

MAYANGNOKCHA :

The Pathfinder



R P Sharma
Ngangshikokba Ao

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FOREWORD BY SONIA GANDHI

MATTER ABOUT THE BOOK

This is the story of a man whose biography, in a way, defines the history of the Naga people for almost the whole of the twentieth century. Popularly known as 'Tambu Mayang', the grand old man of the 1980s, embarked upon a life-time of school teaching when at least three career openings were available to him. As the first Ao and the second Naga graduate, he could easily have gone in for a prospective career in the Civil Services, a pioneering role in Church affairs or the leadership of a political movement in the Naga hills. That he opted for school teaching was definitely his own choice in 1927 but, in course of time, it turned out to be the unique privilege of several generations of the Nagas. Tambu Mayang's steely determination, consistent tenacity and lifelong dedication to his people quite fittingly pushed him into the unique position of THE NAGA OF THE MILLENNIUM.

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MATTER ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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By

R P Sharma
Ngangshikokba Ao

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by R P Sharma and Ngangshikokba Ao

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To

The Youth of Nagaland

Ye are the salt of the earth
but if the salt hath lost its savour,
wherewith shall it be salted ?

Matthew 5:13

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Preface

In fifth-century (BC) Athens, there lived a unique man. The man was Socrates who incarnated all that was good in humanity - magnanimity, saintliness, courage, tenacity and love. He was, above all, a founder philosopher, a searcher for knowledge, a lover of wisdom (*philus* = lover + *sophia* = wisdom). Socrates was a philosopher who brought philosophy from heaven to earth, from the escape into an ivory tower to the actual conduct of human life. His life-long admonition to people around him was "know thyself" because he was convinced beyond all doubt that the only way to know the world and God was to know oneself. He was a married man. He had his wife and three children. He lived in poverty from year to year and more markedly in his last years. He was a born teacher. He died a teacher. He owed his fame and popularity as much to his search for knowledge as to his chronic poverty. He never gave up hope. He was, as he remains to our own times, the leader of optimists in spite of his unfortunate execution at the hands of his own people. His failure to be popular with the centre of power accounts for his universal and timeless popularity with the powerless. He was to his people, as he has been to humanity at large, a true embodiment of the power of the powerless. His power was his province. His province was knowledge. His knowledge was his freedom. He has been loved and revered throughout the world and throughout history for the freedom of his spirit, the power of his knowledge and his knowledge of truth. He was the best incarnation of the philosophic spirit and the finest specimen of human righteousness. He never failed because righteousness and philosophy never fail.

Like a crazy discoverer, he would move around, get hold of young men, disabuse them of their conventional beliefs and attitudes and gradually lead them to a state of *aporia* (puzzlement) the realisation of which would pave the way for the acquisition of true wisdom, abiding knowledge. He used to boast that even though he knew nothing, he was 'wiser' than others because he knew that he did not know while others did not know that they did not know. He often seemed to behave like a Sophist which he never was because while the Sophists resorted to an *eristic*, that is, a win-at-any-price type of argument, he followed a *dialectic* which could lead his interlocutor to seek out true wisdom and abiding knowledge.

Socrates was a deeply religious man with the temperament of a mystic. He was regular in his prayers, sure of his convictions and a true believer in the justness of God. Throughout his life he held that since only God knew what was good for man, a man should simply say in his prayer "give me what is good". As for his mysticism, Plato tells us of his habitual "rapt". He would often go into a trance and remain spell-bound there for hours together. He used to hear a 'voice' from time to time. The voice could indicate whether he should or should not do a thing. He always believed that one's happiness or well-being depended directly on the goodness of one's soul.

He loved politics but his politics was of a different sort. Politics for him was the art of making fellow human beings as good as possible. The conscientious politician was a successful statesman because statesmanship manifested itself only in a genuine love for humanity. A statesman, Socrates would say, is a real physician of the body politic, the defining point of the spiritual health of the community. Socrates

maintained that he alone was a true statesman because he alone understood that knowledge of the absolutely good was the necessary and sufficient condition of national well-being and happiness. Plato's concept of the "philosopher-king" and his picture of life outlined in the *Republic* give us the view of an ideal society governed by the Socratic vision of politics or statesmanship.

It is in a context like this that we find it worthwhile to underline our perception of similarities between the 5th century Athenian philosopher and our 20th century Naga philanthropist and teacher. The connectivity between the two seems to us to be an extraordinary meeting of minds across times and cultures. The connectivity binds the two into a single entity, as it were, in their priorities, their pursuits, and their human materials. Both of them were householders. Both of them were relentless seekers of knowledge, lovers of wisdom. Both of them were full of piety and righteousness. Both of them loved humanity at large even though they were confined to their respective peoples. Neither of them was a politician in the general sense of the term and yet both of them loved politics, politics redeemed of filth and corruption. One cannot think of a better pair of apolitical human beings who were so thoroughly immersed in the politics of humanity at its best. Sides they would not take and yet they had their respective quotas of detractors. What they thought and did was loved and cherished by their peoples and yet there were so many who would not agree with them. The most important connectivity between the two, however, remains their having been teachers for life.

We have a feeling that there may be people in the Naga society today who would find fault with Mayang's

(x)

perception of contemporary events and political developments. We do not hold a brief for him but we would just like to remind them of what Burtrand Russell says in one of his unpopular essays by way of trying to point out to opponents in a debate that most of what they quarrel over is a consequence of their refusal to appreciate the other's point of view. As Russell puts it: "If an opinion contrary to your own makes you angry, that is a sign that you are subconsciously aware of having no good reason for thinking as you do. If someone maintains that two and two are five or that Iceland is on the equator, you feel pity rather than anger, unless you know so little of arithmetic or geography that his opinion shakes your own contrary conviction.... So whenever you find yourself getting angry about a difference of opinion, be on your guard; you will probably find, on examination, that your belief is going beyond what the evidence warrants" (Russell 1950 : 104).

Our book would not have been written without the advice and support of our friends. We are grateful to many of our friends, to Ms Tiarenla, Mr Limawati and Mr Bur in particular, who lent us useful books and helped us in many ways. Of all friends, however, we are immensely grateful to Imti Imchen and Mrs Amongla, the brother and wife respectively of late Panger Imchen who readily made available to us all that the deceased had left behind by way of collected material and notes on Mayangnokcha. As a large part of the material used in this book is directly borrowed from his collection and notes, we would love to place on record that but for him we would not have thought of working on this book. Had he lived longer, he would have written the book himself given his commitment to Mayangnokcha and his familiarity with the biographee. Had he lived longer, we would have loved to collaborate with him in working on the book either

as his advisers or as his co-authors. It is unfortunate that he is no more with us but we cherish his memory and value his collection and notes and we would like the reader to share our sense of gratefulness to Panger Imchen, his wife and his brother.

We would like to place on record our grateful appreciation of the contributions made by authors quoted in the last chapter of the book. Many of these authors make points in their respective write-ups which supplement what we have said in the earlier chapters of the book. Needless to add, these sincere and scholarly contributions would enrich the readers' understanding of Mayang's life and mission.

As we were motivated and authorised by the members of Mayangnokcha's family to work on his biography, without which it could not have been done, we offer our grateful thanks to all of them. We know that it has been a great family and by bringing out this biography we wish to register our appreciation of and respect for the members of the family. We are profoundly grateful to the members of the Mayangnokcha Award Trust (MAT) without whose sponsorship this work would not have been completed.

We are profoundly grateful to Mrs Sonia Gandhi, President of the All India Congress Committee for her illuminating, comprehensive and affectionate foreword.

We will also take this opportunity to record our gratefulness to the two ladies, Chandrakala and Achila, whose consistent co-operation and inspiring encouragement sustained us throughout the entire exercise of working on our manuscript. We sincerely believe that we are blessed to have been associated with them on a life-long basis.

Shillong
01 April 2000

R P Sharma
Ngangshikokba Ao

Foreword

This book is much more than a centenary tribute to one of the noblest Indians of the twentieth century. It is an excellent introduction to the ethnography, linguistics, sociology, culture and history of Nagaland and the Naga people. I commend it as an invaluable introduction to a part of India which needs to be much better known in all parts of the country.

Mayangnokcha was the second Naga and the first Ao to secure a graduate degree. He was immediately offered a job in the civil service. But he preferred to concentrate his energies on the education of his people. For he was convinced that education was the engine to the social and educational emancipation of his people. Thus, it is as a humble school-teacher more than as an administrator or political leader, both of which he also was, that he earned his undying place in the hearts of the Naga people. And so crucial was his role as a teacher in bringing the Naga leadership to modern enlightenment that he can be truly regarded as Father of contemporary Nagaland. The authors aptly quote one of his students, C N Ngulie: "He believed that the future of Nagaland is shaped in the schools. He, therefore, devoted his entire life for this noble cause". (page 228).

Mayangnokcha played a central role in the Naga National Council which formulated the Four-Point Memorandum in 1946 to chart the course for Nagaland in independent India. Jawaharlal Nehru responded by saying he wanted the Naga Hills, in common with other such tribal hill areas, "to have as much freedom and autonomy as possible". (page 26). The tangled history of what followed is told in succinct detail. Mayangnokcha never wavered from conceiving the destiny of Nagaland as an integral part of the destiny of India.

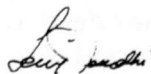
It was under the tutelage of Mayangnokcha that primary education spread from the first missionary school at Impur to much of the rest of Nagaland. But, as the authors point out (page 62) "the British government did not concede the idea of starting government high schools even in the last years of their rule". So, when independent India started one in 1948, it was inevitable that Mayangnokcha, who had moved from the Impur School to the Middle English School at Mokokchung in 1941, should be selected as the founder-headmaster of Nagaland's first government high school and later its first Principal. The present chief minister, Shri S C Jamir, was among the distinguished alumni of the school, all of whom remember Tambu Mayang with the greatest regard and reverence. As the authors say, "The sheer unanimity of Naga public opinion on his life and mission made him a legend in life. And he remains a legend for all generations of Nagas to come" (page 99).

Recognition and honours came to Tambu Mayang with unceasing appreciation. He received a Certificate of Gallantry for his role in repelling the Japanese invasion. The British conferred on him the title of Member of the British Empire (MBE) in 1946. He was selected for the President's Best Teacher's Award in 1964. And in 1984 he was given the Padma Shri. On his passing away in 1988, the Ao Senden hailed him as the "Father of Education".

Mayangnokcha was also a writer of note, his several translations and primers for school-children earning him an eternal place in every Naga school curriculum. One of his best loved works is his biography of Mahatma Gandhi. He was interested in politics without being himself a politician, his politics being "people-oriented, people-centred" (page 54) rather than power-centred. This is reflected in the address he drafted and presented to the Defence Minister of India in 1963, where he described the role of the Indian army

in Nagaland in the following words which must reverberate through the country. The army jawan, he said, had been placed in Nagaland, "not in a war front to fight a foreign enemy but to restore peace and order among his kith and kin". (page 114). Rarely has the role of the armed forces in preserving internal order been more pithily or more accurately expressed.

I hope this important biography attains a wide readership all over India for the life, works and thoughts of Tambu Mayang need to be remembered, reflected upon and emulated. I join the people of Nagaland in paying my centenary tribute to this great Ao, this great Naga and this great Indian. Our enduring tribute would be to remain true to Panditji's promise of 1960: "Our policy has always been to give a government to the Naga people without interfering in any way in their internal affairs or way of life".



(Sonia Gandhi)

President,

AICC

23rd February, 2000

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Incidental to the British annexation of Naga territory, three historic benefits accrued, between the seventies of the nineteenth century and the forties of the twentieth century, to Nagas in general : (i) a sense of oneness as a broadly identifiable people, (ii) a unifying system of literacy and faith and (iii) the know-how of a gun warfare. One does not know why the British demarcated only a part of the territory inhabited by the Nagas and called it the Naga Hills even though they knew as well then as we do now that Nagas were not confined to the demarcated area alone. Everyone who lived in the Naga Hills, it must be emphasised, was not a Naga - there were others. But the more important thing that should have been taken note of by the coloniser was that all Nagas did not live in the Naga Hills alone. Nagas lived then, as they do now, in a much larger and contiguous territory all of which was already under British occupation. The Naga territory outside Naga Hills was a much larger territory inhabited by a much larger number of the Nagas. It was therefore just ridiculous, if not immoral or inhuman, for the coloniser to define a part of the Naga territory as the Naga Hills. However, the point that strikes us as academically remarkable is that the British coloniser, whatever may have been his intentions or motivations for identifying a certain Naga area as the Naga Hills, gave a variety of Naga tribes a generic name which clicked for the rest of their history. By using the word 'Naga' to characterise these hills, the coloniser created the history of oneness for the Nagas.

'Naga' was not a British coinage nor had it ever formed part of the Naga ethnic vocabulary. It is probable that the British borrowed this word from some non-Naga people living in an area adjoining the Naga area. Scholars writing on Naga history widely agree that the etymology of the word 'Naga' is still shrouded in mystery. Who coined this word? How did it come to denote a whole people who differed among themselves in a number of dimensions and yet shared a commonality? One can safely assume that this word did not form part of a political, historical or ethnic vocabulary till the British had used it as part of the phrase, the Naga Hills. In the absence of an authentic or foolproof etymology, scholars have used their conjectures to demystify the mysterious etymology of the word 'Naga'. When we think of the history of the word, we would like to emphasise its phonetic affinity with a probable ancestor word. We may immediately reject out-of-hand words like 'nok' (Konyak), 'nanga' (Hindi), 'nagna' (Sanskrit), 'noga' (Assamese), 'nangta' (Bengali) and 'nangra' (Kachari) on the ground that none of them seems to share a phonetic/phonemic kinship with the successor word, 'Naga'. Going a little deeper into how the British could have chanced upon this word, we are inclined to trace its Burmese or Indian origin. We are inclined to surmise that the British picked up this word as a generic name for all the Naga tribes together somewhere in Burma prior to occupying the area subsequently called the Naga Hills. The Burmese word 'naka' may have undergone a phonemic change in its journey from the Burmese speaker to the British hearer. It is likely that the Burmese /k/ was received as the English /g/ so that 'naka' became 'naga' to identify a whole lot of people as 'wearers of the earring' or one 'whose earlobes were pierced'.

Attention is sometimes drawn to the word 'naga' as derived from the Sanskrit **naga** or **nāga** each of which means both 'snake' and 'hill'. As derived from **naga** or **nāga**, Naga would mean 'snake man' or 'hill man'. The hill-related etymology of 'naga' does not sound convincing because it does not distinguish the Nagas as the only hill people. As regards the snake-related etymology of the word, confusion is often created by referring to a **Nāga** princess in Hindu texts. In Hindu mythology, **Nāgas** are the children of Kashyapa and Kadru. Three of them, two sons and a daughter, are famous. Shesha or Ananta, the oldest son and the eternal couch of Vishnu and his consort, Laxmi, holds the earth on his head. Vasuki, the second son, is the king of snakemen while Manasā is the goddess of the snake kingdom. Married to sage Jarat Karu, she has the unique power of counteracting the venom of snake bites and is known as the sucker of venom. She is worshipped by the devout as the saviour of the victims of snake bites. **Nāgas** also refer to people whose rulers have the snake banner and claim to be the lord of Bhogavati, the mythical capital of the snake world. Many a snake princess is referred to in Hindu literature as a paradigm of feminine beauty and charm. Ulupi, a snake princess, sometimes identified with Hanima in south-western Nagaland, is mentioned in the Mahabharata (Book. I chapter 214) as one of the wives of Arjuna, the best known of the Pandava heroes. Howsoever interesting the stories of Manasa and Ulupi may be, the snake etymology of the word 'nāga' does not convince a sceptical reader for the simple reason that Nagas have never been found to be snake keepers or snake worshippers.

With rejections like the ones mentioned above, we come face to face with the actual word 'nāgā' in the

linguistic repertoire of Sanskritic Hindus from north India where it refers to a wandering tribe of Shaivite holy men, who live by themselves apart from other people and are either scantily clothed or unclothed. It is probable that some settlers in Burma from the Mauryan plains, who had watched waves and waves of Naga migrants going towards the Burma-India border over a length of time, were reminded of the name given to the Naga sadhus (mendicants) back home and elected to use that name to describe the migrants. One may surmise that such observers of the Nagas chose to use this term for them as a people distinguishable from themselves, as the other, emphasising their regular movements, their isolationist preferences and their manner of clothing/unclothing. If it was so, it was remarkable that some people, who may have observed only a few groups of Nagas, could identify them as a people clearly separate and separable from themselves.

In this context, we may remind ourselves that a Buddhist Mission was sent to Burma by Emperor Ashoka himself (269-232 BC). It is on record that Indian settlements in Burma by people drawn from the Mauryan plains had begun as early as in the first century AD and continued up to the end of the British rule in Burma. Early Indians settled in Burma as workers on rice fields and were joined by merchants and professionals in course of time. The Indo-Burmese relationship happened to be one of mutual love and co-operation for a long stretch of time. It was only after the military coup in 1962 that hundreds of thousands of Indians were forced to leave Burma. And yet about a quarter million Indian stayed back as rice farmers. As these rice farmers were the earliest to go to Burma and the longest to stay there, we are inclined

to hazard the guess that the British perhaps picked up the generic word 'nāgā' from them to identify the Nagas as a people distinguishable from other peoples, whether tribal or non-tribal. As we are not in a position to vouch for our interpretation of the 'naga' etymology, we would like to place the parent word on a fifty-fifty basis between the Burmese 'naka' and the Sanskrit 'nāgā'.

Our conjecture that the British borrowed the word 'naga' from the Indians settled in Burma is endorsed by the view taken by some scholars that it appeared for the first time in the *Geographia* (VII : II : 18) of Claudius Ptolemaius, popularly known as Ptolemy, a Greek historian of the second century AD. Ptolemy refers to the Naga area as "the realm of the naked" ('naga lok'), which was probably a distortion of 'nanga lok', a term used by the Hindus of western India in the first century AD to describe the Konyak area. In his 'Preface' to the second edition of J. P. Mills' *The Ao Nagas*, J.H. Hutton writes : "Ptolemy depicts Nagaland accurately enough in its present position; he describes it as "the realm of the naked" If we can regard, as I do, the Nagas known to Ptolemy as approximating to the Konyak tribes in culture and physical type, they are likely to have been preceded by a population of Negrito or Papuan affinities" (1973 : IX -X cf Furer-Haimendorf 1962 : 1 & Hutton 1986 : 32). Next to Ptolemy, we come across the word 'Nagas' again in the seventeenth century in the work of Mir-Hussaini, a historian who perhaps covered the Mogul General Mir Jumla's expedition into Assam. Apart from these two occurrences of the word, we hear of Nagas as a collectivity in the official nomenclature given to the area which approximated to present Nagaland in 1866 when the British called the area the Naga Hills. The

government of India decided, on the advice of NPC leaders, to call the Naga Hills 'Nagaland' which became the 16th State in the Union on 1 December 1963 although the first use of the term is attributed to one Mrs Titterington who used it in an article *History Of Our Baptist Mission In Assam And Japan*, published in a Philadelphia Journal in 1888 (Tajen Ao 1984:62,63).

Even if we are not in a position to correctly trace the origin of the name 'naga', we would like to point out with a sense of responsibility and conviction that it is definitely not a Naga word; it is a word used by a people who may have found themselves very different from the Nagas, who may have seen the 'Nagas' as Nagas in the process of othering or otherisation. In that sense, 'Naga' is comparable to a word like 'Hindi' or 'Hindu'. We would like the contemporary zealot of the Hindutva philosophy to recall and acknowledge that 'Hindu' is a Muslim word. Our analogy, however, must not be taken to suggest that 'Naga' or 'Hindu' are pejorative terms. They may or may not have been originally pejorative but they are not pejorative any longer. We would therefore urge 'Naga' and 'Hindu' nativists that they must not always seek to nativise everything that goes with them or belongs to them. Besides, our reference to the Shiva sect of holy mendicants, traditionally known as Nagas, need not be taken to imply any link or intersection between the holy mendicants in the plains and the 'Nagas' in the hills beyond the coincidence of the two respective names coming together in the political vocabulary of the British coloniser.

When we turn from the name to the people known as Nagas and try to review their history, we are faced with a puzzling problem, a riddle, a question. Did the

Nagas migrate to the present territory from another part of the world? Or, if they migrated, when did they migrate into the present territory? Most writers of Naga history say that they are of the Mongoloid stock and that their languages belong to the Tibeto-Burman group. As of today, Nagas are spread over the whole of Nagaland and the adjoining areas in Assam, Manipur, Burma and Arunachal Pradesh. As regards the time or the duration of their migration to the present habitation, there is more speculation than evidence with the result that their mythology reads like their history and their history reads like their mythology. The dividing line between history and mythology is so blurred that anyone who tries today to separate the two finds himself in an embarrassing position.

The conjuncture of Naga history and mythology raises very fundamental questions about the relationship between the two. How much of a mythology is only mythological or how much of a history is solely historical? If a mythology has any degree of historicity, it is considered good and it makes the mythology more interesting. But if a history is even a little mythic or mythological, it loses its credibility. The problem that now inhibits an earnest historian from confidently articulating his account relates to his growing awareness that history is no longer considered entirely historical. Everyone constructs his own history. What is history? we ask and pat comes the reply : history is what historians write. And the next question is, what does the historian write? The historian writes (if we read between the lines, we know) what he wants to write or believes to be right. If it is so, is not history an illusion, a conjuring trick, a recorded lie, a bunch of stories to satisfy his or his patron's ego (See Moss 99)?

New historicists are continually telling us that history or historiography is a construction or an interpretation rather than a description. "Our construction of the past", the historiographer writes, "is a function of our relation to the present" and a construction of the past is "an ideological construction mediated by a desire or a drive to position oneself in the present" (Wayne 1990). Old historicism is now suspect but how authentic is the new historicism? The new historicism, we must note, is itself "a projection of present-day concerns and present-day models of identity formation unto the past." (ibid.). We do therefore present a brief historical account of the Nagas which we will try to make as little intentional or motivated as possible even though we do not deny that a large part of what we write below is based more on conjecture than on hard facts.

We find it astonishing that even though the name 'naga' has been in use for almost two thousand years now with reference to the people living in an area which is known as Nagaland, the Nagas became conscious of Nagaism or a common Nagahood only during or after World War I. About 2000 Nagas drawn from various Naga tribes in the then Naga Hills were recruited by the British to form part of a labour corps in France during the first World War. Perhaps it was the first chance ever for as many Naga groups to interact with one another and to work for a common cause. On return from France, each tribe selected its representative and those representatives together constituted in 1918 what came to be known as the Naga Club. That people in certain parts of the Naga Hills did not refer to themselves as Nagas even as late as the 1950s may be ignored but the fact remains that

the Naga consciousness of a common Nagahood does not precede the time of the Naga Club. It is true that the various Naga tribes differ from one another in physical features, languages, customs and locations but it is equally true, perhaps truer, that as a whole they share "a general similarity of culture and possess many ideas, habits and occupations in common" (Balfour in J. P. Mills 1973: XIX). Differences among the various tribes are easily overshadowed by the underlying unity of their ideas of war and peace, their favourite dances, their food habits and a large vocabulary of common words. Their commonalties in respect of all their languages belonging to the Tibeto- Burman family and their cultural affinities with numerous tribes settled in different parts of the world should have led to the formation of a common consciousness at least after the British had defined their territory as the Naga Hills. When we try to reason out why it did not happen, we are obliged to look for reasons lying deep at the back of the Naga mind. Nagas, we all know, have their territories even today clearly demarcated tribewise. There is hardly a village which has a mixed Naga population. Why Nagas have traditionally segregated themselves as a whole from the rest of the world or among themselves tribewise, we do not know and therefore we are inclined to believe that it is this segregationist tendency that may have inhibited the formation of a common consciousness in spite of the spread of education and Christianity. Times change, conditions change, we all know, but habits of thought do not change as often. Normally, most people tend to carry on with their traditional habits of thought timelessly but when there is a common threat, they tend to change their habits of thought and to form new, expeditious adjustments and equations. The perception of a

common Naga identity in the people of Nagaland may be related to the Nagas' perception of a common threat when they began to realise that there was going to be, sooner or later, a transfer of power from British to Indian hands. As they were not prepared to accept the political status quo for all times to come, they thought it expedient to shout together to be heard by people who could change their status quo.

No one seems to know why, when or from where the various Naga tribes migrated to the Indo-Burma region and yet there is a consensus among scholars

- 1) that they migrated westward through Burma,
- 2) that they migrated in different groups at different times and
- 3) that they have cultural affinities with tribes settled in different parts of the world, far removed from one another.

Nagas have been found to be closely akin to ancient tribes in places like Chotanagpur in Bihar, Burma, China, Taiwan, Malaya, Indonesia, the Philippines and certain parts of the Oceania. Besides, it is also agreed that once upon a time Nagas were perhaps islanders. Their use and love of marine objects like cowries and conchshells as well as the likeness of their log drums to the shape of canoes may bear witness to the fact that before they entered the hilly terrain in the Indo-Burma region, they had lived by the sea. Isn't it a paradox of history or a quirk of fate that a marine people should migrate from the vast and open sea to a hilly and forested terrain? Why did they leave their original home(s)? Why did they select these hills? Why did all of them elect to share a common territory? Having elected a single area for

habitation, why did they decide to maintain their inter-tribal separateness in respect of location and customs? Naga history has long been a history of internecine wars, both with others and among themselves. Why have they been fighting such inter-tribal, and sometimes even intra-tribal, wars? How were they able to preserve their separateness from others during their long and historic march, say from the Oceania to the Naga hills? We may never succeed in digging out any reasoned or persuasive answers to questions like these yet we are amazed to note that a people so much torn and troubled by so many structural or temperamental contradictions or exclusivities have been able to cohere for so long as an easily identifiable and proud community. Some Nagas are believed to have been in their present region since the beginning of the Christian era. Others came in subsequent periods. Maybe largescale migrations continued up to the end of the 18th century or so. Perhaps the Konyaks and the Phoms were the first and the Aos were the second to migrate to these hills. The Aos were followed by the Lothas, Semas, Sangtams, Angamis and others. Most Naga tribes agree that Konyaks, Phoms and Aos were the earliest to migrate into the present territory. It is also believed that the Nagas who confronted the earliest of Ahoms passing through their territories were the Konyaks, Phoms and the Aos and that since the Aos lived in the western part of the area neighbouring the plains of Assam which were to be occupied by Ahoms, the Aos had to confront the Ahoms for a long time to come.

Spread over a large span of time, Naga migrations into the territory west of Burma chart a sort of chronology and the chronology so charted is lent a degree of credibility by an Ao legend. The legend

has it that centuries and centuries ago, marching from the east to the west in search of a habitable location, a group of Nagas chanced upon a stretch of land and decided to settle there. They established their first village there and called it 'Chungliymti'. They remained there for a great length of time, organised themselves into a cohesive and structured society with a fully developed village republic, a set of customary laws, a system of ethics and a code of socio-religious conduct. Things were going fine but then a time came when the village elders realised that due to increase in population compounded by the frequent migrations of their people from other places, the village gradually began to be felt to be too small to accommodate the swelling crowd. In a situation like this, they thought they might look for new pastures. It was accordingly decided that a large part of the village population must move out of the village. The movement began and the majority of the outgoing people crossed over to the other side of the Dikhu river in search of suitable sites for habitation. The Aos derived their name from the story of their dispersion from Chungliymti. The dispersion obviously drew a line between people who moved out and those who did not. This distinction is contained in the pair of words 'Aor' versus 'Merir', the former referring to those who moved out of Chungliymti and the latter to those who were left behind in Chungliymti. The name 'Ao' came to be a shortened form of 'Aor', a name which the first Aos coined for themselves. And they used 'Merir' to point to Sangtams, Konyaks, Changs, and Phoms. It is interesting that the Semas still refer to the Aos as 'Julimi' which means "those who have gone ahead". The Lothas have a similar name for the Aos. There is, however, a parallel belief among some Aos that their history does not go beyond Chungliymti. They agree

that the dispersion occurred but they do not believe in the story of their ancestors' migration from the east to Chungliymti. They claim instead that they originated from 'six stones' i.e. 'Longtrok' in the village Chungliymti. According to their belief, Chungliymti was the native village of the first AOs. Whatever it may be, it must be pointed out here that the vast majority of the AOs today do not derive their origin from Longtrok and do believe in the story of their migration from the east. Not only did the Greek historian Ptolemy find some Naga tribes in this region, even the earliest of Ahom expeditionary groups had to confront the Konyaks and the AOs during their journey towards Assam and were often obliged to make peace with them. Naga intellectuals and activists often claim, and we believe, very rightly, that they had never in their history been finally conquered and subjugated by any people, including the boldest of Ahom rulers, before the British appeared on the scene.

The history of the Naga-Ahom relationship may be said to have begun in the early years of the thirteenth century with the Ahom armies marching through the Naga territory towards Assam. That an army of outsiders could pass through their territory was something new and unacceptable to the Nagas who resisted the march of the Ahom army with all their might. Their resistance led to armed confrontations and the two sides suffered heavy casualties. The Ahom leader, Sukapha, had no intention to give up the march and he did not oblige the Nagas. He moved on into the Assam plains, inflicting greater casualties on the Naga side. Hordes of Ahom groups followed suit and moved into the plains to the west of the Naga territory. The Nagas lived in their territory while the Ahoms settled in the plains and established a kingdom. For a long

time, the Nagas and the Ahoms looked on one another with suspicion and hostility. But in course of time both learned to live as neighbours. Occasional skirmishes continued to take place, no doubt, but the relationship gradually improved.

More than three centuries had passed between Nagas and Ahoms as half-suspecting, half-trusting neighbours. And there was a coup staged by the Lora Raja of Assam against king Godha Pani or Godadhar Singh. Running for life, the king fled into the Naga hills and besought their help. The Nagas proved to be far more generous and helpful than the king had expected. They gave him food, shelter and protection. Not only that, they raised an army and had his throne restored. The king was grateful to the Nagas for all that they had done and the two sides became affectionate and trustworthy friends. What really brought them still closer to each other was found to be the king's infatuation with a Naga girl, named Sentishila, whom he had come to know during the days of his hiding. After some initial hitch on the part of the girl's father, the king succeeded in getting her to be his wife and queen. Sentishila's marriage to King Godadhar Singh became a historic matrimonial alliance between the two communities and led to the opening of a trading centre on the Ahom-Naga border. A road was constructed to connect Nokpu village in the Naga area to Rongpur in Assam and the border post was named 'Assiringia Duar', 'Assiringia' being the name of Sentishila's father. The trading centre was called Naga-Ghat and Queen Sentishila also came to be known as Dalime (Bendangangshi 1993 : 11). There followed a long spell of peace and prosperity between the two peoples.

As time passed, the Naga-Ahom relationship had its ups and downs. There were wars fought as there were treaties of friendship and co-operation entered into by the neighbours. One can easily make a general statement to say that on the whole the relationship between the Nagas and the Ahoms continually alternated between hostility and friendship but there is no doubt that it was more friendly than hostile. The most remarkable characteristic of such relationship, however, was that the Ahoms, who were so powerful, never in the six centuries that they quarrelled and made friends with the Nagas, tried to take over any part of the region inhabited by the Nagas. And the generality of Nagas to this day look back over that period of their history with a nostalgic fondness.

However, the appearance of the British, in the aftermath of the treaty of Yandabo, on the political map of Assam marked the terminus of the already dwindling glory of the Ahoms and disturbed the cherished traditional privacy of the Naga world. Ironically enough, it also defined the third and final westward march through the Naga area. The history of Naga settlements in this area between Burma and Assam had itself begun with their own march from the east to the west. Centuries later, the Nagas settled in this area had to suffer the irresistible march of the marauding Ahoms from Burma to Assam through their land. Unfortunately for them, this time again, the British army of hundreds of fully equipped soldiers chose to march towards Assam through their land. Again they tried to obstruct the marching army but they could not succeed because the marchers had powerful firearms which could kill any number of them. Nevertheless undaunted, they resisted with all their might and lost hundred of precious lives. They had no

doubt inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy but the loss of so many of their own lives filled them with agony. They were baffled and shocked, bruised and embittered. They were sad and subdued but they would not give up hope. They would wait to fight back, they decided.

The first British march through Naga territory in 1832 was followed by a number of marches called 'expeditions' into and through the Naga area for almost two decades. These frequent expeditions naturally led to a long sequence of armed confrontations between the aggressive British and the belligerent Nagas. The Nagas did not succumb with the result that the confrontations gradually took the form of an internecine, prolonged war between the two sides. The number of casualties kept on increasing from year to year. The British began to realise the futility of the entire exercise and by the end of 1850 decided to befriend the Nagas. They agreed on a sort of truce which was followed by a fifteen-year period (1851-1865) of British non-interference in the Naga way of life.

Before proceeding further, we would like to note in passing or point out as an aside that as a matter of fact the British were initially not interested in invading or occupying the Naga hills for a couple of reasons. One of the reasons was that to attack or try to capture a Naga area could be both hazardous and expensive as had already been shown by numerous expeditions. The other and more important reason, however, was that the British never viewed the occupation of the Naga hills as a commercially profitable enterprise. The British, we may remind ourselves, are never known to indulge in politics or

embark on invasion and conquest without a sense of profit. British politics is basically economic, commercial, business-oriented. British expansionism is a unique doubling of profit and power: profit motivates the entrepreneur while power assures and sustains the profiteer. The politics of power is a mere derivative of or a supplement to the politics of profit. The British were not interested in the Naga hills because these hills could not assure profits on a large scale or for a long stretch of time.

Let us recall in this connection the *modus operandi* of how the British came to India, conquered India and ruled India. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, a bunch of small-time traders arrived in India in a boat, begging for sympathy and support and gradually seeped into the country "like tea from a tea bag" (Roy 1997: 33). They remained faceless and voiceless for a century and a half and then, all of a sudden, pounced like a gouging cat on a mousy ruler in Bengal and declared themselves victorious. The gouging cat for the first time in Indian history had taken so long to pounce on an unsuspecting mouse and rob life out of him in an instant. The whole of India was shocked and dismayed. The trading 'company' had suddenly become a colonial power which meant business and was determined to stay, expand, fleece and shame the rest of India. The company government was not in a hurry. It gave time and it took time to spread out at ease its numerous and long tentacles like an octopus from an Indian myth. After its conquest in Bengal, it took a full century to waylay and capture the whole of India except a few hills in the North East.

The period of truce agreed upon by the British and the Nagas was not quite successful. The British had stopped their interfering gestures and armed expeditions into the Naga area. But the Nagas kept on raiding from time to time the border villages in Assam which were under British control. Besides, the British had to safeguard their Assam tea gardens against frequent Naga raids. With declaring their policy of non-interference in the Naga way of life, the British had given the Nagas a long rope, as it were, but the Nagas did not take the hint. They were not only disturbing the Assam villages and the tea gardens; they appeared to make fun of the British power in their neighbourhood. To take just one example, there were as many as 19 Angami raids between 1854 and 1865 on Assam villages and tea gardens. The British could no longer take these raids lightly and they made up their mind to attack and occupy the Naga hills once and for all. To begin with, they occupied Samaguding (Chumukedima) and created the Naga Hills District in 1866 with their headquarters at Samaguding near Dimapur. Slowly, they started spreading deep into the hills. In 1876 they shifted their headquarters to Wokha and within a couple of years to Kohima on 14 November 1878. The Ao territory was annexed in 1880 and the Sub-Divisional headquarters was shifted from Wokha to Mokokchung. The Tuensang area came under British control as late as 1902 but for many decades to come it was treated as an 'excluded area'. After India's independence, a separate administrative circle was formed with headquarters at Tuensang in 1948. It became a separate Sub-Division in 1951 but just a year later it was separated from the Naga Hills District and attached to NEFA to be administered directly by the Governor of Assam on behalf of the central government. In 1957, however, Tuensang was

retransferred to the Naga Hills and the entire Naga area now came to be known as NHTA (the Naga Hills Tuensang Area). The NHTA comprised the three districts of Kohima, Mokokchung and Tuensang. The NHTA became a *de facto* State in 1961 and attained formal Statehood to be known as 'Nagaland' on 1 December 1963. Ten years later (i.e. 1973) Nagaland was divided into seven districts viz. Kohima, Phek, Mokokchung, Zunheboto, Wokha, Mon and Tuensang. It was only in 1998 that the eighth district, Dimapur, was created.

II

As has already been pointed out, the history of Naga 'nationalist' politics began with the formation of the Naga Club in 1918. The Club offered a common political platform for the various Naga tribes who could together identify themselves as a single community. Having seen a larger world during the first World War, some leading Naga men realised that the village republics were not enough and that progressive Nagas must transcend the limits of their respective villages and tribes. The need for a pan-Naga identity and platform gradually began to be felt by an increasing number of Naga intellectuals and leaders. The Naga Club provided a forum for people from different areas and walks of life to come together and to discuss their common problems. Since the Club happened to be the first of its kind in Naga history, it took time to spread over a large area to realise its true significance as a socio-political organisation. The arrival of the Simon Commission at Kohima in January 1929 offered an opportunity to the members of the Naga Club to submit a memorandum. The Commission wanted to know whether Nagas would join the coming 'New

Reformed Scheme" which would administratively combine them with Assam or whether they would like to be left alone. The members of the Naga Club submitted a brief memorandum to the Simon Commission on 10 January, 1929, signed by 20 members representing the various tribes in Nagaland. The two page - memorandum, apart from being the first political document of the Nagas, clearly pointed out to the Commission that the Nagas would like to be left alone to decide their political future and that they would not like to be connected, administratively or otherwise, with the people of the plains for the simple reason that they had never trusted the latter. It also clarified that since there had never been much of an interaction between the plains people and the Nagas nor had the two much in common, it was only just and proper that the Nagas were allowed to look after themselves and to take care of whatever they might need politically or otherwise in the future. The most important contention of the Naga Club, however, related to the Naga claim that never in their history had they been conquered or subjugated by any people other than the British. And so it was important that they remained free to decide their fate if and when an opportunity for such a decision ever came their way.

In his report to the Commission, J.H. Hutton, the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, emphatically endorsed the contention of the Naga Club. He also pointed out to the Commission that if the Nagas were linked with the people of the Assam plains, under the reformed scheme, they would be made to suffer because they were not in a position at that point of time either educationally or politically to compete with the latter. The members of the Commission were apparently impressed by the content of the Naga Club

memorandum and the report of the Deputy Commissioner. But it was unfortunate that the report of the Simon Commission completely ignored the submissions of the Club and the D.C. Consequent upon the report of the Commission, the Government of India Act of 1935 came into force with effect from 1 May 1937 and the Naga Hills was made an Excluded Area within the province of Assam, though to be administered directly by the Governor of Assam (Atsüngchanger 1994:10). A British scholar, who visited several parts of the Naga Hills in 1937, says that the phrase "excluded areas" meant that the Naga Hills was excluded "from the control of the provincial Legislature and left in the hands of the Governor. The object of this was neither repression nor the artificial preservation of primitive cultures; it was designed to protect the hillman from exploitation, to reduce to a minimum the bureaucracy with which he had to contend and to caution him against the impact of civilisation until he was educated to withstand it alone" (Bower 1950 : 2).

The second World War turned out to be a historic opportunity for the Nagas to show their courage and bravery and the capacity to make sacrifices for a common cause. They came to be better known in the rest of the world for their role in the battle of Kohima even though some Nagas in Burma were believed to have fought with the Indian National Army led by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose to liberate Nagaland from the British. The Nagas in Burma perhaps included Phizo and his brother Keviyally who had joined the INA in 1943 and were with it till 1945. Since the Japanese lost to the British forces fighting in Burma, a large number of INA soldiers were taken prisoner. The Phizo brothers were also detained and were to be tried in

Rangoon for their collaboration with the Japanese. The Assam government wanted the two brothers to be repatriated to Assam for their trial. But as some British officers did not agree, they could not be repatriated to Assam. However, Phizo and his brother, on their release from detention, returned to Kohima in 1946 (Rammuny 1988:53' Bendangangshi 1993:49).

The battle of Kohima was fought between the Japanese and the British forces. It was a decisive battle fought for as many as 66 days. It proved to be a Waterloo for the Japanese and the Nagas happened to be on the side of the victorious British. The Nagas had made sacrifices, shown their mettle, displayed their

valour and demonstrated their unanimous and innate humanity. The British found them to be affectionate, faithful, fearless and agile in a way and to an extent that shamed the soldiers of the so called advanced societies. It was the first time the British had realised on a person-to-person basis that the Nagas meant what they said and that they were a marvellous people. Commenting on the Nagas' contribution in the battle of Kohima, Field Marshal Viscount Shim observes: "These were the gallant Nagas whose loyalty even in the most depressing times of the invasion had never faltered. Despite floggings, torture, execution and the burning of the villages, they refused to aid the Japanese in anyway or to betray our troops. Their active help to us was beyond value or praise....Many a British and Indian soldier owes his life to the naked, head-hunting Naga and no soldier of the Fourteenth Army who met them will ever think of them but with admiration and affection" (Rammuny 1988:29). Fifty-five years later, the Nagas have once again demonstrated in the recent Kargil confrontation that

the British Field Marshal was so correct in his assessment of the Naga's sterling qualities whenever these qualities are put to test in a matter of life and death.

Incidentally, the battle of Kohima exposed the Nagas to a gun warfare. That they were great fighters was clear to anyone who had ever confronted them but the Nagas themselves had never had the firsthand experience of a modern warfare. One can therefore say that the battle of Kohima not only showed the Nagas at their best ; it created a new opening for them to be a well-equipped, responsible and future-oriented army if they ever chose to be one.

With the end of the Second World War, the time came for the British to pack up and leave India. The time was also going to be an opportunity for the Nagas to read history afresh as well as to outline their future in order that they could move forward, slowly but steadily. The war had taken a heavy toll of human life. Hundreds of families had lost their youthful members. Women had been widowed, children had been orphaned, parents had been rendered helpless. Thousands of houses had been reduced to ashes. Kohima and the surrounding villages had borne the brunt of a devastating war. A number of roads had to be repaired, hundreds of government buildings and dozens of granaries had to be reconstructed but, above all, thousands of people had to be rehabilitated and huts raised. A whole crowd of people, men, women and children had to be rehabilitated and huts raised. A whole crowd of people, men, women and children had to be given food, shelter and medical care. To meet demands like these, the insightful Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills,

Charles Pawsey, decided to constitute in April 1945 a body which he called the "Naga Hills District Tribal Council". Pawsey wanted the Council to become an effective instrument of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction as well as to unite the Nagas into a cohesive community. In February 1946 the Council and the Naga Club were merged into a single body to form the "Naga National Council" (NNC).

As soon as we come across the term NNC, we begin to think of or talk about its genesis, motivation, struggle, successes and failures over more than half a century now. Whatever view we take of its stalwarts or its political agenda, we come round one name that we cannot ignore, write off or forget about, perhaps no one can or no one has. There have been great Nagas before him, after him, because of him, without him, in spite of him but no name rings in our ears or shines out before our eyes as that one name. It may be easy to admire him or easier to criticise him but it is almost impossible to do without him if one tries to academically review the twists and turns of politics in Nagaland in the second half of this century. He did not drop from above: he rose from the earth and was quite earthy. He did not belong to a great family. He was not highly educated. Ugly he was not but whether he was hugely handsome may be a matter of opinion, constantly subject to correction. He was neither very short nor very tall. He never had a stout body or a lucrative job, his education was irregular, his health erratic. He had passed the first four decades of his life in sheer obscurity and in the midst of all sorts of setbacks and humiliations. It was a miracle that, in spite of deficiencies and limitations like these, he acquired political stature almost overnight immediately after his rise to the headship of the organisation he

remained tied down to for the rest of his life. He was a person, no doubt, but he was more importantly an idea or a philosophy which united the Nagas in a political fraternity and tactical bewilderment that they had never experienced before. Perhaps no Naga today is in a position to size him up or to clearly make up his mind about his role in politics. One may hero-worship him or quarrel with his ideology but one may never be able to think about one's location in the Naga society apolitically. This man makes it impossible for others to be objective or impersonal about his place in history. Wily-nilly, one is obliged to take note of the solitary and life-long rebel who remains to this day a rallying point for his followers as well as for his detractors, perhaps more for the latter than for the former. This mystery man was Angami Zapo Phizo (1900-1990) who had divided his life between unavoidable oblivion (1900-1946) and voluntary exile (1956-1990) except for a decade in his mid-career. Wasn't it extraordinary that a man appearing from some obscure corner entered Naga politics like a storm at that fateful hour and swept all heavyweights around him off their feet? Isn't it mind-boggling that the top leaders of Naga politics should have taken a decade or so to define their positionality with reference to Phizo? True it is that the halo around Phizo's name has thinned over the years but he is still considered the only leader who drew a line of demarcation not only between the pre-1950 and the post-1950 political history of the Nagas but also between extremist activism and moderate activism among the Nagas.

Patronised by Charles Pawsey, the British Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills and sponsored by Kevichusa Angami, the first Naga graduate and the oldest Naga member of the Indian Administrative

Service, the Naga National Council came into being in February 1946 as a socio-political body with Mayangnokcha, the most eminent Naga educationist and socio-religious activist, as its first president (Rammuny 1988:30). The Council was originally intended to be an instrument of change and improvement in the Naga way of life by uniting all the Nagas into an easily identifiable fraternity as well as by safeguarding the traditional autonomy of the Naga society through peaceful, constitutional means. At its meeting at Wokha on 19 June 1946, the NNC drafted a Four Point Memorandum to be submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru. Clause (c) of the memorandum read: "The Naga Hills should be constitutionally included in autonomous Assam in a free India with local autonomy and due safeguards for the interest of the Nagas" (Rammuny 1988:32). In a letter to Sashimeren Aier and T Sakhrie written in August 1946, Nehru supported the demand for autonomy saying that he wanted all tribal areas including the Naga Hills, "to have as much freedom and autonomy as possible" (ibid. 32).

As the time of the transfer of power was drawing closer, certain officials of the British government began to have reservations about the whole of India being free as one territorial entity. They wanted certain territories here and there to break away from India. It was in this context that a former governor of Assam, Robert Reid, floated the idea that a confederation of the Naga Hills, NEFA and the adjacent tribal areas in Assam and Burma could be carved out to create what he called a Trust Territory or Crown Colony to be directly ruled by the British. But this suggestion was immediately rejected both by the NNC and the then governor of Assam, Andrew Claw.

The NNC did not want to have anything to do with British rule once they became free. It wanted the British to leave the Naga Hills at the same time as they left the rest of India. Interestingly, Phizo was one of the most vocal Naga leaders to reject the idea of the Crown Colony. This was further confirmed by Phizo himself in a letter to Jeffrey Evans of Arizona, USA, as late as 5 April 1982. T. Sakhrie also says that the NNC openly declared that "the moment the British quit India, they have to quit Nagaland as well" (Tajen 1993:277)

With Phizo joining its ranks, in 1947, the NNC changed its stand on the political future of the Nagas. By that time the NNC leadership had changed from Mayangnokcha to T. Aliba Imti as President and T. Sakhrie as secretary. Phizo wanted the NNC to assert Naga 'independence'. Since the majority of NNC members did not support his call, he resigned from the NNC in 1948 and established instead the Naga Clans Club (NCC) as a parallel organisation to fight for Naga 'independence'. He was twice arrested and released. His detention however immensely enhanced his popularity and he rejoined the NNC to become its President in 1950.

Going back to 1947, we come across a very peculiar development in Naga politics. A section of the Nagas certainly wanted to withdraw from India at the time of the transfer of power taking place from British to Indian hands. But a number of Naga leaders felt that they were not yet ready to stand on their own feet as a 'national' government. They therefore came to hold the view that till such time as they were sufficiently schooled in the art and science of governance, they had to have some governmental relations with

Independent India. These leaders submitted a Four-Point Memorandum to the last Viceroy of India, Louis Mountbatten, in February 1947 requesting him and his government to appoint India to act as the Guardian Power over the Naga Hills for a period of 10 years at the end of which the Nagas would be free to decide on their political future.

Akbar Hydari, the Governor of Assam, visited Kohima in the last week of June 1947 and held discussions with NNC leaders. The two sides agreed on a number of points which took the form of a document jointly signed by them. The document was known as the Nine-Point Agreement (or Hydari Agreement). On his return to Shillong, the Governor sent his report to Nehru, giving the details of his discussions with the NNC leadership, including the Agreement. It was expected that the Agreement would be included in the draft constitution of India. There was, however, a good deal of confusion about the exact meaning of the last point of the Agreement which said that the Council, on the expiry of the period of ten years, would be asked whether they would like the agreement to continue further or would like to go in for another agreement. What did it mean? Did this clause endorse the NNC proposal earlier submitted to the Viceroy regarding India being appointed as the Guardian Power for a period of 10 years? Did it entitle the Nagas to secede on the expiry of the 10-year-period? The NNC cadre itself was sharply divided over the correct meaning of this clause. Some interpreted the last clause to mean that on the expiry of the period of 10 years, the Nagas would be free to continue with the measure of autonomy within India enunciated in the Agreement for a further period or to review the pattern and the measure of autonomy so enunciated

in the Agreement, while some others interpreted it to mean that on the expiry of the period of 10 years, the Nagas would be free either to continue within India or to opt out of India (Alemchiba 1970:172, Tajen 1993:280).

Controversies regarding the correct interpretation of the vaguely worded last clause of the 9-Point Agreement notwithstanding, a section of the Nagas, led by Aliba Imti, wanted the 9-Point Agreement in its original form to be incorporated into the constitution of India, then being drafted by the Constituent Assembly. In the meantime, a delegation met Premier Bordoloi of Assam and Governor Hydari in Shillong in early July 1947, seeking assurance that the agreement would be implemented in its entirety. The delegation got the necessary assurance. But the Constituent Assembly decided to incorporate only the important features of the 9-Point Agreement, in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and made special provisions for the Nagas. The non-inclusion of the text of the Agreement as such outraged the NNC leadership.

At this stage of confusion and uncertainty in Naga politics, Phizo joined the NNC and made it clear to everyone around that nothing short of 'independence' would satisfy the aspirations of the Naga people. He wanted the NNC leadership to fight for 'independence', resorting to arms if necessary. Despite the fact that the Hydari Agreement had been approved by the majority of the NNC leadership, Phizo's minority group declared it null and void. To pursue his goal of Naga "independence", he called on Gandhi at the Bhangi Colony in Delhi on 19 July 1947. Gandhi is reported to have told Phizo's six member delegation that Nagas had "every right to be independent". When Phizo expressed his apprehensions about the use of force

against the Nagas in the event of their declaring 'independence', Gandhi assured him that he would not allow the use of force against such Nagas. Rajagopalachari, the Governor General of India is also reported to have told Phizo's delegation in Shillong on 28 November 1949 that Nagas were free to remain either within or outside India. As the statement of Rajagopalachari to the NNC delegation is not confirmed by independent sources (Rammuny 1988:48), we will not take note of what he said. As Gandhi's interview with Phizo is a matter of record, we will comment on the contents of the interview. But before we do that we will go on with our review of the chronology of events for the next decade.

Back home, Phizo could not convince all the members of the NNC leadership of the correctness of his claim for Naga 'independence'. He opted out of the NNC. He pursued his goal with Nagas in general and succeeded in persuading a sizeable population to his point of view. His popularity with the Naga masses soon began to increase on such a scale as he was able to return to the NNC as its unanimously elected President in 1950. As NNC President, Phizo became the dictator of public opinion in the Naga hills. He could take decisions on behalf of his people and they would support him. To follow through his programme of 'independence', he organised a Plebiscite throughout the Naga hills and claimed that nearly all Nagas stood for 'independence'. There may be people who would not vouch for the authenticity of the plebiscite but the fact remains that in the first half of the 1950s Phizo's voice was the voice of the Naga people. It was mainly due to him that the generality of Nagas boycotted in 1952 the District Council and General elections. He slowly shifted his field of activity to the Tuensang area

and in 1954 organised an armed body known as the "Naga Home Guard" which was soon redesignated as the "Naga Army". In the same year he also announced the formation of the PSRFN (People's Sovereign Republic of Free Nagaland). The name changed in 1956 to the NFG (Naga Federal Government). Looking back over developments like these, one may be inclined to take the view that while riding the crest of the popular wave for his 'independence' call, Phizo misread the public mind. Nagas indeed supported his call for independence but he should not have misconstrued such support for an armed struggle on a large scale.

NNC delegations went on meeting political leaders both from Assam and Delhi to impress upon them the urgency and the genuineness of their contention as to why Nagaland should stay apart from India. They kept on insisting that since the Nagas had never had any connection with the rest of India except for the brief period of British rule and since no one had ever conquered them or occupied that territory except for the British just for seven decades or so, there was no reason for the Indian leadership to treat the Naga area as a part of India. As far as leaders from Assam and Delhi were concerned, they kept on telling these delegations that while free India was prepared to accord the Nagas the maximum degree of autonomy within the Indian Union, it was not prepared even to discuss the issue of Naga 'independence' (Alemchiba 1973: 179). The statements of Jawaharlal Nehru and Morarji Desai may be cited in this connection to indicate the Government of India attitude to the issue of Naga 'independence'. When Phizo met Nehru at Silaghat in Assam in 1953 and repeated the question of Naga 'independence', Nehru lost his temper and said "whether Heaven falls or India goes to pieces and blood

runs red in the country, whether I am here or any other body comes in... Nagas will not be allowed to become independent" (Rammuny 1988:66 Tajen 1993: 288). Sixteen years later, Phizo met Morarji Desai, the Prime Minister of India in London in June 1977 and the latter repeated Nehru's sentiments almost in the same tone. Morarji said three things: (1) that he would not support Gandhi's view in this regard, (2) that the Nagas had asked for a State and they had been given a State years ago and (3) if necessary he would not hesitate to "exterminate all Naga rebels." Finally he told Phizo that if he wanted to talk about Naga independence, he (Desai) would not talk to him (Phizo) (NNC Handbook 1993:189-193)

To get the full import of Gandhi's statement on Naga 'independence', we would like to compare it with his statement on Kashmir. But in the meantime we would like the reader to take note of some general points : (1) that it was Nehru, not Gandhi, who represented the official line of Congress thinking on India's territoriality and independence, (2) that Gandhi consistently supported, endorsed and justified Nehru's stand on political matters even though privately he did not agree with Nehru (3) that Gandhi did not always take an unambiguous or consistent position on crucial matters, and finally (4) that perhaps Gandhi did not always intend his words to be taken literally. As we all know, Nehru had the last say on all matters concerning the shape that India was to take geographically, the form of freedom that India was going to achieve, the kind of relationship it was going to enter into with the Princely States in India and with foreign governments and the system of governance that India was going to formulate and accept after independence. Not everybody within the

Congress agreed with Nehru. Gandhi himself did not quite agree with him as he was apparently inclined to the Congress socialists' opposition to Nehru's views on several matters. And yet Gandhi told his prayer meeting in Delhi on 1 June 1947 : "your real king is Jawaharlal" (Bhattacharjea 1997:21). Apart from this, it is also significant to note that even though Gandhi had been opposed to partition all his life, he justified Nehru's decision at the Congress Working Committee in June 1947. An eight member group, including Mountbatten, Jinnah and Nehru, decided, in less than two hours, to divide India along communal lines on 2 June 1947. It was Gandhi's day of silence. Gandhi had his own rules for breaking his silence ('speaking to high functionaries on urgent matters or attending upon sick people', Gandhi himself told Mountbatten on 2 June 1947, *ibid* p 21) in extraordinary situations but he did not break his silence even when he met the Viceroy on that day to convey his displeasure over the partition. The partition meeting had ended at 12 noon. Gandhi went to see the Viceroy in the afternoon. He spent 45 minutes with the Viceroy. Gandhi had every reason to break his silence. On the contrary, before leaving the Viceroy, he wrote the following words to tease him : "I know you do not want me to break my silence. Have I said one word against you during my speeches?" (Bhasin 1988:16). Did the Viceroy then or should we now interpret Gandhi's silence on that fateful day as his "silent" approval of the decision of partition? In this connection we would like to remind the reader that years ago on an equally fateful day, Gandhi had not broken his silence even though he had enough reasons to. Bhagat Singh and his comrades were executed by the British in the most shameful way on 23 March 1931 and yet Gandhi observed his silence on principle and habitually

because it was a Monday (Noorani 1996 :245). As for Gandhi's statements first on Naga 'independence' and then on Kashmir's choice of the right of self-determination, we feel inclined to take the view that perhaps he wanted his listeners on both occasions to take the proper hint or to draw their own conclusions, using their common-sense.

On the eve of his departure for Srinagar to see the wife of Sheikh Abdullah who was then in jail on the charge of sedition against the ruler of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, Gandhi told his prayer meeting in Delhi: "The people of Kashmir should be asked whether they want to join Pakistan or India. Let them do as they want. The Ruler is nothing. The people are everything" (Batacharjea 1997:88). Gandhi's words in these lines have to be read in the light of the firm agreement between Nehru and Mountbatten that, except for the Muslim majority areas meant to constitute Pakistan, the Viceroy or his government would not allow at any cost the balkanisation of the rest of India. The anti-balkanisation principle arrived at between the Congress leadership and the HMG (His Majesty's Government) had been widely publicised again and again so that there could be no confusion in the minds of a population aspiring for separation in any other part of India. At the crucial meeting of the Maharajas, Rajas, Nawabs, Khans, Prime Ministers and Dewans assembled in the Chamber of Princes near the Viceroy's house in Delhi on 25 July 1947, the Viceroy made it finally clear that excepting the five or six states within the geographical bounds of west and east Pakistan he and his government wanted the 560 States to accede to the Indian Dominion before 15 August 1947 and that he or his government would not allow, even if they had to use force, any one of them to stay away from

India or to declare independence. In his final warning he told them that in case they tried to act smart : “you are about to face a revolution. In a very brief moment you will lose for ever your sovereignty. It is inevitable. Do not turn your backs on the India emerging on 15 August” (Bhasin 1998:265). Was Gandhi not saying to his audience in Delhi that the people of Kashmir were sure to join the Indian Union even if their ruler did not want it? Did Gandhi or the audience not know that Sheikh Abdullah had already and finally rejected Jinnah’s overtures for Kashmir to join Pakistan? And if it was so the people of Kashmir and their popular leader had already made up their mind about who to go with? What did he mean by the phrase “India or Pakistan”? Was his statement not an undisguised threat to the vacillating ruler of Kashmir or a guarded support for the people of Kashmir?

Turning to Gandhi’s conversation with the Naga delegation at the Bhangi Basti in Delhi on 19 July 1947 (as recorded by Pyarelal, Gandhi’s Secretary), we quote the following lines, using G for Gandhi and N for the Naga delegation:

G: You will be independent from 16th August....Why 16th of August? You can be independent today and if you have non-violence in common with me, no one can deprive you of independence.

G: You have opened a very large subject. Independence, yes. But if you say you will be independent of the whole world, you can’t do it. I am independent in my own house. If I become independent of Delhi, I will be crushed to atom. I have not stored food. I have to get it from Delhi. I have not stored water here. Vegetables I have to get...

G: On one side of Naga hills is Burma, on the other side is India. You can be friends with one or the other or both.

... ..

G: Personally I believe you all belong to India. But if you say you don't, no one can force you.

N: You mean to say the Government of India won't force us to join India?

G: No, not if I am alive. I will go to Naga Hills and say that you shoot me before you shoot a single Naga. (Rammuny 1988: 41-42 & NNC 1993:23-24)

Gandhi knew that under the India Independence Act 1947, which had become an Act only the previous day, no segment of the Indian population (whether in British or Native India) except those which had been identified as the constituents of proposed Pakistan, was entitled or free to stay away or withdraw from the India that was to take shape on 15 August 1947. Now, if Gandhi knew this, why did he tell the Naga delegation that the Government of India would not force them to remain in India? If Gandhi "personally believed" that Nagas were "one with India", how could he justify the Naga demand for or assertion of 'independence'? Why did he say that Nagas could be friends with Burma or India or both"? What kind of relationship did he visualise between Nagas on the one hand and Burma and/or India on the other? What did he mean by being "crushed to atom" in the event of trying to be independent of Delhi? Was it a threat to freedom - seeking Nagas? Was his statement on the political future of the Nagas a subtle rebuff to the Nagas or a pious sentiment for Naga 'independence' or a

guarded encouragement to the demand for Naga 'independence'? When we read Gandhi's lines today or read between his lines, we are confused and baffled. We do not know whether we should treat these lines as an exercise in diplomatic quibbling or as a humanitarian approach to a political demand. We would therefore like the reader to draw his /her own conclusions about the correct meaning of Gandhi's words.

With the brief digression over, we return to our story with a huge amount of uneasiness that two concurrent but far-reaching political developments took place in 1950 itself. On the one hand, Phizo, as NNC President, unequivocally declared that nothing short of full 'independence' would satisfy Naga aspirations while the Government of India clearly decided on the other, that henceforth nothing would be said or done that would in any way show an official recognition of the Hydari agreement. This sort of mutual hardening between the NNC leadership and the Government of India, being unprecedented, as it was in Naga history, was obviously fraught with disastrous consequences for the development of Naga politics in the years to come. Besides, it was the first time that the Government of India had let down the Governor, late Akbar Hydari, by washing its hands off a historic agreement which had been signed four years earlier and which could have, implemented tactfully, led to a final solution of the Naga problem. By letting down the Governor, the Government of India had let down the moderate Naga leadership as well as itself. Looking back, we will say it was a rare opportunity lost, an opportunity which has not been recovered in the last 50 years.

The official derecognition of the Hydari Agreement also directly paved the way for the confrontationist politics of A Z Phizo to prevail in the Naga Hills. Phizo had been opposed to the Hydari Agreement from the beginning. But what happened in 1953 led to the further estrangement between the Indian leadership and the Naga masses.

Jawaharlal Nehru, accompanied by U nu, the Prime Minister of Burma, visited the Naga Hills in March 1953. Both leaders had to address a public meeting at Kohima on 30th March. The NNC had decided in the meantime to welcome the visiting dignitaries and to present a memorandum to Prime Minister Nehru. The Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, however, refused to allow the submission of the memorandum and the presentation of the welcome address by the NNC leadership. The NNC leadership was outraged and decided to do something which the Deputy Commissioner could not have anticipated. As soon as the two Prime Ministers went to the Kohima football ground to address the public meeting, the entire Naga audience walked out. This was another opportunity lost in less than three years. A Deputy Commissioner, who lacked foresight and had failed to read the psychology of the Naga public was to be responsible for the walk out by an entire public from a meeting to be addressed by a spell-binder like Jawaharlal Nehru. After that incident, distance between the Indian leadership and the Naga leadership went on increasing from month to month and year to year with the result that by 1955 there came to erupt a sort of armed confrontation between NNC volunteers and government forces. Violent confrontations between the two sides became the order of the day and there seemed to be no end to destruction and bloodshed. In the

midst of such violent confrontations, Sakhrie, one of the most respected Naga leaders and one who had opposed Phizo's ascendancy over the NNC, was abducted and brutally murdered in January 1956.

Sakhrie's murder added a new dimension to Naga politics. A number of senior leaders began to feel that violence was not the way. Such realisation on the part of a section of respectable Naga leadership gradually led to an increasing polarisation of political thinking. By 1957 Naga politics seemed to diversify in two different, if not immediately contradictory, ways with the result that in a couple of years alternative forums of political leadership emerged. These alternative forums or groups could be called 'moderate' and 'militant', 'overground' and 'underground' or 'traditional' and 'radical'. For the limited purpose of our review, we would like to designate them as the 'autonomy' group versus the 'independence' group because the history of politics in Nagaland has consistently alternated between autonomy and independence of the Naga area. This kind of division or polarisation had been there since 1946 but, it needs to be emphasised here that, it surfaced clearly and irreconcilably only after the formation of the Naga Peace Organising Committee in 1957.

The Committee came to be the first organised body of political leadership to take note of the senseless brutality of violence and its possible effects on the Naga population. Also, it chose to be the first public forum to protest against the violent means adopted by the NNC. In right earnest, it began to mobilise public opinion on a large scale and succeeded in organising a massive get-together of representatives from various Naga tribes. This get-together was known as the first

Naga People's Convention (NPC) held at Kohima under the Presidentship of Imkongliba Ao (with J B Jasokie as secretary) between 22 and 26 August 1957. But a section of the Naga population contend that the NPC was the handiwork of the political leadership in Delhi. Whatever it may have been, the NPC adopted a number of resolutions, the chief ones relating to the demand for a political solution of the Naga problem, the inclusion of Tuensang within the jurisdiction of the Naga Hills and the achievement of a lasting and honourable peace in the Naga Hills. The Convention also called upon the 'independence' group to come overground and give up the path of violence. On a query from the Governor, it clarified that it wanted a political settlement 'within the Indian Union' (Dev 1988:7). The Government of India immediately responded by creating a union territory known as NHTA (the Naga Hills - Tuensang Area) comprising the three districts of Kohima, Mokokchung and Tuensang with effect from 1 December 1957. The second NPC was held at Ungma in May 1958. The Convention expressed happiness over the creation of the union territory and once again appealed to the 'independence' group to join hands with them so that a lasting and peaceful solution of the Naga problem was achieved at the earliest. As the 'independence' group was in no mood to oblige the Conventionists, the latter decided to go ahead all by themselves and appoint a drafting committee to formulate their demands. The Drafting Committee prepared a Sixteen-Point Memorandum to be submitted to the Government of India for the creation of the State of 'Nagaland' within the Indian Union (Alemchiba: 1970:190). The third NPC was held at Mokokchung between 20 and 26 October 1959. The Convention ratified the 16-Point Memorandum which was to form the basis of negotiations with the

Government of India for the final solution of the Naga problem. In pursuance of this Memorandum, an interim body headed by Imkongliba Ao was formed on 18 February 1961. The State of Nagaland Act, 1962 followed and 'Nagaland' became the sixteenth State of the Indian Union with effect from 1 December 1963.

The creation of the State of Nagaland brought a sense of relief to the autonomy group and a sense of joy to many others. It was the result of a conscious agreement between the Government of India and the autonomy leadership in Nagaland. Concluding his speech in Parliament during discussion on the 16-Point Memorandum, Nehru had said on 1 August 1960 : "The Nagas are a hard-working and disciplined people and there is much in their way of life from which others can learn with profit. We have had for many years Nagas in the Indian Army and they have proved to be excellent soldiers. Our policy has always been to give a government to the Naga people without interfering in any way in their internal affairs or way of life" (Alemchiba 1970 : 199). In keeping with the assurance given by Nehru in the lines just cited, adequate provisions were made in the State of Nagaland Act, 1962 as well as in Part XXI of the constitution of India to ensure maximum autonomy to Nagaland. The official leadership in Delhi and the NPC leadership in Nagaland agreed that the creation of the State of Nagaland was the best and the utmost that could be done within the framework of the Indian constitution.

The emergence of the State of Nagaland, however, did not bring complete peace to the Naga hills. The 'Independence' group refused to accept the Naga hills as a part of India. Dr Imkongliba Ao had been assassinated on 22 August 1961. His

assassination itself had raised questions about the general acceptability of the political settlement mutually arrived at by the Government of India and the NPC leadership.

The creation of the state of Nagaland did not turn out to be a final solution to the Naga problem. It is difficult to correctly gauge the extent of discontent among the Naga public but no one who would like to take an academic view of the political developments in Nagaland would say today that there were no rumblings of discontent during and after the creation of the state. The NNC continued to exercise a certain degree of influence on the public mind and continues to do so even today. It is another matter that in subsequent decades the NNC leadership twice suffered massive splits: first in 1980 when one section broke away from the parent organisation to form the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and next when some of the NNC cadre formed the parallel NNC after Phizo's death and Adino's taking over as the NNC President. The NSCN also split in 1988 into two factions to be known respectively as NSCN (Isak-Muivah) and NSCN (Khaplang). Splits like these give rise to at least four formations within the 'independence' group. Also, the rival factions have generally been at loggerheads with each other. But it deserves to be noted by a student of politics in Nagaland that their mutual contradictions or hostilities should give no cause for peace and progress in Nagaland. The commonalties that bind these factions into a single 'independence' fraternity have rather been really bothersome, if not wholly disruptive. Even if we reduce their popularity rating to a minimum, we cannot and perhaps should not ever say that the 'independence' group does not matter in Naga politics. No responsible leadership, whether in

Delhi or in Kohima, can ever hope to sleep over the so called smallness of their public support.

We find it gratifying that sensible and sensitive people have consistently taken cognisance of the discontent of the people who have been fighting for Naga 'independence'. Those who fight for 'independence' cannot, for very obvious tactical reasons, fight as a regular army and so they resort to what is known as 'partisan guerrilla warfare' in political parlance. Such guerrillas do not often win the war against the State, suffer heavy casualties, face enormous hardships but do not normally disintegrate due to organised army action by the State. As a former IPS official (B.N. Mullik) admits: "we in the IP were quite clear in our minds that the Naga partisan guerrillas could not be defeated by purely military action" and suggests that the ultimate solution of a partisan conflict always lies in a "political settlement" (Tajen 1993 : XXI). A former Commissioner of Nagaland also contends that the partisan conflict (or insurgency) can never be eliminated by the armed forces. He also admits that at times it becomes difficult for the armed forces even to "contain" such partisan confrontations (Dev 1988:179). What we want to emphasise in this context is that a partisan conflict is basically not a military problem; it is rather a political problem and so it must have a political solution. Apart from this, we must also reiterate that in a democratic set up it is the civilian government rather than the military that must identify and solve its problems of governance. Democracy is a participatory form of polity and therefore it becomes obligatory for a democratic government to identify within its territory the areas of conflict or opposition and to try to resolve those conflicts through a process of dialogue and consensual agreement.

The peace proposals of the Naga Peace Mission in the '60s', the Shillong Accord in the seventies and the current Ceasefire and negotiations between the government and the 'independence group' should be viewed as consecutive efforts to establish peace in Nagaland. We hope and pray that real, lasting and positive peace prevails in Nagaland, the long standing conflicts are resolved and the way is cleared for steady and all round development of the state.

III

In our brief account of the religious history of the Nagas we begin with the advent of Christianity for the simple reason that till then neither the generic nomenclature 'Naga' was available nor was there a faith that could bind the various Naga tribes into a single community. Each tribe had its own system of faith and its own patterns of the ideal socio-religious conduct. It will not be academically wrong to say that the religious history of the Nagas began with the advent of Christianity in the Naga hills because it was only the Christian faith that identified Nagas as one people. We are not saying that Christianity preceded the arrival of the British in the Naga hills. The British, as we have noted above, entered the Naga hills for the first time in 1826 while the conversion of the first Nagas took place in 1846. This means that Christianity arrived in the Naga hills on account of the British already being there. One could regard the Christianisation of Naga society as a consequence of British expansionism. The British wanted, it must be pointed out, the Nagas to be Christianised not for the emancipation or betterment of the Nagas but in their own political and business interest. Nagas used to raid and damage the Assam tea gardens in the neighbourhood. The British had to devise ways of

stopping or minimising the Naga raids against the tea gardens. To do that they had two instruments : the power of Christian love and the power of the gun and they used both, almost simultaneously. It was not for nothing that both the first and the second Commissioners of Assam, David Scott and Major Jenkins, thought along the same lines. Scott was of the view that the Nagas 'were more likely to profit by the teaching of the Gospel' while Jenkins clearly held : "the tribes on the Assam frontiers should be brought within the scope of missionary activities as early as possible as the influence of persons skilled in the languages of these tribes and devoting all their time and attention to humanise these rude races could not fail of being useful to us and to them" (Alemchiba 1970:153). Jenkins invited the American Baptist Mission to Sadiya in 1836 so that they could go into the Naga hills. We would like the reader to recall in this connection that it was Jenkins who had organised the first British expedition into Nagaland in 1832. Also, it should be noted that Christianity arrived in the Naga hills as late as in the mid-nineteenth century even though it had been in India since the middle of the first century AD. This delay in the arrival of Christianity in the Naga hills would itself testify to the fact that it arrived in the Naga hills not as a natural expansion of the message of Christ but as an instrument of political expansion. By highlighting this point, however, we do not in any way imply that the arrival of Christianity in the Naga hills was not good for the Nagas. What we are rather trying to point out is that while talking about the historic contribution of Christianity to the Naga society one must not lose sight of the political instrumentalism of the time and manner of its arrival among the Nagas.

In 1836 the first missionaries to arrive in Sadiya (Assam) were Rev Nathan and his wife and Rev Cutter and his wife. Due to an unfortunate incident they had to leave Sadiya and move to Jaipur where they established the headquarters of the American Baptist Mission. While in Jaipur, they sent Rev Brownson to Namsang, (a Naga village in Tirap, NEFA) in 1939. Brownson and his family started their work. But before they could do much, the family had to leave Namsang due to the sudden demise of Brownson's sister. In 1841 the Mission was shifted from Jaipur to Sibsagar in Assam where it began printing and publishing Christian books in Assamese. It was at Sibsagar that two Naga boys were baptised in 1846. Mission work went on in and around Sibsagar but it could not achieve any significant progress for almost the next two and a half decades. The number of people converted to Christianity in as many years could not cross the fifty mark but the Mission did not give up hope.

The Mission was destined to create history and it did in 1869 with the arrival of Rev WE Clark and his wife at Sibsagar. They took up work at the printing press and monitored Mission activities in the surrounding areas. Ao Nagas from the neighbouring villages, particularly from the Dekahaimung village, used to come to Sibsagar, and sometimes to the Mission compound for business purposes. They were astonished to see the Clark couple working at the printing press and interacting with the visitors. They requested Dr Clark to visit their village and teach their children. Clark discussed the proposal with one Godhula Babu, an Assamese gentleman, who was working at the printing press and Godhula Babu in turn discussed it with Subongmeren, a destitute Ao

boy from Dekahaimung, who was staying with Godhula's family. In 1871, Godhula came and spent three days at Dekahaimung. Subongmeren was already there and had persuaded some of his village elders to receive that unique visitor. Godhula was so much impressed by his visit that he decided to visit Dekahaimung again in April 1872, this time with his wife Lucy. They stayed for sometime and got nine Ao boys to accompany them to Sibsagar. These boys were taken to the Dikhu river and were baptised on 11 November 1872 by Rev Clark. Then they were sent back to Dekahaimung as members of the Church of Sibsagar to spread the message of the new faith. They built a house in Dekahaimung. The house became a house of prayer. Thus the history of Naga Christians began to be written in their first Church established in 1872 with three words 'Dekahaimung', 'Subongmeren' and '1872', ringing in everybody's ears. A beginning had been made. A line of demarcation had been drawn between the past and the future of Naga history in general and of Ao history in particular. The future was not intended to 'destroy' the past. It was rather intended to transform and 'fulfil' the past. The American Baptist Mission had established itself and there was no looking back, come what might. The message of Christ was destined to spread far and wide and before long so as to weave all the Naga tribes, despite their age-old mutual exclusivities, into an identifiable fraternity with the golden thread of love and compassion for one another.

The Christians of Dekahaimung, later known as 'Mulongyimjen' by Aos, besought Rev Clark to visit their Church and to spend sometime there. On 18 December 1872 Rev Clark visited Dekahaimung and on 23 December 1872 baptised 15 Aos. In 1873 the Christians of Dekahaimung separated from the

non-Christian population of the village and shifted to another site, a little away from the old village, and founded the first Christian village in the Naga area to be known as 'Mulongyimsen' which became the centre of the American Baptist Mission for the time being. Apart from spreading the new faith, the Christians of the village embarked upon, under the inspiring leadership of Rev Clark, the idea of introducing literacy among the Aos so that each Christian could read and write the message of the new faith. Rev Clark taught a number of boys and girls to read and write and sent them out to the neighbouring villages in order that they might propagate the benefits of education and Christianity. Each educated Christian was supposed to be an ambassador of the Christian faith and a torch-bearer of knowledge because Clark was convinced that the only way to spread Christianity was to educate people. Godhula worked as an evangelist in the Christian village from 1872 to 1875. In 1875 he happened to see the mutilated bodies of two villagers who had been killed in a head hunting game by some Christians of the village. Godhula fled the hills and went to the plains, never to come back. Godhula's sudden departure disrupted the activities of the Church. The missionaries were shocked. They thought of different ways of continuing the work of the Mission but it was not possible to do so in the absence of an inspiring leader. They went therefore to Clark and begged him to come and stay in their village. Luckily for them, Rev Clark came to settle in Mulongyimsen on 2 March 1876. He exhorted people to give up head-hunting practices and superstitious beliefs. Protests and accusations followed. A number of people who listened to him thought that the Mission was going to destroy all that they had cherished for ages. Clark was, however, unfazed by such protests and

accusations. He was determined to go ahead with his programme. He had the resources and the support to implement his agenda.

The Naga society owes so much to the American Baptist Mission and to Rev Clark for his pioneering work in the Naga hills for as many as thirty six years. Nagas still remember the Clark couple as the founders of the Mission and its great educational programme and achievements. He is very rightly revered for drawing the Nagas from a closed world to a world which opened out to receive the benefits of a universal faith, an achievable goal of literacy and education, a modernising and generous outlook on life and a wide variety of subsidiary possibilities. But what is often lost sight of is the historico-political context in which he came to Nagaland and did his work. The conjuncture between the colonial powers and the preachers of the Gospel cannot be ignored or wished away. Each supplemented the other with the result that most of the wonderful effects of colonial rule and missionary work appears today to be incidental to the establishment of the twin centres of power and faith in the Naga hills. Colonialism and the Christian faith entered the Naga hills almost simultaneously, each exhorting the other to go ahead, despite difficulties and embarrassments. Having introduced the first batch of nine Ao Christians to Dekahaimung, Godhula threatened the rebellious villagers to be prepared for a rebuff by the Company forces in case they intended any harm to the new converts (Tajen 1984:36). Rev Clark testified to the commonality of interests between colonial rulers and American missionaries when he wrote in 1877 : "it is of no use to delay Mission operations on the hills waiting for English occupation" (ibid. p.39). Rev Clark and his wife baptised Nagas, solemnised marriages and provided refuge to the needy

during their stay in the Naga hills. Wasn't it intriguing that he had arrived in Assam and then in the hills at the behest of the colonialists and the colonialists arrived in the hills within a few years of his having been there? Wasn't it a quirk of history that by 1879 both the missionary and the colonialist began to operate in the Naga hills as alternative agencies of domination?

Clark's missionary activities were confined mostly to the Aos, though the Impur Mission, established in 1894, became the headquarters of Baptist churches belonging to other tribes in several parts of the Naga hills. While Rev Clark was doing his work in the Ao area, other missionaries spread out to the various parts of the Naga hills. Rev King went to Kohima in 1885 to work among the Angamis. He was succeeded by Rev Revenberg who worked among the Angamis for three decades and was responsible for spreading the Christian faith and liberal education in the whole of the Angami area. It was in 1885 itself that W E Witter went to Wokha to work among the Lothas. In a few years the American Baptist Mission expanded its activities on such a large scale as to cover the whole of the Naga hills so that by the turn of the century a large majority of Nagas became Christians.

The impact of Christianity on the Naga society deserves to be viewed with a caution. There is no denying the fact that the advent or acceptance of the new faith ushered in a new era in Naga history. Christianity did wonderful things for the Nagas. It transformed a divided and divisive people into an organised community by bestowing on them the benefits of enlightenment, liberal education, a new socio-religious order, a complex of ennobling

ceremonies and points of view, better health care and larger possibilities of peace, progress and emancipation. And yet, it was responsible for a number of inhibitions that Christian Nagas have found themselves surrounded by in subsequent years. With a little care and insight, Christian missionaries could have built a bridge between the old and the new so that both tradition and change could embrace each other. One doesn't understand why Christian missionaries thought it fit to reject once and for all a number of traditional customs, values, rituals, and institutions, almost wholesale. It was unfortunate that it happened but it is more unfortunate for the reason that it has become increasingly difficult to restore those customs, values, rituals and institutions that the community once again may find acceptable.

Several scholars have, over the decades, regretted the unfortunate disappearance or elimination of the good things of pre-Christian Naga history. As early as in 1926 Henry Balfour noted with sadness in his 'Foreword' to J P Mills' *The Ao Nagas* how unfortunate was the hurried transition from the old to the new way of Naga life : "the evidence of a gradual passing away of the old order of things..., the breaking down of old associations of ideas, in spite of the innate conservatism which is antagonistic to change and yields reluctantly" (1973 : XXII). Balfour goes on to add, "The decay of old customs too often involves for the natives loss of pride and interest in themselves and their past traditions.... The arbitrary suppression of all traditional customs, ceremonies and dances - including even those which in themselves are harmless enough - on the plea that they belong to the 'bad old days of heathendom and head-hunting', is a short-sighted and a retrograde policy. It strikes at the

roots of practically the whole social structure of the people and its effects are apt to prove disastrous" (ibid. p. xxii). Mills in Appendix IV of his classic draws attention to the negative effects of missionary work upon the Nagas. Some of the negative effects of missionary work identified by Mills were : Christians Nagas tended to lose (1) their sense of humour, (2) interest in the use of traditional institutions, rituals, dress and ornaments while at the same time loved to put on (1) foreign dress (2) foreign outlook and (3) an attitude of dislike for their pre-Christian history.

Like Mills, Fürer-Haimendorf, attributed the rejection of several traditional Naga rituals, ceremonies and institutions to the negative effects of missionary work (1933 : pp. 51-62). In a characteristic passage, the author regrets the Christian Naga's heavy dependence on the missionary's attitude to his tradition and culture: "seeing his own customs condemned by the missionaries, he learned to despise his own tribal and cultural inheritance. Christianity and Naga culture seem to him opposite poles, and on the side of the missionaries, there have indeed been few attempts to bring the two into harmony and build on that which was valuable in tribal life" (ibid. p. 55). Similarly, Ursula Graham Bower writes in her *Naga Path* : "In the administered areas Mission and Plains influence have altered the tribes much. Caps, boots and trousers replace the former simplicities, and a desire for sinecures and soft jobs seduces men from the old, hard way of the soil" (1950 :2)

Since Naga life described in such books as those by Mills, Haimendorf and Bower obtained in the 1920s and '30s, it is legitimate to contend that it is no longer true. Much water has flown down the Dikhu since 1937. Life styles and generations have changed over

the last six decades. How just or genuine would, therefore, it be for an academic to attribute all the evils of the contemporary Naga society to the work of the missionaries? Mass literacy, largescale urbanisation, frequent movements to metropolitan cities, systematically increasing exposure to the media, particularly the electronic media, and popular craze for new fashions, ideas and outlooks have certainly contributed to the gradual erosion of traditional Naga values, customs and traditions no doubt but here we are not discussing influences like these. We are rather concerned with how a noble institution like the Church has adversely affected a traditional people. We feel emboldened in our perception by the growing awareness of the problem among the Naga intelligentsia. Just 20 years ago, a Government of Nagaland publication admitted the effects of western civilisation on the Naga way of life (Gosh 1979 : 67) while a book written 15 years ago says, : "Missionaries in their zeal discarded the native customs and cultures as impediments in the way of reformation. And in the result the traditional colour and gaiety were quickly disappeared" (sic) (Tajen 1984 : 130). This view is better articulated in a write-up published just three years ago. We would take the liberty of quoting the slightly longish passage below : "The church must admit where it has gone wrong. To take a small example, it must admit where it has played a part in destroying our culture. We all agree that Christianity is the best for us and we are all grateful to the missionaries. But in the name of Christianity ignorant Christians have done irreplaceable damage to our culture. In Khamniungan region for example the first thing that the Christians did when a village was converted was to destroy their log drum. This drum which could reveal historical evidence of

migration of the Nagas were burned or buried when they became Christians. Is this Christianity? I wonder what Christ would do in such a situation? Why can't they use the drum instead of a Church bell? This is where we must realise that the Church can either destroy our spirit or revitalise our spirit. It is not for me to point out where the Church has gone wrong. If at all, this task is reserved for its leaders. But you can show us the way to heal our past. To heal the past in order to prepare the future is not a job reserved for specialists. It is the job for everyone but you can make a beginning and lead us all into a new future" (Nuh 1996:80).

Having invited attention to the negative effects of missionary work, we wish to point out with a sense of gratification that, since the Naga intelligentsia have already seized upon the ways in which it has gone wrong, it should not be difficult for them to tell right from wrong and to do what is right in this connection. Christianity has been there for more than a century now and it is time that Naga intellectuals choose to do an academic stocktaking of what the society gained and lost during its transition from the old to the new. It is really great that there is already a rethinking along these lines. But what is important to note in this context is the way in which and the extent to which the past is retrieved into the present to make the present richer and more prosperous. All of history and tradition was never good and a forward-looking community cannot try to retrieve its history or tradition as a lump; it has to be highly selective and acutely critical to separate the chaff from the grain so that the grain is taken and the chaff is rejected. Every community values its past, its tradition, its cultural identity. The Naga society as a developing society has

every right to look back to the past but it cannot, even if it wanted to, recapture or store the past as a whole. The advent of Christianity certainly drew a line in Naga history and there is no going back to the area beyond the line as a matter of general principle. If one tried to do it, it would be tantamount to converting now into then which obviously cannot be done. So we take the past with plenty of caution and a great deal of sagacity and only those valuable institutions, customs and ceremonies are restored to be incorporated into the present that are found to be conducive to the needs and aspirations of contemporary life.

IV

When Dr Clark entered the Naga hills, he knew that Nagas had no history of literacy because they had no script. Perhaps they had a script once upon a time. Naga mythology has it that in those days they had their literature written on some animal skin. But the scribe was not careful. A dog happened to come by one day and eat up the scroll and into the impenetrable inside of the canine eater went the script for ever. Perhaps subsequent generations of Nagas looked back to their literate history and cursed the scribe. Clark may have heard the story but he was as helpless as the Nagas were as far as the recovery of the script was concerned. Neither the scribe nor the dog nor the scroll was to be found anywhere. Clark had therefore to devise or import a script for the Ao language to be written in and he selected the Roman script for starting his programme of literacy and education. Clark's story shows that educated Aos had to write their words and sentences in the script that was allotted to them. The earliest of written Naga literature therefore does not have a history of more than a century and a quarter.

The great missionary that Clark was, he had to transcribe Ao speech sounds on cardboard cuttings used as separate letters of the alphabet. Perhaps he knew the difficulties of transcribing a speech system in a script which was not compatible with it. But he could not do better and we cannot curse him for not being better than he was. He could have used the script of one of the surrounding languages, particularly that of a tonal language, but he did not do it. Why did Clark not select the script of a tonal language for Ao to be written in, we do not know. Was it because he had no choice as far as he could see? Was it because the Roman script came to his mind naturally? Was it because he wanted to impose an alien script on Ao only to Anglicise the language? Did he want to connect Ao with English for political reasons? Did he select the Roman script to act as an instrument of British imperialism? Did he intend to brainwash the Aos into naturally accepting the English language as a model and British imperialism as a means of emancipation? We have no reasons to charge Clark with having acted as an agent of colonialism even in such a neutral area as literacy and education. But neither have we any reason to say that he did not have any colonial designs in his selection of the Roman script. We believe that the Roman script is not compatible with Ao or with any other tonal language, whether Naga or non-Naga. A Naga language written in Roman script is as strange as Arabic written in the Devanagiri script or Tamil written in the Arabic script. An orthography has to have some sort of a natural kinship with the phonetics and phonology of a linguistic system. The reason why different scripts or orthographies belong to different language groups is itself proof that there must be some natural affinity between a

language and the way it is written. The number of languages exceeds the number of scripts, no doubt, but a script does not normally attach to a language outside the family. The identification of the Roman Script with Ao may be seen as an anomalous case of trying to fit in a square peg in a round hole.

Language, we must bear in mind, is the most powerful tool of domination and hegemony. The British introduced their language throughout their empire not to enlighten or emancipate the natives but to tighten their perpetual hold on the natives. 'To learn English was to buy English'. The British taught their subjects English not to write like Shakespeare nor to speak like Gladstone but only to hang on to British rule, British way of life and British institutions. Once a population acquired English as a language of communication, there was no denying English at any stage of future separation from British Rule. The British left their colonies and returned to Britain in course of time but their former subjects have clung to the English language as a matter of habitual slavery from generation to generation. We do not know of any former British colony which once accepted English and later gave it up at or after the emancipation from the British rule. British political colonialism has apparently ended but British linguistic colonialism has not and perhaps never will (Cf. Tharu 1998)

One way of looking at Clark's introduction of the Roman Script to the Ao language would be to see it as the language politics of the white man. By using the Roman script, that is, the English script, to record the Ao language was to connect Ao with English as well as to perpetuate the belief that English was an ideal language. That English is a world language and a

useful language for hundreds of communities throughout the world is beside the point. Our main point here is only to show that the use of the Roman script was perhaps not as neutral, value-free or philanthropic as it might seem to be. There is no going back to an era preceding the introduction of the Roman script in the Ao area or in the Naga hills. Nagas have to put up with it as the rest of the third world has to put up with the English language. But it would be enlightening from the pedagogic or general academic point of view to understand the possible configurations of Clark's choice of the Roman script. We do, nevertheless, appreciate that Nagas have been and should be grateful to Clark for having brought the benefits of education to the Naga hills in spite of his possible motivations for using an alien script to write their language(s).

The basic function of a script is to change a language into a visible object. A script translates a sequence of sounds into a chain of visual images. A language written is a language *seen. A language and a script are related and relatable but the one does not necessarily imply the other. Every community has a language but every language does not have a script. When a language acquires a script, it achieves what is known as literacy. Following from what we have just noted, we may move a step ahead and say that a language -using community may not have literacy at all or may have it at a certain stage of its historical evolution. Till about a century and a quarter ago, Nagas did not have literacy because they had no script. This does not however mean that they did not have visual/visualising symbols/marks to convey their messages. They had in fact complex systems of signs to encode messages which operated

through a structure of dress patterns, ornaments, icons and tattoos. Of these various sign systems, tattooing came closest to writing or script. One may regard tattooing patterns as a pre-literate script. Pre-Christian Nagas practised tattooing on a universal scale. But as it was both time-taking and painful, it had to be given up and it was luckily given up as a matter of principle after the advent of Christianity. No one today would like to have tattooing revived but one could perhaps suggest that the expertise involved in structuring the complex patterns on the skin as an identity marker for a tribe or clan and as a secret code of messages for the decoder both within and outside the tribe/clan could be transferred to construct prototypes of human beings in woodwork, painting, sculpture etc so as to preserve history in a certain perspective. We do not know if any voluntary organisation or a government department dealing with art, culture, history or museology is doing anything or has plans to do anything in this regard and we do suggest that the patterns available in tattooing may be used to add a new dimension to Naga art and drawing. Literate Nagas do not have to return to their pre - literate history and yet they could utilise a historical construct to enrich their present artistic talent and creativity. This digression from the main line of our argument is intended only to bring the possibility of channelising tattooing patterns into a modern art form to the notice of planners of education, art and culture in voluntary organisations and government departments and not to relate it to Clark's vision and programme of education in the Naga hills.

Clark entered the Naga hills primarily as a Christian missionary and additionally as an educator. Education for him was a means and the conversion to

Christianity the end. He had to evangelise on as large scale as possible and he had to educate Nagas to evangelise them faster and wider. To educate the Nagas was essential to converting them to Christianity. As a Christian Naga writer puts it: "establishing learning centres for the Nagas became one of the most effective agents to evangelise all the Naga tribes within a few decades. And the missionaries realised that the Nagas should be taught to read and write so that they themselves could become native preachers to carry the message of salvation to their own people" (Amer 1993 : 14). Subsequent history proved Clark and his associates right because when they left the Naga hills for good, educated Nagas took over as teachers, evangelists and pastors. As Aos happened to be educated first, they outnumbered every other group of educated Nagas, both within and outside the Order. Clark's subordination of education to evangelization is a fact of history but it does not therefore obviate his contribution to the cause of education in the Naga area. His position in Naga history as the founder of education remains eternally fixed and sacrosanct.

He started an informal school in the 'new village' called Mulongyimsen in 1878 and followed it up by starting another informal school in Mopungchukit village in 1882. He had already brought a printing machine from Sibsagar and trained a Naga girl to read and write. He installed the machine at his first school and began to teach Ao boys and girls how to read and write with the assistance of his wife and the Naga girl. The number of schools went on increasing from year to year with the result that by 1893 there were 8 schools in the Ao area. Approximately 200 boys and girls were being educated at those schools. All the schools were

primary schools no doubt but the Aos were excited to have their boys and girls read and write in their own language. One can easily imagine the joy and excitement of the first Aos who had the good luck of having their children educated. It was history in the making but it was a great history and a great making. They had never imagined that they should ever have the benefit of education in their midst. And here was a missionary who had taken the light of knowledge and the benefits of education to their doors. Clark must have had the excitement of a new discovery and the Aos the joy of fulfilment. The joy and the fulfilment took a concrete shape on 14 October 1894 when the Impur Mission Centre was established in a part of Mupongchukit village. Henceforth the Impur Mission Centre was to be the Headquarters of Mission activities, including education, in a larger part of the Naga hills. Impur was a portmanteau word which combined two roots, ('im,' meaning 'village') and ('pur' meaning 'people'). 'Impur', selected by Clark was intended to distinguish the 'genuine citizens of the village' from others and in a way it hinted at the famous Biblical phrase, "God's chosen people". Clark, the adventurous visionary that he was, clearly wanted to cut out a certain area to be inhabited and managed by holy people who were committed to the noble mission of the church through the achievable instrumentality of mass Christian education. It was only in the fitness of things that the Impur Mission Centre soon became the head-office of evangelisation and education that transcended the boundaries among Semas, Lothas, Changs, Phoms, Konyaks and Sangtams. Clark and his wife published primers and Bible stories in Ao. Besides, they also published the first Ao - English Dictionary. When they left the Naga hills after a 36 - year hectic schedule, they had

converted a whole mass of Nagas to Christianity and Christian education. In later years the Sema, Lotha, Chang, Phom, Konyak and Sangtam Churches separated themselves from the Impur Mission Centre but it is remarkable that as of today the Centre's activity extends to such areas as Arunachal Pradesh and Burma.

Concurrently with Clark's work in the Ao area, Missionaries took up the spread of evangelisation and education in Sema, Lotha and Angami areas. All of them used the Roman script and proceeded to do their work along the lines taken by Clark. Missionaries like King, Revenberg and Witter came and worked in these areas and published bi-lingual dictionaries and primers for the benefit of teachers and students in respective mission schools. In the 1880s the British government also decided to start its own schools in different parts of the Naga hills to impart secular education. Young men and women who had graduated from mission schools were employed as teachers in government primary schools. In a matter of decades primary education spread to the whole of the Naga country. The Mission centre at Kohima came to have within its jurisdiction such diverse areas as Angami, Rengma, Zeliang, Kuki and Sema. As years passed by, primary schools were upgraded into Middle Schools so that by 1940-41 there were a few middle schools in the Naga hills. But it is amazing that the British Government did not concede the idea of starting government high schools even in the last years of their rule. Just on the eve of their departure from India, they agreed to grant financial assistance to the two high schools in the Naga region, one in Kohima and the other in Mokokchung, which had been started a few years earlier by the people themselves.

As mentioned above, school education started in the Naga hills in 1878 and British rule in 1879-80 although the British had declared their colonial grip on the Nagas in 1866 itself by creating what they called the Naga Hills District. Isn't it intriguing that (except for taking over a high school in Kohima) they did not consider it necessary to start a Government High School even by 1947? Why did they do so? Was it an omission or a consequence of their refusal to extend the benefits of secondary education to the Nagas? We do not know for sure the right answer to any of these questions and yet we legitimately take the view in the light of their attitude to secondary and higher education in the rest of India (they started 3 universities in respective Presidencies as early as 1858 and the number of universities in India had gone up to 36 by the time they decided to quit) that they did not start a government high school in the Naga area or did not give financial aid to the two private high schools there because they did not want the Nagas to be educated beyond the primary level. It is unfortunate that we are constrained to close our review of the history of education in the Naga hills with a bad taste in the mouth in spite of our acknowledgement of the great work that dedicated missionaries had done in the field of primary education.

In addition to offering a brief account of the twists and turns of Naga history, our Introduction is intended to create in the educated youth of today a spirit of self-criticism so that they may rethink their conventional perceptions of their location in time and space and undertake research-oriented studies of how far their history has succeeded or failed in achieving what it has. We do not want the youth to take anything on faith. They must not agree with a point of

view simply because it has been handed down to them by their elders or teachers. They must see for themselves whether something is good or bad, acceptable or not acceptable. We would like them to subject every bit of academic hand-out to a close scrutiny and only then to accept or reject it as a matter of their conscious decision.

We find it gratifying that some Naga intellectuals have already offered excellent specimens of critical stocktaking of Naga history during the British period. What an irony it was that the British maintained their paramountcy over the Naga hills for less than seven decades (1881-1947) even though they had taken more than five decades (1826-1881) to declare it! All the same, the truth remains that those twelve decades (1826-1947) altered Naga history in a way and to an extent as no other political development had done before and therefore it becomes crucial for an educated Naga today to make up his/her mind about what the British period in fact offered to or took away from, the Naga community. It would be unfair to the British to suggest that they did not offer anything to the Naga community.

We have already said in the opening paragraph, as we say here again, that they offered quite a few things to their Naga subjects but we reiterate that what the British offered to the Naga community was incidental to what they took away from the Naga community. We must remember that the British occupation of the Naga region was not a philanthropic mission. The British occupied and ruled the Naga region in their own interest and for their own sake but then certain inevitable developments took place in the process that turned out to be beneficial to the Naga community.

Our interpretation of the British Naga interactions over a period of 12 decades (1826-1947) is amply borne out by a well-documented study of the instruments and strategies of British policy and administration in the Naga hills by a well known Naga scholar, Piketo Sema. In his doctoral dissertation, published not many years ago, Dr Sema (1992) draws attention to how and why the British did what they did in the Naga hills during this period. We cite below, for the reader's convenience, some of the general remarks made by this learned author :

(i) the British occupied the Naga hills for the security of their colonial interests (pp 4, 10, 22),

(ii) education and evangelization were instruments of British colonialism (pp 45, 9, 59, 60, 66, 68, 74),

(iii) 'excluding' the Naga hills from the influence of the plains people was in fact motivated by cultural protectionism (pp 57, 64, 65, 66),

(iv) the partition of the Naga territory into Naga Hills, NEFA, Manipur, Assam and Burma was determined by expansionist/colonial convenience, (pp 51-52), and

(v) with the single exception of taking over a high school in Kohima in 1941, the British did nothing by way of promoting secondary education in the Naga hills (p 85).

V

Before concluding our introductory remarks, we would like to touch upon a couple of items which may be significant for an understanding of the contemporary Naga ethos. These two concepts are : the question of minorities in Nagaland and the state of Naga society today. 'Majority' and 'minority' do not always refer to a numerical equation. A minority may be a minority in spite of having a larger number than a so called majority has. 'Majority' and 'minority' are therefore better interpreted as 'dominant' and 'subordinate' groups because dichotomies like these are generally political rather than numerical. Women in several Naga tribes, for example, outnumber men and yet we consider them here a minority group. For the purposes of this discussion we identify such minorities as (1) ethnic, linguistic, religious minorities (2) women, (3) mixed progeny (4) minors (5) deviants (6) marginals (7) parasites and (8) dissidents. Each of these categories is rendered a minority because of its being subordinate to the dominant group which in Naga society today, except in respect of women, happens to be a numerical majority.

Differentiated from the dominant majority group, with a variety of negative connotations, the minority is assigned to a lower status in "one or more of four areas of life: the economic, the political, the legal and the social-associational" (Rose 1972). In each of these areas, the minority is prevented from exercising the full political privileges arbitrarily held by the majority group. As it is systematically discriminated against in all or many walks of life, the minority begins to partially reconcile itself to its subordinate position and keeps away from direct or determined confrontations

with the majority though an observer can easily feel the undercurrents of a crisis of confidence equally shared by the minority-majority groups. As the majority group maintains its superior position in matters of law, finance, social status and political power, it always defends and supports the status quo. The minority, on the other hand, always looks for a change in the hope of sharing positions, privileges and power with the majority group on an equal footing. The minority-majority binarism therefore is continually haunted by mutual suspicion and ill-will.

A simple, commonsensical way to appreciate the civilisational hallmarks of a society is to find out how that society interacts with or treats its minorities. Seen in this light, can we say that the majority Naga group treats its various minorities with love, respect and a sense of reciprocity? Does the majority group share its philosophy of polity, economy and socio-political privileges with its ethnic, linguistic and/or religious minorities? Naga society is predominantly Christian. Each of its segments speaks its own language. All the segments put together share a common racial ancestry. But there are people in Nagaland who do not speak any of the Naga languages, do not share the Mongoloid ancestry and do not go to church. How are they accommodated, tolerated or accepted by the dominant group? The Naga society is both patrilineal and patrilocal. A Naga family is headed by a male and property passes from father to son. Wife and children stay with the male head of the family which centres round him. How important or decisive is the role of the wife and children in the management of the family? What part do women and children play in social organisation or in the division of political power in the state? There are children born of a Naga father

and a non-Naga mother or of a Naga mother and non-Naga father. What socio-political or economic status is assigned to such mixed progeny? Not every Naga male is normal and decent, law-abiding and God-fearing. There are men in Naga society, who do not subscribe to social/moral values, abide by the laws of civilised behaviour or stick to traditional standards of desirable conduct. Such anomalous males turn out to be deviants and marginals and often pose a threat to the familial and social fabric. How are they treated or accommodated by the majority? Does the majority try to persuade, threaten, punish or reject these deviants and marginals? Like any other society, Nagas have their share of people who do not have a life style or point of view of their own. Such habitual dependants and parasites are often a liability. How does the majority situate or place such people? Apart from categories like these, there is in Naga society, as in almost every other society, a small minority of perennial dissidents, people who do not or cannot agree with the majority consensus, whether within the family, within a community or within the political organisation. Does the dominant majority in the family, in the community or in the political system tolerate or accept such dissidents? We must remember that the right to disagree must be a defining feature of a democratically structured, civilised, noble and progressive family, society, or organisation. A majority that silences the minority by force or disapproval can never claim to be a decent, humane and morally sound community.

In the foregoing paragraphs we have not offered solutions or supplied opinion on anything that concerns how the Naga majority must conduct itself in relation to its minorities or subordinate groups. We

have instead posed questions for the majority to answer if it chooses to do so. Our questions are simply pointers to an academic consideration of a sociological and political problem. No one can oblige us to believe that the Naga society in the sense of the entire collectivity of the people living in the present state of Nagaland is a monolithic structure. As it is not a monolithic structure, we are inclined to view it as consisting of clearly distinguishable groups of people which in our opinion define some sort of a polarisation between dominant and subordinate groups. The dominant-subordinate relationship has a number of configurations. What we have done here is just to draw the attention of the enlightened reader to the actuality of such configurations. We would also like to clarify that neither of these categories, majority and minority, is a constant. Constituents in one group keep moving into the other from time to time and from situation to situation but the fact cannot be denied that the binarism between these two groups continues to hold. That there are two groups today is not as important as the fact that such rival groups always and everywhere co-exist. Our remarks in this section therefore are primarily concerned with highlighting the academic urgency of seeing them as clearly as possible. Besides, we also want to emphasise that, as the dominant majority enjoys a position of privilege, it is duty-bound to rethink its perception of its attitude to the subordinate minorities, whether in respect of ethnicity, language, religion, gender, age, law, or consensual ideology.

We think of the present state of Naga society and we are filled with mixed emotions. Is it good? Is it bad? Is it going the right way? As we think along these lines, we begin to have negative emotions. When we look around to see for ourselves if Nagaland has

achieved even half of what its leadership on 1 December 1963 aimed at., we realise that it has not gone the right way in its pursuit of bringing prosperity and happiness to its people. The leadership has achieved neither stable peace nor a satisfactory progress in development. Roads have been constructed, the number of employment opportunities has increased, more and more educational institutions have come up, no doubt, but there is still much to be desired as things stand today. The state has been through its lack of proper planning and sincere effort added to an ever-increasing employment problem. It has not been able to improve its forms of governance. It has not achieved any dependable degree of self - sufficiency in such crucial areas as food production, power generation, communication, water supply, health care and quality education. Repercussions of failing leadership have resulted in electoral malpractices and ever expanding distrust and a near-total absence of accountability.

We quote below a few excerpts from a book on the present state of Naga society in support of our generalisations in the foregoing paragraph:

“Corruption in government, civil service, police and army is worse than ever. Most of the government programmes are only lip service. What rules our society today is not rule of law but rule of guns and money. If you have guns and money you are the law because everything has its price. Everything is measured in money. Everything and almost everyone can be bought. And the game is going on” (Nuh 1996:26)

“Since the mid-seventies... there have been more criminals, more briberies, more robbers, more drunkards, more drug addicts, more rivalries, more

factions among freedom fighters, more violations of human rights and ...more scandals". The author goes on to add: "This Christian state is ... the most corrupt state in India Even for a government servant to draw his GPF money it is not possible to move files... without bribery. Check posts in Nagaland have almost become bribery posts....political leaders alone cannot be held responsible for the aforesaid scenario of Naga society. Church workers and ordained ministers are, to a very great extent, responsible for the reign of evil in Nagaland today". (Takoyaba, *ibid.* pp 33-34)

"Nagaland is a dying place but it cannot express its pain, its agony" (Visier Sanyu, *ibid.* p 74)

That other states in and outside India are in as bad a shape as or even in a worse shape than Nagaland should be no consolation to Nagas. They are a small population locked in a difficult terrain and they cannot afford to ignore opportunities of development and improvement. The future belongs to them only if they are prepared to make an optimal use of it. They have to move faster and to move conscientiously. They cannot afford to lose time. As they cannot afford to be negligent or myopic, people in government and politics as well as makers and leaders of public opinion are obliged to take a hard look at the present state of Naga society so as to be able to start doing everything necessary and desirable on a war footing. We academics can only remind them of a part of the prayer of St Francis of Assisi:

*Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace,
Where there is hatred, may I bring love,
Where there is malice, may I bring pardon,*

Where there is discord, may I bring harmony
Where there is doubt, may I bring faith,
Where there is error, may I bring truth,
Where there is despair, may I bring hope,
Where there is sadness, may I bring joy,
Where there is darkness, may I bring light (ibid 39-40)

Going through our Introduction, an unwary reader might wonder why we wrote it for a book of this nature. He/she may like to ask: How are the introductory remarks relevant to a study of the protagonist's life and work? We knew it from the beginning. We could easily anticipate a question like this and yet we did it. We had a very simple reason for doing what we did. We wanted to place the protagonist's life and work in a proper perspective. Mayangnokcha was a 20th century man in the full sense of the term. His life span covered the first 88 years of the 20th century and, as such, his story may be read as the Naga history of the 20th century. Nagas had not lived much of their single-community life when he was born as they had not achieved much of all that they wanted to do by the time he died. Apart from this, we considered it important to place his life and work against the backdrop of all that had happened and was happening among the Nagas as a whole so that a reader would have no difficulty in forming his or her own opinion of the contributions that this great Naga made to the Naga ethos as a whole.



Entrance of Impur School Today.
(Named as Clark Memorial Higher Secondary School).