widespread agitation which followed and took the entire hills in its grip. It is well known that Naga Hills during those years were really a disturbed area. The last article of the said agreement was interpreted differently and thus became controversial. According to the text it was envisaged that at the end of ten years the Nagas would be better suited to suggest changes in their administrative set-up and receive greater autonomy within the Indian Union. A section of the Nagas interpreted the article that they could demand for

complete separation at the expiry of limit of 10 years. A delegation went to Delhi and held meetings with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawahar Lal Nehru the then Prime Minister of India to press for their demand of self-determination after ten years. Nehru categorically denied any right of separation from India. In the meantime Angami Zapuphizo popularly known as A.Z. Phizo emerged as a leader of Naga National Council. Like the meaning of his name (Zapuphizo meaning 'who will be famous') he became a famous figure on the political scene of Naga Hills. He was arrested on 9th July 1948 and put behind the bars at Presidency Jail Calcutta but later was released unconditionally. In 1947 on the eve of Independence of India NNC sent a telegram to the government of India informing that at the end of the ten years period of the Hydari Agreement, the Nagas would be free to decide their own future. Sometimes after this Gandhiji was assassinated in January 1948 and in December of the same year Sir Hydari the architect of Agreement also died. With these deaths there was a set back to the hopes of the Nagas. The NNC not only rejected the Sixth Schedule but also boycotted the elections held to form the District Council. On December 11, 1950 Phizo was elected as the President of NNC. In 1951 NNC held plebiscite in Naga Hills and claimed widespread public support for independence. No Naga candidate offered himself for the General Election in 1952 and no Naga exercised his right to vote. The agitation took the form of a civil disobedience, non-payment of taxes and boycotting of official and national celebrations. The undercurrent of impending confrontation between the NNC and government of India can be gauged from the fact that Naga houses in the hinterland had collected sufficient quantity of salt to last for several years. It was rumoured that *dhawai* (war) is inevitable with India and may last for long years. Consequently the supply link with the plains would be paralysed. It may be recalled that leaders like Phizo hailed from Khonoma village which is of historical importance since the latter stubbornly

resisted the British adventure in its initial stage and later Kohima situated in the Angami Area remained the nerve centre of Naga political activities. The process of intense political activity has its inevitable results which precipitated the polarisation of forces—one extremists and another moderate. The former though small in size but as usual was more assertive. The gun was not a new entry among Nagas and they were well versed with the art of warfare since on their soil the battles of second World War had taken place. Every Naga village had some guns which later were seized by the extremists. The hostilities took the form of threats, public denouncements, destruction of government property and sometimes killings. The idea, although disapproved by the moderate section of NNC, of an armed uprising was more or less, gaining momentum by the close of 1953. When the leaders of NNC went underground their number was small but gradually it swelled. Simultaneously with expansion of underground organisation the attacks of police posts, blockades of roads and cases of intimidation increased. In March 1956 the underground formed the Naga Federal Government with the hoisting of its flag in Rengma village. In its constitution Naga Hills was designated as the People's Sovereign Republic. It has a provision for a parliament of 100 and directly elected president assisted by fifteen Ministers. To achieve independence the underground increased the hostilities including large scale violence and sabotage and when the situation was beyond the control of Assam police and Assam Rifles the government of India instructed the regular Army columns to move into Naga Hills. The military operation obviously led to a great deal of bloodshed and loss of life. This distressed a group of liberal and moderate Nagas who met the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru for a peaceful political solution of Naga autonomy. They were assured for talks on the issue of autonomy provided peace could be ensured in the strife-torn Naga Hills. In the meantime church leaders too came forward to assist the moderates for restoring peace in Naga

Hills. Subsequently, a Naga People's Convention was held in Kohima, the largest village of Naga Hills, during 22-26 August 1957. This convention was presided over by Dr. Imkongliba Ao and J.B. Jasokie and attended by more than 1760 delegates and over 2000 visitors representing all tribes of Naga Hills and Tuensang Frontier Division. It unanimously denounced violence and decided to negotiate with the government of India since their primary concern was restoration of peace and normalcy. The convention also proposed formation of a Union Territory from Naga Hills and Tuensang Frontier Division under the direct control of union government as an interim step. The immediate impact of this convention was the large scale cessation of violence. The leaders of Convention met the Prime Minister Nehru. The latter agreed to create a separate administrative unit and consequently NHTA (Naga Hills Tuensang Area) was born with Kohima Mokokchung and Tuensang as its three districts each with a Deputy Commissioner under a Commissioner at Kohima, through a presidential promulgation on 1st. December 1957. This new unit of administration was placed under External Affairs Ministry. The Governor of Assam as Agent of the President of India was the chief administrator of this administrative unit. The second and third meetings of the Naga people's convention were held at Ungma (the largest Ao village) in Mokokchung in 1958. These meetings welcomed participation of underground Nagas. The convention chalked out a sixteen point memorandum for the creation of a separate state of Nagas to be known as Nagaland within the union of India. A Naga delegation presented this memorandum to Prime Minister of India in July 1960. In the meantime Phizo, the leader of extremist group had left the country and was in London from where he dissented and did not recognise the New Delhi meetings for solution of Naga problem. The rebels once again reorganised themselves on the advice of their leader and smuggled in large scale arms and ammunition from neighbouring countries who did not have friendly relations with India. The Prime

Minister on August 10, 1960 announced his government's decision for the establishment of sixteenth state in the Indian Union to be called Nagaland. The President of India promulgated the Nagaland (Transitional Provisions) Regulation on January 24, 1961 to bring into operation a new administrative set up for Nagaland. On December 1, 1963 a new state known as Nagaland was formally inaugurated by Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan the then President of India at Kohima amidst unprecedented jubilation and rejoicing. The creation of state marks an epoch in the history of the Nagas. If we view the population size, then according to 1961 Census there were 108,924 individuals. Thus Nagaland state's population was smaller than many subdivisions of other states in India and in terms of state's total area, it was even short of a district's area in other parts of the country. In 1963 it was rather beyond imagination of many people living in other parts of India, to allow such a small area with such a small size of population to be given the status of a state. Yet, it was given a statehood to satisfy the aspirations of the Nagas to allow them to manage their own affairs in their own way. But creation of a state did not satisfy the underground set up and in coming years the young state had to face enormous difficulty in maintaining peace. The church leaders took the initiative in restoring normalcy and Naga Baptist Church Council formed a peace-mission in 1964 in which there were three important leaders namely Late Jaiprakash Narayan, B.P. Chaliha and an European Rev. Michael Scott. This peace mission held talks with the under ground and certain terms were drawn up. Accordingly an agreement was signed at Sakrabama on 24th May 1964 which came into force from 6th September 1964. Initially the underground suspended their operation for one month and renewed the orders of suspension every month for several years. This paved the way for a conference between the government of India and the underground leaders. There were altogether six round of such talks with the Prime

Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi but without any tangible results. The members of Peace Mission were dissatisfied and this resentment was exhibited through tendering resignations by Jayprakashji and Chaliha. The latter gave the reason that sabotage arson and violence continued by the underground was impediment in holding talks for peace. Moreover it was Rev. Scott alleged that, the remaining member of Peace Mission was trying to internationalise the Naga issue. He was expelled from the country on 4th May 1966. Furthermore, the recurrent explosions in trains caused by placing time bombs, took a heavy toll. In spite of all these activities the peace talks continued upto 1967 for complete three years. The two General Elections held in Nagaland indicated that overwhelming majority of Nagas have accepted the statehood and desire for a peaceful solution of underground activities. The killing of Kenito Sema on 3rd August 1968 a leader of underground Naga who successfully led a coup within the ranks and files of underground organisation, coupled with happenings in which attempt on the life of Hokishe Sema the chief Minister of Nagaland resulted into proclamation of Naga National Council and Naga Federal Government as illegal and unlawful associations under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. Thus the chapter of untiring effort on the part of the government of India to achieve a peaceful solution of Naga problem came to an end. The defunct Peace Mission was succeeded by a Peace Council in 1974. During this turbulent year of Naga politics Rani Gaidinliu led a Zeliangrong Naga delegation to Delhi and met Mrs. Indira Gandhi the then Prime Minister of India. The former urged her to concede to the integration of the Zeliangrong people into an administrative unit in Nagaland or in separate existence. The Rani's followers opposed the underground activists of Phizo group and after creation of Nagaland state many of her armed followers were absorbed in the Nagaland Armed Police. Her agitation asking a separate state for Zeliangrong was turned into agitation for a district to be carved out of the

Zeliangrong inhabited areas of Manipur, Nagaland, Kachar and North Kachar Hills of Assam. In the meantime in June 1978 Morarji Desai, the then Prime Minister of India met Phizo in London but the former did not like to talk Naga independence. The Peace Council continued its efforts to have a settlement with the underground. The government of Nagaland too agreed to provide with opportunities of settling the undergrounds honourably with peaceful avocation.

In January 1964 the first Ministry of Nagaland was formed under the leadership of P. Shilu Ao, the chief Minister. The ruling party was renamed Naga Nationalist Organisation which during 1969 election became Nagaland Nationalist (NNO) Organisation. On the other hand some nine MLAs under the leadership of Vizol formed the United Front of Nagaland. The latter during 1974 election became United Democratic Front (UDF). It is gratifying to note that overwhelmingly the Nagas participated in six General Elections held in the state and the armed struggle of a few underground activists has reduced to political bargain.

Differences of stature, dress, coiffeure and indigenous weapons displayed especially on festive occasions make it easy to distinguish one Naga group from the other. In skin colour they are all brown with slight variation. The Tangkhul seems to be darker. Among the Manipuri Nagas such as Tangkhul, Mao, Maram, Kabui, Koirao, Koireng, Maring and Kacha there are persons who have a tinge of colour in their cheeks when still young. The nose also varies from straight to typical Mongoloid shape where it is flattened at the nostrils. Their eyes are usually brown, though cases of black eyes are not uncommon. The jaw is not very heavy and hair are generally straight. However in some areas we may come across wavy and curly hair. Beards are uncommon and scanty growth of hair on the face is characteristic feature. There are a few who possess a moustache. The cheekbones are generally prominent and slope of the eyes are not well marked. As far as height is concerned it varies

from the slender lightly built Maring to the tall sturdy, finely proportioned Mao. It is the general impression that men of the large, permanently settled villages which possess terraced cultivation such as Angami are bigger, stronger and of well shaped figures. The women are much shorter than the men but strongly built with a muscular development of which the men would not be ashamed. They are often very comely with handsome features. This mosaic pattern of morphological features originating from Mongoloid stock is resultant of admixture. Each tribe has combined elements due to immigration of elements from three directions north-east, north-west and south. The exodus of people from the plains of Assam and Burma enriched the genetic endowment of these hill tribes. The scholars in this field of specialization have given various hypotheses regarding influx of different strains among the Naga tribes. We may speculate that at a certain stage, a Negrito element, later an Austric strain of Kol-Annam or Mon-Khmer type was in occupation of these hills. This has been surmised from the left over traces in shape of agricultural implements and folktales which are found today. Later came a wave of Bodo immigration from the north-west and its impact was retention of Y-shaped posts in house types, method of reaping by hand and elements of a marilineal system. Furthermore, admixture with Tai elements from the east has left marks on the dialectical structure of lingua franca of these people. The immigration wave from the south brought in elements from southern Burma. The Angami thus claim their ethnic origin from Igorot and possibly other Phillipine tribes and in support show certain cultural similarities with the latter. Similarly the Ao Naga besides showing affinities with hill tribes of Assam and Burma exhibit similarities with tribes living outside the mainland of Asia. They claim many cultural affinities with Dyaks of Borneo and Igorot of the Phillipines e.g. practice of head-hinting, platform burial, tattooing, bachelor's dormitory and terrace cultivation. The Angami style of terrace cultivation is found to be identical with that of the Igorot.

All the Naga tribes may have numerous versions of an almost similar fable related with their origin. Mostly the Naga tribes point to Meikhel or its surrounding areas as their place of origin and dispersal. It is a small village between the Mao and Maram habitation about ten miles south-east of the present town of Kohima. This place of origin has been referred to as Mekhoromia by the Angami meaning 'the place of departure'. The Tangkhul call it Maikel Tunggam, while the Mao refer it as Makhrai Mai in their dialect. Near this village is the second highest peak in all Naga hills called Japro (height 9,890 ft.). The legends of the Angami, Sema, Lotha, Tangkhul, Mao, Maram, Koirao, Maring, Chakhesang describe exactly how they came to occupy their present territories. It can be stated that the Nagas at first lived in stone caves which were referred to as womb of the earth before their dispersal to other places. It may be interesting to note here that origin from a cave is also claimed by Mizo and Kuki group of tribes living in Mizoram, Manipur and Assam Hills. The Tangkhul Naga legends substantiates a link with the general tradition which makes the Naga, Kuki and Manipuris descent from a common ancestor who had three sons; who became the progenitors of these tribes. The Angami legends also indicate presence of three brothers who became progenitors of Naga, Kuki, Mizo and Meitei (Manipuri) tribes. The Aos migrated from south-eastern parts of Burma and after passing through Manipur hills upwards to Wokha in the Lotha Naga inhabited areas where they settled for a considerable period of time before migrating in the present habitat through Naotistime where traditional six stones or Lungtorok were erected. Naotistime is a day's journey east of Mokokchung. The Phom have identical legend about their origin. At Meikhel one can see this great monolith which marks the site from which the common ancestors of Naga emerged. The Rengma inhabiting the area north of Angami territory like other Nagas consider the place of their origin to be Khezakenoma.