

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

*Identity, War and The State In India:  
The Case Of The Nagas*

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD in  
the University of Hull

by

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## *Abstract*

This thesis is a political history of the Nagas of the Naga hills, from the 1820s to the 1960s. By drawing on a wealth of primary sources unutilised hitherto, and an extensive contextualisation with comparative and theoretical literature, it seeks to render the respective agents' actions meaningful and thus challenges the established historiography in three periods – pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial.

While imperialist historiography of the pre-colonial period still predominates, and made the Nagas responsible for their own subjugation, this work shows that the logic of the British empire made it poised for conquest. Subsequently the colonial rulers were able to blame the vicissitudes of Naga society on the Nagas themselves. This thesis offers an alternative version of the Naga hill region as home to a plethora of polities conscious of the superior power of their plains' neighbours.

While social science' writings tend to blame colonialism for post-colonial identities and wars, here it is demonstrated that agency and identity-formation are an on-going process and neither started nor ended with colonialism. Although the interaction of the local population with colonialism produced a Naga national élite, it was the Indian political class that came into existence the same way which succeeded in, having access to superior means of nation and state-building so as to enable it undertake the modern Indo-Naga war. And it was this war that firmly made the Nagas into a “nation” – setting them onto the road to independence. This work fundamentally revises our understanding of the existing “histories” of the Nagas by exposing them as ahistorical - consciously or unconsciously – influenced by colonial or post-colonial narratives of domination.

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*Abbreviations*

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| AP         | Assam police   |
| APB        | Assam police battalion                                 |
| AR         | Assam rifles   |
| CC         | chief commissioner                                     |
| DC         | district commissioner                                  |
| EIC        | East India Company                                     |
| GOI        | government of India                                    |
| IA         | Indian army  |
| IB         | intelligence bureau                                    |
| INA        | Indian National Army                                   |
| INC        | Indian National Congress                               |
| ISF        | Indian security forces                                 |
| MP         | member of parliament                                   |
| MNF        | Mizo National Front                                    |
| NEFA       | Northeast Frontier Area                                |
| NFG        | Naga federal government                                |
| NHD        | Naga hills district                                    |
| NHDTC      | Naga hills district tribal council                     |
| NHG        | Naga home guard  |
| NHTA       | Naga hills tribal area                                 |
| NPC        | Naga People's Convention                               |
| NSCN (I-M) | National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isaak – Muivah) |
| NSCN (K)   | National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang)      |
| NNC        | Naga National Council                                  |
| NWS        | Naga Women's Society                                   |
| NYM        | Naga Youth Movement                                    |
| PIL        | People's Independence League                           |
| SDO        | sub-divisional officer                                 |
| SP         | superintendent   |
| TFD        | Tuensang frontier division                             |
| ULFA       | United Liberation Front of Assam                       |
| UNO        | United Nations Organisation                            |

## *Glossary*

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <i>alhou</i>       | supreme being in Sema cosmology                             |
| <i>ang</i>         | chief among the Konyak Nagas                                |
| <i>dobashi</i>     | interpreter   |
| <i>gaonbura</i>    | village headman   |
| <i>germa</i>       | auspicious days during which certain activities were taboo  |
| <i>godowen</i>     | warehouse (here for storing food provisions)                |
| <i>kebel</i>       | territorial division of Naga villages                       |
| <i>lungkizumba</i> | supreme being in Ao cosmology                               |
| <i>mandala</i>     | symbolic figure representing the universe                   |
| <i>morung</i>      | young men/women dormitory with social and educational tasks |
| <i>raj</i>         | British rule in South Asia                                  |
| <i>raja</i>        | king  |
| <i>ryat</i>        | settler-cultivator  |
| <i>satyagraha</i>  | non-violent non-cooperation                                 |
| <i>sepoy</i>       | soldier in British service                                  |
| <i>suuraj</i>      | self-rule   |
| <i>thana</i>       | police post   |
| <i>tsungrem</i>    | earth spirits   |
| <i>ukepenopfu</i>  | supreme being of Angami cosmology                           |

## *Spelling*

It was endeavoured to standardise the spelling of names and places in the main body of the text. The spelling in the quotes and in the sources in the footnotes that is often at random, however, was left untouched. The important places and names, though, will be recognisable.

In the same way the spelling in the quotes was left in the original, despite often being mistaken or dated.

## *Preface and Acknowledgements*

In 2000 I took up the opportunity offered by the Department of Political and International Studies at the University of Hull to pursue doctoral research. Professor Gurharpal Singh who was designated my supervisor, has with his rare mixture of protestant work ethic, faculty and good humour, provided invaluable support in the completion of this thesis, notwithstanding his move to the University of Birmingham. I also want to express my gratitude to Professor Norton for his encouragement and assistance in expediting the many formalities associated with the final submission of the thesis.

I am grateful to the Ferens Educational Trust of the University of Hull for funding and thus enabling my research and especially to Rachel Blakey for solving the practical problems involved.

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I also have to thank several Nagas, of whom I want to name only two: Luithui Luingham and Mr. Yong Kong, the conversations and friendship with both were (and are) not only of great personal worth but also of invaluable importance for the conduct of this research.

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Heidelberg, December 2004

## *Introduction*

The political history of the Nagas of Northeast India is the subject of this work. This history culminated in the Indo-Naga war in the 1950s – a war which had profound consequences for the Nagas, the wider region and India to this day. Covering the period from the 1820s to the 1960s, this thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of this trajectory.

The Indo-Naga war, fought with varying degrees of intensity since the 1950s, bears in its consequences heaviest on the Nagas themselves: decades of violence have destroyed their social fabric;<sup>1</sup> drug abuse and HIV has developed on an epidemic scale;<sup>2</sup> the lack of prospects forced many young Nagas to emigrate to Indian cities,<sup>3</sup> where they are either perceived as East-Asians,<sup>4</sup> or as savages,<sup>5</sup> and where they watch their fellow-Nagas being paraded as folkloric attractions during Indian national celebrations.<sup>6</sup>

The Indian policy vis-à-vis the Nagas (and towards all other people inside India, who are fighting for their independence) consists of a three-tiered strategy:

...brute force to crush the physical capacity to resist, a flood of funds to soften the resolve of indigenous groups and a fierce campaign to portray them as renegades, 'misguided' elements who would see sense if only they were given a chance.<sup>7</sup>

As well as the policy of divide-and-rule, which began with the creation of the Nagaland state,<sup>8</sup> the emergence of a local political caste that developed a vested interest in the perpetuation of the war.<sup>9</sup> As Hazarika notes:

The new élite comprises politicians and their relatives, contractors (and their relatives) and senior bureaucrats and police officials. Over the years, the dream of independence has faded for many, only to be replaced by a *nouveau riche* culture of sex and violence, drugs and music, bribery and corruption.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M. Horam, *Nagas old ways and new trends* (New Delhi, 1988), p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Sanjoy Hazarika, *Strangers in the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India's Northeast* (New Delhi, 1994), p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> Horam, *Nagas old ways and new trends*, p. 140.

<sup>4</sup> Hazarika, *Strangers in the Mist*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>5</sup> Nari Rustomji, *Imperilled Frontiers: India's North-Eastern Borderlands* (Delhi, 1983), p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> M. Horam, *Naga Insurgency: The last thirty years* (New Delhi, 1988), p. 216.

<sup>7</sup> Hazarika, *Strangers in the Mist*, p. 249.

<sup>8</sup> Luingham Luithui and Nandita Haksar, *Nagaland File: A question of Human Rights* (New Delhi, 1984), p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> Nehemiah Panmei, 'Naga movement and its ramifications', In R. Vashum, Aleube Iheilung et al (eds.), *Nagas at Work*, 1996), pp. 85-100, p. 97.

<sup>10</sup> Hazarika, *Strangers in the Mist*, p. 241.

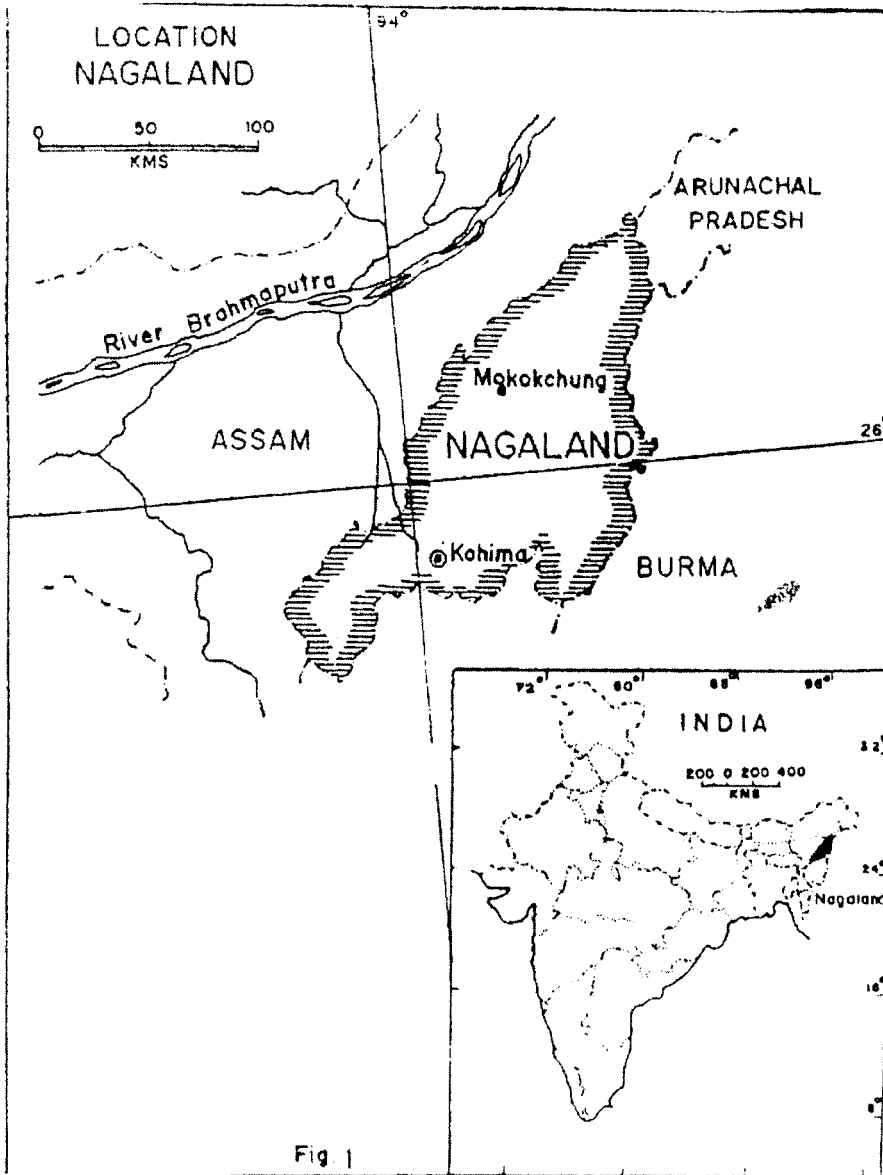


Fig. 1

The result is the creation of profound inequalities in Naga society,<sup>11</sup> and the criminalisation of parts of the resistance.<sup>12</sup> Neither the union government, nor the Nagaland state government has a real interest in ending the war. For the Nagas' public opinion appears to be overwhelmingly in favour of an independence of Nagaland.<sup>13</sup>

The death-toll of the war among the Nagas is said to be around 100,000.<sup>14</sup> Life in Nagaland since 1955 is "...characterised by constant fear, physical danger and suspicion..."<sup>15</sup> A

<sup>11</sup> Horam, *Nagas old ways and new trends*, p. 94.

<sup>12</sup> Panmei, 'Naga movement and its ramifications', p. 97.

<sup>13</sup> Hazarika, *Strangers in the Mist*, p. 242.

<sup>14</sup> Manfred Scheuch, *Bedrohte Völker* (Wien, 1995), p. 117. Although there never has been a count, nor a differentiation of the direct and indirect casualties resulting from that war, so any number given is only an approximate indicator of how bad the situation is.

<sup>15</sup> Horam, *Nagas old ways and new trends*, p. 121. Louanne Richards, belonging to a group of Westerners who, heavily guarded, could travel in 1995 to Manipur and Nagaland, in order to visit the graves of their relatives that were killed there during World War Two, and confirms Horam's statement, see Louanne Richards, *A Journey into Nagaland* (Oxford, 1995). This was also corroborated to me in the course of a telephone interview with a filmmaker in



mass of security forces – army, paramilitary, police and secret services – have, on the basis of special laws,<sup>16</sup> in the whole of the Northeast, a free hand to do whatever they want “...to shoot, kill, conduct search and destroy operations, to enter private premises and search them as well as to arrest individuals without warrants.”<sup>17</sup> This form of violence continued in the Naga hills up to the 1990s:

Churches were burned, villages were razed, aircraft were used to bomb and harass the Nagas, women were raped and continue to be molested even these days by troops, nearly forty years after the first shots of the Naga uprising were fired.<sup>18</sup>

The result is that today violence is employed as the main means to solve conflicts, is endemic in the whole of the Northeast and prevails in a complex pattern that would be hard to untangle.<sup>19</sup>

Leaving aside the government of India's (GOI) obsession with the balkanisation of India, as well as the overrated relevance for the relations between India and its neighbours,<sup>20</sup> it is exactly the growing unrest in the Northeast that seemingly is the most important result of the Indo-Naga war. This is so since the Nagas played a domino role for other resistance groups in the Northeast, the reason why an Indian intelligence officer described the National Socialist Council of *Nagalim* (NSCN) as the “...mother of the north-eastern insurgencies...”<sup>21</sup>

Bangkok on 21 March 2001 who in June 1999 could do limited work in the Naga hills and described the atmosphere there as extremely repressed due to the long-term military occupation, and that people still obeyed curfew, though it had been lifted since long.

<sup>16</sup> For the text of that special laws, see R. Vashum, et al (eds.), *Nagas at Work* (New Delhi, 1996), Appendix XI.-XVI., pp. 183-198.

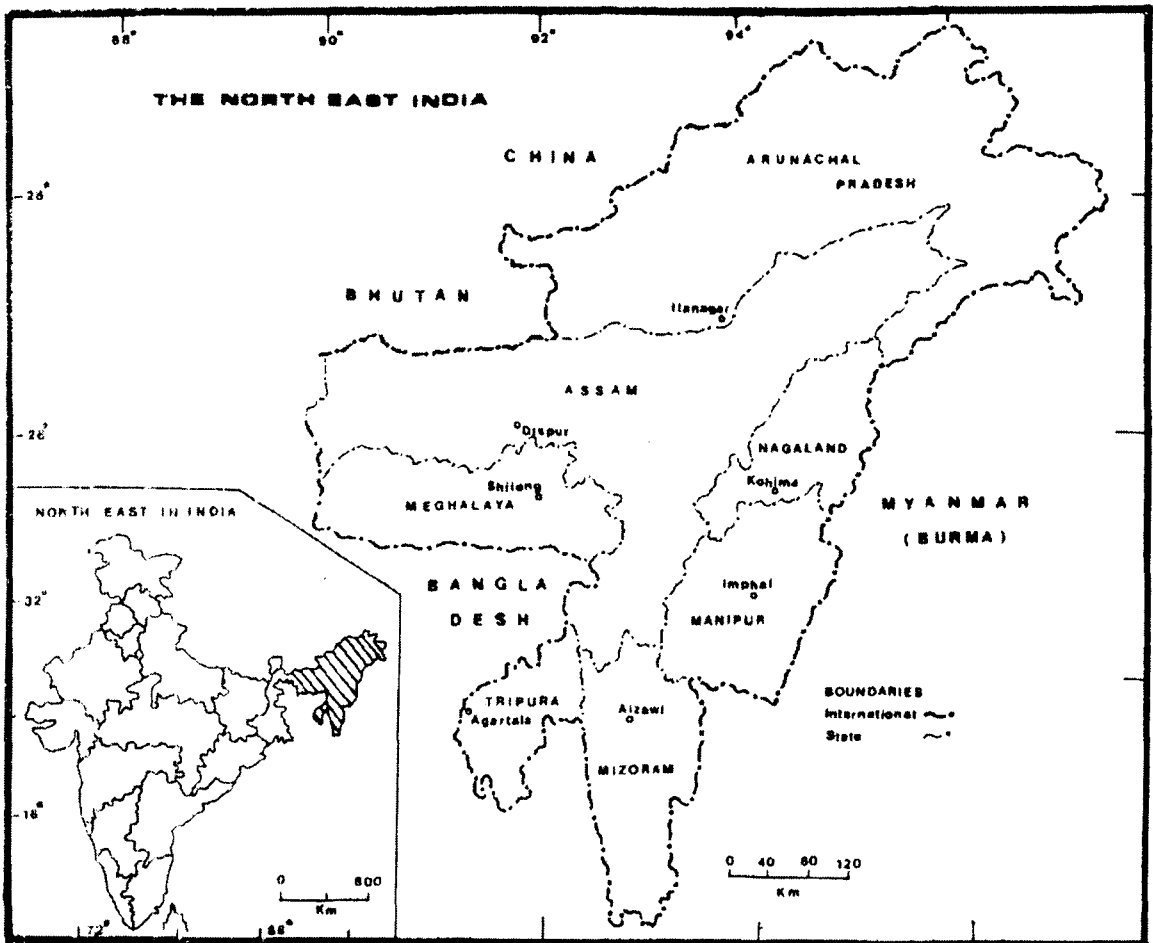
<sup>17</sup> Horam, *Nagas old ways and new trends*, p. 105. About human rights abuses in Nagaland, see Neville Maxwell, *India and the Nagas* (London, 1973); Luingang Luithui and Nandita Haksar, *Nagaland File: A question of Human Rights* (New Delhi, 1984), Chapters 15-26, pp. 189-277; Naga People's Movement For Human Rights, 'Report of NPMFHR', In A. R. Desai (ed.), *Repression and Resistance in India* (London, 1990), pp. 288-291; Idem, 'Abrogation of Fundamental Rights in Naga Areas', In *ibid.*, pp. 308-311 and P. Dandavate, Haksar, N. et al 1990, 'Report of a Fact Finding Team', In *ibid.*, pp. 292-307; Neingulo Krome, 'Human Rights Movement in Nagaland', In Naorem Sanajaoba (ed.), *Human Rights: Principles, Practices and Abuses* (New Delhi, 1994), pp. 173-178; Nimai N. Singh, 'Human Rights Abuses by Security Forces in Manipur', In *ibid.*, pp. 179-193 and *North-East Sun* 1998, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 10-11 and Vol. 4, No. 10, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> Hazarika, *Strangers in the Mist*, p. 101.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of State, *India Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998*, Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, February 26, 1999, pp. 6-7, [http://www.state.gov/www/global/human\\_rights/1998\\_hrp\\_report/india.html](http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1998_hrp_report/india.html).

<sup>20</sup> The Indo-Naga war that was started in the middle of the 1950s may have had minor consequences for Indian foreign policy in the past due to the support the Nagas received from Pakistan, China and Burma, and due to the use of Bangladesh's territory by Nagas for training and sanctuary. This, however, will have never posed an important factor in India's relationship to those countries. For the opposite opinion that indeed the Naga case played a strong role in India's foreign policy towards these countries, see *Subir Bhattacharya, Insurgent Crossfire: North-East India* (New Delhi, 1996) and Idem., 'North-East India: The Evolution of a post-colonial Region', In Partha Chatterjee (ed.), *Wages of Freedom Fifty Years of the Indian Nation State* (Delhi, 1998), pp. 310-327.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110. By 1962 the Mizos had decided to follow the example of the Nagas and founded the Mizo National Front (MNF). The Nagas helped them to establish contacts with Pakistan, China and the independence movements in Burma. The MNF in turn helped the Tripura Upajati Juma Samiti, who followed Phizos (the central figure of Naga nationalism) call for the unification of the Northeast. Inspired were also the Meitis of Manipur, experimenting, from the middle of the 1960s onwards, with revolutionary activities. The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)



Now it has been argued by some that because the peripheral areas (Northeast and Northwest) command less than 7 per cent of the total population of the Indian State today and roughly the same amount of political representation in New Delhi, that “wars” in these regions do not pose a problem for India’s democracy.<sup>22</sup> But such an argument overlooks the fact that 40 million are living under martial rule;<sup>23</sup> and that this condition has a detrimental effect on India’s polity. The

was founded by Pradip and Someshwar Gogoi after consultations with the NSCN, and ULFA cadres received training in the camps of the NSCN in the Somra Tracts of Burma. The NSCN had also been involved in the organisation and training of further resistance groups from Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh (Panmei, ‘Naga movement and its ramifications’, p. 96 and Hazarika, *Strangers in the Mist*, p. 134). Among them were the United Peoples Manipur Liberation Army and the Bodo Security Force (ibid., pp. 165-166). Phizo, the central figure in the independence movement of the Nagas, is often described as the father of Naga-nationalism. He repeatedly called for a unified Northeast. Even in Assam, when the situation there worsened at the end of the 1970s, people demanded a unification of the Northeast under the leadership of Phizo, see Nirmal Nibedon, *North East India: The Ethnic Explosion* (New Delhi: Lancers Publishers, 1981), p. 124.

<sup>22</sup> James Manor, ‘Ethnicity’ and politics in India’, *International Affairs*, 1996, Vol. 72, 3, pp. 459-475.

<sup>23</sup> Subash Gatade, ‘Why the Armed Forces Special Powers Act should be Dumped’, *Mainstream*, Vol. XLII, No. 32, July 31, 2004, pp. 3-5.

argument is further contradicted by the fact that materially the war involves heavy expenditure and that the loss of potential legitimacy is a permanent drain on the Indian state.

But more importantly the treatment of Others in the periphery by the Indian state exemplifies the ruthlessness with which it deals with Others inside its borders, and those Others are increasing in numbers – Muslims, Sikhs, Assamese, Kashmiris, Untouchables, Tribals, Christians, women etc.<sup>24</sup> The Indo-Naga war then is an invaluable case-study for the chauvinistic and expansionist quality of the Indian polity since 1947 and of course it is in the interest of every Indian citizen to reverse this trajectory.

Most Indian authors trace the origin of the Indo-Naga war to colonialism. In essence they argue there was no widespread support for independence among the Nagas which was supported only by few extremists. Consequently the GOI was justified in suppressing the insurgency and the challenge to its territorial integrity.<sup>25</sup>

The only reason why we have to take this seriously is that we are dealing here not with badly disguised propaganda, but with propaganda that has turned into an outlook, a worldview, an objective truth. So much so that a professor for political science of Indian origin once told me in a discussion, that for him, as for every Indian, it is perceived as normal to send the army into any peripheral area, where terrorists are creating problems.<sup>26</sup> That people who are resisting the violent subjugation at the hands of the Indian state are understood as terrorists by the average Indian, and that decades of fighting and tens of thousands killed does not call this view of the situation into question, shows how deeply engraved in the Indian mind it is by now. If educated and enlightened Indians cannot countenance in the face of overwhelming evidence, then there is something profoundly wrong.

Indeed if it is not the foreign hand, it is the colonial legacy during which British and missionaries had created division in the form of other people, and their existence alone suffices as explanation for the wars on India's periphery. Kakar, for example, sees ethnicity, from his ahistorical, psycho-analytic perspective, as inherently aggressive-belligerent. Writing of the war in Punjab in the 1980s and 1990s, he notes:

The division of humans into mutually exclusive group identities of tribe, nation, caste, religion and class seems to serve two important psychological functions. The first is to increase the feeling of well being in

<sup>24</sup> Paul R. Brass, 'Secularism out of its place', In *Contributions to Indian sociology* (n.s.) 32, 2 (1998), pp. 485-505.

<sup>25</sup> D. R. Mankekar, *On the Slippery Slope in Nagaland* (Bombay, 1967); Y. D. Gundevia, *War and Peace in Nagaland* (New Delhi, 1975); V. K. Anand, *Conflict in Nagaland: A Study of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency* (Delhi, 1980); B. B. Gosh, *History of Nagaland* (New Delhi, 1982); Joysankar Hazarika, *Geopolitics of North East India: A Strategic Study* (New Delhi, 1996); B. G. Verghese, *India's Northeast Resurgent: Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development* (New Delhi, 1996); V. A. Panandiker, 'Foreword', In *ibid.*, pp. VII-IX and S. K. Khanna, *Encyclopaedia of North-East India* (Delhi, 1999).

<sup>26</sup> This was in an informal conversation, not in an interview. For literature that sees the Naga question simply as one of terrorism, see Bhawani Singh, 'Terrorism in Asia: The Indian Variant', *Political Science Review*, 1986, Vol. 25, No. 3-4, pp. 78-93 and Ved Marwah, *Uncivil Wars: Pathology of Terrorism in India* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 1995).

the narcissistic realm by locating one's own group at the centre of the universe, superior to others. The shared grandiose self, maintained by legends, myths and rituals, seems to demand a concomitant conviction that other groups are inferior (...) the, second function of division into ethnic groups, namely the need to have other groups as container's for one's disavowed aspects.<sup>27</sup>

The group-narcissism of the Sikhs, their ethnicity according to Kakar, was responsible for the fall of the magnificent self of the Sikhs, into a narcissistic rage when faced with the destruction of the Golden Temple.<sup>28</sup> When seen in contrast with the ethnicity of the Sikhs, for Kakar the ethnicity of the Hindus appears to be less aggressive. In the same anthology and in the same vein Veena Das analyses the discourse of Sikh militants, and compares it with *the* reality. For Das the narratives and discourse among the Sikh population about the violent excesses of the police are responsible for the violence of the Sikhs, *not* the excesses themselves.<sup>29</sup> Terror is the result of the discourse of the Sikhs, not the terror and the discourse a result of state terrorism.<sup>30</sup> Indira Gandhi's remarks that the state, in case of demands for independence by the Sikhs, is not able to protect those Sikhs outside Punjab, is for Das an admission of helplessness.<sup>31</sup> Ethnicity, especially if it concerns minorities who want to opt out of the state, seems in the Indian discourse to be something that combines the negative with the irrational and the aggressive. The origin for this dissident ethnicity, i.e. the existence of other people than Indians, which *are* the causes of communal and ethnic violence, is to be found in the times of colonialism.

This argument is also perpetuated in recent publications in South Asian history, politics and social anthropology respectively: Peter Robb, in his 'The Colonial State and Constructions of Indian Identity: An Example on the Northeast Frontier in the 1880s', takes the Naga hills not to explain the genesis of the Naga identity itself, but as an example of how the colonial state with its administration and its boundaries created an all-Indian identity. However, since his example itself is faulted, due to his reliance on limited sources, that what he wants to elucidate might share the same fate.<sup>32</sup> While for Robb both the Indian and the Naga identity were created by colonialism, Sanjib Baruah, in 'Confronting Constructionism: Ending India's Naga War', only takes the Naga identity as constructed, and sees the other collective identities as unproblematic. His argument roughly runs like this: colonial rule led to a break-down of traditional hierarchy, that in turn

<sup>27</sup> Sudhir Kakar, 'Some Unconscious Aspects of Ethnic Violence in India', In N. Jayaram and Satish Saberwal (ed.), *Social Conflict* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 149-158, p. 151.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 154-156.

<sup>29</sup> Veena Das, 'Time, Self, and Community: Features of the Sikh Militant Discourse', In N. Jayaram & Satish Saberwal (eds.), *Social Conflict* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 175-191, p. 187.

<sup>30</sup> Contrary to such an understanding stresses István Kende the relationship between violence exerted by states and the phenomenon of terrorism. *Idem*, 'Terrorism, wars, nuclear holocaust', *International Social Science Journal* 110, 1986, pp. 529-538.

<sup>31</sup> Veena Das, 'Time, Self, and Community: Features of the Sikh Militant Discourse', p. 189.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Robb, 'The Colonial State and Constructions of Indian Identity: An Example on the Northeast Frontier in the 1880s', *Modern Asian Studies* 31, 2 (1997), pp. 245-283.

resulted in the acceptance of Christianity which enabled a collective Naga identity in the first place, and that led to conflict, and more Christianity. He stresses pre-colonial Naga divisiveness, but at the same time, that they had close and varied ties with the Assamese, i.e. a peaceful coexistence.<sup>33</sup> Both Robb and Baruah suffer from an insufficient historical rootedness and an uncritical reliance on institutional history. While Robb may be excused, since his aims lie elsewhere, Baruah's argument runs risk of associating with Greater Assam, and since he himself contradicts his own argumentation in the conclusion to his article, it leads one to ask for what reasons this constructionism is employed at all. Andrew West, in *The Most Dangerous Legacy: the development of identity, power and marginality in the British transfer to India and the Nagas*, jumps even more blatantly on the "invented" and "imagined" bandwagon that not only denies any agency to people like the Nagas, but also holds them responsible for their own suffering.<sup>34</sup> To the same school of thinking belongs Julian Jacobs beautiful illustrated *The Nagas: Hill Peoples of Northeast India*, implicitly pretending to be a pre-colonial historical anthropology of the Nagas, while drawing nearly exclusively on only published material of late colonial investigations. Thus, though clear in writing and in form, in its ahistorical and apolitical construction, it presents a distorted picture of Naga history and present.<sup>35</sup> None of these authors uses the colonial files that are the main source on Naga history, and if they do to a little extent, as in the case of Robb, they take the writing already for the action, and do not question their relationship, i.e. compare them among themselves and interrogate their validity by contextualisation. An exception is Paula Banerjee, 'Between Two Armed Patriarchies: Women in Assam and Nagaland', who by investigating the women's role in the political process of the last twenty years takes them serious as agents and does not seem to profess self-censorship either.<sup>36</sup>

In the works on Assam's history, like the *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, edited by H. K. Barpujari, or his *Problem of the Hill Tribes: North-East Frontier* and Amalendu Guha's *Planter-Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam, 1826-1947*, the Nagas are dealt with in a relation to Assam and thus in a cursory form. If primary sources are used in relation to the Nagas, it is done in an unproblematic way. In addition, theorising and contextualising is hardly undertaken, and this all is accompanied by an obvious Assamese bias portraying the Nagas as

<sup>33</sup> Sanjib Baruah, 'Confronting Constructionism: Ending India's Naga War', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2003, pp. 321-338. This article is an extension of Chapter Two of his, *India Against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality* (Philadelphia, 1999).

<sup>34</sup> Andrew West, *The Most Dangerous Legacy: the development of identity, power and marginality in the British transfer to India and the Nagas* (Hull, 1999). For this critique, see Jocelyn Linnekin, 'Cultural Invention and the Dilemma of Authenticity', *American Anthropologist*, March 1991, Vol. 93, No. 1, pp. 446-449, p. 447: "...all traditions - Western and indigenous - are invented, in that they are symbolically constructed in the present and reflect contemporary concerns and purposes rather than a passively inherited legacy."

<sup>35</sup> Julian Jacobs, *The Nagas: Hill Peoples of Northeast India* (Stuttgart, 1990).

<sup>36</sup> Paula Banerjee, 'Between Two Armed Patriarchies: Women in Assam and Nagaland', In Rita Manchanda (ed.), *Women, War and Peace in South Asia: Beyond Victimhood and Agency* (New Delhi, Thousand Oaks & London, 2001).

primitives.<sup>37</sup> An exception is Girin Phukon, *Assam Attitude to Federalism* who, however, focuses on the time around the Transfer of Power.<sup>38</sup> Shibanikinkar Chaube's *Hill Politics in North-East India* is certainly a good overview work on the Northeast in regard to theory and context, but the cursory attention of the Nagas is not satisfying.<sup>39</sup> Sanjoy Hazarika's *Strangers in the Mist: Tales of War & Peace from India's Northeast*, though lacking in theory and context, takes the Nagas serious as actors but also deals with the whole of the Northeast.<sup>40</sup> Udayon Misra's *The Periphery Strikes Back: Challenges to the Nation-State in Assam and Nagaland* is, where it deals with the Nagas, an uninspired repetition of the above outlined argument of Indian authors.<sup>41</sup>

Personal accounts on Assam based on his own professional insight, like Nari Rustomji's *Enchanted Frontiers: Sikkim, Bhutan and India's North-Eastern Borderlands* and *Imperilled Frontiers: India's North-Eastern Borderlands* and journalistic works on the Northeast and Nagaland like Nirmal Nibedon's *North East India: The Ethnic Explosion* and his *Nagaland: The Night of the Guerrillas*, although being valuable sources, cannot be considered as scholarly works. Moreover they, like Verrier Elwin's *Nagaland*, seem to be characterised by a self-censorship that clearly is in the interest of the Indian state.<sup>42</sup>

Works on Naga history by Naga scholars themselves such as M. Alemchimba's *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland* and Y.L. Roland Shimmi's *Comparative History of the Nagas: From Ancient Period Till 1826* also suffer from a paucity of historical sources, contextualisation and theorising.<sup>43</sup> Although the books of Atola L. Changkiri, *The Angami Nagas and the British, 1832-1947* and Visier Sanyu, *A History of Nagas and Nagaland: Dynamics of Oral Tradition in Village Formation* have a solid basis of historical sources, they neither subject them to critical scrutiny nor

<sup>37</sup> H. K. Barpujari (ed.), *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vols. I-III (Guwahati, 1990-1992); Idem., *Problem of the Hill Tribes: North-East Frontier*, Vols. I-III (Gauhati, 1970-1981) and Amalendu Guha, *Planter-Raj to Swraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam, 1826-1947* (New Delhi, 1977).

<sup>38</sup> Girin Phukon, *Assam Attitude to Federalism* (New Delhi, 1984).

<sup>39</sup> Shibanikinkar Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-East India* (New Delhi, 1973).

<sup>40</sup> Sanjoy Hazarika, *Strangers in the Mist: Tales of War & Peace from India's Northeast* (New Delhi, 1994). I met Hazarika in August 2000 in Delhi and while he back then saw the Naga question as an inner-Naga one, perpetuated by their own armed groups, two years later he had developed a more sympathetic stand towards the Nagas and their concerns, while keeping the messed-up situation of the whole of the Northeast in view. This notwithstanding, he sees the sixth schedule as unproblematic, see Sanjoy Hazarika, 'India's Northeast: Ethnic Conflict, Peace and Civil Society', *the little magazine*, vol. III, issue 5 and 6, 2002, pp. 36-41.

<sup>41</sup> Udayon Misra, *The Periphery Strikes Back: Challenges to the Nation-State in Assam and Nagaland* (Shimla, 2000).

<sup>42</sup> Nari Rustomji, *Enchanted Frontiers: Sikkim, Bhutan and India's North-Eastern Borderlands* (Bombay, 1971) and Idem, *Imperilled Frontiers: India's North-Eastern Borderlands* (Delhi, 1983); Nirmal Nibedon, *North East India: The Ethnic Explosion* (New Delhi, 1981) and Idem, *Nagaland: The Night of the Guerrillas* (New Delhi, 1983) and Verrier Elwin, *Nagaland* (Guwahati, 1997 [1961]). Cynthia Keppley Mahmood also came across this phenomenon in relation to her experience in Punjab: "...despite a strong commitment to academic freedom in India, a fair amount of self-censorship goes on all the time, especially in peripheral locations." Idem, *Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogues with Sikh Militants* (Philadelphia, 1996), p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> M. Alemchimba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland* (Kohima, 1970) and Y.L. Roland Shimmi, *Comparative History of the Nagas: From Ancient Period Till 1826* (New Delhi, 1988).

contextualise or theorise to a satisfying degree.<sup>44</sup> This has as a consequence that Naga history as narrated by British imperial historians, as Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal* and Sir Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam From 1883-1941* retains its hegemony till today.<sup>45</sup> An exception is Pieter Steyn's *Zapuphiza: Voice of the Nagas* (London, 2002), which breaks the viewpoint of the coloniser and presents us with the perspective of the Nagas. Unfortunately, however, he does not give his work a scholarly form and thus it is unlikely that it will have the desired impact to shatter established historiography.<sup>46</sup>

All works that focus on the post-colonial political history of the Nagas have an introductory historical part that more or less gives the colonial view. Moreover, even the better works among them, like Asoso Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study* and M. Horam, *Naga Insurgency: The last thirty years* do not theorise or contextualise as a rule, and very often do not give their sources. While Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict* does the last, he also misses on the first two.<sup>47</sup>

This short discussion of literature on the Nagas shows that the research into Naga history and politics has only started. The reason for this is the war. This work thus can be seen as part of a new departure.

The methodology used is closely related to my research history. In the second half of 1997 I decided to write my *Magister*-thesis at the Social Anthropology Department of the South Asian Institute of the University of Heidelberg, Germany, on the Nagas. Before that I had done extensive research into historical anthropology and the understanding I thus gained also informs my current thesis.<sup>48</sup> I also had worked on Southeast Asian history, politics, and anthropology,

<sup>44</sup> Atola L. Changkiri, *The Angami Nagas and the British, 1832-1947* (New Delhi, 1999) and Visier Sanyu, *A History of Nagas and Nagaland: Dynamics of Oral Tradition in Village Formation* (New Delhi, 1996).

<sup>45</sup> Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1884) and Sir Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam From 1883-1941* (Guwahati and Delhi, 1997 [1942]).

<sup>46</sup> Pieter Steyn, *Zapuphiza: Voice of the Nagas* (London, 2002).

<sup>47</sup> Asoso Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study* (Delhi, 1974); M. Horam, *Naga Insurgency: The last thirty years* (New Delhi, 1988) and Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict* (New Delhi, 2001). In addition to this three works one could also name Ashikho Daili Mao, *Nagas: Problems and Politics* (New Delhi, 1992); Nehemiah Panmei, 'Naga movement and its ramifications', In R. Vashum, Aleube Iheilung et al (eds.), *Nagas at Work* (New Delhi: NSUD Publication, 1996), pp. 85-100; the personal account of Charles Chasie, *The Naga Imbrogio* (Kohima, 1999); the kind of a source book full of anecdotes, eye-witness accounts, documents and known history by Kaka D. Iralu, *Nagaland and India: The Blood and the Tears* (2000) and R. Vashum, *Naga's Rights to Self-determination* (New Delhi, 2000).

<sup>48</sup> See, for instance, the following: Marshall Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities* (Ann Arbor, 1981); Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley, 1982); Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology makes its object* (New York, 1983); Sherry B. Ortner, 'Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1984, 26, pp. 126-166; Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago, 1985); Maurice Bloch, *From blessing to violence* (Cambridge, 1986); John D. Kelly, 'From Holi to Divali in Fiji: An Essay on Ritual and History', *Man*, 1988, 23, pp. 40-55; Nicholas Thomas, *Out of Time: History and Evolution in an Anthropological Discourse* (Cambridge, 1989); Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi, 1990); John D. Kelly and Martha Kaplan, 'History, Structure and Ritual', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1990, 19, pp. 119-115; James G. Carrier

among them the pre-colonial history of Indonesia, the history of US-American involvement in the Vietnam war, the genesis of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia and state-minorities conflict in Southeast Asia. Although not much of this has gone directly into this thesis, I felt I was in a familiar area in studying the Nagas.

When I decided to work on the war in the Naga hills I started to engage with anthropological literature on war of which most, however, is ethology not anthropology, i.e. separates the reasons for wars among ahistorical (stone age) tribals etc. from the reasons for wars among us historical beings, a distinction that is unjustifiable.<sup>49</sup> Part of this analysis and anthropological and other literature on war that does not make this distinction have gone into Chapter Six where I try to explain why the Nagas resorted to arms and why they continued to fight, and why those who did the actual combat had the widespread support of the population.<sup>50</sup>

In 1998 I signed up with the *International Committee of the Red Cross* as an English-Urdu translator for Jammu and Kashmir for a little bit over a year. I believe that the experiences I had made in this theatre of war, considerably helped my further engagement with the Naga case, but also in the understanding about the dynamics and complexities of comparable armed conflicts in general. The most astounding thing I found was that I had to revise or abandon most of what I

(ed.), *History and tradition in Melanesian Anthropology* (Berkeley, 1992); John and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder, 1992); Kirsten Hastrup (ed.), *Other Histories* (London, 1992); Charles F. Keyes, Laurel Kendall and Helen Hardacre (eds.), *Asian Visions of Authority: Religion and the Modern States of East and Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, 1994).

<sup>49</sup> See the ecological determinism of Marvin Harris, in his works *Cows, Pigs, Wars and Witches: The Riddles of Culture* (New York, 1974); Idem, 'The Yanomamö and the causes of War in Band and Village societies,' In M. Margolis and W. Carter (eds.), *Brazil: Anthropological Perspectives: Essays in Honor of Charles Wagley* (New York, 1979), pp. 121-132; Idem, 'A Cultural Materialist Theory of Band and Village Warfare: The Yanomamö Test', In Brian R. Ferguson (ed.), *Warfare, Culture, and Environment* (Orlando, 1984), pp. 111-140 and Idem, 'Animal Capture and Yanomamö Warfare: Retrospect and New Evidence', *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 1984, 40, pp. 183-201; or the biological determinism of Napoleon A. Chagnon in 'Die soziale Organisation und die Kriege der Yanomamö-Indianer', In Morton Fried, Marvin Harris and Robert Murphy (eds.), *Der Krieg: Zur Anthropologie der Aggression und des bewaffneten Konfliktes* (Frankfurt, 1971), pp. 131-189; Idem, *Yanomamö: The Fierce People* (New York, 1983); Idem, 'Reproductive and somatic conflicts of interest in the genesis of violence and warfare among tribesmen', In Jonathan Haas (ed.), *The Anthropology of War* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 77-104 and Idem, *Die Yanomamö: Leben und Sterben der Indianer am Orinoko* (Berlin, 1994); or the economic determinism of Brian R. Ferguson in his 'Introduction: Studying War', In Idem (ed.), *Warfare, Culture and Environment* (Orlando, 1984), pp. 1-81; Idem, 'A Reexamination of the Causes of Northwest Coast Warfare' In *ibid.*, pp. 267-328 and Idem, 'Explaining war', In Jonathan Haas (ed.), *The Anthropology of War* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 26-55; and for a more recent ahistorical, comparative and cognitive anthropology of war that degenerates into an ethology, see Erwin Orywal, 'Krieg als Konfliktaustragungsstrategie - Zur Plausibilität von Kriegsursachentheorien aus kognitionsethnologischer Sicht', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 121 (1996) pp. 1-48 and that this "ethology" collapses as soon as it is confronted with historical data see the following discussion, *ibid.*, pp. 49-99.

<sup>50</sup> Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, 1985); Georges Balandier, 'An Anthropology of violence and war', *International Science Journal*, 1986, 110, pp. 499-511; Mary LeCron Foster and Robert A. Rubinstein (eds.), *Peace and war: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (New Brunswick, 1986); István Kende, 'Terrorism, wars, nuclear holocaust', *International Social Science Journal* 110, 1986, pp. 529-538; Jack S. Levi, 'The Causes of War: A Review of Theories and Evidence', In Philip E. Tetlock et al (eds.), *Behavior, Society and Nuclear War* (New York, 1989), Vol. 1, pp. 209-333; Thomas Gregor, 'Uneasy peace: intertribal relations in Brazil's Upper Xingu', In Jonathan Haas (ed.), *The Anthropology of War* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 105-124; Thomas Gibson, 'Raiding, trading, and tribal autonomy in insular Southeast Asia', In *ibid.*, pp. 125-145; Clayton Robarchek, 'Motivation and material causes: on the explanation of conflict and war', In *ibid.*, pp. 56-76; Peter J. Bräunlein and Andrea Lauser (eds.), *Krieg und Frieden: Ethnologische Perspektiven* (Bremen, 1995); Antonius Robben and Carolyn Nordstrom (eds.), *Fieldwork under Fire:*



had believed before I arrived there. It took me approximately nine months in the field with access to all sides, readings and discussions also with knowledgeable colleagues, before I was able to understand the different lines of conflict and common interest. This taught me a lesson about the complexities of such wars and how much effort is required to understand them, and though my work is a historical, since I never have been in the Naga hills, nor been able to talk to a wide array of people there, I consider my work as preliminary effort, subject to revision once I do obtain access.<sup>51</sup>

Returning to Heidelberg in spring 1999 I wrote my *Magister*-thesis. In this I established already a narrative of modern Naga political history with the help of secondary sources, available at or via the University of Heidelberg, while clarifying some points also in interviews with Nagas. The thesis questioned concepts of state, nation and nationalism, ethnicity and ethnic group and war and their inherent relationship. At least a little of this has gone into the theoretical part of Chapter Six.

In the summer 2000 I got the offer to continue the work on the Nagas at the University of Hull. I registered for the Ph.D training course during the academic year 2000/2001, and in the course of which I wrote, among other things, several papers for Professor Gurharpal Singh regarding centre-state relations in India, his transfer of the concept of ethnic democracy to the Indian polity and Ernest Gellner's theory of nationalism, material that can be found in Chapter Five and Six.

In March 2001, I went to Bangkok to meet and interview representatives of the NSCN (IM) for about three weeks, where I had especially very extensive talks with its general secretary Th. Muivah and, while nothing directly informed this thesis, it greatly enlarged my understanding of the more recent affairs.

From June 2001 to June 2002 I spent doing research on Naga history in the archives of the British Library in London, in addition to an ongoing series of interviews with Nagas.

*Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival* (Berkeley, 1995); Erwin Orywal, Aparna Rao and Michael Bollig (eds.), *Krieg und Kampf: Die Gewalt in unseren Köpfen* (Berlin, 1996); Hidemi Suganemi, *On the causes of war* (Oxford, 1996).

<sup>51</sup> This experience led me to appreciate, for instance, the following literature on torture, state terror, nationalism and war: Michael Taussig, 'Culture of Terror – Space of Death: Roger Casement's Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1984, 26, pp. 467-497; S. J. Tambiah, *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy* (Delhi, 1986); A. J. Wilson, *The Break-Up of Sri Lanka: The Sinhalese-Tamil Conflict* (London, 1988); Pierre L. Van den Berghe (ed.), *State Violence and Ethnicity* (Niwot, 1990); Imtiaz Ahmed, 'State, military and modernity: the experience of South Asia', *Contemporary South Asia* (1994), 3 (1), pp. 53-66; Carole Nagengast, 'Violence, Terror, and the Crisis of the State', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1994, 23, pp. 109-136; Miles D. Wolpin, 'State terrorism and death squads in the New World Order', In Kumar Rupesinghe and Marcial Rubio C. (eds.), *The culture of violence* (Tokyo, 1994), pp. 198-236; Ronald D. Crelinsten and Alex P. Schmid (eds.), *The Politics of Pain: Torturers and Their Masters* (Boulder, 1995); Joyce Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab: unheard voices of state and guerrilla violence* (London and New Jersey, 1995); Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, *Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogues with Sikh Militants* (Philadelphia, 1996); Sumantra Bose, *The Challenge in Kashmir: Democracy, Self-Determination and a Just Peace* (New Delhi, Thousand Oaks & London, 1997); E. Valentine Daniel, *Chapters in an Anthropology of Violence: Sri Lanka, Sirhalas and Tamils* (Delhi, 1997); Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, 'Trials by Fire: Dynamics of Terror in Punjab and Kashmir', In Jeffrey A. Sluka (ed.), *Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror* (Philadelphia, 2000), pp. 70-90.

Although I was already acquainted with most of what had been published on the Nagas, I decided I would leave that aside and take as little for granted as possible in order to arrive at my findings afresh with the help of new sources and a critical reading of them. Consequently, for the whole year I combed through every relevant volume and folder, and gathered the material which I then wrote up in the following year.

This work therefore is very much anchored in the interplay and articulation of historical anthropology, history and political science.

I analysed and contextualised this narrative via interrogating and comparing its coherence with “itself” and by embedding it into the wider framework, i.e. for one in the wider British imperial enterprise (Chapter One and Three), Southeast Asian history (Chapter Two), ethnogenesis under colonial rule (Chapter Four), Indian post-colonial nation-building (Chapter Five), and Naga nation-formation (Chapter Six).

The thesis therefrom aims to counter the overall shortcomings of the writings on the Nagas as outlined above. These might be summarised as the continuation of British imperial history, the perpetuation of the “invented” and “imagined” argument denying them history, “agency”, the defamation of Nagas as mentally “immature savages”, and finally, the *denial* of the war and its description as “a law and order problem”. All this might be treated as in the service of an ongoing project of domination. Hence I have divided my thesis into six chapters, of which two always demonstrate the dialectic between *domination* and *resistance*.

Chapter One deals with the initial phase of contact between British and Nagas and the diverse manifestations of the former’s desire to subjugate the latter - until this was abandoned due to high costs. This runs against established historiography that claims British imperial indifference towards the Naga hills at this stage and makes the Nagas responsible for British retribution and conquest. Moreover, by embedding British actions into the general context of British imperialism, I show that British movement into the Naga hills at this time were perfectly in accord with the overall imperial project.

Chapter Two attempts to render Naga behaviour in the face of British encroachments understandable. This I do via a careful reading of colonial sources, then by placing them into the wider history of that region and by looking at comparative cases. Here in relation to one Naga group I am able to stress several things distorted or neglected in the established historiography: first, that these hill societies can only be understood when placed into the wider context, which is especially true for the practice of headhunting; second, that the Naga hills were not a murderous zone of headhunting machines; third, that the Nagas were politically conscious of themselves and in contradistinction to their plains’ neighbours; fourth, that they were also aware about the superior power of their centralised neighbours and thus as a rule refrained from provocative acts;

fifth, that when they surrendered they did it out of the belief the victors would not want to stay and finally return to the plains; and sixth, and more implicitly, they also surrendered because they were aware of the general practice of imperialism (i.e. of rule over others, and thus more willing to accept it).

Chapter Three then returns to the British agents, explains their return to and partial conquest of the Naga hills, the way they ruled them and the reasons for retreat. I am able to show here that the British, when the Transfer of Power was nearing, never wanted the Nagas to be independent, as it is widely believed, but were only interested in some safeguards for them, and that also only in the beginning. Further, this chapter describes in detail the specific colonial administration and thus presents us with the basis for rendering the consequences of this rule meaningful in regard to Naga social identity formation.

This process of ethno- or nationgenesis under colonial rule is addressed in Chapter Four. At this juncture I first demonstrate that colonial rule did not have the salutary effects it is professed to have had in colonial historiography. Further, that the impact of colonial administration and Christianity were only enough to produce an élite Naga nation, but inconsequential in this respect for the mass of the Nagas who only were sensitised to their elite's concerns by the cataclysm of the Second World War, staging one of its decisive battles in the Naga hills.

Chapter Five outlines the policy of the post-colonial political Indo-Assamese élite towards the Nagas that was characterised on the one side by lip-services at the centre towards granting free choice to the Nagas and sympathy with them, but on the other side, by a determination to keep them within the Indian union, which found its equivalents in the Indian constitution and in the actions of the Indo-Assamese agents on the spot who treated the Nagas as politically immature savages. It is shown that the Indian state, in the logic of the nation-building process of post-colonial states, employed massive armed force, qualifying to be called state terror and genocide, to bring the recalcitrant Nagas to terms.

Chapter Six expounds how the Nagas, initially voting for immediate return to their independence then acquiesced to an interim solution before they, because of the as insincere perceived Indian policy, again returned to their initial demand. Further, it examines how the Nagas, in emulation of the Indian Congress, fought with non-violent non-cooperation till the violence, employed by the Indo-Assamese administration, became in their eyes intolerable and resulted in them taking recourse to armed resistance. The ensuing war finally not only served as real catalyst for Christianity among the Nagas but also in the same vein for the Naga nation.

## *Chapter One*

### *British Imperial Expansion and Historical Agency – 1820s-1850s*

#### *1.1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>*

That the British never intended to conquer the Naga hills and that this was forced on them by the Nagas themselves is a myth in the modern sense. The aim to defeat the Burmese, to expel them from Assam and to reinstall the native governments in between as a buffer zone, made the hill people surrounding Assam initially into potential allies, to be drawn into the violent conflict and made instrumental in the war efforts. At this stage they are by no means portrayed as negative and treated as equals in the colonial documents. The prospect for economic profit and the discovery of the strategic value of the mountains surrounding Assam then led to the decision to keep it and to reinstall only some of the native governments, and then only as dependent ones. The hill people now were turned from sensible and potential allies into irrational, irresponsible, barbarous savages, of whom the Assamese had to be protected. The reason for keeping Assam under British rule was to safeguard it from these “viles”. In the case of the Nagas the dependent government of Manipur was encouraged to subjugate them. When that stratagem failed and led to retaliations, carried out by the Nagas, the British in turn changed tactics and tried to make them comply with, what they called punishment expeditions. These punishment expeditions involved the foraging into the Nagas’ territory, destroying their villages and defences together with their grain stores, leaving them resourceless and defenceless to the mercy of often hostile neighbours and trying to overawe them into subjugation. Yet when this also failed to show the desired effect, the British turned to add to their strategy the component of the economic break-up and incorporation of the Naga hills into their market sphere, combined with the threat of military force. Simultaneously they were closing in on the Naga hills by settling other cultivator populations around them, as well as allowing the extensions of the tea estates up to the foot hills. But this was all to no avail. The Nagas were under no central rule, which could have made them comply. The terrain and the weather were so difficult for the British that the Nagas, when changing to guerrilla tactics, could not be controlled easily by them. Hence a rational calculation brought the British to disengage from the Naga hills. More than a decade later the British reversed that policy. For reasons lying beyond the Naga hills, they started to conquer them bit by bit, never bringing them entirely under their control (see Chapter Three).

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<sup>1</sup> For orientation the map in the pocket at the end of the thesis may also be consulted.

The Tengimas were part of the later Angamis, and at the time of British arrival were organised in a ranked clan system that can be taken as a segmentary political system (see Chapter Two). The clans rivalled each other for hegemony that expressed itself in tribute and enforced following in case of external threat, thus constituting a parallel penetrated territorial polity based on conflict and consensus. Historically, Southeast Asian, the Tengimas inhabited a refuge area whose inhabitants had developed their identity by stressing individual autonomy and collective consensus in conscious opposition to the hierarchical constituted lowland societies. Since they were aware of the numerical, material, and technological superiority of their centrally organised plains neighbours, they carefully tuned their policy towards them, appeased at one time and deterred on the other. Being at the same time conscious on the fact that it was the very inaccessible nature of their territory that allowed for their independent way of life, they put up staunch resistance when threatened with large-scale invasions, but gave in when resistance seemed futile. Plains kingdoms in Southeast Asia had thus far not seen any incentive to direct control or to subjugate hill regions.

Radcliffe-Brown was at pains to justify such processes in African societies as politics.<sup>2</sup> Politics was the matter of states, and real states were nation-states, and nation-states, in turn, were European or of European descent, since only rational Europeans could devise, erect and man them. Non-Europeans, devoid of self-consciousness, were excluded from progress and history, and thus unable to develop a national consciousness, form a nation, or build a nation-state. These non-nations, had to be ruled by the enlightened nations, in this way conveying legitimacy to the imperial project.<sup>3</sup> So when we speak about nation or non-nation we have to be aware of this legacy, on the normative content of this statement, and the empowering or disempowering consequences that may come with it. The term nation, I would argue, always was more normative than it was descriptive - which is not to deny its relative reality - but to doubt its real reach and extent.

I will argue that the Tengimas were conscious of themselves as political different, and determined to retain that difference, as is proven by their sustained resistance. This consciousness of being different qualifies to be called as national in the sense of a self-conscious political community. To measure and evaluate Tengima nationalism against an idealised modern European nation is not only part of the above mentioned legacy, but in its teleology obstructs our view and inhibits us to understand both phenomena.

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<sup>2</sup> A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, 'Preface' In M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard (eds.), *African Political Systems* (London and New York, 1987 [1940]), pp. XI-XXIII.

<sup>3</sup> Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago, 1995), pp. 22-23.

The evidence is overwhelming that the British had no preconception of the region, in which they were to encounter the hill tribes, who at that time were already called “Nagas” by the inhabitants of the plains – a term unknown to the Nagas. The meeting of the British and the Nagas was the result of the war of the former with the Burmese in 1824-26. The Burmese had invaded Assam and threatened territory of the East India Company (EIC) until the British declared war and decided to expel the Burmese from the Northeast. At first the British did not want to stay in Assam, but rather intended to create a buffer zone between British India and the court of Ava. As long as the Burmese threat continued to exist, the British planned to enlist the hill tribes for purposes of gathering intelligence, maintaining logistics and fighting the Burmese as members of British troops. The British had used hill tribes in this way before. At this historical juncture, the British perceived and portrayed the Nagas with moral indifference. This, however, quickly changed when the British discovered that the Arracan mountain range potentially formed a natural (geopolitical) boundary thus rendering Assam important from a strategic point of view. Immediately following this revelation, strategic and economic reasons for keeping Assam within the empire were brought forward. With an ever increasing accumulation of intelligence, the British fortified their strategic and economic rationale for occupying Assam, as well as the necessity for British civilisation<sup>4</sup> and administration, until they both merged into one. Such rationales were superseded and at the same time justified by a new British awareness of their duty to protect Assam from the “barbarians”, the name then given to the hill tribes. In other words, perception and description of land as well as people varied in accordance with the changing imperial interests.

Interpreting the actions of Cortés during the conquest of Mexico, Tzvetan Todorov suggests that “...in the world of a Machiavelli and a Cortés the discourse is neither determined by the object, which it describes, nor by congruence with a tradition, but follows in its construction only the aim, which it is pursuing.”<sup>5</sup> Todorov explicates this argument with a theoretical analysis of language, beginning with the publication of the first grammar of a modern European language in 1492. This characterised an attitude shift from one of obedience to analysis and the

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<sup>4</sup> “Civilization” and “Europe” by and large took the place of the term “Christendom” to define the West against the rest. G. W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York, 1987), p. 11. About the properties of the concept: “The notion of “wildness” (or in its Latinate form ‘savagery’) belongs to a set of culturally self-authenticating devices which includes, among many others, the ideas of ‘madness’ and ‘heresy’ as well. These terms are used not merely to designate a specific condition or state of being but also to confirm the value of their dialectical antitheses: ‘civilization’, ‘sanity’, and ‘orthodoxy’ respectively. Thus, they do not so much refer to a specific thing, place, or condition as dictate a particular attitude governing a relationship between a lived reality and some area of problematical existence that cannot be accommodated easily to conventional conceptions of the normal or familiar.” Hayden White, “The Forms of Wildness: Archeology of an Idea”, In Edward Dudley and Maximilian E. Novak (eds.), *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism* (Pittsburgh, 1972), pp. 3-38, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Die Eroberung Amerikas: Das Problem des Anderen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), p. 142 (my translation; French in the original: *La conquête de l’Amérique. La question de l’autre*).

concomitant consciousness that one may as well utilise language for practical purposes.<sup>6</sup> This may be likened to what Max Weber has termed the “disenchantment of the world”: the knowledge or belief of being able to understand everything about the conditions of life by way of calculation, in order to dominate them.<sup>7</sup>

For the Spaniards the spread of Christendom provided ideological legitimacy for conquest, expansion, and the hunt for gold. They gave Christianity and took the gold, with material subjugation thus a prerequisite for the spread of Christianity and the taking of the gold. As such, means and ends merged into one. In cases of resistance, the Other had to be seen as inferior, thereby providing justification for conquest.<sup>8</sup> The Other had to be denied equality, was not to be taken as a subject, but as an object. Or, as Todorov phrases it: “The other human is discovered and refused/rejected at the same time.”<sup>9</sup> In this respect, the British may be seen to have followed the pattern of their Spanish forerunners.

Let us now have a closer look at our British conquerors, and what might have driven them to empire, since “[t]he study of empire, even of British society remains essential for an understanding of those societies which were touched by imperial powers.”<sup>10</sup> This is not to say that the Nagas were created by the British. The British imperialists were not that powerful. Communities had older roots (see Chapter Two), and Bayly stresses this,<sup>11</sup> but nevertheless they are (unfortunately) our main source, and their actions made an impact, that well justifies the following excursus.

## *1.2 The Drive for Empire*

The literature on causation and reasons of British imperialism is immense, so the material drawn on here is necessarily selective. While a short account of some of the major arguments of this discussion is necessary, mainly to render the effects that this expansion had on the Nagas meaningful, it is more important to show that the quality of the relations the British entertained with the Nagas was in line with general imperial policy. To state this, is to counter the argument mentioned above and prevailing in the literature existing on the Nagas: namely, that the British did not wish to invade and subjugate the Naga hills, rather that the Nagas brought this conquest upon themselves by raiding British holdings in the Assamese plains, and the British had no choice but to go in and tame these “savages”. Although the British right to have been in the Assamese plains at all is widely challenged today, this is not at all the case with their seizure of the

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>7</sup> Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre* (Tübingen, 1973), p. 594. Weber stresses that this did not mean actual knowledge, only the belief.

<sup>8</sup> Todorov, *Die Eroberung Amerikas: Das Problem des Anderen*, p. 59.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 65, (my translation).

<sup>10</sup> C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British empire and the world 1780-1830* (London, 1989), p. 218.

Naga hills. The reason for it not being so, may be found in the fact that thus it might convey some legitimacy to the successor of the *raj*, the Indian union, whose agents justify their later invasion and occupation by referring not only to the right that the British conquerors had handed down to them, but also by adopting and alluding to the argument brought forward by their forerunners to justify the annexation; that is, that this happened for the Nagas' own good.

There is no perfect agreement on what actually imperialism is,<sup>12</sup> since every definition tries to capture the phenomenon as well as the intentions that were behind its creation. It might be useful to start with Gallagher's and Robinson's definition:

Imperialism, perhaps, may be defined as a sufficient political function of this process of integrating new regions into the expanding economy; its character is largely decided by the various and changing relationships between the political and economic elements of expansion in any particular region and time. Two qualifications must be made. First, imperialism may be only indirectly connected with economic integration in that it sometimes extends beyond areas of economic development, but acts for their strategic protection. Secondly, although imperialism is a function of economic expansion, it is not a necessary function. Whether imperialist phenomena show themselves or not, is determined not only by the factors of economic expansion, but equally by the political and social organization of the regions brought into the orbit of the expansive society, and also by the world situation in general.

It is only when the politics of these new regions fail to provide satisfactory conditions for commercial or strategic integration and when their relative weakness allows, that power is used imperialistically to adjust those conditions.<sup>13</sup>

Gallagher and Robinson stress four points important for our case: the overall economic objective and drive that was behind the whole enterprise and did not necessarily lead to imperialism; whether direct political control was exercised or not;<sup>14</sup> the allowing for the gaining of control over a certain territory not out of an immediate economic interest in itself but out of a strategic rationale, for example to protect the economically esteemed hinterland; and finally they give consideration to the local and global power situation that played a decisive role in whether the imperial decision-making machine went for direct conquest and subjugation under direct administration or for indirect control, or still, to abstain from any interference in the first place. Cain and Hopkins subscribe to this definition, but stress the point that "imperialism" is ultimately

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 178, although with regard to mainstream Indian society.

<sup>12</sup> Dierk Walter, 'Colonialism and Imperialism', In *Encyclopaedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*, Vol. 1 (San Diego, 1999), pp. 355-365, p. 355.

<sup>13</sup> John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *The Economic History Review*, Second Series, Vol. VI., No. 1, 1953, pp. 1-15, pp. 5-6.

<sup>14</sup> "Refusals to annex are no proof of reluctance to control." Ibid., p. 3.



part of what is generally described as “international relations”, that is that states entertain relations and interests beyond their borders, that constitutes an external expansion, but what in the end qualifies for them as “imperialistic” is when these relations turn essentially unequal:

...imperialism is a branch of international relations and not its totality. The distinguishing feature of imperialism is not that it takes a specific economic, cultural or political form, but that it involves an incursion, or an attempted incursion, into the sovereignty of another state. (...) What matters for purposes of definition is that one power has the will, and, if it is to succeed, the capacity to shape the affairs of another by imposing upon it. The relations established by imperialism are therefore based upon inequality and not upon mutual compromises of the kind which characterise states of independence.<sup>15</sup>

To see imperialism as a function, as the aggressive possibility, of the external relations of states enables us to develop an open and non-compartmentalised view on the phenomenon itself. This is to say that imperialism is not limited to the European expansion that took place since the end of the fifteenth century,<sup>16</sup> nor to a specific period of it, but that imperialism had already existed before and still does afterwards and that it was and still is also carried on by non-European polities. In addition we have to free our depiction and narration of political history from the perspective of the state and remind ourselves that imperialism was, especially in the past, carried out by all kinds of socio-political formations that were called empires, kingdoms etc., and in turn also had them as targets. Today, it is especially state-less people, who are the often unrecognised object of imperial policies. “Empire”, so Anthony Pagden, states:

is represented as a mode of political oppression, a denial by one people of the rights – above all the right to self-determination – of countless others.

Empires, it is assumed, are in some sense artificial creations. They are created by conquest, and conquerors have always attempted to keep those they have conquered in subservience. This has been achieved by a mixture of simple force and some kind of ideology; in the case of the Roman Empire this ideology was that of ‘civilization’, the lure of a more desirable, more comfortable and infinitely richer way of life. In the case of the Spanish, French and British empires, it was the same, but reinforced now by differing brands of Christianity.<sup>17</sup>

Having stated this, and thus suggested the *longue durée* of ideas, and also possibly of phenomena, it may be fruitful to take a step back. Subjugation and colonisation, the business of empire-building, was, for Europeans, first rooted in European tradition, praxis and experience.

<sup>15</sup> P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British imperialism innovation and expansion 1688-1914* (London, 1993), pp. 42-43.

<sup>16</sup> Further, that the exerted control was never as total or as unchallenged as European perpetrators liked to portray it, see Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, empire and the world, 1600-1850* (London, 2002).

The British were conscious of themselves being a conquered people and their polity stemming from this conquest. Further, the example of the colonisation of Ireland demonstrated that the model of the Romans was still practicable in the modern world.<sup>18</sup> The Roman empire dominated European political imagination in every way and served as the definite point of reference for any expansionist enterprise.<sup>19</sup> Rome thus delivered a reservoir of examples and ideas to be copied and followed on, or, if needed, learned from and modified. An empire was thus imagined in three different ways: "...as limited and independent or 'perfect' rule, as a territory embracing more than one political community, and as the absolute sovereignty of a single individual..."<sup>20</sup> Pagden sees this conception being "...derived from the discursive praxis of the Roman Empire, and to a lesser extent the Athenian and Macedonian empires."<sup>21</sup> These three ideas of empire illuminate that the first is incompatible with the two ensuing, yet following Aristotle's theory of natural slavery, the Roman Cicero wrote that the provincials had to be ruled for their own good. The Roman empire saw itself as the only power, the only civilisation on earth, and entertained the conviction that there existed a divide between those fully rational and those who were not, between those destined to rule and those to be ruled. Pagden stresses then that ever since Aristotle's theory of natural slavery, the Greek conception of themselves and the *barbaroi*, and the Romans seeing themselves as the only power, the legitimacy for empire, that is to say the rule over others by asserting it is for their own good, was provided for in European ideology.<sup>22</sup> This legacy of ancient classic times of an argument that may justify anything, is still with us today, and was available to the British, as to other European powers, throughout their history. The Roman claim for world rule was succeeded by first the Christian and then the civilising project.<sup>23</sup> Yet, all beginning of empire-building was instigated by the desire for glory achieved through conquest:

This seemingly inescapable desire for territorial expansion through conquest was also bound by a code of aristocratic values which had played a crucial role in the creation of all the earliest overseas empires. for overseas expansion promised to those who engaged in it not only trade and, if they were lucky, precious metals, it also offered the promise of glory, and with glory a kind of social advancement which, before the mid-eighteenth century, could be acquired by almost no other means.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Anthony Pagden, *Peoples and empires* (London, 2001), p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> Nicholas Canny, 'The Origins of Empire: An Introduction', In *The Oxford history of the British empire. Vol. 1. The origins of empire: British overseas enterprise to the close of the seventeenth century* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 1-34, pp. 7-9 and 15. See also Thomas R. Metcalf, 'Ideologies of the Raj', *The New Cambridge History of India*, Vol. III.4. (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 2-3.

<sup>19</sup> Anthony Pagden, *Lords of all the world: Ideologies of empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500- c.1800* (New Haven and London, 1995), pp. 11-12 and 17.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-23.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

The Spaniards set the example that the English, and also the French, tried to emulate initially, but neither the French nor the English had the resources for large-scale conquests or found the conditions as the Spaniards had done. Thus they had to settle for trade and utilising the new territories for agricultural produce, the antithesis of the more glorious conquest. By the eighteenth century the earlier objective of imitating the Spaniards had been forgotten, and now the English set themselves apart by creating their self-image as peaceful traders and supporters of agriculture, not as blood-spilling conquerors.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the British sharply felt the need for some legitimacy for the occupation of other peoples' land, and due to their own history they could not find it in religion,<sup>26</sup> and somehow found it in the

...Roman Law argument known as *res nullius*. This maintained that all "empty things", which included unoccupied lands, remained the common property of all mankind until they were put to some, generally agricultural, use. The first person to use the land in this way became its owner.<sup>27</sup>

This rationalisation was utilised from the 1620s onwards by English colonists (and also by the French). Conquest lost its legitimising value, and it was now the improvement of the land by agriculture that transferred the right of possession over the land to the new settler, supported by John Locke who argued that one only acquires right to property when one has invested labour. Consequently, the hunter-gatherer was as title-less to the land as any wild animal. Moreover, the use of the soil only gave the possibility of building up a true civity and via this conferred sovereignty over it. The conquest of America and later of Australia brought about the claims that hunter-gatherers were sub-human beings, rather like wild animals.<sup>28</sup> Hence, there might have been a direct line from Aristotle's concept of "natural slavery" that justified war against barbarians in order to bring them, or their land, into the *civitas* to the discussions of the Europeans on the legitimacy of their acquisition of foreign lands.<sup>29</sup>

As the Roman and the own European example constituted the background from which experiences and justifications were drawn for the undertaking in the Americas, the Americas in turn represented a case that had shown what to do and what not to for the future. Finally, the loss of the thirteen colonies to Britain later on accelerated the push for territorial conquest that had supplanted the earlier trade relations with Asia and Africa. Cain and Hopkins locate the driving force behind this later British imperial expansion in the metropolitan itself, and thus counter assumptions that an ever turbulent frontier imposed expansion on an unwilling elite in

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 63-64.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 64-68.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-75.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 77-79.

the metropolis.<sup>30</sup> The Glorious Revolution of 1688 consolidated the political power of the land-possessing class, by them having achieved control over parliament and therewith over the main power lines - the legal system, the public expenditure, and defence. In addition to that, agriculture was the most important economic factor until the end of the 1840s, thus combining wealth and power in the hands of the landed class.<sup>31</sup> Initially, the EIC and the South Sea Company were exclusively the concerns of traders and merchants. Yet their position was greatly enhanced with the financial revolution in the 1690s, with the foundation of the bank of England, the recoinage, the evolution of specialised merchant banks in the city of London, the growth of market in mortgages, the increasing use of bills of exchange to settle obligations, the rise of the stock exchange, the development of insurances, and to document all this, the rise of a financial press, and this all in London.<sup>32</sup> The national debt incurred to finance the wars with France helped to establish a closer relationship between the old landed and the new moneyed class. The former discovered the latter's trading companies and their overseas branches as more and more acceptable places for employment and enrichment of their sons.<sup>33</sup> In this way the ruling class and finance became closely interwoven,<sup>34</sup> as were England and its European and overseas empire. When trade fell short of its expectations, war was used to enhance it,<sup>35</sup> and to create a powerful polity, founded on commerce.<sup>36</sup> The decisive role that the wars with France had played in shaping the distinctive features of the British state was demonstrated by John Brewer. From the Glorious Revolution of 1688 onwards until 1783 Britain had fought five major and several minor wars that transformed Britain into what Brewer has termed a "fiscal-military state", in which the military apparatus constituted the growing core of the developing state, around which, through competition among interest groups and the crown, an ever more effective bureaucracy evolved, whose task it was to fuel this military with money and men.<sup>37</sup> The landed classes that dominated parliament managed to retain control over the finances and therefore its relevance in opposition to the crown despite the external threat to the polity. In order to prevent the crown from gaining fiscal independence that would have threatened the achievements of the Glorious Revolution, the commons decided against a general excise and in favour of a land tax, which was under their control, to finance the wars between 1692 and 1713.<sup>38</sup> The Seven Years' War then had increased

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 99-101.

<sup>30</sup> John S. Galbraith, 'The "Turbulent Frontier" as a Factor in British Expansion', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. II., No. 1, Oct. 1959, pp. 150-168.

<sup>31</sup> Cain and Hopkins, *British imperialism innovation and expansion 1688-1914*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 60-62.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>35</sup> John Brewer, *The sineus of power. War, money and the English state, 1688-1783* (London, 1989), pp. 167-178.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 189-190.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 27-29.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 141-148.

state expenditure to an extent that domestic taxes, already pushed to the limits, were not sufficient anymore to deliver the means. Thus, the metropolitan government looked for fiscal revenue to the overseas possessions,<sup>39</sup> formerly the sole field of trade companies in pursuance of trade-goods and markets.<sup>40</sup>

This deduction is in line with the findings of the meticulous study conducted by Michael Mann on Bengal in the time between 1754 and 1793. The state-building process, that was simultaneously underway on the Indian subcontinent as it was in Europe, increased the financial needs also of the EIC that had evolved into a quasi-state structure.<sup>41</sup> Both the British state and the EIC were desperately in need of funds that mutated primarily into the pursuit of taxable populations. Mann calls this situation “double fiscalism” and sees it as the initial major driving force behind British imperial expansion in Asia.<sup>42</sup> Mann identifies the inception of British colonial rule and progressive deprivation of power of the EIC in the middle of the 1760s, when Clive effected the subordination of private factories and enterprises in Bengal.<sup>43</sup> Owing to war debts and the costs that incurred due to the troops stationed in North America, all reforms of the British government after 1763 endeavoured to achieve the appropriation of the EIC-territory, the expansion of administration as well as the structured levying and collection of taxes and custom duties.<sup>44</sup> In turn, the expenditure for the administration and even more so for the military build-up made it necessary to gain control over more new territory to extract its resources to cover the costs.<sup>45</sup> Mann coins this motion machine (perpetuum mobile) “fiscal imperialism” and discerns it as the driving force behind British imperial expansion.<sup>46</sup> The sequence seen necessary to achieve this supremacy was firstly, the provision of military in order to guarantee security against external threats, secondly, the command over tax revenue, and thirdly, the set-up of a jurisdiction and an effective executive.<sup>47</sup> The colonies, argues Mann, were thus no longer the locale for British investors, economic emigrants or political-religious refugees, but served the progressively global interests of the British state.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>41</sup> See also P. J. Marshall, ‘The English in Asia to 1700’, In *The Oxford history of the British empire*, Vol. 1, *The origins of empire: British overseas enterprise to the close of the seventeenth century* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 264-285.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Mann, *Bengalen im Umbruch: Die Herausbildung des britischen Kolonialstaates 1754-1793* (Stuttgart, 2000), p. 12.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 104-105.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 133-134.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 408-410. This is in line with Bayly, *Imperial meridian: The British empire and the world 1780-1830*, p. 10 and 59.

<sup>47</sup> Mann, *Bengalen im Umbruch: Die Herausbildung des britischen Kolonialstaates 1754-1793*, p. 158. Yet this was the ideal, the reality of tax levying was conducted following the principle of try and error, and the exertion of an effective executive remained a wishful thinking, *ibid.*, respectively pp. 226-259 and 348-354ff.

<sup>48</sup> These interests were geopolitical, economical, and fiscal political. *ibid.*, p. 174.

For the subcontinent this was already the case from 1793<sup>49</sup> onwards, and not only since 1857. To state this is to stress the continuum of interest aiming at conquest and incorporation between metropolis and periphery. In the periphery, as Förster shows, there might have been considerable lee-way for decision-making in general and for the forward policy in particular.<sup>50</sup> Therefore we not only have to identify the different agents when trying to make sense of their actions, but also the period they acted in,<sup>51</sup> that is to say the proximate reasons for expansion, to which we will turn shortly. But as Cain and Hopkins have stated “...sub-imperialism does not explain imperialism, and to show that actions on the frontier were not always directed from London is not to explain why the actors were there in the first place.”<sup>52</sup> However, since this is not a work on the reasons for British imperial expansion, we do not have to worry about what seems to be a simple question of weighing the different arguments, but the arguments themselves are not disputed. When Förster sees the governor general as the pivotal figure behind the British drive for conquest, this could be supported by Peers’ findings on the power structure of British India. The governor general possessed considerable power, with the council having only an advisory function. The governor general could only be checked by London, and although London could not be ignored, it was far away. The whole power structure was set up in such a way that nothing could happen without the co-operation of the permanent civilian and military staff, with the secretaries taking a central position, even participating in council meetings.<sup>53</sup> Thus, while Förster sees the single figure of the governor general as major factor for expansion, Peers in turn takes the sub-imperialism even further to the periphery in holding the Anglo-Indian personnel in general responsible. India was conquered by the sword, and as this was the conviction of civilians and officers alike, could only be kept by the sword.<sup>54</sup> Thus, peace was seen as harmful, as reducing vigilance, and war was necessary for growth and survival.<sup>55</sup> Out of about 40,000 British in India in 1830 less than 10 per cent were civilians.<sup>56</sup> The Indian army served more and more as an imperial task force, and India itself was used to station troops made redundant in the post-Waterloo time to remove them from parliamentary scrutiny, and of

<sup>49</sup> See also Cain and Hopkins, *British imperialism: innovation and expansion 1688-1914*, p. 92-93, footnote 141: “The principle measures were the Regulating Act of 1773, Pitt’s India Act of 1784, and the Charter Act of 1793.”

<sup>50</sup> Stig Förster, *Die mächtigen Diener der East India Company: Ursachen und Hintergründe der britischen Expansionspolitik in Südasien, 1793-1819* (Stuttgart 1992), passim. For Förster the periphery is Calcutta, and the decisive figure behind his sub-imperialism is the governor general.

<sup>51</sup> Bernard S. Cohn, ‘The British in Benares: A Nineteenth Century Colonial Society’, In *ibid.*, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi 1990), pp. 422-462, p. 425: “Too often attempts have been made to characterize British attitudes, knowledge of India and Indians and relations with Indians in general terms, without carefully sorting out the periods involved and, more importantly, the type of work done by the British.”

<sup>52</sup> Cain and Hopkins, *British imperialism: innovation and expansion 1688-1914*, p. 321.

<sup>53</sup> Douglas M. Peers, *Between Mars and Mammon: Colonial Armies and the Garrison State in Early Nineteenth-Century India* (London, 1995), pp. 33-39 and 50.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62-66. The omnipresent threat of course also justified the upholding of the military apparatus, plus that expansion was considered as profitable by the officers. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107, 129 and 136-137,

course, charge the Indian tax-payer with their expenses.<sup>57</sup> Yet, even the remaining civilians were imbued with military ethics and pre-occupied with military concerns, due to a militaristic interpretation of Indian society on the one hand, and the consciousness of the fact that their personal self-enhancement was best to be accomplished via military achievement on the other,<sup>58</sup> since civilians and officers alike served in India to improve their material and social predicament. Booty, prize money, and the prospective of escaping the dreadfully slow seniority principle of promotion by some glorious victory contributed to the desire for war among the officers.<sup>59</sup> It was Anglo-Indian militarist establishment, which drove Amherst to war with Burma in the 1820s, despite Amherst being personally averse to war and having explicit orders from London to abstain from any territorial conquest.<sup>60</sup> The garrison state also survived Bentinck's will to reform by simply blocking his work.<sup>61</sup> Adding to this, from the late 1820s onwards the board of directors took a more aggressive stand,<sup>62</sup> bringing Anglo-Indian establishment and London closer, and so Dalhousie still relied on the sword.<sup>63</sup>

Although the periods of scrutiny of the different authors do not overlap (except for Cain and Hopkins, who expressively claim to cover the whole period), we can take it for granted that they intended to make a more general point. Even though Cain and Hopkins, Brewer and Mann argue in favour of the metropolis setting the impulses for expansion, and Förster and Peers locate them more on the scene, we may put them together, and see it as one process. The empire was in essence the result of state-building efforts underway in Europe itself. What happened in India was only an extension of the processes pushed forward in the Gaelic fringes. The French wars served as a catalyst, catapulting the resource-creating and power-base-consolidating measures, ergo, state-building measures – knowledge, ideology, economy – to strengthen the military.<sup>64</sup> Britain's smallness for one provided for its aggressive drive and its success due to its cohesion imposed by its insular compactness.<sup>65</sup> The survival of the British state, but even more of its ruling landed class depended on the outcome of this world wide power struggle with France.<sup>66</sup> These

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-53.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 44-45.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-79.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 145-146 and 150-151.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 213 and 235-236.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 215-217.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 244.

<sup>64</sup> Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British empire and the world 1780-1830*, see especially chapter 4, pp. 100-132. On the consensus in the state-building literature that war and the threat of it made state, see Thomas Ertman, 'The Sinews of Power and European State-Building Theory', In Lawrence Stone (ed.), *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London, 1994), pp. 33-51.

<sup>65</sup> Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850*, pp. 10-11 and passim.

<sup>66</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992), pp. 55-100. Lawrence Stone argues in favour of seeing the British state of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century not as an independent agent, but as one of the ruling class, that, for example, counted about 20,000 males out of a population of six million



landed élites came under stress – ideological and material - with the defeat in the American War of Independence and the French Revolution. Its reaction was a more rigid and standardised élite education, in the course of which the young of the ruling class were imbued with the ethics of manliness, patriotism, and empire, teaching them that they were in fact a martial race, destined to rule and civilise the world. A picture was conveyed of a meritocracy also open, albeit limited, to men of not noble descent, ascetic, patriotic, in the service to their country. This was meant for home consumption to justify their ruling position, yet resulted from 1793 onwards in a martial élite.<sup>67</sup> This brings the circle back to Peers and his concept of a “garrison state” in India. Colley, moreover, reminds us that the congruence of the ideological with the material must not necessarily bother us as a contradiction:

Recognising that an ostentatious cult of heroism and state service served an important propaganda function for the British élite does not mean, of course, that we should dismiss it as artificial or insincere. All aristocracies have a strong military tradition, and for many British patricians the protracted warfare of this period was a god-send. It gave them a job and, more important, a purpose, an opportunity to carry out what they had been trained to do since childhood: ride horses, fire guns, exercise their undoubted physical courage and tell other people what to do. Even more parvenu members of the élite were likely, as we have seen, to have been exposed to an aggressively patriotic curriculum at public school or in the universities. And almost all of them were influenced by an exhilarating sense of expanding British power in the world, a particular kind of arrogance of place which was badly dented but not long depressed by defeat in America. One sees this arrogance, a pride in nation as well as a pride in blood, reflected very clearly in the portraits of the time.<sup>68</sup>

That Colley later on gives voice to the subaltern of the imperial enterprise and strongly argues against a uniform outlook by British actors on the Others and the rest of the world<sup>69</sup> does not have to disturb us here. The decision makers with whom we are concerned and whose sources we are about to utilise will have subscribed to the above outlined world-view. At least they will have done this sufficiently enough to serve us as an ideal-type construct for the sake of giving our analysis a point of approximation. Of course we should always keep in mind that the actors' outlook and motivation, but also their actions were in reality far more complex than we will ever know. This together with the fact that we don't know anything about most of the other actors involved and their praxis should remind us about the scarcity of our picture painted and world evoked.

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people in 1750, but that, nevertheless, had a vital interest in a strong state. Lawrence Stone, 'Introduction', In Idem (ed.), *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London, 1994), pp. 1-32.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., see chapter 4, pp. 147-193.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, p. 178.



### 1.3 The First Anglo-Burman War, February 1824 – March 1825

From August, 12<sup>th</sup> 1765 the EIC was the de facto ruler of the lower Gangetic valley. By 1766, the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa had been added, including “...the present district of Goalpara in the State of Assam [being] ...a border area, separating the Ahom kingdom in Assam from the Company’s dominions.”<sup>70</sup> Although Koch Bihar was made a tributary by 1773, there was no British move to interfere in Assam in any political way. Banerjee sees the reason for that in the purely commercial nature of British interest.<sup>71</sup> Peers, on the contrary, sees the contemporary concept of “natural frontier” as responsible for the lack of British interest into what is nowadays Northeast India. While the Indus river or the Hindu Kush mountains to the north-west and the Himalayas to the north clearly could be taken as such a “natural frontier”, the terrain north and east of Chittagong, on the other hand, with all its hills and jungles, presented itself to the British rather as a zone than a frontier.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the territory was considered as anything but salubrious, the Burmese market as too unpromising, and the Burmese empire as such not perceived as a threat. Otherwise, reasons for war with the Burmese had been given from the time of Hastings.<sup>73</sup> However, the British did interfere in the Assam disturbances, raging from the 1780s,<sup>74</sup> the first time from 1792 – 1794.<sup>75</sup>

The Burmese on the other side of the theatre were asked by the Moamarias, the Singphos and by the Ahom monarch to intervene on their behalf in Assam. Following their annexation of Arakan between 1784 and 1785, the Burmese increased their activity in Chittagong but had no intention of intervening on either side in Assam.<sup>76</sup> Yet in 1819 the Burmese invaded Assam for the second time (the first having been in 1817) and installed themselves in Gauhati (today Guwahati).<sup>77</sup> By 1822 the Burmese had complete control over Assam, subsequently being seen as a province of the Burmese empire.<sup>78</sup> The historical basis of British and Nagas coming into contact includes this Burmese conquest of Assam and Manipur, the Burmese threat of annexing Cachar and Synthia (the latter then considered a dependency of East Bengal), and of invading

<sup>69</sup> L. Colley, *Captives*, pp. 15-16 and passim.

<sup>70</sup> A. C. Banerjee, ‘The East-India Company and Assam’, In H. K. Barpujari (ed.), *The Comprehensive History of Assam Vol. II. Medieval Period: Political. From Thirteen Century A. D. to the Treaty of Yandabo, 1826* (Guwahati, 1992), pp. 300-331, p. 300.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>72</sup> Peers, *Between Mars and Marmion*, p. 57.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 147-149.

<sup>74</sup> This was so, since gangs operating from EIC’s territory were partially responsible for these, see Banerjee, ‘The East-India Company and Assam’, p. 306.

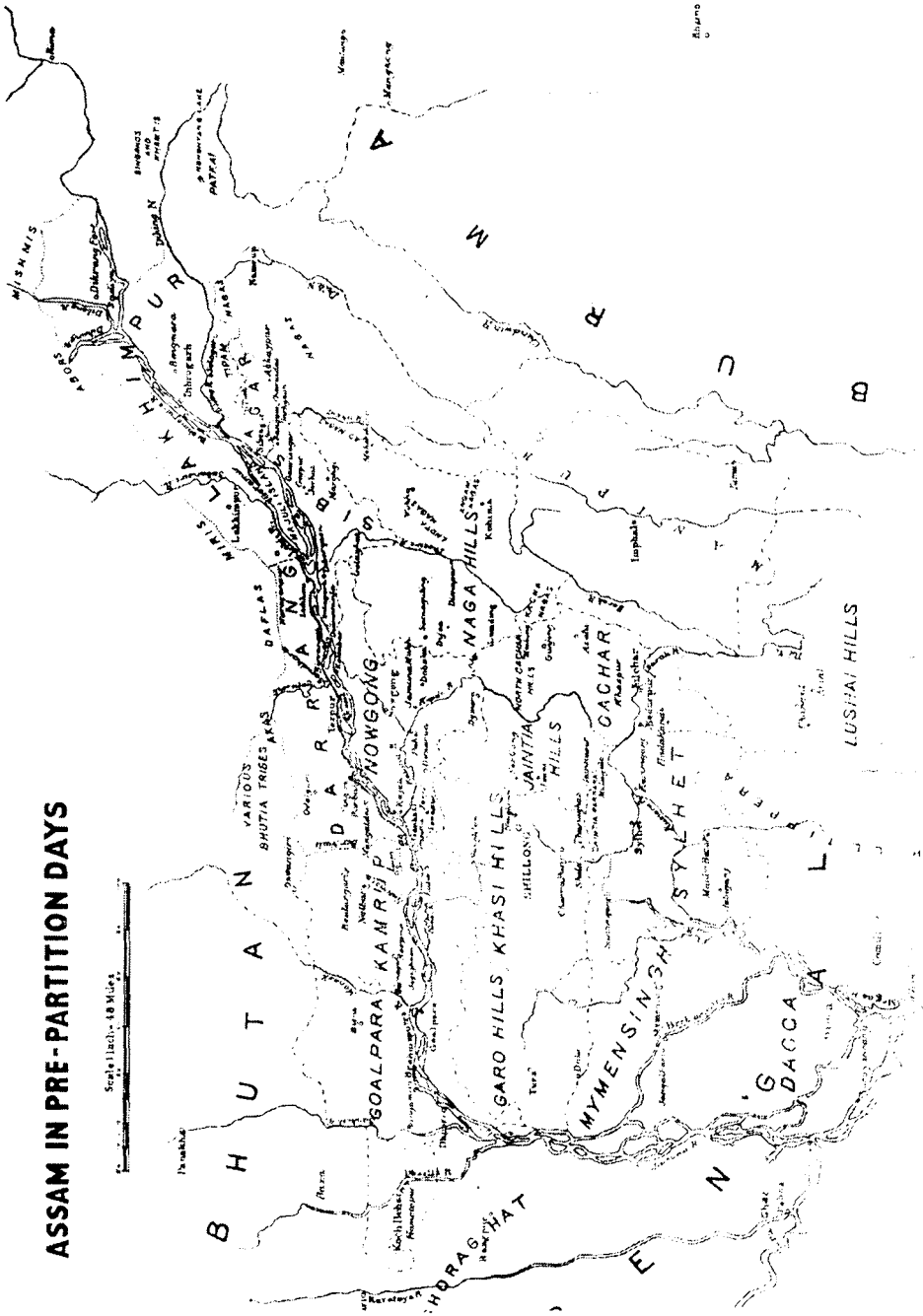
<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306-328. Under the command of Captain Welsh, ‘Welsh’s Report on Assam, 1794’, In Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the The North-East Frontier of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1884), Appendix A., 377-394. That Welsh’s expedition was instigated by the prospect for commerce, see A. C. Banerjee, *The Eastern Frontier of British India 1784-1826* (Calcutta, 1946[1943]), pp. 109-111.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 330.

<sup>77</sup> A. C. Banerjee, ‘Internal Dissensions and Foreign Invasions’, In H. K. Barpujari (ed.), *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. II., (Guwahati: Publication Board, Assam, 1992), pp. 332-352, p. 347.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351.

British territory itself. This was the situation, or how it was described, at least, in contemporary British correspondence. From the same documents we may infer that the British would have preferred to avoid confrontation, respecting one another's respective zones of influence, which



were guaranteed by a buffer zone between the two powers.<sup>79</sup> By February 1824, the British no longer believed in the possibility of a peaceful settlement with Ava.<sup>80</sup> In a private letter, Scott, the then agent to the governor general on the Northeast Frontier, to Swinton, the then secretary to the governor general in Fort William, Scott praised the strategic value of the Assam valley, south of the Brahmaputra,<sup>81</sup> offering evidence for reasons to extend British territory into Assam. In a declaration to the council on February 24<sup>th</sup> 1824, governor general Amherst justified this position with an account of Burmese aggressions against the British, going on to announce war against the Burmese with the aim of dislodging them from Assam, where they threatened the eastern frontier of Bengal.<sup>82</sup> The British suddenly did want to see the border disputes and skirmishes with the Burmese as a threat justifying war, despite Amherst starting with an explicit order to abstain from any offensive action.<sup>83</sup> For Peers it was Anglo-Indian militarism again that construed the Burmese threat into one that was portrayed of being able to incite the whole of India, and/or suspected even the Russians behind it. In addition in 1824 six years of peace had already prevailed putting at risk the vigilance of the troops. Consequently, a show of force was deemed necessary and Amherst was pressured into it by those he was supposed to govern.<sup>84</sup>

That revenue stagnation and decline in the 1820s might have been a further incentive to look for prospective territory.<sup>85</sup> Bengal's agency houses may also have played a not too neglecting part. Established during the 1780s by merchants pooling their resources to cope with the new opportunities and demands of the China trade, they became the locus for investment for company employees, having been barred from conducting private trade by Cornwallis' reform of 1793. These agency houses on the one hand used this capital for commercial expansion into Southeast Asia, and on the other hand "...also became major creditors to the Company administration in India, financing warfare, and the general costs of territorial expansion."<sup>86</sup> They entered into a symbiotic and influential relationship with military-fiscal British-India, and were allowed a great deal of say on company's policy in Southeast Asia and its eventual expansion.<sup>87</sup> The Burmese kingdom and British India were two expanding empires. While the British gave refuge to rebels operating from their territory against the Burmese, the latter tested the former by violating their territory. Both had already known each other intimately for decades before the

<sup>79</sup> *Bengal Secret and Political Consultations* (BSPC), Vol. 320, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1824 – 27. February 1824, listed under Fort William 2<sup>nd</sup> January, Doc. No. 16, letter written by H. Gordon, Lieutt. Dept. Staff to Captain Truman, commanding at the disputed island of Shapuree, dt. Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> 1823.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, listed under Fort William 6<sup>th</sup> February 1824, Doc. No. 6.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, dt. Budderpre, 25<sup>th</sup> January 1824.

<sup>82</sup> BSPC, Vol. 321, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1824 – 9<sup>th</sup> April 1824, listed under Fort William, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1824, Doc. No. 1, dated 24<sup>th</sup> February 1824.

<sup>83</sup> Peers, *Between Mars and Mammon*, pp. 145-146.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 150-152.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>86</sup> Anthony Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in South East Asia 1770-1890* (London, 1998), pp. 40-42.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

British finally decided to wage war. Thus we may say that although the Burmese were expansionist towards the smaller kingdoms in their neighbourhood, they did not seek a full-scale war with the British, and were thus completely taken aback by their response and assault even on mainland Burma. This is to say that the evidence seems to agree with Peers, and that it was Anglo-Indian militarism that provoked and exaggerated the Burmese threat to give pretext for further conquest.<sup>88</sup>

On 5<sup>th</sup> March 1824, the official proclamation of war against the Burmese by the governor general followed. The initial aim proclaimed in the proceedings was to reinstall the smaller kingdoms as a buffer zone between the two bigger powers,<sup>89</sup> although the ultimate aim was already to strike at Rangoon.<sup>90</sup> By April 1824, the British were planning to attack Ava, were already in Gauhati, and were hoping to use the hill tribes to expel the Burmese from Manipur.<sup>91</sup> Yet, the whole region was still a veritable *terra incognita* to the British; their efforts then remained largely limited to the gathering of intelligence.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., pp. 138-145. For a detailed discussion of Anglo-Burmese affairs, that though it wants to come to a different conclusion, does support our argument with its data, see A. C. Banerjee, *The Eastern Frontier of British India 1784-1826* (Calcutta, 1946). Nirode K. Barooah, *David Scott in North-east India 1802-1831: A Study in British Paternalism* (New Delhi, 1970), pp. 63-87 and 230-231, shows that Scott, who was then commissioner of Koch Bihar, and later became agent to the governor general on the Northeast Frontier, and of whom we will hear soon more, might have been one of the main propagators for territorial gain and war with the Burmese, who in turn might have been out only to consolidate their provinces.

<sup>89</sup> BSPC, Vol. 321, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1824 – 9<sup>th</sup> April 1824, listed under Fort William, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1824, Doc. No. 2.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., Doc. No. 4 and 5.

<sup>91</sup> BSPC Vol. 322, 20. April 1824 – 28<sup>th</sup> May 1824, listed under Fort William, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1824, Doc. No. 8, letter from Scott to Swinton.

<sup>92</sup> BSPC Vol. 322, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1824 – 28<sup>th</sup> May 1824, listed under Fort William, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1824, Doc. No. 31 and 32, To Swinton from Quarter Master Generals Office, dated 10<sup>th</sup> April, signed Stevenson, who transmitted a paper by Lieut. Fisher, Deputy Quarter Master General, dated Sylhet, 26<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1823. Again, the context is the conquest of Assam and the plan to push the Burmese out of Manipur and the strike against Ava. Here also the lack of knowledge about the terrain emanates dominantly out of Fisher's report on Manipur.

#### “Copy of Munnipoor

In proportion as the boundaries which are the object of the present inquiries are removed from the field of our own immediate observations the difficulties attendant upon the attainment of a true knowledge of their topography, internal condition, resources and power, become increased, we are reduced to attend for our information upon the reports of Natives generally ignorant, careless and credulous, and all times induced by jealousy and apprehensions wilfully to misrepresent the subject of our researches. The only chance therefore of eliciting the truth is that which is afforded by a comparison of the reports of different individuals unacquainted with each other, though all the accounts which may be supposed to involve calculation must be received with distrust no data existing from which they could be formed.-

#### Topography.

The modern name Munnipoor by which this country is commonly designated in India, was originally only applied to its Capital City.-

The name Capsay under which it is discovered by Travellers in Burmah is totally unknown both to the Natives of the Country and to the People of Bengal and Cachar, but in contradiction to the opinions entertained by some late authors, Mekhley is the appellation by which it is recognized in all the writings of the inhabitants. Goudharbdis, is the ancient name under which it is mentioned in the Puranas ... [and] being compounded of two Sanscrit words Ganoharl an order of Demigods and des a region or country.-

The inhabitants are known in India by the appellation Moglye, the origin of which is not now known though it is possible only a corruption of Moitye the name by which the natives of Munnipoor distinguish themselves.-

It is separated on the north from Assam by a continuation of the same range of mountains which divide that Country from Cachar, on the East & South it is bounded by Burmah, from which it is parted on the former frontier

Scott may be seen to have propagated the annexation of the Assam valley for strategic and health reasons - a tenor which runs through all of his reports.<sup>93</sup> Thereafter, Scott referred to the hill tribes and for the first time mentioned the Nagas to be utilised as auxiliaries:

With a view to bring the Several hill Tribes to a closer intercourse with us and to conciliate and attach them to our Govt., we think it would be very desirable to endeavour to entertain men of the Several Tribes, Say one Company of Nagas (...) to form a part of the Sylhet local corps (...). This would gradually introduce a familiar intercourse with these Tribes at present Totally unknown to us, tho[ugh] little doubt can exist but they may be made extremely useful, if we can attach them to our Interests.<sup>94</sup>

The relation of those hill tribes to the interests of the British at that time in history is also clear: the British clearly wanted them to be instrumental against a territorial rival, rather than simply leaving them to their own devices. The British worried about the route from Cachar to Manipur. They had tried to send a large force under general Shuldham via that route into Burma in early 1825, but had to give up this plan due to extremely difficult terrain.<sup>95</sup> Only when reading Pemberton it comes clear that Shuldham failed due to his lack of local knowledge. Close to the route Shuldham had chosen, was another one, called the Kala Naga route, due to the name of a

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by the Neengtee River, and on the west it has Cachar and Tipperah, on which side the boundary is formed, partly by a range of mountains and partly by the Soormah and Barak Mulla-

The length from North to South is commonly stated as 3 Days journey or about 30 miles and the breadth from East to West is by various accounts represented as 15 days but of that number 7 days journeys are among the hills where the horizontal distance cannot be reckoned more than four miles hence the probable breath is about 100 miles and the area 3000 British square miles of the quantities contained in each, of the natural divisions of this Superficies, no estimates can be obtained but it is probable the greater portion is occupied by hills exclusive of the mountains in the great northern range... . The basis of these mountains are covered by forests, trees and thick underwood, and they are entirely uninhabited, it being pretended that they are the abodes of Supernatural beings.”

Anthony Giddens, *The nation-state and violence* (Cambridge, 1985), was right, it was all about gathering and storing of intelligence, but it also becomes evident that the sources colour the information not only to their knowledge, but also to their interest, as the Manipuris here obviously have denied the existence of hill tribes with which they must have had frequent and close contact. At the latest it becomes clear here, that if something was ever written about the Nagas already, either by Ptolomea in his *Geography* or by old Indian texts, it not had any impact on the British at the time of contact, they were completely ignorant of them, also exemplified by the next document, *ibid.*, Doc. No. 33, Extracts from Dr. Francis Buchanan's Journal relating to Munnipore:

“Page 132. In ascending the Kiaynduayn river, you have Burma towns and villages on your right but after a months journey you come to a nation on the left named Aynguin, inhabiting scattered villages through this Country is the best road to Munnipore,..[who] are a very rude, fierce tribe, but raise a great deal of rice.”

and with which we come closer to possible Naga terrain.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. No. 8, listed under Fort William 14<sup>th</sup> May 1824. Scott dreamt about turning present day Khasi hills into a breeding ground for “...a race of hardy European soldiers.” See Major Adam White, *A Memoir of the late David Scott: Agent to the Governor General on the North-East Frontier of Bengal and Commissioner of Revenue and Circuit in Assam* (Guwahati, 1988 [1831]), p. 21.

<sup>94</sup> BSPC Vol. 322, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1824 – 28<sup>th</sup> May 1824, listed under Fort William, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1824, Doc. No. 8.

<sup>95</sup> S. K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations 1771-1826* (Gauhati, 1949), pp. 546-547.

village were the route started, and by which Gambhir Singh soon was to proceed.<sup>96</sup> This shows how dependent the British, at least at that stage, were on local agency. However, then they wanted to delegate the responsibility for the Kala Naga route to the respective Naga chiefs, to whom they intended to provide the necessary tools for maintaining the track. The governor general-in-council desired “...to conciliate the Naga and Cookee Chiefs on the frontier of the Sylhet District...” This was supposed to be achieved by the diplomacy of presents:

There are I understand 5 Nagha Chiefs between Cachar and Munnipoor the service of all might be steadily engaged by the Distribution of presents of woolen Cloth, Scarlet and Blue Hindoostaanee female ornaments, Tobacco, Spirituous Liquours, Salt Fish, onion and Garlic, articles much in request with them as are Goats, Dogs and Geese.<sup>97</sup>

Gambhir Singh, the former *raja* of Manipur who had fled into British territory to escape the Burmese, was to go to Manipur accompanied by a detachment of sepoy commanded by an European officer. Besides, he was to collect detailed information about the route. Singh received his instructions from Tucker, the commissioner of Sylhet:

...above all it is essential to conciliate the Tribes of Naghas inhabiting the Hills; you will when in their neighbourhood insert the names by which the different Tribes are distinguished, the names of their Chiefs, which amongst them are inclined to our Interests, and which appear to favour the Burmahs you will also State what appears to you the most likely methods of Established a friendly intercourse with them; whether by Presents in money or in kind and what articles are in estimation, ferocious or mild and humane, their food; whether the products of the earth are reared or whether they Subsist on animals killed in the Chase. whether they Trade with their neighbours and in what articles, and at what markets. You will also ascertain whether they any of the Nagas are willing to serve as Sepoys, if so, the Havildars and Naicks will be Selected form their own body. The Private Sepoy will receive a monthly allowance of 5:8 and the officers proportionally greater according to their rank. When engaged in the field this allowance will be increased, and in Case of being wounded So as to be unfit for further service they will receive pensions for life.- (...) 50 Sepoys 1 Naick and 1 Havildar from the Naga Tribes will be required, a Statement of the pay of their Several grades is appended, you will communicate with them and if willing to enter on these Terms send them to Sylhet.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>96</sup> R. B. Pemberton, *Report on the eastern frontier of British India* (Gauhati, 1966 [Calcutta, 1835]), pp. 53-56. General Shuldham had a forerunner in captain Verelst, who already tried and failed due to the difficult terrain to enter Manipur from Cachar in 1763 in order to expel the Burmese, see J. B. Bhattacharjee, *Cachar under British Rule in North East India* (New Delhi, 1977), p. 20.

<sup>97</sup> BSPC Vol. 322, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1824 – 28<sup>th</sup> May 1824, listed under Fort William, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1824, Doc. No. 9.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. No. 31, listed under Fort William 21<sup>st</sup> May 1824, Translation of a letter from Tucker to G. Singh.



The Nagas in question here, according to Pemberton, were the Kabui Nagas; Pemberton spells them "Kubooee". The requested intelligence on them included the names of the tribes and those of their respective chiefs. Moreover, the instruction was also to find out about their political

inclination, whether they were receptive to presents, and if they were more induced to war than to peace, what their modes of subsistence were and with what and where they traded, the quality of their relations with their neighbours and whether or not they were willing to serve in the company troops. The gathering, storage and use of intelligence became an important precondition for the exaction of power, as demonstrated by Giddens.<sup>99</sup> This production of knowledge was already, but not long before, practised for similar reasons in another colonial society, in Scotland, to salvage the “savage Gael”, before it was practised in India from 1783 onwards.<sup>100</sup> That this was not only necessary for conquest, but also for keeping what one had conquered, and hence was part not only of the British empire, but of a world-wide effort in state-building (see Chapter Three).<sup>101</sup>

The Nagas under consideration here were those living between Cachar and Manipur.<sup>102</sup> In a letter to Swinton dated 29<sup>th</sup> May 1824, Scott reported his survey of Assam, this time not only reiterating the strategic reasons for the annexation of Assam, but adding and listing Assam’s economic potentials. Additionally, he argued that the surrounding tributary hills states would be more than willing to accept British protection, thus forming a buffer zone around Assam against the Burmese.<sup>103</sup>

On 10<sup>th</sup> September 1824 the commander in chief demanded an exact survey of Assam and the bordering regions to prevent future surprises by the Burmese as well as to establish an infrastructure which would enable the fast deployment of troops. Ergo he asked for the annexation of Assam in one way or the other.<sup>104</sup> A month later, the future political aims were formulated as follows:

Resolution of Government in the Secret Department (...) the accomplishment of the desirable objects of expelling the Enemy from the Territory of assam and of making such arrangements with the Native Chiefs of that Country, and with the neighbouring hill tribes as may be best calculated to oppose an effectual ban to the Establishment of the Burmese power in that quarter.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Pemberton, *Report on the eastern frontier of British India*, p. 56 and pp. 173-174; Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*.

<sup>100</sup> C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, pp. 124-125.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 126. For a similar state-building on the part of the Burmese empire, see William J. Koenig, *The Burmese Polity, 1752-1819: Politics, administration, and Social Organization in the Early Kon-baung Period* (Michigan, 1990), p. 31.

<sup>102</sup> BSPC Vol. 322, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1824 – 28<sup>th</sup> May 1824, listed under Fort William, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1824, Doc. No. 31,

Translation of a letter from Tucker to G. Singh.

<sup>103</sup> BSPC Vol. 323, 4<sup>th</sup> June – 9<sup>th</sup> July 1824, Doc. No. 15, listed under Fort William 11<sup>th</sup> June 1824, letter from D. Scott, Agent to the Governor General to G. Swinton Esq., Secretary to the Secret and Political Department, dated Gowalpara, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1824. Scott and Swinton had been fellow-students at Fort William College, see Barooah, *David Scott in North-east India 1802-1831: A Study in British Paternalism*, p. 6.

<sup>104</sup> BSPC Vol. 324, 16<sup>th</sup> July 1824 – 10<sup>th</sup> September 1824, Doc. No. 1, listed under Fort William 10<sup>th</sup> September 1824, minute by the Commander in Chief, Secret Department.

<sup>105</sup> BSPC Vol. 325, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1824 – 19<sup>th</sup> November 1824, Doc. No. 6, listed under Fort William 8<sup>th</sup> October 1824 “To the Agent on the Northeastern Frontier To D. Scott Esqre Agent to the Governor General on the North East Frontier from Swinton.” dated *ibid*.



It was this objective that from now on directed the British policy towards the hill communities. Swinton ordered Tucker to mobilise the Nagas, added that other hill tribes in Chittagong had already proved useful to the British, and suggested a “satisfactory arrangement” was to be made with Nagas and other hill tribes. That is, Swinton authorised Tucker to undertake all necessary steps to secure their support and to charge the political department with the incurring expenses.<sup>106</sup> We can clearly see how the hill people, inhabiting the more inaccessible zones between the two extending empires became drawn into their war from a very early moment onwards.

#### ***1.4 The British Annexation of Assam, March 1825 – June 1828***

A few months later the governor general released a resolution declaring that, once the Burmese forces had been expelled, Assam would be transformed provisionally into a commissioner-ship with Scott as senior commissioner. Scott was ordered to negotiate arrangements with the native princes and with the tribes bordering Assam. This change in policy instantly altered the British perspective of the hill people and the language portraying them:

As a general measure of Police, no arrangement burns so immediately and urgently important, as the pacification and settlement of the wild hill tribes of Assam, and the protection of the inhabitants of the low lands from their cruel savages and inroads.<sup>107</sup>

This is the first time the British depicted the hill-people as “cruel”, “savages” etc., yet it is striking how much the relationship between British and Nagas was still an equal one at that stage,<sup>108</sup> and perfectly illustrates that the superiority of the British is a post-facto fabrication, as Colley has demonstrated.<sup>109</sup>

In a note written on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1826, Swinton stated that a natural boundary had been discovered in the form of the Arracan Chain. On this basis, he argued that the plan of restoring the kingdoms between the company’s territory and the Burmese should be dropped, with the whole area rather to be brought under British protection and rule, under which it would flourish again. In addition to the strategic rationale he also brought forward the economic evidence in favour of annexation of the conquered territory, so often produced to him by Scott, and against the old plan of creating a buffer zone: the ease of reaching the heartland of the Burmese from

<sup>106</sup> BSPC Vol. 328, 7<sup>th</sup> January 1825 – 4<sup>th</sup> March 1825, Doc. No. 29, from Swinton to Tucker.

<sup>107</sup> BSPC Vol. 329, 11<sup>th</sup> March 1825 – 29<sup>th</sup> April 1825, Resolution of the Gov. Gen. in Council, dated & listed under 5<sup>th</sup> April 1825. In this resolution only the pacification of Assam and the surrounding hill tribes and the policing of the former was decided, not yet what had to be done with Assam in the future.

<sup>108</sup> See for example BSPC Vol. 337, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1826 – 27<sup>th</sup> April 1826, Doc. Nos. 31 and 34, listed under Fort William 17<sup>th</sup> March 1826.

<sup>109</sup> Colley, *Captives*.

Arracan; the salt and timber there; the access it provided to the markets of Southern China in Yunnan via Assam and Manipur; and the possibility of command over traffic with Siam and the control over harbours and goods of this area, hence liberating the British from dependency on Bangkok.<sup>110</sup>

Nearly two years later, in February 1828, Scott wrote to Swinton how tranquil Assam had become, and propagated the annexation of Assam, instead of restoring the Assam kingdom as a dependent one.<sup>111</sup> For support for his argument he referred to captain Neufville, who was, according to Scott, well acquainted with this area and its tribes, and who was also of the opinion that Assam would benefit from the superior administration of the British.<sup>112</sup> Shortly after Scott had made his proposal for keeping Assam, Swinton conveyed to him the decision of the governor general-in-council to retain for the time-being only Lower Assam. This meant the restoration of a native kingdom, albeit dependent, in Upper Assam. This decision ran contrary to what Scott, Neufville, and also Swinton had in mind at that point, since the latter also had previously given his backing to the incorporation of the entire area and had labelled the tribes, which were now considered by him and the other British as “wild” and “intractable” frontier tribes.<sup>113</sup>

But matters, so it seems, were not yet settled, since in May 1828 Scott wrote to Stirling, an assistant of Swinton's, now supporting the restoration of a native regime. Stirling, it appears had conveyed to him his objections beforehand. Now it was the government that wanted to retain the whole of Assam. Exceptionally, rather than obeying the convention of arguing for an extension of British authority under any circumstances, as was the rule for officers on the frontier, and as he had done in the past, Scott suddenly was convinced that regarding the hill tribes, there was no trouble to be expected due to their peaceable demeanour.<sup>114</sup> What had changed Scott's opinion was his more intimate knowledge of the locality. He was convinced that otherwise unrest was to be expected from the disempowered Assamese nobility. Calcutta, on the other hand, reconsidered things on grounds of the prospective gain in revenue.<sup>115</sup> So, Stirling replied that the governor general-in-council would take his view into consideration but wanted to wait before coming to a final decision, adding that in the case of Assam having recovered – population-wise – from its impoverished state, it then might easily pay for a proper (i.e., British) administration.

<sup>110</sup> BSPC Vol. 339, 27<sup>th</sup> April 1826 – 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1826, Doc. No. 5, listed under Fort William 12<sup>th</sup> May 1826, note by the Secretary. In *ibid.*, Doc. 6, another note by Swinton where he argued for the retention of the southern Burmese territories Mergui and Tavoy, because of the safe ports in this area.

<sup>111</sup> BSPC Vol. 350, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1828 – 25<sup>th</sup> April 1828, Doc. No. 4, listed under 7<sup>th</sup> March 1828, Scott to Swinton, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1828.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. No. 8, Swinton to Scott, dated *ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> BSPC Vol. 351, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1828 - 27<sup>th</sup> June 1828, Doc. No. 115, listed under Fort William, 27<sup>th</sup> June 1828, from Scott to Stirling Esq., offg. Secy to Gov. in the Sect. and Pol. Dept., dated 26<sup>th</sup> April 1828.

<sup>115</sup> Barooah, *David Scott in North-east India 1802-1831*, pp. 130-156.

The governor general, via his secretary, continued his missive with a prediction on the future prosperity of Assam, emphasised the business aspect of the whole undertaking and then mentioned the duty of the British government to act as guardian of the eastern provinces. For this he used the tribes as an excuse for keeping Upper Assam: "As the British Govt. is charged with the entire Mily[tary] defence of the Province and must necessarily act as Guardian of the Eastern Frontier which is encompassed by so many barbarous and Turbulent Tribes."<sup>116</sup> This is all the more astounding when one considers that Scott, who was on the eastern frontier and not like the governor general together with Stirling in far away Calcutta, had only just conveyed to Fort William that there would in fact be no problem with the tribes. Stirling, nonetheless, ordered Scott to build a line of fortifications to fence off the tribes, for the moment.<sup>117</sup> In other words, the tribes were to remain beyond the frontier, not within it. Furthermore, Stirling instructed Scott to report the history of incursions into the territory that was to be annexed since it had been conquered, as well as its past revenues. Based on these, Scott was to calculate, prospective future revenues and had to facilitate a cost-benefit analysis of what was expected to be needed for the upholding of order and what was to be the possible surplus.<sup>118</sup> Scott, the most important man based on the frontier had turned from a propagator of annexation into one who supported the restoration of the native kingdom. Fort William, however, from a very early moment onwards, pursued the extension of direct control over Assam.

### *1.5 Pushing the Frontiers, February 1831 – October 1839*

The British and the Nagas had come into contact due to the war between the former and the Burmese. As long as the British did not want to stay in this area, they considered the Nagas as independent people; they wanted to utilise them for their war efforts, but there was no talk about "tribes", "savages" or "barbarians". Once strategic and economic reasons had been brought forward that made the British want to keep Assam, the Nagas and other hill people turned into bloodthirsty savages against whom Assam had to be defended, that is to say they were transformed into the very reason why the British had to annex Assam. In addition to that the superiority of British administration was to redeem the people from their savageness and uplift them to the one and only civilisation, the British.<sup>119</sup> Here the aspired objective simultaneously was the one delivering legitimacy – the British had the moral obligation to annex what they deemed profitable, and hence desirable to. This smokescreen seemed to protect against possible self-

<sup>116</sup> BSPC Vol. 351, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1828 - 27<sup>th</sup> June 1828, Doc. No. 116, listed under Fort William, 27<sup>th</sup> June 1828, from Stirling to Scott, dated 27<sup>th</sup> June 1828.

<sup>117</sup> A technique that had already been practised against Scottish highlanders, see Colley, *Britons*, p. 117.

<sup>118</sup> BSPC Vol. 351, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1828 - 27<sup>th</sup> June 1828, Doc. No. 116, listed under Fort William, 27<sup>th</sup> June 1828, from Stirling to Scott, dated 27<sup>th</sup> June 1828.

<sup>119</sup> On the British belief that they were the chosen people of providence, see Colley, *Britons*, especially Chapter 1.

criticism as well as against that from others. The argument of good government and civilisation was only to be countered by force, and if only in the form of a shifting power balance.

The decision to keep Assam and to annex Cachar and the installation of dependent governments in Upper Assam and Manipur brought the British to the foot of the hills separating Assam from Burma. The British intention to design the plains adjoining to the hills to their gain, to exploit them economically by the way of searching for natural resources, as well as by settling farmers there who could be taxed and encouraged to grow cash crops, added an additional incentive to have a closer look at the hills themselves. First, by surveying them to find out whether there were profitable resources in the hills, and second, to secure the plains by bringing the hills under control and to open up and secure communications from Manipur to Assam through exactly these hills. Therefore, the British saw it as beneficial to subjugate the Nagas between Assam and Manipur, and, because it presented itself as the cheaper variant, asked the state of Manipur to do that job for them. The Nagas there, the Angamis, resisted and retaliated against British held territory itself. The British then decided to take the matter into their own hands and planned to make the Angamis pay with one punishment expedition. A punishment expedition was a military force entering the territory of the Other, forcing its way into their villages, killing those who resisted, burning down the village and the grain stores, driving those surviving into the jungle and leaving them to the mercy of often hostile neighbours and to starvation. Since there rarely was a real battle to be won, or a head of state or regime to be defeated, war had to be waged on the people,<sup>120</sup> which reminded some classical educated officers of the Bacchanalian, and is, due to its rare evocative quality, worth a longer quote:

The village being situated on rocky eminence, surrounded by jungle, in which the enemy had taken refuge; to secure our position, it became necessary to set fire to the houses skirting the jungle – but, being filled with grain, it extended to the whole village, and soon presented a scene strangely contrasted – looking upwards, a lofty pillar of fire rose up from the devoted village, and, beyond it, a dense column of smoke towered up to the highest heaven, presenting an object of great sublimity. Beneath, a strange Bacchanalian scene of license rose upon the view – some of the soldiers and camp-followers were shooting pigs and fowls – others were roasting them before the fire – some were searching for plunder, and running about in the gay dresses of the Cassyas – a few were eagerly searching for their arms to carry off as trophies, whilst other joyous souls made free with their spirituous liquors they all made admirable cheer for the evening, and the free spirit of a camp reigned throughout.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>120</sup> G. J. Bryant, 'Pacification in the Early British Raj, 1755-85', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XIV, Oct. 1985, No 1, pp. 3-19, p. 3 and H. L. Wesseling, 'Colonial Wars: An Introduction', In J. A. de Moor and H. L. Wesseling (eds.), *Imperialism and War: Essays on Colonial Wars in Asia and Africa* (Leiden, 1989), pp. 1-11, pp. 2-5.

<sup>121</sup> White, *A Memoir of the late David Scott*, pp. 16-17. Although documented during a campaign against the Khasis, then written "Cassyas", it will not have been different among other peoples and gives us a faint idea about what normally was left out of the reports.

In February 1831 captain Francis Jenkins, the new agent to the governor general on the Northeast Frontier, and Pemberton were assigned to survey most of the mountain area between Assam and Burma.<sup>122</sup> Worries about continuing raids by the Singphos and fears that they might be turned into an instrument of the Burmese intensified the survey activity<sup>123</sup> and brought the British into direct contact with Angami Naga territory.<sup>124</sup> Two reconnaissance tours were undertaken through Angami territory, the one mentioned above by Pemberton and Jenkins, and another one by lieutenant Gordon, Gambhir Singh and a Manipur levy a year later. Both were strong forces, the first one counted in total around 1,500 men, but both had literally to fight every step of their way, making heavy use of their guns which, so the behaviour of the Angamis suggested, were hitherto unknown to them. The Angami clans united and even went so far as to destroy their villages, stored food, and crops in order to leave to the intruders only a scorched earth to subsist from.<sup>125</sup>

In the process of 1832-33 Cachar was annexed by simply informing the local powers.<sup>126</sup> This was done for two reasons: first, the British wanted to encourage immigration of *ryats* from the “adjoining districts” of Dacca and Sylhet into Cachar to extend cultivation and therefore to increase revenue.<sup>127</sup> Second, they hoped to establish a line of communication (i.e., a road) between Assam and Bengal via central Cachar.<sup>128</sup> Cachar, although in a desolate condition due to perpetual internecine war since 1816, was always considered by the British as possessing a lucrative potential. Thus when Gambhir Singh of Manipur finally murdered the *raja* of Cachar Govindachandra the British seized the opportunity and Cachar,<sup>129</sup> on the pretext of Govindachandra having failed to produce a heir, as Mackenzie extrapolated,<sup>130</sup> without mentioning that it was the British government that had prevented him from adopting one.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>122</sup> BSPC Vol. 360, see the whole of Fort William, 4<sup>th</sup> February 1831 and especially Doc. No. 1, listed under Fort William, 11<sup>th</sup> February 1831.

<sup>123</sup> BSPC Vol. 361, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1831 – 26<sup>th</sup> August 1831, Doc. Nos. 1 and 2, Minute by the Governor General in Council, listed under 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1831, dated 13<sup>th</sup> July 1831, where it was decided to gather more information (geographical, political and military). Jenkins and Pemberton got assigned the task for finding the best route for military from Sylhet through Cachar to Manipur. Grant was supposed to erect fortifications in Upper Assam to repel and scare tribes into submission, also with offensive measures.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 5, order by Swinton, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1831: Jenkins and Pemberton were supposed to go from the north of Manipur into Upper Assam and Doc. Nos. 1-6, listed under Fort William, 19<sup>th</sup> August 1831 are all about the preparations for this survey through an area which until then was unknown to them.

<sup>125</sup> Pemberton, *Report on the eastern frontier of British India*, pp. 61-65. Captain John Butler, ‘Rough Notes on the Angami Nágás and their Language.’ *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Vol. 44, No 4, 1875, pp. 307-346, p. 311. Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1884), p. 101.

<sup>126</sup> *Bengal Political Consultations* (BPC) Vol. 126/50, 9<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>th</sup> July 1832, Doc. 16, listed under Fort William, 9<sup>th</sup> July 1832, Swinton to Jenkins, dt. *ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> BPC Vol. 126/67, 16<sup>th</sup> – 30 May 1833, Doc. 100, listed under Fort William, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1833.

<sup>129</sup> Bhattacharjee, *Cachar under British Rule in North East India*, pp. 25-53.

<sup>130</sup> Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 102.

<sup>131</sup> Bhattacharjee, *Cachar under British Rule in North East India*, p. 50.

Cachar therefore became an integral part of the British empire on May 30<sup>th</sup> 1833.<sup>132</sup> As a reward, the eastern part of Cachar was ceded to Manipur, to the complete opposition of its population of Kachha Nagas, according to Bhattacharjee.<sup>133</sup>

Also in 1833, Upper Assam was handed back again to the native aristocrat Purunder Singh<sup>134</sup> who was chosen on grounds of his docile character,<sup>135</sup> the handling of the whole affair is paradigmatic for the imperial policy of indirect rule. Purunder's kingdom was yet not more than a vulnerable protectorate, seemingly even more dependent on the mercy of the British than the ruler of Manipur, Gambhir Singh. The cessation of British administration and the hand-over of Assam to Purunder Singh came into effect on April, 12<sup>th</sup> 1833.<sup>136</sup>

By February 1833, Pemberton described the map to Swinton which he and Jenkins had facilitated on their survey from Manipur to Assam. The territory in question, as we know, was the one of the Angami Nagas. The *raja* of Manipur was trying to bring that stretch of land under his rule. Pemberton considered this as important to guarantee the communication between Assam and Manipur. Although he acknowledged the independent status of these tribes, he nevertheless left no doubt that they had no right to their independence, once it came into conflict with the greater designs of the British empire,<sup>137</sup> and this despite them obviously making good use of their soil. Robertson, agent to the government on the Northeast Frontier, was obviously unaware of his own government's implication in the enterprise and warned Swinton that Gambhir Singh had undertaken an expedition "...across the mountainous region inhabited by the Nagas between his own Country & assam"<sup>138</sup> with the aim to subjugate them. Robertson strongly opposed this and

<sup>132</sup> BPC Vol. 126/68, 30<sup>th</sup> May – 21<sup>st</sup> June 1833, Doc. 110, listed under Fort William, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1833, dated *ibid*.

<sup>133</sup> Bhattacharjee, *Cachar under British Rule in North East India*, p. 58-60.

<sup>134</sup> BPC Vol. 126/67, 16<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> May 1833, Doc. 84 – 86, listed under Fort William, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1833: extensive listing of the profound problems in Upper Assam and possibly the reasons why the British handed it over to Purunder Singh.

<sup>135</sup> BPC Vol. 126/62, 28<sup>th</sup> January – 4<sup>th</sup> February 1833, Doc. 123, listed under Fort William, 18<sup>th</sup> January 1833:

Poorunder Sing is a young man apparently of about 25 years of age. His continuance is pleasing and his manners extremely good. From the little conversation that I had with him I am inclined to think that his natural abilities are respectable and his disposition mild and pacific. I suspect that he is neither very active or energetic, but these are qualities far from necessary, perhaps hardly desirable in one who is to fill a dependent Throne.-

<sup>136</sup> BPC Vol. 126/68, 30<sup>th</sup> May – 21<sup>st</sup> June 1833, Doc. 112, listed under Fort William, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1833, dated 20<sup>th</sup> April 1833.

<sup>137</sup> BPC Vol. 126/64, 19<sup>th</sup> February – 12<sup>th</sup> March 1833, Doc. 76, listed under Fort William, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1833:

3<sup>rd</sup> The Naga Villages noticed in the map are all large and well inhabited and the rice cultivation is sufficiently extensive to support a considerable increase to the present population of the hills.- 4<sup>th</sup> a road available for military commercial purposes might with great facility be construed along the line here pointed out...(...)...at present the ranges boundary the two countries are inhabited by numerous petty but powerful tribes, not acknowledging dependence in either State, but Ghumber Singh is busily engaged in reducing them to Subjection and this is essential to the establishment of a safe and free line of communication between assam and munnipore.-

<sup>138</sup> BPC Vol. 126/67, 16<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> May 1833, Doc. 105, listed under Fort William, 30<sup>th</sup> March 1833.

described the Angamis as peace-loving people and that one hardly could wish for better neighbours:

4. The Nagas are a humble peaceable race who have long carried on a traffic with the people of the Plains whence a considerable sum has annually accrued to Government in the shape of duties. Better neighbours to the state about to be erected in upper assam it would be impossible to desire while a worse one than the Chieftain by whom they may be supplanted can hardly be imagined.- [referring to Gambhir Singh]

(...)

7. Useleß in a commercial & pernicious in a Political Point of view I hold the measure of aiding a Barbarian Prince, whose conduct we never can control to subject a harmleß and inoffensive race like the Nagas to his dominion to be morally unjustifiable & I must therefore hope that a repetition of this year's expedition will be decidedly discountenanced by the Supreme Govt."<sup>139</sup>

The secretary to the government, Macnaghten, explained to Robertson, that Singh undertook the expedition for the reason of military exercise (e.g., to be prepared in case of a repetition of a Singpho invasion, as had happened in 1830) and that the government approved of this. Moreover, the people in this region (i.e., the Nagas) "...should be better and better known."<sup>140</sup> This clearly indicates that the attack was carried out by Manipur with the consent of, and the possible encouragement, by its British protector and ally. It is also evident that the British administration justified this assault with the effect in training it might have had on the Raja's troops. Macnaghten informed Robertson that Manipur had already then, with the agreement of the British government, subjugated and made tributary a number of large, populous Naga villages, even north of the watershed (the latter boundary between Nagaland and Manipur). Macnaghten mentioned the paramount importance of a road from Cachar to Manipur, for the movement of troops, which to a large part should be build and maintained by Nagas, lowering the costs considerably and then referred to a report by Jenkins and Pemberton:

In paragraph 56 it is proposed that Gumbheer Singh should be encouraged to extend his influence over the northern nagas and that the forest to the north should be the boundary between munnipore and aßam. on this point the sentiments of Government have already been recorded...[i.e. consented] On the Aßam side towards keeping open the routes, they [Jenkins and Pemberton] recommended that the Political Agent in upper aßam should establish a military post at the confluence of the Muneeoojan and Dhunsirie Nullahs, and endeavor by grants on such terms as may be needful, to locate Villages there, and at other spots mentioned. On the side of munnipore the forest is the proposed boundary, and it is suggested that Gumbheer Singh should be held accountable for the

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> BPC Vol. 126/68, 30<sup>th</sup> May – 21<sup>st</sup> June 1833, Doc. 110, listed under Fort William, 30<sup>th</sup> May.

behaviour of the nagas thus considered to be placed under his paramount authority – you should ascertain and report what steps the Raja would take to keep open the communication.-<sup>141</sup>

Macnaghten continued how the frontier, which was understood as the inner semi-circle alongside the hills, was to be fortified; villages had to be located there according to strategic considerations. Furthermore, remarks of the governor general indicates that he wished the hill tribes should be given a chance for good guidance and advice, meaning British rule.<sup>142</sup> Therefore, Robertson's advice was overruled and the *raja* of Manipur was ordered to subjugate the Nagas up to Upper Assam and was made responsible for their behaviour. The British authorised and ordered a dependent prince to conquer and control people, who hitherto had neither been under Manipuri nor British rule.

Two years after Manipur had attacked them we come about the first act of retaliation by the Angamis on British held territory. In a dispatch from February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1835, Jenkins sent a copy of a letter from captain Fisher, dated Cachar February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1835, to the secretary to the government of Bengal in the political department, wherein Fisher reported of encroachments of Nagas on Cachar:

...that a party of...[up to one hundred] Nagahs from the Eastward have been recently levying contributions on the inhabitants of some of the village in our limits enforcing their demands by violence and burning the houses of those who decline Compliance with them. I have directed the Jemadar to proceed against them and made preparations for taking further steps...found necessary.<sup>143</sup>

Jenkins, in his reply to Fisher on February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1835, assured him of support in punishing the party of Nagas.<sup>144</sup> We also have evidence of incursions conducted by Nagas into Manipur in the first quarter of 1836.<sup>145</sup> Increased correspondence about the Nagas indicates their rise to prominence.<sup>146</sup> The commissioner of Dacca, Gordon, writing on the incursions into Upper Cachar, gives us a possible realistic evaluation about the effectiveness, or lack of it, of punishment expeditions, and on the random quality and the antagonising effect they had on the affected populations, not to speak of the cruelties they involved and created:

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> BPC Vol. 127/28, 7<sup>th</sup> January – 30<sup>th</sup> March 1835, Doc. 4, listed under Fort William, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1835.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> BPC 127/32, 7<sup>th</sup> April – 27<sup>th</sup> September 1836, Doc. 20, listed under FW, 26<sup>th</sup> April 1836, dated 30<sup>th</sup> March 1836, Gordon acknowledged the receipt of a copy of the proceedings of the govt. of Bengal in which the incursions of Nagas into Manipur were discussed.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., Doc. 1, listed under FW, 14<sup>th</sup> February 1837, dated 11<sup>th</sup> February 1837 & *ibid.*, Doc. 1, listed under FW 21<sup>st</sup> February 1837, dated 20<sup>th</sup> February 1837 (both communications from the secy. to the govt. of Bengal to the secy. to the govt. of India, pol. dept. – both Macnaghten).



(...) I would respectfully, but strongly urge the propriety of not attempting to seize and punish the perpetrators of past outrages. The only mode by which such an attempt could be made would be by one of those (...) [expeditions, having]...no probable chance of securing the guilty. A considerable time has now elapsed since the marauding incursion took place the information as to the quarter whence it proceeded is Security and little to be relied upon and even admitting that we could discover the abodes of the guilty the inaccessible nature of the Country gives so many facilities of escape, that their apprehension may be looked upon as next to impossible. In the Second place the expeditions resorted to by Native states to punish the outrages of the Nagas seem to be accompanied with gra/oß barbarities and to involve the innocent and guilty in one indiscriminate plan of murder, arson and rapine and in the third place such expeditions not only do not effectually stop, but seem to increase the plundering habits of their unfortunate victims...I have only to refer to the fruitless efforts of the Detachment sent by the Munnipore state last year and to the assertion of Captain Jenkins that the late incursion of the Nagas into Cachar, probably sprang from a desire to avenge the Sufferings they endured from the Munipooren Detachment. For these reasons I entirely agree with Captain Jenkins as to the inexpediency and inhumanity of adopting measures of retaliation against the Nagas. (...) <sup>147</sup>

Gordon went on writing that in case the government decided otherwise, then any retaliation has to be carried out by Manipur, which had experience in this kind of warfare, besides the climate being fatal for British officers and troops. Hence, he suggested as further prevention of incursions the transfer of the border part of Upper Cachar to Manipur, which should erect a line of posts against the “barbarous tribes”. Gordon gave us here an idea about the general quality of punitive expeditions and their concealed collateral damage. They were mere summary punishments, a random collective retaliation, pretending to be precision strikes capable of finding the guilty but unable to do so, and moreover, when carried out by native governments, they were accompanied by indiscriminate cruelties, not capable of stopping any incursions, but reinforcing them or in the first place, triggering them. Gordon here indicated that the incursions of the Angamis into Cachar were rooted in the previous assaults by Manipur on them. This is all the more interesting, since we know that punitive expeditions turned into the habitual disciplinary tool of the British. The commissioner of Dacca, Lewis, also suspected that the inroads of the Nagas could be retaliations “...for the devastations committed by the late Munnipore Detachment.” He therefore recommended that all troops should have European officers to prevent cruelties. <sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Doc. 21, but says Dacca, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1837. Is the first extract of BPC 127/35, Doc. 3, listed under FW, 21<sup>st</sup> February 1837, To D. Mungles, Secy to the Govt. of Bengal, Judicial Dept., FW. Extracts from the Proceedings of the Right Honble the Gov of Bengal in the Judicial Dept., dated 17<sup>th</sup> January 1837 (copies of certain correspondence about the inroads on the frontier).

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

Gordon, the political agent of Manipur, on the contrary, asked for immediate military action. He regarded the "...chastisement of the Naga Tribes occupying the confines of Munnipore and Toolarams Country. - ...I believe it to be the desire of His Lordship to strike such terror as may prevent a recurrence of the aggressions..." and went on in calling for a combined action of troops from Manipur and Cachar.<sup>149</sup> A few days earlier he already had asked Macnaghten for permission to strike against the Nagas "...to obtain satisfaction for the late heinous outrage perpetuated by Nagas occupying the confines of Munnipore and Toularams Territory..." for the sake of the "...future peace of the Frontier."<sup>150</sup> Captain Lister, commanding the Sylhet Light Infantry, had already suggested bringing the Nagas under British control in a letter to Macnaghten on the previous day. A European officer should command the troops of Cachar and Manipur: "The Officer to have Civil control and be vested with discretionary power to bring the whole of the Independent Tribes of Nagas laying between Huplung in Upper Cachar and Munnipore under our direct management and control..." in order to bring peace to the frontier.<sup>151</sup> This was the first time a British officer suggested direct subjugation of the whole tract. On the same day, Gordon informed Lister that a Manipur contingent was ready to be put under an European officer, if Lister would make one available.<sup>152</sup> Macnaghten, at that time the mouthpiece of the governor general of India, then George Lord Auckland, the governor of the presidency of Fort William in Bengal, on March, the 3<sup>rd</sup> 1837 pronounced the decision "...for the protection of the North Eastern Frontier of Cachar from the incursion of the Nagas."<sup>153</sup> Yet, there was no specification of how this was to be accomplished. Gordon from Manipur continued to press for quick and combined action of Manipuri and British troops against the Angamis.<sup>154</sup> However, the governor decided on February, 21<sup>st</sup> 1837 against any punishment expedition "...against the Naga tribes..." but to station a Manipur force in Northern Cachar "...in order to cut off the retreat or to pursue into their fastnesses, any body of Nagas committing further aggressions."<sup>155</sup> Yet, the problem was not laid to rest, and Jenkins, when asked about his opinion, wrote to Macnaghten on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1837, that the country around Shemkur had neither been under Manipur nor under Tula Ram (North Cachar) and that the latter had no means to subjugate the Nagas of Shemkur. Nevertheless, he was in favour of occupying the country around Shemkur, in order to

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., Doc. 4, listed under FW, 21<sup>st</sup> February 1837. Under the same Doc. are further letters listed, concerned with how to strike against the Nagas. The number of troops was suggested to be 800, as during the previous season, but this time under an European officer. The following Doc. 5 deals with how to protect Cachar. Suggestions involved offensive as well as defensive measures. When problems like this arose the govt. encouraged every officer on the frontier to give his opinion.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., Doc. 6, listed under FW, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1837.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., Doc. 1, listed under FW, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1837, dated FW.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., Doc. 2, listed under FW, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1837, dated Munnipore 11<sup>th</sup> February 1837.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., Doc. 2, listed under FW, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1837, Extract from the Political Dept., i.e. what the Pol. Dept. had decided on.

protect their Cacharee subjects, but not by Manipur troops, who were not well paid, travelled without rations and therefore had to rely on requisitions, plundering etc. Furthermore, that the Manipur government wanted to station its troops permanently at Shemkur only to commit plunder and arson and he also assumed that the “barbarous aggressions” of the Nagas were maybe retaliations for the “...devastations committed by the late Munipooree Detachment.” Jenkins saw a solution only in the handing over of the matter to troops commanded by an European officer by whom the causes for the actions of the Nagas were investigated.<sup>156</sup>

The governor general-in-council decided on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1837 that “...the conciliation of the Nagas being an object of the last importance...”,<sup>157</sup> and thus the Manipur troops should or could be used, but nevertheless if the “Right Honble the Governor” agreed on the suggestion of Jenkins, then “His Lordship in Council” was ready to direct captain Lister with a company of the Sylhet Light Infantry to investigate into the origins of “...atrocities of the Nagas...” to prevent them in the future.<sup>158</sup> The government of Bengal approved of the suggestions made by Jenkins,<sup>159</sup> and requested the government of India “...that the necessary order for the coercion of the Naga tribes in Cachar may be issued accordingly.”<sup>160</sup> An European officer from the Sylhet Light Infantry was to proceed at the beginning of the cold season (November 1837) to investigate into the reasons for the Naga raids.<sup>161</sup> On 10<sup>th</sup> October 1837 the government of India informed the government of Bengal that it was decided by the governor general-in-council to take action against the Nagas, but was not willed to put them directly under its rule:

Sir, I am directed by the ... GovGenl of India in Council...on the subject of the arrangement for employing a part of the Levy [of Manipur] against the nagas.

2. In reply, I am directed to state that it is not the intention of Government to take the management of that tract referred to by you provided the Munnipore Government is disposed to rule it without oppression and can prevent the inroads of the Nagas into the British Territory. In directing the

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., Doc. 3, listed under FW, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1837.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., Secy. to the Govt. of India Macnaghten to Secy. to the Govt. of Bengal, Pol. Dept., dt. FW, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1837.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., Doc. 3, listed under FW, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1837, Extract Judicial Dept., from the Proceedings of the Right Honble the Governor of Bengal in the Judicial Dept., dt. 25<sup>th</sup> April 1837.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., Doc. 4, letter from Secy. Govt. Bengal Macnaghten to Secy. Govt. India, Pol. Dept. Macnaghten, undated.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., Doc. 1, listed under FW, 4<sup>th</sup> July 1837. Pol. Agent Cassiah Hills Lister to Secy. Govt. India Macnaghten, dt. FW, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1837:

I do not anticipate that much, if any information, will be obtained, relative to the original cause of these Naga incursions. In upper Cachar these inroads are of yearly occurrence and have been carried on unchecked for many years past, the tribes committing the atrocities are understood to come from a remote distance from our frontier, not less than fifteen marches. It is therefore improbable, that our Cacharee Subjects, unwarlike as they are acknowledged to be, should have ever committed acts of aggression on them. The true cause, will, no doubt be found in the predatory habits of the people, to which all the barberous mountain tribes of the Frontier are more or less addicted, and which nothing but fear will make them forego.

employment of British troops alone in the interior of the Hills, His Lordship in Council was influenced by the apprehension that the Munnipore troops if so employed might be guilty of excesses. (...) you will be pleased to impress upon the Munnipore Government the necessity of preventing any aggression by the Nagas in the Company Territory.<sup>162</sup>

British troops only were deployed into the interior of the Naga hills. At the same time the tract between Assam and Manipur, sheltering off Cachar, was handed over to Manipur, with the condition to rule it without excesses and with the order to protect British territory from Naga incursions. By September 1838 Jenkins went one step further in suggesting the permanent stationing of a European officer and troops in the Naga hills to prevent further incursions by the Nagas and the therefrom resulting depopulation of the Cachar hills.<sup>163</sup>

On October 20<sup>th</sup> 1838 Burns, the superintendent (SP) of Cachar, reported to Jenkins that the Angamis had conducted another raid on Upper Cachar, killing five and abducting twenty. Burns asked for a "...Speedy and Summary retaliation...[against this] Savages."<sup>164</sup> Burns seems to have lost his patience. Jenkins replied that he had ordered a Cacharee chief with a party of armed Cacharees to Haflong, into the affected area and that he had asked the government to take immediate action.<sup>165</sup> The government on its part agreed to send at least 200 men to punish the Angamis. Prinsep pressed Jenkins to take all necessary steps to put "...the advancing party...in the position they may occupy to effect the permanent subjugation of the offending Tribes."<sup>166</sup> The British were convinced that they could pacify and subjugate the Angamis with one expedition, without knowing really who the Angamis were or where exactly they resided. At this stage it had been decided on the first expedition against the Angamis. Many would follow. Jenkins continued to press for urgency to act and argued in favour of the use of Shan and Cacharee militias. Yet, the British had problems in gathering the force.<sup>167</sup> Grange, sub-assistant of Nowgong, who was assigned to the task, was either to get hold of the perpetrators or to take hostages among the Nagas, in order to force them to be handed over.<sup>168</sup> Despite the unclear origin of the hostilities Jenkins suggested measures against the Angamis that were supposed to spread terror and this although he himself called the Nagas the original occupants of that country and was of the opinion that the Cacharees had brought about these attacks on themselves, by permanently trying

<sup>162</sup> BPC Vol. 127/36, 29<sup>th</sup> August – 28<sup>th</sup> December 1837, Doc. 3, listed under FW, 10<sup>th</sup> October 1837 FW, dated *ibid.*, from the Secy to the Govt of India to the Secy to the Govt of Bengal (both Macnaghten) with copy to the Political Agent at Manipur (Capt. Gordon) and the Commissioner of Dacca.

<sup>163</sup> *India Political Consultations* (IPC) Vol. P/195/3, 21<sup>st</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> November 1838, Doc. 104, listed under FW, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1838, from the Agent to the governor general to the North Eastern Frontier Jenkins to the Secy. Gov. of India, Pol. Dept., FW Prinsep, dt. 11<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1838.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 106, is contained as copy in a communication from Jenkins to Prinsep, dt. Assam, 10<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1838.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, dt. Assam, 10<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1838.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 107, Prinsep to Jenkins, dt. FW, 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1838.

<sup>167</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/8, 16<sup>th</sup> January – 13<sup>th</sup> February 1839, Doc. 59, Jenkins to Prinsep, dt. 11<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1838.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

to enslave the Nagas. That is to say, the Angamis' raids could have been retaliations for those conducted by the Cacharees on them.

On May 20<sup>th</sup> 1939 Jenkins reported to Prinsep about Grange's failure to carry out his mission of punishing the Angamis, due to the failure on the side of the authorities of Cachar to provide enough personnel. Yet, Grange had proceeded into and through parts of Angami country in a speedy manner and had asserted that the reason for the raids and their extent was for the sake of obtaining slaves, and foretold that the affected territory would soon be completely deserted.<sup>169</sup> A month later Jenkins conveyed to Prinsep his belief in the rapid subjugation of the Angamis through just one further punishment expedition by Grange and that most Nagas would surely happily put themselves under British protection and argued for the annexation of this part of country (i.e., Angami territory) in grouping it with Assam.<sup>170</sup> Grange had reported that 1,500 – 2,000 Naga-houses had shown their willingness to put themselves under British protection, hence would produce revenue through house-tax.<sup>171</sup> Yet, Prinsep informed Jenkins that the government had decided against any annexation, but had agreed on the exertion of political influence via the headmen of the villages.<sup>172</sup> In September Jenkins asked captain Gordon, the political agent of Manipur, for Manipuri assistance to the projected second expedition of Grange. Jenkins also wanted Manipur to subdue and bring under its control the Nagas south of the watershed.<sup>173</sup> By October Prinsep had informed Jenkins that the government had sanctioned the annexation of North Cachar to Nowgong and another expedition against the Angamis to reduce them to subjection.<sup>174</sup> Bigge had already written to Jenkins that the annexation of North Cachar was agreed on by the government. Bigge also told Jenkins that he was not sure how the government wanted to control those Nagas who were willing to put themselves under the British and those who were not. Lieutenant H. Bigge, assistant agent to Jenkins, was critical of the government's decision and he doubted the possibility of controlling the Nagas without force, that is to say the government wanted to annex North Cachar but not the Naga hills, where it didn't want to get too much involved. This presented an unclear policy for Bigge.<sup>175</sup> Jenkins replied that the Naga communities should be controlled through their chiefs and informed him that the management of the Angamis from now on was under his, Bigge's jurisdiction, since the whole communication with them went via North Cachar, which fell from then on under Bigge.<sup>176</sup> The government

<sup>169</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/19, Doc. 56, listed under FW, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1839, Jenkins to Prinsep, dt. 20<sup>th</sup> May 1839.

<sup>170</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/22, Doc. 107, listed under FW, 14<sup>th</sup> August 1839, Jenkins to Prinsep, dt. 15<sup>th</sup> June 1839.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, copy attached, Bigge to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong 8<sup>th</sup> June 1839.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 109, Prinsep to Jenkins, dt. FW, 14<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1839.

<sup>173</sup> IPC Vol P/195/26, 2<sup>nd</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1839, Doc. 89, listed under FW, 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 1839, copy of a letter from Jenkins to Captain Gordon, Political Agent of Manipur, dt. 6<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1839.

<sup>174</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/26, Doc. 90, listed under FW, 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 1839, Prinsep to Jenkins, dt. FW *ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/27, 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct. – 6<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1839, Doc. 105, listed under FW, 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct. 1839, Jenkins to Prinsep, dt. 11<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1839 of copy of Bigge to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong 1<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1839.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, Jenkins to Bigge, dt. 7<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1839.

approved of Jenkins' realisation of its orders and specified and stressed again that the authority and power of those chiefs, whose conduct was in accordance with the British government, should not be touched.<sup>177</sup> This change of mind on the part of the government was caused by Grange's portrayal of a new revenue-pregnant territory that was to be reaped, and Jenkins' unremitting assurances on the ease with which the Angamis were to be lured into the British realm. The Nagas clearly did not present a priority on the government's agenda. As long as it saw its security concerns warranted by the chiefs of Manipur and Upper Cachar it encouraged both to bring the mountain range bordering them under their control, including the population living there. A process begun immediately after the Burmese had been expelled. That is why we come across repeated incursions by Nagas into Manipur as early as winter 1826-27,<sup>178</sup> being retaliations for Manipur's incessant encroachment on them, and explains the ferocious resistance put up against the exploratory tour of Jenkins and Pemberton in the early 1830s. Upper Cachar, being a renegade province of Cachar, fought in alliance with Manipur against Cachar and, like Manipur emboldened by British backing, rivalled with it for predatory raids on both Cachar and the Angami hills.<sup>179</sup> Yet, being both petty statelets, and for Upper Cachar this is even an exaggeration, they could only sustain forages, plunder, and the usual request for occasional tribute and formal acknowledgement of suzerainty, but in no way could exercise anything near effective control. The British government, as we have seen, only developed an interest in these affairs once local officers promised an easy prey. Low priority, contradicting reports about an unknown theatre, together with slow and difficult communications and an unclear and complicated chain of command allowed for a considerable scope of action on the side of the local officers,<sup>180</sup> who all, as a rule, behaved as worthy representatives of Anglo-Indian militarism. This will become even clearer in the following pages.

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., Doc. 106, dt. 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct. 1839.

<sup>178</sup> BSPC Vol. 342, 4<sup>th</sup> November 1826 – 30<sup>th</sup> December 1826, Doc. No. 5, listed under Fort William 30<sup>th</sup> December 1826, from Tucker to Swinton, dated Sylhet, Commissioner Office 16<sup>th</sup> December 1826.

<sup>179</sup> L. Atola Changkiri, *The Angami Nagas and the British, 1832-1947* (New Delhi, 1999), pp. 22-30. Bhattacharjee, *Cachar under British Rule in North East India*, pp. 46-65. Both authors allow also for predatory raids on the part of the Angamis, either as compensation for interrupted trade, or out of conviction for the sake of headhunting or to trade slaves with Bengal. Even then agency must have been more complex as different Angami clans used to ally with either North Cachar or with Manipur against local rivals, and united only temporarily in case of a massive invasion of their territory. However, since Cachar was always thinly populated (ibid., p. 15), and was even more so by internecine strife since 1813 onwards, and the following Burmese invasion and occupation (ibid., pp. 25-44), but never was anything mentioned of any part for the Angamis in it, I suppose the evidence suggests that they were drawn into this by their neighbours. H. K. Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes North-East Frontier 1822-42* (Calcutta, 1970), Vol. I, pp. 142-146 and 173, for example, uncritically follows British sources and is only unsure whether it was the desire for heads, or for salt, or for plunder that triggered the raids, but not whether these raids that were raids on Naga villages in North Cachar, were raids on North Cachar, because North Cachar was suddenly extended over these villages.

### 1.7 Attempted Economic Integration, December 1839 – March 1843

The end of the 1830s saw the first military action of the British against the Angamis. It involved a policy in which the British burned the villages and destroyed the food stores of those Nagas who did not welcome the invasion of their territory. This policy was supplemented by the order to the Nagas to refrain from any active fighting, to surrender their own means of defence and attack to the British. The Angamis knew this and that is why they have shaken their spears at Grange on his second expedition shouting that “...their spears were their Rajas.”<sup>181</sup> In turn, the British promised the Nagas to refrain from any interference into their local affairs, but that the Nagas should give some symbolic tribute as sign of acceptance of British supremacy. Furthermore, the Angamis were ordered to surrender those of their chiefs whom the British held responsible for attacks on what the British had decided to be their territory; otherwise close relatives would be taken hostage. Subsequently, to avoid creating a power vacuum, the population was to choose new chiefs and they had to be installed. These new chiefs, in turn, were supposed to be held responsible by the British for the conduct of the tribes, that is to say the British would rule through them. The chiefs would be told of economic rewards via trade and it was this opening up of the hills by which the British hoped on the one hand to civilise, domesticate and dominate the Nagas,<sup>182</sup> and on the other, to profit from this trade themselves by incorporating the Naga hills into their market system and possibly extract resources. This in the end meant subjugation via economic penetration for which it was necessary to open up the lines of communication, if possible without high-cost military intervention. To ensure that all this would work out, the British intended to establish a military post, that is to say a bridgehead, in the Angami hills, at the same time assuring them that this did not allude to any encroachment on their sovereignty.

Grange, who commanded a Shan militia, was ordered for his second expedition into Angami country to go via Mohong Dijua, close to Dimapur, in order to clear the road as far as the Dhansiri river, and to establish there a “...godown for Storing provisions, as also huts for the Sepoys have been ordered to be built at the different stages.”<sup>183</sup> Brodie was instructed to join Grange at the Dhansiri river. Identified as the main perpetrators of the raids were the “...tribes, under the chiefs Ikari and Inpoji inhabiting the villages of Mangoan and Sukungo...”<sup>184</sup> The aim was to pacify without occupying, to pursue the chiefs “...to agree to exert themselves, to restrain

<sup>180</sup> Peers, *Between Mars and Mammon*, pp. 37-39.

<sup>181</sup> Major John Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam, during a Residence of fourteen years* (London, 1855), p. 106.

<sup>182</sup> As had been done before with Scottish highlanders (as already remarked) and in the Bengal presidency, see Bryant, ‘Pacification in the Early British Raj, 1755-85’, p. 11.

<sup>183</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/31, Doc. 112, listed under 1<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1840, Jenkins to Prinsep, dt. 6<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1839, includes copy of Bigge to Jenkins, dt. Mahojong 26<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1839, including copy of Bigge to Grange, dt. *ibid*.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid*. The two villages mentioned here must have been Mozema and Khonoma.

the predatory habits of their tribes...” to put themselves under British protection. There was not to be any reduction of their power and authority. As a sign of their acknowledgement of British protection they should send an annual present of elephant tusks. Nevertheless, Grange was to take hostages if he had reason to suspect that their consent was only given due to the presence of British troops. Ikari and the Inpoji should either be surrendered, or close relatives of them should be taken hostage to ensure their good conduct. In case of their resistance they should be attacked, apprehended and then treated as prisoners of war. Grange was to find out which chief the tribes wanted and should ensure to install him, so that no power-vacuum would lead to instability and chaos. The chiefs were to be made to understand that the British government did not want to deprive them of their power, and that they were only held responsible for the peaceful conduct of their tribes and that they would profit from a “...free intercourse with traders and others...” but would be attacked in any case of misconduct.<sup>185</sup>

Bigge informed Grange that a permanent military post was to be established and he, Grange, should suggest a location for this. The Shan were to man this post and to be asked to settle there. The native officers were not to exercise any control over the native chiefs and should avoid any offence towards them and were to act in a conciliatory manner towards the people.<sup>186</sup> The government approved of these instructions.<sup>187</sup>

Grange was ambushed during this expedition. He took the village of Khonoma by force and destroyed it together with its hidden store of grain.<sup>188</sup> When retreating he realised that the Nagas had *parjied*<sup>189</sup> every path. On his way back he encamped in two further villages, one of which he also destroyed, together with the whole of its grain stores.<sup>190</sup>

Jenkins reported to the Government about his hope that Grange’s expedition had had the desired effect on the Angami Naga tribes:

The repetition of our incursion & the punishment inflicted on two of the largest Villages of the Angami confederacy Haplongmie and Juppama the former for attacking him on returning from his search after the Munipoorees and the latter for killing one of the Asamese Coolies during his absence cannot but convince the Nagas that we have power of punishing them for any offences upon our subjects, & it is gratifying to know that the murderous attacks of these Nagas upon the Cacharee

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., Doc. 113, Prinsep to Jenkins, dt. FW, 1<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1840.

<sup>188</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/39, 25<sup>th</sup> May – 15<sup>th</sup> June 1840, Grange to Bigge, dt. Summoo Guding, 16<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1840.

<sup>189</sup> *Parjies* were sharpened bamboo sticks, stuck into the ground to hinder the opponents progress or to injure him.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., Grange to Bigge, dt. Sumoo Guding, 29<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1840.



Villages have been entirely suspended during the past year; & that our Ryats have been enabled to advance their cultivation along the Dheensiri to the South much beyond its former limits.-<sup>191</sup>

Grange had taken prisoners from these “hostile and powerful tribes” who were to be used as messengers to exert influence on them.<sup>192</sup> The projected pacification was obviously necessary to allow the further settlement and cultivation bordering the hills, indispensable for the extraction of revenue. Jenkins summarised and commented on the communication between Bigge and Gordon in a dispatch to Fort William. Therein Jenkins informed the government that Gordon was in favour of establishing a *thana* in the Angami country, in order to dominate it and completely subjugate the Nagas. This would ensure an easy communication between Assam and Manipur via a road between these two parts through Angami territory. Bigge, on the contrary, was of the opinion that there was nothing to trade there to justify the expenses of building such a road. He instead would have preferred to go on a leisurely tour through Naga country to bring them in line and Jenkins supported this idea of a four months tour with only a small detachment. Furthermore, Jenkins was of the opinion that a military post at Dimapur on the Dhansiri, on the northern frontier of North Cachar and at Semkhur, at the southeastern frontier of the district would not only discourage attacks but also encourage settlers to extend their settlement towards the hills and if necessary Gordon’s plan of a road from Manipur to Assam via Angami land could be implemented.<sup>193</sup> The government approved of Bigge’s plan to carry out a public relations tour through the Naga villages.<sup>194</sup>

A few months later in April 1841 Jenkins recalled to the government the success of the taken measures that the raids of the Angamis had already stopped after Grange’s first expedition and that during each of these raids approximately 40-50 people had been killed or abducted. Thus Jenkins suggested to go one step further and to incorporate the Naga hills economically and to send the *ryats* of the company there.<sup>195</sup> The governor general expressed his satisfaction with the development, encouraged frequent mutual intercourse and, if possible, the avoidance of force and the use of peaceful means to encourage the Nagas to abstain from hostilities between themselves and from those on their neighbours.<sup>196</sup> The government wanted to acquire an acknowledgement as soon as possible from the Angamis of their submission to British authority, and in general desired to open up and civilise slowly the Naga hills through roads, trade, traders

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., Jenkins to Maddock, Secy. to the Govt. of India in the Pol. Dept., FW, dt. 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1840.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/42, 20<sup>th</sup> July – 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1840, Doc. 93, listed under FW, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1840, Jenkins to Torrens, Officiating Secy. Govt. India, Pol. Dept., FW.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., Doc. 94, Torrens to Jenkins, dt. FW, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1840.

<sup>195</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/55, 12<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> April 1841, Doc. 79, listed under FW, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1841, Jenkins to Maddock, dt. Gowhatty, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1841.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., Doc. 80, Maddock to Jenkins, dt. FW, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1841.

etc.<sup>197</sup> However, raids were resumed in December 1841. The government ordered action to be taken especially regarding the fixing of boundaries (e.g., between Manipur and Angami Naga territory) and the protection of the frontier by the set-up of a “...permanent chain of Military posts in the hills for checking the aggressions of the Angami and other neighbouring tribes.”<sup>198</sup> In March 1842 the government decided against the establishment of a post among the Angamis and in favour of frequent visits for “...the conciliation and civilization of the [Angami] tribes.”<sup>199</sup> Yet, in the meantime inroads by Angamis to villages in Manipur and Cachar were continuously reported.<sup>200</sup> However, a turning point seemed to be reached when Jenkins informed the government of India in March 1843 as follows:

...that two of the principal Chiefs of the Angamee Nagas and Several heads of Villages of the Rengma tribe of Nagas have attended at Nowgong on his Summos inviting them to a personal interview, and have entered into agreements with Capt. Gordon to obey the Govt and abstain from wars among themselves. (...) [and] to pay a yearly tribute in acknowledgement of our authority...(...)...the number of houses dependent on the Chiefs is estimated at 9264, which at our ordinary calculation would give a population of 50,000 Nagas now brought under our control, but the number will be still higher for the houses of the Hill Nagas are of great Size and each contains whole families. This large accession of people to our Rule, who will now become valuable consumers of our products and contributors to the general trade of the Country, is only a small portion of the benefits which will be the consequence of the submission to our authority...but from the restoration of perfect tranquility to the vast tracts which surround the Angamie hills in Northern Cachar and the districts of the Dhunsiri and Jumoona Rivers, very important Result will gradually be obtained, the lands in the tracts in question being of various nature in soil and elevation and mostly of the greatest fertility.- One of the products which will now become available is the Tea known to exist in the lower ranges of the angami hills which by the Shans is considered of a very superior quality... .<sup>201</sup>

Jenkins was euphoric, believing, or at least wanting to convey that he believed, that the Nagas in this area (Angamis and Rengmas) had now accepted British supremacy. The advantages he saw, or which he at least wanted the government to believe, were the expected revenue through house tax, the addition of the Nagas to the market as consumers and producers, the full development and cultivation of the ostensible fertile country bordering on Naga territory, since it was now

<sup>197</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/56, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> May 1841, Doc.105, Maddock to Jenkins, dt. FW, 19<sup>th</sup> July 1841.

<sup>198</sup> IPC Vol. P/196/4, 13<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1841, Doc. 95, listed under FW, 13<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1841, Maddock to Jenkins, 13<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1841.

<sup>199</sup> IPC Vol. P/196/10, 7<sup>th</sup> March – 30<sup>th</sup> March 1842., Doc. 39, listed under FW, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1842, Maddock to Jenkins, dt. 7<sup>th</sup> March 1842.

<sup>200</sup> IPC Vol. P/196/4, 13<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1841, Doc. 94, listed under FW, 13<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1841, Jenkins to Maddock, dt. 24<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1841 & IPC P/196/13, Doc. 12, listed under FW, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1842, a series of communications between Jenkins, Bigge and Gordon (the one in charge of Nowgong, not the one in charge of Manipur).

<sup>201</sup> IPC Vol. P/196/29, 29<sup>th</sup> March – 12<sup>th</sup> April 1843, Doc. 76, listed under FW, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1843, Jenkins to Bushby, dt. 19<sup>th</sup> March 1843.

pacified and safe, and the cultivation of some high quality tea in the Naga hills themselves. He evoked a new flourishing area, which he would have liked to be supported and connected by a school in Dimapur, helping to facilitate trade relations between the hills and the plains – at this stage the British, on economic grounds, wanted to enhance the relationship between these two areas. Only later, when they realised that the enforced fusion between hills and plains brought about conflicts that often precipitated unrest and rebellions, as for example already experienced by the British in Bengal,<sup>202</sup> and that then, as a rule, order had to be reinstalled with expansive counter-insurgency operations, was a policy of separation followed. This policy afterwards could be presented as a philanthropic one devised to safeguard the interests and the way of life of the hill people. Much later, already in the 1920s, when the Nagas resistance had been crushed, and when they had stopped posing even a remote danger or challenge, some of the British officers, serving long terms among them, would deliver a liking to the Nagas and the way of living they had then developed. Yet, there was nothing of that in the nineteenth century; the Nagas, together with the difficult terrain they lived in, were simply enemies of the British. Consequently, the British had developed certain strategies to deal with those, and one of them was to try to incorporate them into the market system. The trade goods and opportunities were meant to be the carrot; the striking power of the sepoy, the stick.

After the policy to delegate the task to subjugate the Angamis to Manipur had failed and instead had resulted in them fighting back, the British changed their strategy. They had wanted to incorporate the Nagas into their market sphere with a mixture of intimidation, by appointing and holding chiefs accountable to the British, and opening up lines of communication and securing them through the establishment of a military post, by encouraging settler colonisation into the Naga hills, as well as around them, and in placing the Kukis in Cachar to check possible forays.

The so-called punishment expeditions were also used to gather intelligence on a wide range of topics: there was first of all the military necessity to collect and document the data about the geo- and topography of the area, as well as about the distribution of populations, their cultural identification and social and political order.<sup>203</sup> Then there was the hunt for, and

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<sup>202</sup> As a more dated work, see Bryant, 'Pacification in the Early British Raj, 1755-85'. For a newer treatment of this topic see Mann, *Bengalen im Umbruch: Die Herausbildung des britischen Kolonialstaates 1754-1793*, pp. 213-259.

<sup>203</sup> Morag Bell, Robin Butler and Michael Heffernan, 'Introduction: Geography and imperialism, 1820-1940', In idem (eds.), *Geography and imperialism 1820-1940* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 1-12. That the created knowledge was anything but exact, and a long way from qualifying as monolithic or even totalizing, but rather chaotic, see Matthew H. Edney, 'The Ideologies and Praxis of Mapping and Imperialism', In idem, *Mapping an empire: The geographical construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago, 1997). Edney here especially argues against Edward Said, whose view he sees as follows: "The imperial power thus recreates the empire in its maps, subsuming all individuals and places within the map's totalizing image. Military conquest, geographical conquest, and cultural conquest are functionally equivalent." (24) But even Edney admits that the so created data was valid enough to allow for conquest and control (35).

documentation of possible natural resources or the likelihood for growing cash-crops, as well as the discovery of trade opportunities.

### *1.8 Direct Intervention and Retreat, November 1844 – February 1851*

Encouraging trade and contact between the plains and the hills was until hitherto the strategy of the British to incorporate the Naga hills into their economic sphere. This was to be the first step and should have had the effect of pacifying the Nagas, to civilise them in British or European terms, to make them dependent on trade, and hence incorporate them into their empire. But it was not the opening up of the Naga hills towards modernity, it was to take away their independence, or we could call this to dispossess them of their means of defence and production, and therewith their self-determination.<sup>204</sup>

In the process of doing so, the British drew the circle closer and clashed with the dominant Angami groups, for whom they represented rivals. The Angami power field was characterised by a constant struggle between leading clans,<sup>205</sup> correlating to the territorial unit of the *kebel*. It was common practice to temporarily seek for allies among the powers surrounding the hills to finish off a local rival. We will have a closer look at who the Angamis were in the next chapter. The British, seeing themselves as the paramount power of order, were drawn into the local power struggle, not realising that the Nagas saw them as just another contestant, and never wanted them to stay, nor believed that they could wish to do so.<sup>206</sup> Local British officers, far away from any direct control, also had their role in this drama, and some decided not to inform the government about the real situation on the spot. The government, once it had found out, and predominantly motivated by commercial interests, did give the order for retreat and non-interference, once face-keeping retaliation strikes had been carried out. Subsequently, for more than a decade other affairs than the Nagas were more important for the British. Only after further parts of Lower Burma had been conquered and incorporated into the *raj*, did the Naga hills come back onto the British political agenda.

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<sup>204</sup> And preparing their way towards qualifying as ethnic group, Jean and John Comaroff, 'On Totemism and Ethnicity', In idem, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder, 1992), pp. 49-68. An ethnic group therefore is mainly one that lives in an unequal and subordinated position, by taking away their control over the means of production, defined and justified through cultural signifiers. Timothy Garton Ash, when writing on Bosnia and on the difference between a dialect and a language, quotes the linguist Max Weinreich, who said in 1945, that "A language is a dialect with an army and a navy." Timothy Garton Ash, *History of the Present: Essays, Sketches and Dispatches from Europe in the 1990s* (London, 2000), pp. 218 and 477. We may say a nation is an ethnic group with an army.

<sup>205</sup> We will try to disentangle Angami polity in the next chapter.

<sup>206</sup> See again Bryant, 'Pacification in the Early British Raj, 1755-85.' The British asserted their control over frontier areas in which they were simply seen as another competitor, moreover, enforced a tighter control that hitherto had been exercised.

By November 1844 the Shan militia, stationed at the village of Lamkaje, a small outpost of Hosung Hajo was attacked by Angamis.<sup>207</sup> British investigations established that Khonoma was behind this attack on the Shan Militia. The involved Angamis had announced that they would make war on the “sepoys”, seeing themselves as the strongest village and therefore convinced that the others had to do what they said.<sup>208</sup> The local officers Eld and Wood were ordered to cautiously arrest the most powerful Khonoma chief.<sup>209</sup> Both led the two columns of the following military operation which burned down three villages in the process, including Khonoma, for not surrendering its men.<sup>210</sup> However, this time the government did not approve of the practice of burning down villages:

The burning of these villages was not justifiable and the Officers engaged with these half civilized tribes on the Frontier of our possessions would in the opinion of the Governor General in Council gain more influence with them and be better able to carry out measures for the protection and benefit of our own Frontier and Subjects by acting in all circumstances with Strict Justice and moderation, than by having recourse to these harsh measures of general and indiscriminate Vengeance.<sup>211</sup>

The British had entered into a local power struggle and were seen by the Angamis both as rivals and as potential allies. Therefore, the local officers saw the only solution in the establishment of a permanent military post among the Angamis.<sup>212</sup> Additionally, the most important chiefs should be taken hostage to ensure the submission of the rest of the tribe.<sup>213</sup> After renewed forages by Angamis in 1846,<sup>214</sup> the government sanctioned all measures, especially the opening up of communications (roads), to enable the establishment of a temporary military post at Samaguting, with the aim of suppressing future Angami raids. The government was then still hoping to find natural resources in the Naga hills, for example coffee etc.<sup>215</sup> For his next expedition into Angami

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<sup>207</sup> *India Political and Foreign Proceedings* (IPFP) Vol. P/196/63, 2<sup>nd</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1844, Docs. 74-76, listed under FW, 16<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1844.

<sup>208</sup> IPFP Vol. P/197/2, 14<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1844, Doc. 87, listed under FW, 28<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1844, Subassistant to Commissioner Golah Ghat B. Wood to Collector/ Assistant to Commissioner Nowgong Capt. P. Eld, dt. Golah Ghat 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1844.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 88, Jenkins to Eld, dt. 20<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1844.

<sup>210</sup> IPFP Vol. P/197/16, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1845, Doc. 69, listed under FW, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1845, Jenkins to Currie, dt. 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1845. This logic held whole populations responsible for the acts of their democratic elected governments, see also Docs. 70 and 71, the reports of Capt. Eld.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 72, Currie to Jenkins, dt. 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1845.

<sup>212</sup> IPFP Vol. P/197/19, 20<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> June 1845, Doc. 123, listed under FW, 27<sup>th</sup> June 1845, Eld, Principal Assistant to the Agent to the Governor General to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong 20<sup>th</sup> May 1845.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 125, Jenkins to Currie, dt. Gowahatte 5<sup>th</sup> June 1845.

<sup>214</sup> IPFP Vol. P/197/44, 5<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1846, Doc 18, listed under FW, 19<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1846, Butler to Jenkins, dt. 29<sup>th</sup> May 1846. & Butler to Jenkins, dt. Now Gong 12<sup>th</sup> June 1846 & Doc. 17, Jenkins to Bushby, 19<sup>th</sup> August 1846.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 19, Bushby to Jenkins, dt. FW, 19<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1846.

territory, Butler was especially called on to collect botanical and geological information.<sup>216</sup> The government was eager to find something to pay the expenses.

The post at Samaguting was for long a success, the place itself flourishing and settlers poured into North Cachar to start cultivation,<sup>217</sup> until the British decided to move their militia – headquarters into the centre of Angami country.<sup>218</sup> This intrusion and interference resulted in a surprise attack on their militia with thirteen personnel killed.<sup>219</sup> The militia was attacked because it got involved itself in a local feud.<sup>220</sup> Thereupon, the government sanctioned immediate and strong measures; the dispatch of military forces into the Angami hills that were allowed as a last resort the burning of villages and the destruction of the crops.<sup>221</sup> Military operations inside Angami country were carried on for months and the British for the first time stayed on in the hills during the rains.<sup>222</sup> When in May 1850 the government grew impatient and requested the agent to the Northeast to submit more information about the situation in the Angami hills,<sup>223</sup> Jenkins reported on the impending success of the operation, that the Nagas were coming in one by one and were offering submission. Further, that the commanding officer in the hills, lieutenant Vincent, asked to stay on in the hills during the rains. Jenkins, on this occasion, conveyed his opinion that the mere destruction of the offending villages was not enough and suggested as further measures the destruction of the crops and to prevent the Nagas from cultivation, a strategy of scorched earth, but that this necessitated the permanent stationing of an European officer. This, so he continued, would finally bring them to submission, but involved “...the necessity of proceeding to the harsh but unavoidable infliction of destroying villages and crops.”<sup>224</sup> Jenkins warned not to call off the operation at this stage, since this would send the wrong signals. There was, so Jenkins, every justification to make an end to their “...useless striving for their rude independence and the right to plunder and murder their neighbours... .”<sup>225</sup> The government gave its approval, since it “...may be productive...”<sup>226</sup> Jenkins continued to portray

<sup>216</sup> IPFP Vol. P/197/47, 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. – 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1846, Doc. 18, listed under FW, 14<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1846, Jenkins to Butler, Principal Assistant of Nowgong, dt. 20<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1846.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 42, listed under FW, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1849, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong, 17<sup>th</sup> April 1849.

<sup>218</sup> IPFP Vol. P/197/47, 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. – 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1846, Doc. 43, Jenkins to Butler, dt. Gowhati, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1849 & Doc. 44, Grey, Officiating Undersecy. Govt. India, FD, to Jenkins, dt. FW, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1849.

<sup>219</sup> IPFP Vol. P/198/59, 17<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1849, Doc. 156, listed under FW, 17<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1849, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong Assam, 9<sup>th</sup> August 1849.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 157, Jenkins to Halliday, dt. Gowhatty 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1849.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 171, Halliday to Jenkins, dt. FW, 17<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1849.

<sup>222</sup> IPFP Vol. P/198/65, 4<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1850, Docs. 85 & 133, listed under FW, 4<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1850; IPFP Vol. P/199/3, 19<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> April 1850, Docs. 287, 277, 285, 278, 296, 294 listed under FW, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1850; IPFP Vol. P/199/5, 31<sup>st</sup> May – 7<sup>th</sup> June 1850, Docs. 139, 141, 140 listed under FW, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1850; IPFP Vol. P/199/5, Doc. 145, listed under FW, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1850.

<sup>223</sup> IPFP Vol. P/199/4, Doc. 13, listed under FW, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1850, Grey to Jenkins, dt. FW, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1850.

<sup>224</sup> IPFP Vol. P/199/5, Doc. 144, listed under FW, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1850, Jenkins to Grey, dt. Gowhatty, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1850.

Note that Jenkins reported before the request of the government could have reached him, showing him having been conscious that a report was long overdue.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 148, Grey to Jenkins, dt. FW, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1850

the course of events in the Naga hills as very positive, that the British had very good relations with the Nagas, yet, at the same time he requested artillery support to dislodge a stockade above Khonoma.<sup>227</sup> The government, now alarmed by the sudden request for artillery, ordered that no offensive step should be undertaken before Jenkins had submitted the details.<sup>228</sup> Nevertheless, the government sanctioned the building of roads, necessary to take action against the Angamis, including one to be built from Golaghat and Nowgong via Dimapur to Samaguting,<sup>229</sup> from there the extension up to Mozema and the transformation of Dimapur into a permanent military post.<sup>230</sup> And finally agreed on Jenkins' request for two mountain howitzers from the Assam Local Mountain Artillery.<sup>231</sup>

Information from around the time painted a dramatic picture of the situation for the British in the Angami hills. The Nagas were not at all willing to go into submission and only a force of 500 men with mountain guns were seen as sufficient to effect that. The whole of the hills was either hidden or open against the British.<sup>232</sup> Grey, the then officiating under-secretary to the government of India, had undertaken the task of analysing all the previous communications dealing with the events that led to the then present situation in the Naga hills, and came to the conclusion that most of the killings had occurred since they, the British, had started their intervention:

The present state of affairs in the Naga Hills bordering upon Nowgong to the eastward and lying North of Muneepore would seem to have arisen entirely out of the endeavours made by the British authorities in Assam to restrain the violent and deadly feuds existing among different tribes and villages of Nagas.<sup>233</sup>

Of course, Grey had to portray here the British endeavour to subjugate the Nagas as an altruistic humanitarian intervention. Nevertheless, he had come to the conclusion, that the raids had become more lethal, that is to say, the number of killings during single raids had become higher. Every intervention, so he continued, was a failure, the adopted measures led to new failures and the result was that the whole race was up in arms and prepared to offer the most determined opposition to the British troops.<sup>234</sup>

<sup>227</sup> IPFP Vol. P/199/12, 23<sup>rd</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> August 1850, Doc. 68, listed under 30<sup>th</sup> August 1850, Jenkins to Grant, Secy. Govt. Bengal, Judicial Dept., FW, undated.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., Doc. 69, Extracts From Military Department, undated.

<sup>229</sup> IPFP Vol. P/199/15, 11<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1850, Docs. 88-90, listed under FW, 18<sup>th</sup> October 1850, communications between Jenkins, Butler, Grant and Grey.

<sup>230</sup> IPFP Vol. P/199/17, Doc. 89, listed under FW, 8<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1850, Grey to Jenkins, dt. FW, 6<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1850.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., Doc. 144, Grey to Jenkins, dt. FW, 8<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1850.

<sup>232</sup> IPFP Vol. P/199/21, 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1850, Doc. 303, listed under FW, 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1850, Lt. Vincent to Butler, undated.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., Doc. 308, Note by Officiating Under Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Dept., Grey, dt. FW, 19<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1850.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

This brought the matter to the higher levels of British hierarchy, so the governor general of India Lord Dalhousie expressed his complete displeasure with the conduct of Jenkins and his subordinates, and also that the government now had to act with military power to support him and restore the “...influence of our power... .” About the future policy he wrote as follows:

It would be premature perhaps to state now my views as to what ought to be our subsequent course, as farther information has been called for by His Honor in Council – But I can have no hesitation in declaring my opinion, that our past proceedings of late years with the Nagas have not been for our advantage- I deprecate the continuance of any such relations with barbarous tribes as tend directly to the mischievous occurrence of “little Wars”: and I hold that on this as on all other frontier where wild and plundering clans are seated, our true policy is to stand strictly on the defensive; to protect as fully as we can our own border, and its inhabitants, but not to interfere beyond it from any motive however laudable. In short we ought to mind our own business and not to meddle with other peoples.<sup>235</sup>

Dalhousie ordered a strictly defensive stand, and discouraged any attempt to impose authority over the Nagas: “I...depreceate entirely any seizure of useleß and embarrassing territory...”<sup>236</sup> The orders were to defend strictly only the British borders, to protect only their own subjects and to abstain from any interference “...all further relations with the hill chiefs or attempted authoritative influence should be avoided.”<sup>237</sup> In a further protocol Dalhousie underlined his stand vis-à-vis Angami country:

I dissent entirely from the policy which is recommended of what is called obtaining a control, that is to say of taking possession of these hills and of establishing our sovereignty over their savage inhabitants. Our possession could bring no profit to us; and would be unproductive.<sup>238</sup>

Again his order was strict non-interference, and regarding the defence of the frontier, of which Jenkins had said it was impossible, Dalhousie wrote that it should be possible with spirit, that the withdrawal after a military victory signalled British power and the will to enforce, and “...our desire to show that we have no wish for territorial aggrandisement, and no designs on the independence of the Naga tribes.”<sup>239</sup> As long as the Angamis were peaceful, trade should be carried out with them, once they offend British territory or subjects, the trade should be

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., Doc. 318, Minute by the Most Noble the Governor General of India Lord Dalhousie, dt. 20<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1850.

<sup>236</sup> IPFP Vol. P/199/32, 21<sup>st</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> March 1851, Doc. 252, listed under FW, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1851, Minute by the GovGenl of India Dalhousie, dt. 8<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1851.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., listed under FW, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1851.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., Doc. 1, listed under FW, 28<sup>th</sup> March 1851, Minute by the GovGenl of India Dalhousie, dt. 20<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1851.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.



interrupted “...to allay their natural fears of our aggression upon them...”<sup>240</sup> On the next day the order to withdraw was immediately relayed to Jenkins.<sup>241</sup>

The stationing of a military post inside Angami territory had first drawn the British into local Naga politics and then made them a target for the Angamis who were then rallying around the flag to expel the intruder and finally managed to do so. The local officers, guided by the problems on the spot were called back by their superiors, once they had realised that the cost-benefit calculation would come up with a deficit. Hence, the first phase of interaction between British and Nagas ended in 1851 with a decision in favour of non-interference, a conviction that it would not pay to colonise the Nagas and that the troubles with them were instigated by the interference into their affairs.

### *1.9 Conclusion*

Strategic rationale and the promise for profit brought the British to the foot of the hills separating Burma from Assam. Strategic and economic considerations made them want to gain ascendancy over the hill tribes, especially since they first thought it could be done by Manipur, and then, after that had failed, that one powerful strike would scare the natives into compliance.

The empire, cautiously, hesitatingly, yet steadily, expanded its search for natural and tradable resources, for markets, and above all for taxable populations. This expansion was furnished with legitimacy by inventing the mission to deliver its rule and administration and save the people from oriental despotism or unspeakable savage cruelties. One people after the other had to be redeemed when commercial interests conflated with the ideological, covering up the mere predatory enterprise. The British agents, we may assume, lived in their ideology, only sometimes questioning their right to be there, to conquer. Strangely these reflections were always made by the senior officials in Calcutta or London, when expecting an unprofitable enterprise.

Military force, or force as such, seemed to be the natural tools of British policy. War was not the continuation of politics with other means, the policy was war.<sup>242</sup> The British state and its ruling class were a martial one, “...dressed to kill”.<sup>243</sup> Perpetual warfare made fighting into something very normal and necessary, lest there were the danger of degenerating.<sup>244</sup> Or as Edmund Burke, staunch critic of the empire noted in 1784:

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., Doc. 241, Grey to Jenkins, dt. FW, 21<sup>st</sup> Feb. 1851.

<sup>242</sup> Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, p. 105: “New markets came as a result of war and empire; they did not apparently cause it.”

<sup>243</sup> Colley, *Britons*, p. 186, see George Orwell, *Burmese Days* (Utrecht: , 1967 [1934]), p. 174.

<sup>244</sup> Peers, *Between Mars and Mammon* p. 65.

The main drift of their policy was to keep the natives totally out of sight. We might hear enough about what great and illustrious exploits were daily performing on that great conspicuous theatre [India] by Britons. But...we were never to hear of any of the natives being actors.<sup>245</sup>

We will now try to remedy this, despite the scarcity of sources, and will try our best to understand who these Nagas who resisted, if only for a time, the onslaught of the garrison state.

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<sup>245</sup> Cited from Linda Colley, *Captives*, p. 304.

## Chapter Two

### *The Nagas, the Angami Case – Polity and War, 1820s - 1880*

#### *2.1 Introduction*

This chapter aims to demonstrate that the British, when they tried to subjugate the Naga hills lying between Assam and Manipur, bordering Northern Cachar, encountered a number of clusters of polities of which one group, calling themselves “Tengima”, took central stage in the resistance. Why is this important? I will argue at a later stage that the societies of these polities shared a similar culture that allowed them to identify themselves in a political way and of which the former Tengimas only formed a part. Further, the hardening of the surrounding cultural and societal boundaries defined the extent of the conglomeration of polities. That is to say it was to a lesser extent the colonial vis-à-vis, his boundaries and administration, but to a far greater one the policy of the post-colonial successor that melded these polities into one, forming the Naga nation. This is an ongoing process, and will become clearer in proceeding chapters.

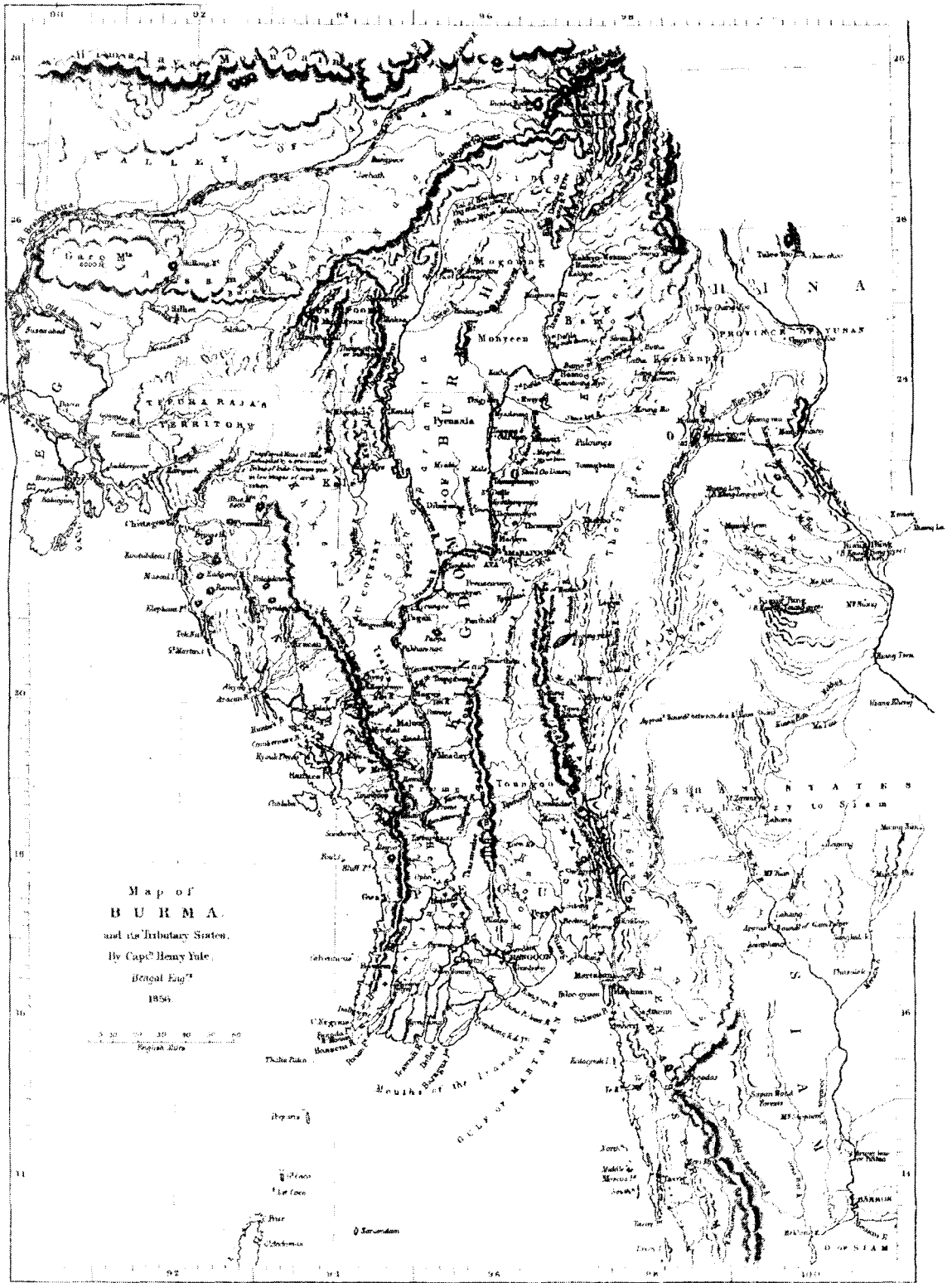
Our data stems from the pens of the British conquerors. When trying to make sense of their writings, we have to interrogate them in a careful way and to keep in mind what we learned in the previous chapter on the garrison state, its personnel, their culture and interests. They basically give us some ethnographic accounts, but data is most comprehensive where some form of violence was involved. Our main problem will thus be in deciphering contemporary Naga practice, their polities. This will necessitate an additional and framing discussion of Southeast Asian history, concepts of rule, and understanding of war. In addition, wherever it seems helpful, I will also fall back on literature dealing with cases in other regions and times that show similarities to our case and were termed by Gellner “peripheral areas”.<sup>1</sup>

#### *2.2 The Outer Circle*

What nowadays is named Northeast India represented a long-standing crossroads between China and Southeast Asia on one side and the subcontinent and Afghanistan on the other. Chinese and Greek sources from the second century B. C. onwards tell us about routes leading from southern China via northern Burma through the Brahmaputra valley: one through the Patkoi range and Upper Burma, another through Burma alongside the Chindwin valley, and yet another through

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Anthropology and Politics: Revolutions in the Sacred Grove* (Oxford, 1995), p. 164.



Pub. for the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society in 1856, Volume 10, London, 1856.

the Arakan along the Irrawaddy valley.<sup>2</sup> China aside, Southeast Asia was connected to South Asia by sea- and land-routes, the latter via the difficult terrain of the mountain chain between Assam and Burma.<sup>3</sup> Archaeological findings and observations suggest that the hill regions definitely and also very likely the Assam valley were influenced rather by Southeast Asia, than by South Asia.<sup>4</sup> While immigration from the subcontinent by the twelfth century nearly consolidated the Sanskritisation of the Brahmaputra valley, the hills did not respond to the new religion.<sup>5</sup> Alastair Lamb delineated Northeast India and mainland Southeast Asia as one region into which the migration from areas corresponding to modern southern China had happened:

...the hills...of the Brahmaputra valley in Assam are really but westward extensions of the hill country of mainland South-east Asia, of Burma, Thailand, Laos and North Vietnam. The hills also extend deep into the Chinese province of Yunnan, and through them runs the tribal belt (...) [which], because of geography, flows over into the north-east corner of the Indian subcontinent and within it there has been a history of population movement extending back far into prehistoric times. Northeast India and Bangladesh is where South and Southeast Asia meet, the former in the plains, the latter in the hills.

It was only the British annexation, having its administration centre in South Asia, that removed the hills of these region from Southeast Asia.<sup>6</sup>

Southeast Asia was characterised by low population density as a result mostly of incessant warfare. War, however, and we will come back later to this point, was fought to acquire manpower not to waste it.<sup>7</sup> Adding to that precariousness was what Anthony Reid, following Victor Lieberman, names “law of impermanence”, cultural tendencies operating in favour for the overthrowing of dynasties and change of the location of their capitals.<sup>8</sup> This fluid state of affairs is best described with Stanley Tambiah’s coinage of Southeast Asian polities as “galactic”, that is to say, they were oriented towards a centre, that assembled around itself in concentric circles,

<sup>2</sup> S. Chattopadhyaya, ‘Economic condition’, In H. K. Barpujari (ed.), *The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. I: From Pre-historic Times to the Twelfth Century A.D.* (Guwahati, 1990), pp. 233-264, pp. 258-259.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>4</sup> H. D. Sankalia & T.C. Sharma, ‘The Prehistoric Age’, In Barpujari (ed.), *The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. I: From Pre-historic Times to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, pp. 25-43, pp. 35-36. Although one can neither agree with the authors to call the hill tribes “primitive” (32), nor with the perception that they still are in the neolithic age (32) or were it in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (35), since they must have been contemporary at all times. In the same volume M. M. Sharma contributed the article about religion (pp. 302-345), and labels the religions of the hill peoples under the headline “primitive religion”, suggesting a not too progressive perspective on their non-Hindu and non-Muslim compatriots.

<sup>5</sup> H. K. Barpujari, ‘Introduction’, In idem (ed.), *The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. I*, pp. 1-24, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Alastair Lamb, *Asian Frontiers: Studies in a Continuing Problem* (London, 1968), this and preceding quote pp. 40-44.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680. Volume One: The Lands below the Winds* (New Haven and London, 1988), pp. 17-18 and 120-124.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Reid, ‘Introduction: A Time and a Place’, In idem (ed.), *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power, and Belief* (Ithaca and London, 1993), pp. 1-23, pp. 7-8. Reid refers here to Victor Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles: A Narchy and Conquest, c. 1580-1760* (New Jersey, 1984), pp. 3-5.

following the geometric example of the *mandala*, identical to itself but in power diminishing, polities, that were in effect autonomous, but over which it would overlord ritual authority.

Competing with this centre were others that attracted or lost these minor polities to rival centres depending on the respective power constellation. In Tambiah's own words:

In the center was the king's capital and the region of its direct control, which was surrounded by a circle of provinces ruled by princes or governors appointed by the king, and these again were surrounded by more or less independent "tributary" polities. (...) If we keep in mind the expanding and shrinking character of the political constellations under scrutiny, a central, perhaps the central, feature to be grasped is that although the constituent political units differ in size, nevertheless each lesser unit is a reproduction and imitation of the larger. Thus we have before us a galactic picture of a central planet surrounded by differentiated satellites, which are more or less "autonomous" entities held in orbit and within the sphere of influence of the center. Now if we introduce at the margin other similar competing central principalities and their satellites, we shall be able to appreciate the logic of a system that is a hierarchy of central points continually subject to the dynamics of pulsation and changing spheres of influence.<sup>9</sup>

This pulsating picture replicating in increasing or decreasing scope in an varying but identical pattern was, in essence, built on the societal principle of leader-follower delivering the building blocks of the traditional polity in Southeast Asia.<sup>10</sup> In between these polities were stretches of territory difficult to access, either because they were mountainous or heavily forested or both, providing a refuge for a life outside these kingdoms, and creating

a fundamental dualism of hill and valley, upstream and downstream, interior and coast. (...) No state incorporated such dependents fully; they remained a stateless penumbra of the state, often indispensable providers of forest or sea products, messengers, warriors and slaves – tributary but distinct, and perceived as uncivilized but also as free.<sup>11</sup>

Although Lieberman sees a continuity of centralisation and state-building for mainland Southeast Asia, that was to a large degree comparable to what happened in Europe, and for him thus resembling a common Eurasian pattern, he nevertheless admits that until the arrival of the European colonial powers, mainland Southeast Asian polities retained their galactic quality as ascribed by Tambiah, and that the hill areas had by then not been affected by the state-building

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<sup>9</sup> Stanley J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a historical background* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 112-113.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 524.

<sup>11</sup> Reid, 'Introduction: A Time and a Place', pp. 3-5.

measures.<sup>12</sup> Although we have to qualify this further below, this brief discussion of historical Southeast Asia shall suffice for the moment to render our following historical circumvention of the Naga hills comprehensible. We will proceed anticlockwise, first Assam, then Manipur, and finally Burma.

John Peter Wade, the assistant surgeon accompanying captain Welsh into eighteenth century Assam, somehow served as chronicler of the expedition that was to assist the Ahom dynasty in its internecine strife and had “...intercourse with the most intelligent and best-informed natives...”<sup>13</sup> of the Ahom kingdom. These Ahom scholars related their history to him, a narrative dominated by the dynamics of extension and contraction, by attack, counter-attack and defence, of the different regional polities, thus exactly behaving like Tambiah’s galactic polity. We also learn from it that the Nagas presented a fixed category in the mountains east of the Ahom kingdom. As chronicles of kingdoms do, they deem as notable affairs only those relating to state business, that is on war and conquest, alliance, betrayal and submission. Thus we are informed that the Ahoms had waged war against the king of the Nagas in the east, in the vicinity of the river Dihing. Further, that a distant successor of this Naga king was first in alliance with the Ahoms, but then betrayed them and was lured under a pretext down into the plains and killed; that an Ahom governor had complained about one of the Naga chiefs, named Tungshoo who had carried out raids on Ahom territory, and that thus the King of the Ahoms again had waged war against the Nagas. Furthermore, that Nagas of one district had submitted and, as sign of their submission, had presented elephants and virgins of rank.<sup>14</sup> The early time of the Ahom dynasty is undated, but one of incessant warfare against Nagas, Cacharies (then written Kacharies), and others. Later, in the fourteenth century, we are told the Cacharies had conquered Naga, the designation for the hill country.<sup>15</sup> And that the Ahom army, when on their way to fight the Cacharies, had on the one hand its way shown by Nagas, but also that, on the other hand, support units for the army had also been plundered and massacred “...by various parties of the people of Naga who infested the wild in the vicinity of the road.” Nagas attacked a fortification, but were repulsed by a detachment of Miris. The Nagas, we are told, retreated as soon as they had losses. Yet, the Miris managed to kill two of them and carried their heads in triumph into the fort. The Nagas, however, continued to infest the roads and prevented all communications with the Ahom army. Miris manned several fortresses along Naga country, that the Ahom deemed

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<sup>12</sup> See his two book-like articles: Victor Lieberman, ‘Local Integration and Euroasian Analogies: Structuring Southeast Asian History, c. 1350-c. 1830’, *Modern Asian Studies* 27, 3 (1993), pp. 475-572 and idem, ‘Transcending East-West Dichotomies: State and Culture Formation in Six Ostensibly Disparate Areas’, *Modern Asian Studies* 31, 0 (1997), pp. 463-546.

<sup>13</sup> Dr. John Peter Wade, ‘A Geographical Sketch of Assam 1800 A.D. Appendix’, (Reprinted from *The Asiatic Annual Register, 1805*, In idem, *An Account of Assam* (Madhapur, 1927 [1800]), edited by Benudhar Sharma, p. 2

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17 and 20- 21.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62

necessary to build. When the Ahom fought the Cacharies, they occasionally got attacked by Nagas, but were "...compelled...to flee to their mountain" by the Miris in Ahom service. But still many Ahom soldiers were killed by the Nagas.<sup>16</sup> In the eighteenth century Manipur asked Ahom for assistance against the court of Ava, and the Ahom king ordered to build a road over the mountains into Manipur, the same undertaking around the middle of the eighteenth century as was carried out around 80 years later by Jenkins and Pemberton, and Gambhir Singh and Grant, yet unsuccessful and with more disastrous consequences, and casualties counting into the thousands by disease and Naga attacks. The mountains concerned were those of the people later to be known as Angamis, about whom we will soon have to say more, and their land seen by the Ahom as intractable wilds.<sup>17</sup> Wade's informants told him (among, of course, many other more important things, the Nagas were only of minor interest) of the existence of the Nagas since the thirteenth century, they spoke of "the land of Naga", "people of Naga", "King of Naga", "chiefs of Naga". Wade was not yet using any of the terms that convey legitimacy to any dispossession of their land. The Nagas, so we may read out of Wade's writings, were a fixed category on the eastern frontier in the mountains, necessitating the stationing of military against their incursions,<sup>18</sup> and if we are very sceptical, we may say that this was so at the latest since the eighteenth century. Since peace makes bad history, we may suppose that hill and plains people for the biggest part of the time had a lively and unspectacular peaceful intercourse with each other that was not considered to be worth to be conveyed to Wade.<sup>19</sup>

The Nagas also had contact with the kingdom of the Meitis located in the valley of Manipur. From the seventeenth century onward the Meitis absorbed groups from Bengal and adopted Hinduism as their official religion.<sup>20</sup> Pemberton in re-narrating the history of Manipur wrote about the prosperous 1770s "...a friendly intercourse preserved with the different Naga tribes inhabiting the neighbouring hills."<sup>21</sup> The Manipuris, so it seems, told Pemberton that there already have been hill tribes called Nagas for a long time and that they had had a friendly, and that meant possibly, a lively intercourse with the Manipuris. Yet from the middle of the eighteenth century, so Pemberton found out, the region had started to fall into chaos as a consequence of the war with Ava, resulting in lawless zones, the dispersion of large parts of the population, and many refugees.<sup>22</sup> The whole power landscape had been upset for long before the

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 98-102.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 146-147.

<sup>18</sup> Wade, 'A Geographical Sketch of Assam 1800 A.D. Appendix'.

<sup>19</sup> H. K. Barpujari, 'Introduction', In idem (ed.), *The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. I: From the Pre-historic Times to the Twelfth Century A.D.* (Guwahati, 1990), pp. 1-24, pp. 3-4.

<sup>20</sup> Y.L. Roland Shimmi, *Comparative History of the Nagas: From Ancient Period Till 1826* (New Delhi; 1988), p. 76-120.

<sup>21</sup> *Bengal Secret and Political Consultations* (BSPC) Vol. 342, 4<sup>th</sup> November 1826 – 30<sup>th</sup> December 1826, listed under Fort William 30<sup>th</sup> December 1826, Doc. No. 10A16, From Hodgson, Surveyor General of India to Swinton, dated 15<sup>th</sup> November 1826. The report itself was signed by Pemberton on October 20<sup>th</sup> 1826.

<sup>22</sup> BSPC Vol. 342, Doc. No. 10A16.



British got to know this area, as it always seemed to have been the case when expanding empires closed in.<sup>23</sup>

To the east of the Naga hills the more central organised kingdoms and empires of the Shans, Burmans and Mons were limited in their rule to the depressions of the larger north-south running river valleys. The incorporation of hill areas was out of question, even during extraordinarily successful centralisation and unification processes, like under the Taung-ngu rulers in sixteenth century Burma, the then largest land-empire in Southeast Asia. Land was plenty but population in demand, only people could create and represent power.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, it seems as if it was difficult enough to control the river valleys as rebellions and their suppression happened nearly on a daily basis.<sup>25</sup> Populations were forcible moved and resettled either to the heartland to strengthen the demographic core or to the plains bordering hills to check encroachments by hill dwellers.<sup>26</sup> The orientation of the Burman empires was historically directed predominantly to the east, the west neither posing a security problem nor a lure on grounds of the difficult terrain. This must have contributed to the survival of independent Tai statelets in the upper Chindwin area.<sup>27</sup> However, from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards the Burmese empire was consolidated under the Kon-baung dynasty and not only gained control over the upper Chindwin valley, but also extended its sway into Arrakan, Manipur, Cachar and Assam, after these kingdoms had been weakened by internal disputes, bringing the Burmese into direct contact with the EIC, as has been outlined in the previous chapter.<sup>28</sup> Koenig's findings are in line with Reids' when he portrays a clear division between lowland and highland societies:

...early Kon-baung society falls into an unequal dichotomy between the majority lowland rice-cultivating, Buddhist peoples – Burmans, Mons, and Shans – who, although linguistically and ethnically different, shared in common culture, social structure, and history, and the animist hill peoples such as the Karens, Chins, and Kachins, who had a different type of social structure and culture.<sup>29</sup>

He goes on further specifying the difference:

...the hill peoples, mainly the Kachins, Chins, and Karens, were marginal and generally of little concern to the Kon-baung rulers. Unlike the lowland paddy cultivators who lived in village communities, the

<sup>23</sup> Brian R. Ferguson and Neil L. Whitehead, (eds.), *War in the Tribal Zone: Expanding States and Indigenous Warfare* (Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1992).

<sup>24</sup> William J. Koenig, *The Burmese Polity, 1752-1819: Politics, Administration, and Social Organization in the Early Kon-baung Period* (Michigan, 1990), pp. 1-11.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11 & 13.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

hill peoples survived by shifting agriculture, trade, and warfare, were structured genealogically in terms of clans or lineages, lived in geographically widespread settlements, and were non-Buddhist animists. Such peoples were able to maintain a fair degree of independence because they were not generally integrated into larger political units.<sup>30</sup>

To stress again, land was available in abundance, not even the lowland had been brought completely under cultivation, and the main concern of Kon-baung administration was that of control of the river depressions and to prevent rival centres of power from developing inside the kingdom.<sup>31</sup> That Koenig not even mentions the Nagas indicates their irrelevance for the Burmese polity. Nagas will have been in direct contact only with the in-between the Burmese kingdom and Naga hills lying petty Shan polities. Pemberton, when reporting in the 1820s that the Burmese had gained control over the Chindwin valley qualifies that, in saying that this control was confined to the river itself, and that this limitation was due to the presence of powerful Naga groups in this area:

...the fierce and warlike character of these hardy mountaineers having frequently enabled them not only to resist the Burmahs but to dictate terms to the Sunjok Rajah one of their tributaries who now resides at a village (...) The whole country north of Kuboo...is inhabited by powerful Loohooppa and Tanghool tribes who are not likely for many years to be subjected either by Burmahs or Munypoorees, the same may be said to the tribes on the south, and on the west and northwest the Barak is, and always has been the boundary between the states of Munnipoor and Kachar.<sup>32</sup>

However, that the Nagas were politically irrelevant to the Burmese does not say that they had no interaction with Burma,<sup>33</sup> or did not venture into it. On the contrary. In a world of weak states individuals and/or groups must have ventured into the neighbouring countries and must have related their adventures to those that had stayed at home, but we will come to this in the next sub-chapter. Coming back to the larger structuring of the region, addressing the case of Southeast Asia in words which apply equally to our area of concern, Lamb writes:

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 62-63.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>32</sup> BSPC Vol. 347, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1827 – 21<sup>st</sup> September 1827, Doc. No. 51, listed under Fort William, 17<sup>th</sup> August 1827, from Pemberton to Hodgson, dated Munnypoor, 8<sup>th</sup> July 1827. One of the main objects of Pemberton's survey was to find appropriate boundaries between Cachar, Manipur and Ava.

<sup>33</sup> BSPC Vol. 358, 9<sup>th</sup> July 1830 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 1830, Doc. Nos. 16 & 17, listed under Fort William, 19<sup>th</sup> November 1830, therein Pemberton's diary of his tour from Manipur to Ava and subsequently over the Yoorma mountains back to the Arraccan, where Pemberton mentioned Nagas in the Kabaw valley besides the Burmese officers, so it seemed normal and well-known that Nagas lived there and had close interaction with Manipuris, Burmese and British.

...the shape of mainland South-east Asian boundaries had not yet become stabilised when the age of British and French colonial penetration into the region began. (...) No final solution had been arrived at for the problem of the limits of the Burmans, Thais, Shans and Laos, who were still actively competing with each other right up to the latter part of the nineteenth century. At the moment of European colonial impact, it would not have been easy to point to any stable delimited or demarcated boundary in mainland South-east Asia, even though the location of the centres of power in the region was clear enough.<sup>34</sup>

There were no boundaries, but only frontiers.<sup>35</sup> The plains were partially under the control of centrally organised kingdoms, rivalling among themselves, their scope and effective control depending on their respective power.<sup>36</sup> These centralised polities had neither the technical possibilities nor the incentives to force the hill areas under their permanent and effective rule. Thus, as we have learned above, the whole region was defined by a dichotomy between plains and hills. However, that these hills were not incorporated by valley kingdoms does not mean that they presented a time warp, as will become clear in the following.

### *2.3 Heart of Darkness (or rather Black Forest)*

When looking at the map we might imagine what was then called by the British the north-east frontier in the nineteenth century as a pristine, godforsaken country under the lee of the towering Himalayas protected by impenetrable bamboo or other jungle and nourished by torrential monsoon rains, a kind of fery-tale Shalimar, or Conradian heart-of-darkness sans the colonial Kurtz. Whereas when we, for a good example, read Lieutenant Wilcox's *Memoir*<sup>37</sup> on his upstream explorations along the Brahmaputra in the second half of the 1820s, and when we look at the composition of his party accompanying him, we find among it several Khamtis, that is to say people that resided in the north-eastern corner of Assam and in the adjoining hills, further, one Hindustani (Indian) and one Burman cook (in case the former fell sick), one Chinese, who hoped to reach Yunnan, and one Assamese aristocrat.<sup>38</sup> All of the members of that multicultural party had their own reasons to participate in that tour and all thus tried to contribute to its progress. For them the territory traversed was not, like it was for Wilcox and most probably for the

<sup>34</sup> Alastair Lamb, *Asian Frontiers* (London, 1968), p. 42.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.: "A boundary is a clear divide between sovereignties which can be marked as a line on a map. It has, as it were, length but no area" (ibid.: 4). "A frontier, as that term was understood by authorities on British imperial border questions, such as Lord Curzon and Sir Henry McMahon, is a *zone* [iiO] rather than a *line* [iiO]. It is a tract of territory separating the centres of two sovereignties. (...) A frontier zone may well be of very extensive area, and a dispute a dispute over the exact whereabouts of a boundary line through a frontier zone can involve large tracts of territory" (ibid.: 6).

<sup>36</sup> Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, esp. Part I.

<sup>37</sup> Lieutenant R. Wilcox, 'Memoir of a Survey of Assam and the Neighbouring Countries, executed in 1825-6-7-8', In L/PS/20/D16, Political and Secret Department (Burma Office), *Selection of Papers Regarding the Hill Tracts between Assam and Burmah And ON The Upper Brahmaputra* (Printed at the Bengal Secretariat Press, 1873), pp. 1-82.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

Hindustani, a *terra incognita*,<sup>39</sup> but a route, though maybe tedious, that had been traversed already several times, and that connected homelands with destinations of business. One day, while already high up in the mountains, Wilcox's party rested among the Mishmis, of whom everyone carried a pipe and a case for flint and tinder. The cases, so the party discovered, were obviously of Chinese manufacture, and so the Chinese translated the inscription that said "Made at the shop of...in case of being bad, bring it back to the shop for exchange." In addition the Mishmis possessed Chinese porcelain, wore plains-fabricated petticoats and Tibetan woollens.<sup>40</sup> Wilcox's escort and guides always did send out envoys to inform the villages lying ahead and asked for permission to traverse their country,<sup>41</sup> and the party everywhere was received in a friendly way. The hill people, so it seems, were generally hospitable people. What strikes one when reading this travelogue are the many individuals encountered, not different from Wilcox (or oneself for that matter) with their considerations, interests etc., their complete normalcy.<sup>42</sup> At the level of this narrative the natives still possessed agency, something they lost when stories were related back to the metropolis of London, causing Burke's criticism given at the end of the previous chapter. However, one day at last Wilcox describes how he and his companions were sure to encamp at the end of the world when suddenly workers passed by, on their way back from their fields, greeted, and told them that their houses were not far away. What follows is the depiction of a well-cultivated and inhabited landscape.<sup>43</sup> Wilcox's memoir is to remind us that it well may have been European imagination that filled the unknown with the arcane. The hill areas might not have been worth subjugating permanently by kingdoms, as land was plenty, and people was what mattered, but there were all kind of interactions and transactions by individuals or groups between hills and plains, or across the former from one valley to another. In the case of the Angamis we know for example that their chiefs went down to Nowgong to negotiate the release of hostages taken by the British,<sup>44</sup> or sent envoys to the British for the sake of establishing contact,<sup>45</sup> and in 1843, there was even a conference held at Nowgong with several Angami and Rengma chiefs present.<sup>46</sup> From then on Naga chiefs were hosted and presented with gifts over the following years on a regular basis.<sup>47</sup> Further, that Nagas accompanied Butler as far as Gauhati

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 34-35.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 33ff.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 42ff.

<sup>44</sup> *India Political Consultations* (IPC) Vol. P/195/39, 25<sup>th</sup> May – 15<sup>th</sup> June 1840, Doc. 118, listed under 25<sup>th</sup> May 1840, Jenkins to Maddock, Secy. to the Govt. of India in the Pol. Dept., dt. 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1840.

<sup>45</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/54, 22<sup>nd</sup> March – 5<sup>th</sup> April 1841, Bigge to Jenkins, undated, attached copy to Doc. 92, listed under 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1841, Jenkins to Maddock, dt. 10<sup>th</sup> March 1841.

<sup>46</sup> IPC Vol. P/196/29, 29<sup>th</sup> March – 12<sup>th</sup> April 1843, Doc. 76, listed under FW, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1843, Jenkins to Bushby, dt. 19<sup>th</sup> March 1843.

<sup>47</sup> See for example *India Political and Foreign Proceedings* (IPFP) Vol. P/197/59, 12<sup>th</sup> June 1847, Doc. 47, listed under FW, 12<sup>th</sup> June 1847, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong 21<sup>st</sup> May 1847; IPFP Vol. P/198/33, 26<sup>th</sup> Aug. – 9<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1848,

and Tezpur simply to go shopping,<sup>48</sup> that Nowgong developed into the principal place for the Nagas to barter,<sup>49</sup> and that in the first quarter of 1849 more than 1,000 Angamis had been there for that matter, but also that Dimapur had developed into a market place.<sup>50</sup> This list could be continued at will, but two more striking examples shall suffice to illustrate my point. The first is to narrate that in the course of a feud one Angami chief went to Gauhati to purchase muskets and that the rival was assisted by a freebooter, formerly in service in Manipur, and his Cacharie mercenaries.<sup>51</sup> This indicates that there were agents around in the Naga hills who beforehand had intensive contact with the wider world and of whom we normally do not get to know anything. Possibly there were many more of them. The second occurrence I want to convey is that the Angamis, when besieged by the British, inquired about the terms of surrender via mail.<sup>52</sup> This episode, though happening as late as 1880, nevertheless clarifies that the Nagas might have lived in an area difficult to access but that this was by no means the case for themselves.

We should keep in mind that the hills were most certainly not inaccessible to their very inhabitants and were consequently not considered by them to be a frontier zone. Rather, these hills were for the Nagas a homeland, the very difficulty of whose terrain enabled a life outside the quasi-feudal state they found their plains-dwelling neighbours living in, but didn't hinder them in their transactions with the wider world. Further, that the examples I listed, and the one that are documented, only show a tiny fraction of what must have been really going on. Finally, that this kind of interaction was not a novelty but will have always been in process, elucidating what by now should be common knowledge, that people like the Nagas always lived in the present. That there never were any people without history. Due to human agency among the members of local communities, and an articulation between them and the wider world, even the most static seeming people were and are historical.<sup>53</sup> Since Eric Wolf, we know that the people of all continents share their history with the people of Europe since its unique expansion 500 years

Docs. 142-3, listed under FW, 26<sup>th</sup> August 1848 & *ibid.*, Docs. 121-123, listed under FW, 9<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1848; IPFP Vol. P/198/46, 28<sup>th</sup> April – 5<sup>th</sup> May 1849, Docs. 60-61, listed under FW, 5<sup>th</sup> May 1849;

<sup>48</sup> IPFP Vol. P/197/57, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> April 1847, Doc. 38, listed under FW, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1847, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong, 10<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1847.

<sup>49</sup> IPFP Vol. P/198/35, 30<sup>th</sup> Sept. – 21<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1848, Doc. 25, listed under FW, 14<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1848, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong, 25<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1848.

<sup>50</sup> IPFP Vol. P/198/47, 12<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> May 1849, Doc. 42, listed under FW, 12<sup>th</sup> May 1849, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong Assam, 17<sup>th</sup> April 1849.

<sup>51</sup> IPFP Vol. P/198/59, 17<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1849, Doc. 159, listed under FW, 17<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1849, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong Assam, 15<sup>th</sup> August 1849.

<sup>52</sup> *India Foreign Proceedings - Political* (IFP-P), Vol. P/1552, April-June 1880, April 1880, Doc. 219, Note on Naga Hills affairs by the Chief Commissioner of Assam, dt. Kohima, 10<sup>th</sup> March 1889, S. C. Bayley, Offg. CC Assam, pp. 243-248, p. 243.

<sup>53</sup> See for example Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi, 1990), especially the first three chapters; John and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder, 1992), chapters 1 and 4; James Carrier (ed.), *History and Tradition in Melanesian Anthropology* (Berkeley, 1992) and Kirsten Hastrup (ed.), *Other Histories* (London, 1992).

ago, even so in cases where direct contact was not made for a long time.<sup>54</sup> Although it should be stressed that history always was one and continuous.<sup>55</sup> Yet, the ideological need to legitimise the colonial and imperial enterprise, created a picture of the people of other continents as at best in need of help, or at worst as inferior, but in essence as categorically different. The political power imbalance between the west and the rest was reflected in the social sciences in the subsuming of the non-west into one and the same timeless orient vis-à-vis the historical occident.<sup>56</sup> Differences in culture were defined historically,<sup>57</sup> distances in space reflected processes in time, the non-west Other was denied of coevalness.<sup>58</sup> This was even more true for societies which were organised in a segmentary way, or at least, not powerful enough to counter such a categorisation of themselves. Those “savages”, “primitives”, “tribals” were perceived and portrayed in the then dominant worldview of evolutionism as in time backward, their societies as pristine, static, without history, to be studied and understood in an ahistorical way.<sup>59</sup> Following this logic the members of those seemingly unchanging societies were perceived and portrayed as possessing no agency, following the rules of their societies like puppets.<sup>60</sup> Again, when reading the dispatches of the officers on the frontier we do not find anything of that. They saw the Naga as historical contemporary, and we may deem that direct interaction did not allow for any other interpretation. Moreover, when we remember that Wade, the assistant surgeon collecting information in eighteenth century Assam, referred to the “people”, the “nation” of the Nagas and their “country”,<sup>61</sup> it becomes obvious that we are witnessing ideology at work, and that not only the patently derogative terms “savages”, “barbarians”, and “wilds” have the quality to legitimise the incapacitation of the thus described, but that the label “tribe” may share the same quality.<sup>62</sup>

In other words, we may conclude that not the communities were imagined but their obscurity. Although the hinterland was less affected by changes happening in the trade and political centres, this does not say that it was not affected at all. Albeit inland trade is not well documented it nevertheless seems to be attested for that even the far off areas were touched by

<sup>54</sup> Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley, 1982).

<sup>55</sup> And Wolf, to do him justice, does this extensively in his book.

<sup>56</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978).

<sup>57</sup> Jay O'Brien and William Roseberry, 'Introduction', in Idem (eds.), *Golden Ages, Dark Ages: Imagining the Past in Anthropology and History* (Berkeley, 1991), pp. 1-18.

<sup>58</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology makes its object* (New York, 1983).

<sup>59</sup> Nicholas Thomas, *Out Of Time: History and Evolution in Anthropological Discourse* (Cambridge, 1989).

<sup>60</sup> Sherry Ortner, 'Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1984, 26: 126-166.

<sup>61</sup> See for example Wade, 'A Geographical Sketch of Assam 1800 A.D. Appendix' and L. W. Shakespear, *History of Upper Assam, Upper Burma and North-Eastern Frontier* (London: MacMillan, 1914).

To be sure, the Ahoms certainly would have tried to conquer and occupy the Naga Hills, if they would have seen a reason for that. Then, might was right. I do not want to give the impression here, as if then some ruler would have cared about the opinion of some people living on a certain land, especially when inferior in power.

<sup>62</sup> See John Sharp, 'Introduction: Constructing social reality', In Emile Boonzaier and John Sharp (eds.), *South African Keywords: The uses and abuses of political concepts* (Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1988), pp. 1-16.

the trade boom that took off in Southeast Asia at around 1400, and even more so since the important Southeast Asian goods were forest products.<sup>63</sup> But despite temporary successes of centralisation efforts hurled over hinterland people, they managed to retain their autonomy. “Tribute” gifts accompanied trade relations but did not represent any ruler-ruled relationship. The volatile political landscape made alliances mandatory (that were inherently unstable), but which did not touch, despite their rhetoric of absolutism, local autonomy, and remained voluntary federations. Where protection was sought it was at the same time made clear that one was determined to continue to conduct one’s own affairs.<sup>64</sup> It may have been this that led Lieberman to state that the hills were not affected by the continuous centralisation efforts of states. What he possibly meant with that might be that these ever larger polities had not been able to manage to incorporate the hinterlands until the arrival of the European imperialists. For us it should be clear by now that the hill societies of Southeast Asia always lived their life in interaction with the lowlands, and this already before 1400, though possible with less intensity. We also have to keep in mind that the hinterland was for centuries raided for slaves to provide the lowland capitals and coastal towns with manpower,<sup>65</sup> rendering any notion of “precontact”, referring to the time before the advent of European colonialism, meaningless.<sup>66</sup>

Keeping this in mind it remains to inquire as to what societies lived there in the later Naga hills and how they were politically constituted. Our access will be via the Angamis, following the British conquerors, who solely have provided us with contemporary sources. We have some contemporaneous ethnographic accounts, but the nature of the Angami-British relations back then provided for the fact of us becoming informed in the main on acts involving actual violence, and it will be therefore also through the documentation of these that we try to shed some light on the political composition of the Naga hills.

## 2.4 *The Inner Circle*

When reading the reports dealing with the initial phase of British–Angami dealings one is puzzled by the chaos of the events that present a veritable mess. At the same time one is bored by the humdrum recurrence of an unchanging pattern: the British rushing back and forth, punishing here, conciliating and negotiating there, Angamis promising submission, or even asking for protection, and at the next moment, or even simultaneously but only reported afterwards, we learn about a raid conducted by another or even the same group. Possibly the chaos presented in

<sup>63</sup> Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680. Volume Two: Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven and London, 1993), pp. XIV and 53-61.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 207-253, *passim*.

<sup>65</sup> Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680. Volume One: The Lands below the Winds* (New Haven and London, 1988), pp. 132-133.

the writings reflects only the confusion of the British who, after all, were there to install their order and it is very likely that the logic behind all the affairs was perfectly unambiguous to the Angamis.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, that in the non-modern world of the Angamis, in which no powerful state existed to enforce unitary and regulated behaviour on its inhabitants, the multitude of practices was the rule, and this was especially true for actions transcending the boundaries of one's own group, the foreign relations so to say. For the Angamis, at least, there is abundant evidence that the British perceived them in such a way. That this seemed to include acts of violence was to the great annoyance of the British. It was this quality that should lead Butler to denote Angami resistance to British intrusion as "hydra-headed rebellion."<sup>68</sup> But this did not mean that an Angami could disobey the marriage rules, that is to say Angami society had other rules and was constituted in a way different from the rather modern state, and different from what the British perceived it then to be.

The Nagas in general, and the Angamis in particular seemed to have been able to escape not only from the Burmese military campaigns but also from repeated attempts to force them to swear allegiance: "...all of these tribes are however remarkable for an independence of spirit that acknowledges no restraint...".<sup>69</sup> Protected by the rugged terrain they had been able to resist all attempts at subjugation:

With a sagacity which has at once insured them both health & security they have in every instance established themselves upon the most inaccessible peaks of the mountainous belt they inhabit & from these elevated positions can see & guard against approaching danger long before it is sufficiently near to be felt various attempts in the days of their prosperity & power were made by the Rajahs of Munipoor, Kachar & Tipperah to reduce these savages to a state of vassalage but uniformly without success they steadily refused to acknowledge allegiance to either power & policy restrained the two first from using coercive measures, where success was at least doubtful & failure would effectually have closed against them the only direct communications between their respective countries.<sup>70</sup>

A statement that would please any present-day Naga nationalist. That Pemberton here might have misinterpreted the actual extent of control projected and involved in oaths of allegiance

<sup>66</sup> Janet Hoskins, 'Introduction: Headhunting as Practice and as Trope', In idem (ed.) *Headhunting and the Social Imagination in Southeast Asia*. (Stanford, 1996), pp. 1-49, p. 3.

<sup>67</sup> "The entire subfield of political anthropology is predicated on finding order where none is visible; at ground level, people always self-organize somehow, and they know who is gunning for whom. Anarchy – case after case suggests – is nothing more than an intellectual construct, and all dire predictions to the contrary, it never really exists." Anna Simons, 'War: Back to the Future', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1999, 28: 73-108, p. 92.

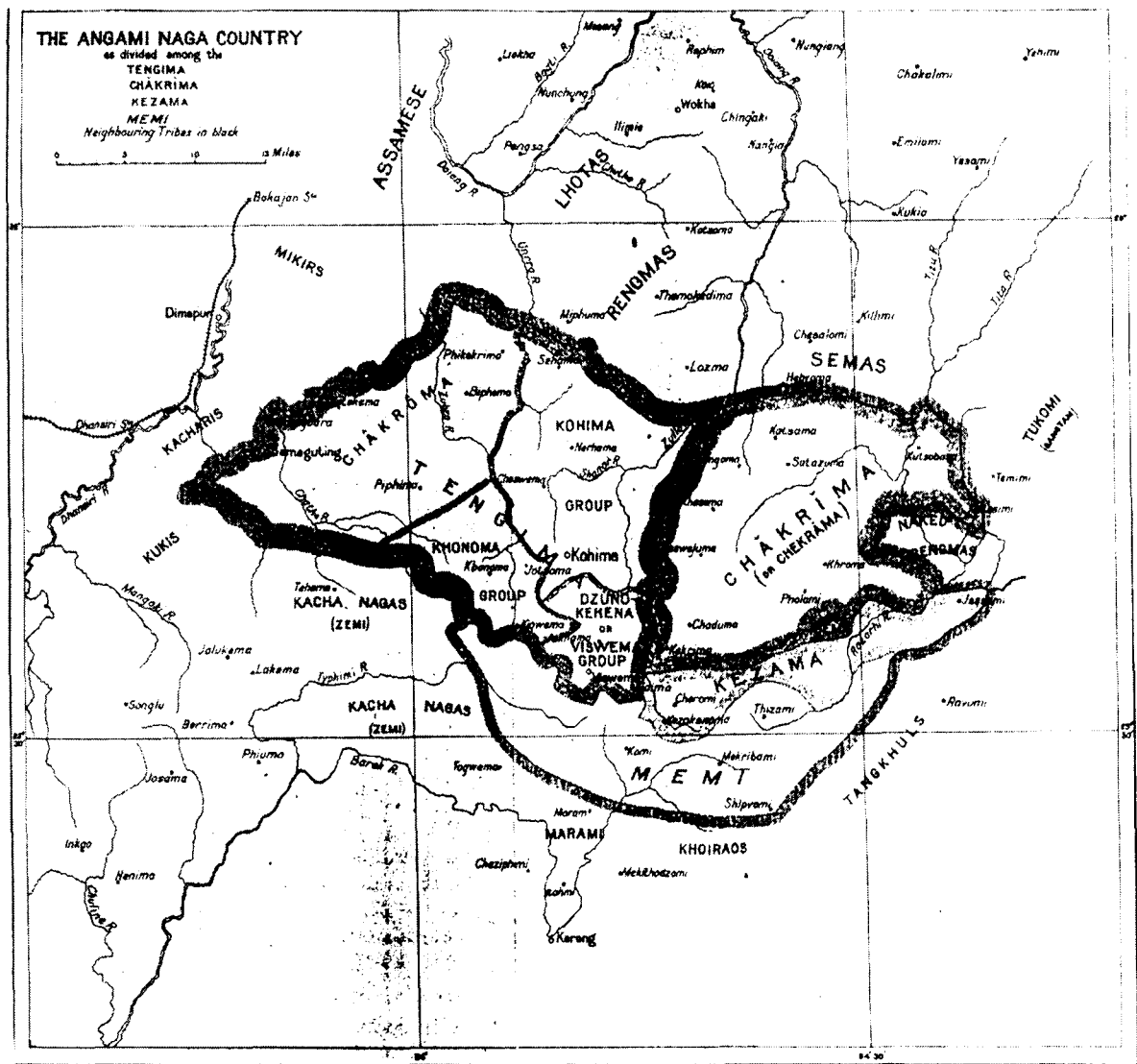
<sup>68</sup> Major John Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam, during a residence of fourteen years* (London, 1855), p. 194.

<sup>69</sup> BSPC Vol. 336, 6<sup>th</sup> January 1826 – 24<sup>th</sup> February 1826, Doc. Nos. 52 & 53, listed under Fort William 6<sup>th</sup> January 1826, dated 19<sup>th</sup> December 1825, written and signed 19<sup>th</sup> November at the River Ganges, the whole style of the report is that of a private note, yet the very obvious feature is the rather positive portrayal of the Nagas.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.



anyway, does not have to disturb us here. Polities were constantly extending or contracting due to their respective and relative strength. Sworn allegiance did not necessarily, or rather rarely, involve de facto control.<sup>71</sup>



<sup>71</sup> See discussion above.

The triangle Cachar, Angami Naga Hills, and Manipur was depleted of any larger polity in the aftermath of the long succession of wars, and even more so, in the nearby presence of the powerful and victorious British-India. We have already in the previous chapter mused about the quality, reasons and intentions of the raids conducted by Angamis on Manipur<sup>72</sup> and Cachar, and we came to the conclusion, that they might have been retaliations for attacks carried out on them by Gambhir Singh, (i.e. Manipur), and Tularam Senapati, (i.e. North or Hill Cachar), both trying to enlarge their area of control or influence in the post-war time. We know that Manipur was later required to do so by the British, but we may assume that neither Tularam nor Gambhir needed encouragement to do so in the first place. Still, neither Manipur, and even less so, North Cachar, had, as petty principalities, the power to exert anything that could deserve the name control over the Angami Hills. Moreover, that might not even have been intended. The objective will have been simply the occasional conduct of predatory incursions, the levying and collecting of tribute, and the take-over of some villages bordering the area of influence of the rival polity.<sup>73</sup>

But let us now take a leap forward to share what intelligence the British had gathered on the Angamis in June 1880, just after what would take shape as the final defeat of the Angami Nagas at the hands of the British, when the officiating secretary to the chief commissioner of

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<sup>72</sup> BSPC Vol. 342, 4<sup>th</sup> November 1826 – 30<sup>th</sup> December 1826, Doc. No. 5, listed under Fort William 30<sup>th</sup> December 1826, from Tucker to Swinton, dated Sylhet, Commissioner Office 16<sup>th</sup> December 1826 and Doc. No. 6, From Captain Grant to Tucker, dated Munnypore, 6<sup>th</sup> December 1826; BSPC Vol. 344, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1827 – 16<sup>th</sup> March 1828, Doc. No. 12, listed under Fort William 12<sup>th</sup> January 1827, from Grant to Tucker, dated Mannipoor, 20<sup>th</sup> December 1826.

<sup>73</sup> Simplified we might take Angamis, Cacharies and Manipuries as three polities in conflict with each other, and even then the situation was not an easy one to penetrate:

In what part of the hills these Nagas inhabit I cannot exactly say but I presume in the vicinity of the Salt Springs near Lemkar in the vicinity of the Sources of the Dhunsiri, Tamoo and Dyung rivers.-

What has led to these aggressions I cannot say, but there seems every reason to suppose they have originated in a long series of mutual attacks and in feuds of long standing and I think it is not improbable that the feuds have arisen from disputes for the possession of the Salt Springs as I recollect, when crossing the Cachar hills, being informed that there had been disputes between the Nagas and Cacharees for the Salt Springs which occupied by the former and claimed by the latter.- The late atrocities may also have been more particularly caused by the recent expedition of the manipoories, who burned and destroyed many Villages in this direction and as they did not maintain permanent possession of the hills, they may only have exasperated the Nagas and brought on there retaliations upon our villages.- The munipooree expedition arose out of attacks of the Nagas upon the Cachares in the vicinity of the sources of the Jiri river.-

It is I presume now impossible to trace who were the original offenders in these perpetual quarrels but the impression on my mind is from what I learned in the hills, that the Cacharees have been constantly endeavouring to subject the Nagas the original occupants of the Country to Slavery and to have brought these attacks upon themselves and I know the Nagas did complain grievously of the oppressions of the Cacharee Chiefs.-

The reports therefore of the Cacharee Chiefs are to be received with suspicion, but whatever may have been the origin of the feuds the object now will be to get hold of the persons of some of the perpetrators if possible or else to inflict such punishment upon them, by burning their villages and crops, as may tend to deter them from future aggressions.-

Assam, C. J. Lyall, reported the findings to his superior about the power structure of the Angamis, and the reasons for coming into conflict with them:

They have no tribal Chiefs to keep peace, scarcely even do they acknowledge the authority of village chiefs or elders; the only influence is that of the public opinion of the village, or rather of the particular *kebel* [italic in the Original (itO)] or clan of the village to which a person belongs (for each of these is a separate democratic community), and there is a chronic state of warfare between village and village, and even between different *kebels* [itO] of the same village. The only check on massacre is the obligation which each community is under of avenging the death of any of its members; and, though this acts in one direction as a deterrent upon wanton outrages, it operates in another in making feuds perpetual.<sup>74</sup>

Lyall went on, to note that these villages were all turned into fortresses and located on inaccessible sites. This, in combination with terrace cultivation, tended to an accumulation of power in a few strong villages, themselves existing in a balance of power, like for example Khonoma and Mozema, although being very much connected by intermarriage, were continuously caught in a rival position.<sup>75</sup> The Merhema *kebel* of Khonoma, according to Lyall, traded with Manipur and Assam in ponies, and bought, with the therewith acquired money, firearms and ammunition from Manipuris residing in Cachar. Through these firearms, Khonoma, and to a lesser degree also Mozema, had “... attained a position of superiority in the Naga Hills district, which enabled them to lord it over the smaller Angami villages, from which they would requisition supplies and demand service at will.” Even when only two or three of them appeared in Cachar or Manipur it was enough to give them a reception, which would never be given to a British officer or a Manipur minister. The occupation of Kohima by the British was therefore incompatible with the domination of Khonoma and had to lead to a confrontation.<sup>76</sup> Writing five years earlier, captain Butler, based on extensive first-hand experience, has left us the following description about the Angami polity:

...the Angámis have no regular settled form of government. With them might is right, and this is the only form of law – or rather the absence of all law – heretofore recognised among them. Every man follows the dictates of his own will, a form of the purest democracy which it is very difficult indeed to conceive as existing even for a single day; and yet that it does exist here, is an undeniable fact. In every village we find a number of headmen or chiefs, termed *Peúmás*, who generally manage to arbitrate between litigants. (...) The actual authority exercised by these *Peúmás*, who are men noted for their personal prowess in war, skill in diplomacy, powers of oratory, or wealth in cattle and land, is,

<sup>74</sup> IFP-P, Vol. P/1743, Aug. – Sept. 1881, Aug. 1881, Doc. 617, C. J. Lyall, Offg Secy. CC Assam, to Lyall, Secy Govt India, FD, dt. Shillong, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1880, pp. 587-601, p. 593.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

however, all but nominal, and thus their orders are obeyed so far only, as they may happen to be in accord with the wishes of the community at large, and even then, the minority will not hold themselves bound in any way by the wishes or acts of the majority. The Nágá Peú má is, in fact, simply *primus inter pares* [iiO] and often that only *pro tem* [iiO]. (...) Theoretically, with the Angami, every man is his own master, and avenges his own quarrel. Blood once shed can never be expiated, except by the death of the murderer, or some of his near relatives, and although years may pass away, vengeance will assuredly be taken some day. One marked peculiarity in their intestine feuds is, that we very seldom find the whole of one village at war with the whole of another village, but almost invariably clan is pitted against clan. Thus I have often seen a village split up into two hostile camps, one clan at deadly feud with another, whilst a third lives between them in a state of neutrality, and at perfect peace with both.<sup>77</sup>

In what follows we will find confirmation of Butler's characterisation of the constitution of Angami polity. Grange, a British official, left us his version of an encounter in 1839 with, as he was told, "...one of the greatest chiefs of the Angamees..." Ikkari, and that "...his own men even abused his timidity..." when he showed reluctance to approach Grange.<sup>78</sup> Leaving room for the possibility that Grange wanted to ridicule the Other in order to extrapolate his own fearless performance, he still could not have invented that Ikkari, who was known to him as one of the two most powerful men in these hills, was, when showing fear, insulted and mocked by his fellow clansmen. This would lend further confirmation on the egalitarian constitution of Angami clans for that period. Butler, the elder, would confirm that. Though he identifies hereditary chiefs in Angami villages he acknowledges their limited authority.<sup>79</sup> He did not yet know that they were considered as the descendants of the village founders and thus had important ritual functions.<sup>80</sup> But he conveys to us a depiction of the decision-finding process concerning collective violent action:

In all transactions of importance, such as setting out on a predatory inroad, or to take revenge on any village, the aged and warriors of any village assemble together and decide on what is to be done; but it is believed that the counsel of warriors is more frequently adopted than the sober advice of the elders and peaceably disposed.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, p. 594.

<sup>77</sup> Captain John Butler, B.S.C., Political Agent, Nágá Hills, Asám, 'Rough Notes on the Angami Nágás and their Language', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. 44, 1875, Part I., No. IV.-1875, pp. 307-346, p. 314-315.

<sup>78</sup> E. R. Grange, 'Extracts from a Tour-Diary of 1849' and 'Into the Naga Hills', In Verrier Elwin (ed.), *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1969), pp. 203-218.

<sup>79</sup> Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam, During a Residence of fourteen years*, pp. 145-146.

<sup>80</sup> John Henry Hutton, *The Angami Nagas: With some notes on neighbouring tribes* (London, 1921), pp. 113-114. From what Butler writes about this village chiefs and about the decision-finding process we may assume that the role of these "chiefs" was more or less congruent then with what Hutton had established in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

<sup>81</sup> Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, p. 146.

Although this indicates the rule of the young and middle-aged men, it nevertheless confirms for a collective leadership (of this category of men). And even though an outgoing war party appointed a leader, the authority conveyed to him could not have been too far-reaching as the following example of radical democratic warfare, dating from 30<sup>th</sup> November 1846, and again taken from Butler, the elder, elucidates:

One day, at about one P.M., I was surprised to see a large party with shields and spears, screeching, yelling, and jumping about in the most fantastical manner, coming down the Mozo-mah hill in regular battle array towards my camp. We immediately got under arms and warned the Nagahs not to approach us in this hostile manner. Our position being very strong, a stream, with perpendicular banks on one flank, and high, inaccessible hills on the other, leaving our front only open to attack, the Nagahs seemed puzzled what to do. They advanced, then halted, sat down in groups, quarrelled with each other, and at last, as they saw our glittering bayonets in line, ready to receive them – and that, though we were but a small body of men, we were not intimidated by their warwhoop, or numbers – they suddenly lost courage and retreated.<sup>82</sup>

The Angami, though from tender youth onwards brought up to be a warrior,<sup>83</sup> was not trained to sacrifice his life in battle, rather the contrary, such ethics were decidedly alien to him,<sup>84</sup> the task was to kill and return alive which was a decisive disadvantage when confronted with regular army units kept under a strict discipline. This notwithstanding, the quotes above tend to confirm that

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., pp. 166-167. This collective form of individualistic warfare seems to have survived among the Khonoma men until the 1950s, even if a certain degree of self-celebration and self-stylization for the sake of stressing one's traditional egalitarian qualities may be admitted: "Sometime in June 1956 some of the Khonoma volunteers had marched towards Zeliang area to attend a military conference of the Naga Home Guards. The officer in the conference asked the Khonoma contingent. "Who is your officer?" In the Angami dialect in which the question was put it would be..."Who is the biggest among you?" (...) Therefore when this question about what officer was leading the contingent was asked, the volunteers understood the question in the literal physical sense of the word (body size). The volunteers replied "Golau must be the biggest one." When Guolau was summoned and the officer asked him "What is your rank?" Gulau replied, "What is rank?" Kaka D. Iralu, *Nagaland and India, the Blood and the tears: A historical account of the 52 years Indo-Naga war and the story of those who were never allowed to tell it* (no publishing place mentioned, bur year, 2000), p. 215.

<sup>83</sup> Martial and dressed to kill as his British adversary: "At sixteen years of age a youth puts on ivory armlets, or else wooden, or red-coloured cane ones, round his neck. He suspends the couch shells with a black thread, puts brass earrings into his ears, and wears the black kilt, and ties up his hair with a cotton band. If a man has killed another in war, he is entitled to wear one feather of the dhune's bird [hornbill, the author] stuck in his hair, and one feather is added for every man he has killed, and these feathers are also fastened to their shields. They also use coloured plaited cane leggings, wear the war sword, spear, shield, and choonga or tube for carrying *panjies* [jüO]. They also attach to the top of the shield two pieces of wood in the shape of buffalo horns, with locks of hair of human beings killed in action hanging from the centre." Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, pp. 148-149.

<sup>84</sup> Compare Renato Rosaldo's findings in his, *Ilongot Headhunting 1883-1974: A Study in Society and History* (Stanford, California, 1980), p. 18, footnote: "Ilongots...found it beyond their moral comprehension that army officers, as they saw in 1945, could command their troops to move into open fire. Soldiers, they remarked, are men who sell their bodies." and p. 158: "They held no notion of the valour of death in open combat, for they could not conceive of asking a brother, a son, or a father to lay down his life – "to sell his body," as they said of soldiers, less in contempt than out of sheer moral incomprehension."

Angami society was, as Gellner puts it “...blessed with a wide military (and hence political) participation...”<sup>85</sup>

This depiction of a warlike society receives confirmation from the reports on the social structuring of Angami landscape. Major Butler, based on his own experiences in the second half of the 1840s, gave an account of fortress-like villages, situated on the inaccessible peaks of hills, that “...could offer serious resistance to any force assailing them without firearms.”<sup>86</sup> The same was already written by Pemberton twenty years earlier, and confirmed by Lyall in 1880, as we have seen above. Captain Butler even left us a rather thick description of the Angami architecture of defence, including the structures separating each *kbel* inside a village, that themselves could be instantaneously turned into an effective line of defence, in case relations were souring.<sup>87</sup> Yet, major Butler added that rather decisive qualifier “without firearms”. Most villages were such positioned as to be overlooked by adjoining heights from which any enemy with guns could control the interior of the villages and render resistance useless.<sup>88</sup> In other words, this revolution in military armament must have been the moment in Angami history in which the arms of defence, their village fortresses, were made redundant by the arms of attack. We have to keep this in mind when interrogating power-relations inside Angami society.

Another feature of Angami society, concerned with violence, was the already mentioned duty of each Naga to avenge a killed relative. Butler, the younger, likened the Naga feud to the Corsican *vendetta* “...revenge being considered a most holy act, which they have been taught from childhood ever to revere as one of their most sacred duties”, and sees a straight line from petty conflict to blood-feud to “...bitter civil wars which devastate whole villages.” Even Nagas having been in service for years with the British in the plains on their return to the hills will “...indulge again and take part in all the scenes of rapine and cruelty going on around them...their wily plots of deep-laid treachery, or as they would call it ‘skilful strategy’; scratch the Dobhásha and you will find the Nágá.”<sup>89</sup>

At the time of major Butler’s writing the British counted 87 Angami villages, containing 19,949 houses (they give this definite number! no approximation), with an average of five persons per house, adding up to around 99,745 Angamis.<sup>90</sup> On their self-perception Butler wrote:

...they have no generic term applicable to the whole race, but use specific names for each particular group of villages; thus the men of Mezoma, Khonomá, Kohima, Jotsoma, and their allies call

<sup>85</sup> Gellner, *Anthropology and Politics: Revolutions in the Sacred Grove*, p. 162. Gellner, in terminology, follows here S. Andreski, *Military Organisation and Society* (London, 1954).

<sup>86</sup> Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam, During a Residence of fourteen years*, p. 143.

<sup>87</sup> Butler, ‘Rough Notes on the Angami Nágás’, p. 318,

<sup>88</sup> Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, p. 143.

<sup>89</sup> Previous paragraph based on Butler, ‘Rough Notes on the Angami Nágás’, p. 320.

<sup>90</sup> Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, pp. 140-141.

themselves T e n g i m á s, whilst others if asked who they are would reply simply that they were men of such a village, and seem to be quite ignorant of any distinctive tribal name connecting them to any particular group of villages...<sup>91</sup>

Also, Butler relates two myths of origin, conveyed to him by the Angamis (since he didn't specify which one, we assume the myth was generally prevalent among them), or more specific, one of common origin for all humans, Angamis, plains people, and the "white faces", though with the latter a white dog was involved as founding father. The myths explains the existence of the less numerous Angamis in the hills, the numerous far more superior plainsmen, and, of course, of the "white faces" and also their material superiority.<sup>92</sup> The myth was surely concerned to deal and explain the then contemporary political situation, indicating clearly a consciousness of them and us, unfortunately in this abridged form left to us, less cultural, but certainly political in its statement. For us it is not so much of interest whether such myths existed long before, but we may assume that, taking the "white faces" out, they surely may have existed for long, and that they definitely pre-date the conquest of the Angami Naga hills.

In 1880 the British saw the Merhema *kebel* of Khonoma as the hegemon in the Angami Naga hills. Thirty years earlier, Butler identified as such four villages, Khonoma, Mozema, Kohima, and a village called by him "Lopsheh-mah". To these villages all the smaller villages were obliged to pay tribute, and were in turn protected by them, in Butler's view especially against themselves.<sup>93</sup> This group, so again we learned above from the younger Butler, had the generic "Tengima" name for itself. We also know that in 1844 the British were informed by villagers living on the western fringes of the Angami Naga hills that they had to consult first with their superiors of Khonoma and Mozema before they could decide on their further policy towards the British.<sup>94</sup>

### 2.5 To War or not to War

The Angamis had been spared the depredations of the wars involved and preceding the first Anglo-Burman war. Yet the *raja* of Manipur, after his re-enthronement had been effected by his British protectors, lost no time in his zeal to make tributary the hill people surrounding his kingdom, including the Angamis.<sup>95</sup> In addition, we have evidence that during the winter months of 1831/32 and 1832/33 respectively, strong expedition forces, each consisting of around 1,500

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 310.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, p. 144.

<sup>94</sup> Browne-Wood, sub-assistant commissioner, Nowgong, 'Extracts from a report of a journey into the Naga Hills in 1844', In Verrier Elwin (ed.), *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1969), pp. 232-243.

<sup>95</sup> BSPC Vol. 344, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1827 – 16<sup>th</sup> March 1828, Doc. No. 12, listed under Fort William 12<sup>th</sup> January 1827, from Grant to Tucker, dated Mannipoor, 20<sup>th</sup> December 1826.

personnel, including 800 troops, crossed the Angami hills and were ferociously opposed at every step of their progress. The Angamis acted in unison and in some cases even went so far as to burn their own villages and crops, leaving only a torched earth to the intruder. It was only due to their superior armament with guns that British and Manipur forces did not share the fate of their Ahom predecessors. The second of these expeditions, led by Gambhir Singh of Manipur and the political agent Gordon attached to him, destroyed five villages in the process and left behind a stone with the footprints of the *raja* in order to symbolise his aspired over-lordship.<sup>96</sup> The British had ordered Manipur to subjugate the Angamis<sup>97</sup> and equipped for this sake its troops with guns and ammunition.<sup>98</sup> The Angamis possibly in retaliation raided North Cachar and Manipur, however, without us being given any specifics.<sup>99</sup>

The first details on an Angami intrusion into North Cachar stem from February 1835, stating that the Angamis demanded tribute from there living Naga villagers, and in case the latter refused, burnt their houses and took by force what had not been given freely. That the British called this an intrusion is due to the fact that they since shortly considered North Cachar as their territory. It is, however, very likely that the Angamis were not yet conscious about this, and thus from their side constituted no intrusion at all. Moreover, the way the tribute was extracted by the Angamis came very near to the one the British would later adopt, though in this particular case the latter called it “plunder”.<sup>100</sup> The next incident on which we happen to possess concrete information was reported two years later, in May 1837, when Angamis killed five people and abducted thirty,<sup>101</sup> and another raid more than a year later in October 1838, with again five homicides and twenty abductions.<sup>102</sup> The affected area was the one around Haflong. Who and what exactly was behind that raids is difficult to establish. It is a possibility that they were retaliations for Manipuri and Cacharie attacks, or that a dispute over salt wells was involved. The documents also say that these raids were a mixture of headhunting<sup>103</sup> and slave-capturing raids, for the latter could either be sold to Bengali slave traders or ransomed to their respective

<sup>96</sup> BPC Vol. 126/64, 19<sup>th</sup> February – 12<sup>th</sup> March 1833, Doc. 76, listed under Fort William, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1833; BPC Vol. 127/35, 3<sup>rd</sup> January – 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1837, Doc. 4, listed under FW, 21<sup>st</sup> February 1837 and Doc. 6, listed under FW, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1837.

<sup>97</sup> BPC Vol. 126/68, 30<sup>th</sup> May – 21<sup>st</sup> June 1833, Doc. 110, listed under Fort William, 30<sup>th</sup> May.

<sup>98</sup> BPC 127/35, 3<sup>rd</sup> January – 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1837, Doc. 3, listed under FW, 21<sup>st</sup> February 1837, To D. Mungles, Secy to the Govt. of Bengal, Judicial Dept., FW. Extracts from the Proceedings of the Right Honble the Gov of Bengal in the Judicial Dept., dated 17<sup>th</sup> January 1837 (copies of certain correspondence about the inroads on the frontier).

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. & BPC 127/32, 7<sup>th</sup> April – 27<sup>th</sup> September 1836, Doc. 20, listed under FW, 26<sup>th</sup> April 1836, dated 30<sup>th</sup> March 1836, Gordon acknowledged the receipt of a copy of the Proceedings of the Govt. of Bengal in which the incursions of Nagas into Manipur were discussed and BPC Vol. 127/35, 3<sup>rd</sup> January – 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1837, Doc. 3, listed under FW, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1837.

<sup>100</sup> BPC Vol. 127/28, 7<sup>th</sup> January – 30<sup>th</sup> March 1835, Doc. 4, listed under Fort William, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1835.

<sup>101</sup> BPC Vol. 127/35, 3<sup>rd</sup> January – 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1837, Doc. 1, listed under FW, 25<sup>th</sup> July 1837, dt. Cachar, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1837.

<sup>102</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/3, 21<sup>st</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> November 1838, Doc. 106, listed under FW, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1838, copy in a communication from Jenkins to Prinsep, dt. Assam, 10<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1838.

<sup>103</sup> We will have a closer look at headhunting in the next sub-chapter.



villages.<sup>104</sup> Thus this raids, carried out on Naga villages, could also have been part of their feuding system. But whatever the real reasons for them or their actual perpetrators were, and whether the accounts themselves were part of the violent conflicts between rival groups to direct the wrath of the British against ones' enemy, we probably never will be able to say with certainty. What becomes evident though, is that the extent and the number of incidents seems to have been greatly exaggerated by the British officers, the portrayal of an escalation solely the produce of the reports' ever faster circulation. British officers on the spot, on the one hand, dramatised the situation to render intervention necessary, on the other hand, they exaggerated the economic potential of the area and the willingness of the inhabitants to be taken under British protection. In this way they created the pretext for pushing the frontier further.

Thus, in the late 1830s the British decided to take the affairs into their own hands.<sup>105</sup> The official Grange, in early 1839, was sent to Haflong in North Cachar to apprehend the perpetrators of the raids among the Nagas or to take hostages among them in order to enforce their hand-over.<sup>106</sup> It was during this tour that the earlier mentioned meeting with Ikkari took place. Grange failed to achieve his object and traversed the western periphery of the Angami territory in a rather hastened way, since his party was permanently harassed in the course of its tour.<sup>107</sup> He was dispatched again into Angami country by November 1839,<sup>108</sup> and already threatened at Dimapur when he seized the grain of the Angamis there, but since Grange and his troops laughed at them, the Angamis remained careful.<sup>109</sup> This time he came as far as Khonoma, and found out that the Angami villages were not tributary to Manipur, but on the contrary, were hostile to it. Just shortly before Grange's arrival at Khonoma a Manipur detachment had destroyed the part of the village which was at enmity with it. The destruction of just a division of the village shows that Manipur had understood the political structuring of Angami society, that stressed the clan as political unit and in this way did not necessarily coincide with the whole territorial unit of the village. But, a clan, if powerful, could extend its reign over other villages and/or clans to collect tribute and demand following in case of rival polities encroaching on its

<sup>104</sup> BPC Vol. 127/35, 3<sup>rd</sup> January – 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1837, Doc. 3, listed under FW, 21<sup>st</sup> February 1837; IPC. Vol. P/195/8, 16<sup>th</sup> January – 13<sup>th</sup> February 1839, Doc. 60, Copy of a letter from Jenkins to Lt. Bigge, dt. 18<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1838; IPC Vol. P/195/19, Doc. 56, listed under FW, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1839, Jenkins to Prinsep, dt. 20<sup>th</sup> May 1839, copy of Grange's report about his expedition into Angami territory, undated, sent by Lt. Bigge to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1839.

<sup>105</sup> IPC. Vol. P/195/8, 16<sup>th</sup> January – 13<sup>th</sup> February 1839, Doc. 59, Jenkins to Prinsep, dt. 11<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1838.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., Doc. 60, Copy of a letter from Jenkins to Lt. Bigge, dt. 18<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1838.

<sup>107</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/19, Doc. 56, listed under FW, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1839, Jenkins to Prinsep, dt. 20<sup>th</sup> May 1839, copy of Grange's report about his expedition into Angami territory, undated, sent by Lt. Bigge to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1839..

<sup>108</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/31, Doc. 112, listed under 1<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1840, Jenkins to Prinsep, dt. 6<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1839, includes copy of Bigge to Jenkins, dt. Mahojong 26<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1839, including copy of Bigge to Grange, dt. *ibid*.

<sup>109</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/39, 25<sup>th</sup> May – 15<sup>th</sup> June 1840, letter from Grange to Bigge, dt. Sumooguding, 1840, included as copy in Doc. 118, listed under 25<sup>th</sup> May 1840, Jenkins to Maddock, Secy. to the Govt. of India in the Pol. Dept., dt. 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1840.

sphere of influence, as we will see below, and thus acquired and constituted a territorial dimension.

Coming back to November 1839, Grange's party's progress was hindered at every step, he was attacked, ambushed, avalanches of rocks were unleashed on him, the vegetation around him was set on fire, wells were poisoned and his path *panjied*.<sup>110</sup> Sometimes they seemed to agree with him proceeding, but just to attack him at the next moment. It was during one of this attempts at Samaguting (nowadays Chimakudi) that the Nagas were shouting that their spears were their *rajas*. The Angamis used beacons of light from hill tops to communicate about the progress of the party, all Angamis, so it appeared to Grange, were up against him, and he, in turn, destroyed everything he could lay his hands on to bring them to his terms. The Angamis, on their side, destroyed Grange's grain *godown* at Samaguting. Yet, his retreat into the plains was not hindered.<sup>111</sup> Both of Grange's intrusions provoked concerted and protracted resistance on the side of the Angamis, following the pattern that had been put up against the large expeditions that had traversed this hills and that were mentioned at the beginning of this sub-chapter. We know that they exchanged intelligence among themselves on the whereabouts of the intruders, and that nearly all of them participated in the resistance. Thus, of what we have learned by now, this opposition could have been one that was centrally commanded, or was coordinated between units on an egalitarian basis, or, they could as well have been the result of a series of local decisions.

Grange, to ensure the conduct of the Nagas of Samaguting, took hostages from among them. So when Jenkins reported to Fort William that Grange had taken prisoners from these "hostile & powerful tribes" and further that the attacks of the Angamis on Cachar had been stopped for the entire previous year, ascribing it to Grange having hit at "...the largest Villages of the Angami confederacy...".<sup>112</sup> Both of these statements were valid only to a limited extent: first, Samaguting was not one of the powerful villages, but rather a vulnerable outpost, and second, raids, as we have discovered earlier, were anyhow much more infrequent than Jenkins and his

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<sup>110</sup> I leave the explanation as to what *panjies* are to someone with first-hand experience: "In war-time, the hill sides and approaches are escarped and thickly studded over with panjies. These panjies...are sharp-pointed bamboo skewers or stakes, varying from six inches to three and four feet in length, some of them as thin as a pencil, others as thick round as a good-sized cane, and although very insignificant things to look at, they give a nasty and most painful wound, often causing complete lameness in a few hours. Deep pit-falls and small holes covered over with a light layer of earth and leaves, concealing the panjies within, are also skilfully placed along the paths by which an enemy is expected to approach, and a tumble into one of the former is not a thing to be despised, as I have had good reason to know." Butler, *Rough Notes on the Angami Nágás*, p. 317.

<sup>111</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/39, 25<sup>th</sup> May – 15<sup>th</sup> June 1840, Grange to Bigge, dt. Summoo Guding, 16<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1840 & Grange to Bigge, dt. Summoo Guding, 29<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1840, included as copies in Doc. 118, listed under 25<sup>th</sup> May 1840, Jenkins to Maddock, Secy. to the Govt. of India in the Pol. Dept., dt. 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1840.; See also Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, pp. 105-114.

<sup>112</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/39, 25<sup>th</sup> May – 15<sup>th</sup> June 1840, Jenkins to Maddock, Secy. to the Govt. of India in the Pol. Dept., FW, dt. 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1840. Ten months later Jenkins again sells his policy of intervention to Fort William by exaggerating

subordinates had preferred to portray, so that this supposed stop of raiding might as well have been the normal state of affairs. On the other side it could also have been that Grange's tours cautioned the Angamis, as hill people were, as a rule, anxious not to provoke incursions by their numerically superior, and better armed, central organised neighbours of the plains, as they were aware of at all times.

When in May 1840 Naga chiefs of Samaguting had come down to Nowgong to sign a written agreement for the release of the nine hostages and asked for land under British protection that was allotted to them,<sup>113</sup> we may assume that this was either part of an independent foreign policy on part of that village or a strategic request to gain the release of their fellow-villagers, or maybe a mixture of both.

By January-February 1841 Bigge, the British officer in charge of Nowgong district, was, together with his instrument of persuasion, a detachment of the Assam Light Infantry, despatched on a tour into the Angami hills. Bigge's party was not opposed during the course of its tour. Bigge talked to the Nagas via an interpreter and told them that the Dhansiri river now was the boundary between their and the company's territory. He was told by the Angamis that Khonoma was acknowledged as the most powerful of all Naga villages, Mozema coming second. It seems that shortly before his tour, one of the two big Khonoma chiefs, Ikasi, had moved to Mozema, most probably together with his clan, and that after Bigge's return to Nowgong, both chiefs sent a group of *gaonburas* to Nowgong that were wanting to see him.<sup>114</sup> This move of Ikasi and his clan to Mozema marked the begin of a long feud or power struggle (or both) between both of their clans. In the initial phase both tried to gain the assistance of the British against the local rival, and from the moment on that Mozema had won it, Khonoma turned to Manipur for support, and got it, if limited and secret. That Khonoma and Manipur not long before had been at enmity with each other seemed not to matter in this power game (following rules that easily could have stemmed from the realism school of thought). For the Angamis, entering into alliances with outside powers to finish off a local rival must have been an established pattern by then, and was as much common praxis in Southeast Asia<sup>115</sup> as it was in Machiavelli's Italy, even more so, since outside powers were not assumed to want to establish effective rule over the hills,

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through implication the number of raids happened prior to Grange's tour, see IPC Vol. P/195/55, 12<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> April 1841, Doc. 79, listed under FW, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1841, Jenkins to Maddock, dt. Gowhatty, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1841.

<sup>113</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/39, 25<sup>th</sup> May – 15<sup>th</sup> June 1840, Doc. 98, copy of Bigge's letter to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong 10<sup>th</sup> May 1840, included in Jenkins to Maddock, dt. 15<sup>th</sup> June 1840.

<sup>114</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/50, 4<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1841, Docs. 105 & 106, listed under 18<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1841, Maddock to Jenkins, dt. FW, *ibid.*; IPC Vol. P/195/54, 22<sup>nd</sup> March – 5<sup>th</sup> April 1841, Bigge to Jenkins, undated, attached copy to Doc. 92, listed under 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1841, Jenkins to Maddock, dt. 10<sup>th</sup> March 1841; IPC Vol. P/195/55, 12<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> April 1841, Bigge to Jenkins, dt. Sumiegooding, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1841, attached to Doc. 79, listed under FW, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1841, Jenkins to Maddock, dt. Gowhatty, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1841.

<sup>115</sup> Reid, 'Introduction: A Time and a Place', p. 5.

that is to say to stay. I will later argue that this proved to be a decisive factor in what the Angamis must have considered only as a temporary submission to British military power.

However, coming back to our sequence of events, in spring 1842 new raids by Angamis on villages in Manipur and Cachar were reported, but since we do not get to know anything specific,<sup>116</sup> we may doubt the validity of the information. Moreover, by October 1842 “...certain Naga Chiefs and their followers...came down on a visit from the Naga Hills...”,<sup>117</sup> and were hosted by the British at Nowgong, constituting a political practice that continued as a way of diplomacy between British and Angamis from then on. Then, in March 1843 we are informed about a peace conference in which the Angamis took oaths to abstain from feuding and to bow to British suzerainty:

...that two of the principal Chiefs of the Angamee Nagas and Several heads of Villages of the Rengma tribe of Nagas have attended at Nowgong on his Summos inviting them to a personal interview, and have entered into agreements with Capt. Gordon to obey the Govt and abstain from wars among themselves. (...) [and] to pay a yearly tribute in acknowledgement of our authority...<sup>118</sup>

Nevertheless, in the course of 1843 the Angamis carried out two raids, killing four each, and taking with them considerable amount of loot. In 1844 two more assaults were carried out, this time on the Rengma Naga hills, killing nine in total, and taking again substantial property. The British seemed to know that 89 persons were involved in these incursions, but since they always returned immediately to the hills, no-one was ever caught.<sup>119</sup> These raids certainly were of non-political nature, may have been conducted by any group, carried out either for sport, i.e. to prove oneself, or to subsidise one's economic shortage, or, more likely, out of a combination of both reasons.<sup>120</sup> By December 1843 the assistant Woods was to tour the Angami Nagas.<sup>121</sup> The aim was to keep up and renew the relationship with the already acquainted chiefs and to establish new relations further to the east.<sup>122</sup> Yet the most powerful Angami chiefs, those of the villages Khonoma and Mozema, refused to give the agreed on gift as sign of submission. The lesser

<sup>116</sup> IPCP/196/13, Doc. 12, listed under FW, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1842.

<sup>117</sup> IPCP/196/19, 12<sup>th</sup> Oct. – 2<sup>nd</sup>. Nov. 1842, Docs. 158 & 159, listed under FW, 19<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1842, dt. 26<sup>th</sup> Sept. & 19<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1842.

<sup>118</sup> IPC Vol. P/196/29, 29<sup>th</sup> March – 12<sup>th</sup> April 1843, Doc. 76, listed under FW, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1843, Jenkins to Bushby, dt. 19<sup>th</sup> March 1843.

<sup>119</sup> Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, p. 117.

<sup>120</sup> See next sub-chapter.

<sup>121</sup> *India Political and Foreign Proceedings* (IPFP) Vol. P/196/42, 18<sup>th</sup> Nov. – 30<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1843, Doc. 21, listed under FW, 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec. 1843, Davidson, Officiating Secy. Govt. India to Jenkins, dt. 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec. 1843. – from Vol. P/196/31 onwards the Volumes change their name, possibly according to a change in the administrative areas of responsibilities, into India Political and Foreign Proceedings, or at least they are filed under that name, so I will call them accordingly. Yet on the Volumes themselves they are still called “Consultations”.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 20, Jenkins to Brodie, dt. 17<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1843.

chiefs did pay tribute, yet hesitatingly, since, as they stated, and we already had learned earlier, had not the permission from their superiors from Khonoma and Mozema.<sup>123</sup>

Nearly a year later, by November 1844, it was reported that the Shan militia, in the service of the British and stationed at the village of Lamkaye in North Cachar, had been attacked by Khonoma with the assistance of the neighbouring village of Akooee (Asalu), and with the knowledge of the people also of Lamkaye themselves. Three Shans and one Naga boy servant were killed.<sup>124</sup> Wood had found out that Khonoma had announced to make war on the “sepoys”, were seeing themselves as the strongest village and therefore convinced that the others had to do what they said.<sup>125</sup> Captain Eld, after having gone to the Angami hills to investigate the attack on the Shan militia, reported that he had information from the “...Gau Boora of the Mozoma Clan...” that the Khonoma Angamis had tried to persuade the Mozemas to participate in the attack on the Shan, that they had refused, and that the Khonoma Angamis had acquired firearms during the attack and had later used them against Mozema. The Mozema *gaonbura* further stated that all Angami villages were peaceful, except Khonoma, being the most powerful and which had to be stopped.<sup>126</sup> Wood and captain Eld in retaliation burnt down the sections of the three villages implicated in the attack - the village “Assaloo or Akoee” (transcription by far not standardised, yet), the village Beren, and Khonoma.<sup>127</sup> Khonoma, in retaliation, went against Mozema and destroyed that village.<sup>128</sup> Further, Eld had received information that the Khonoma Angamis together with Manipur troops had attacked Mozema, which was by then considered as being friendly disposed to the British, and had killed some of its inhabitants.<sup>129</sup> All promises, so Eld, that the Angamis had made at Nowgong were null and void:

...that they had no intention whatever of fulfilling them, their reply to the Kutukee sent to collect their tribute last year being to that very effect viz:-

“When at Now Gong in the Sahib’s power we assented to all he asked because we were afraid, now we are in our own hills and if you want any tribute you must take it by force.”<sup>130</sup>

<sup>123</sup> IPFP Vol. P/196/57, 10<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1844, Doc. 34, listed under FW, 24<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1844, Jenkins to Currie, Secy. Govt. India, in the Foreign Department.

<sup>124</sup> IPFP Vol. P/196/63, 2<sup>nd</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1844, Docs. 74-76, listed under FW, 16<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1844.

<sup>125</sup> IPFP Vol. P/197/2, 14<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1844, Doc. 87, listed under FW, 28<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1844, Subassistant to Commissioner Golah Ghat B. Wood to Collector/Assistant to Commissioner Nowgong Capt. P. Eld, dt. Golah Ghat 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1844.

<sup>126</sup> IPFP Vol. P/197/6, 1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1845, listed under FW, 1<sup>st</sup> Feb. 1845, Eld to Jenkins, undated.

<sup>127</sup> IPFP Vol. P/197/16, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1845, Doc. 69, listed under FW, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1845, Jenkins to Currie, dt. 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1845.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., The reports of Capt. Eld are the following Docs. 70 and 71.

<sup>129</sup> IPFP Vol. P/197/19, 20<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> June 1845, Doc. 123, listed under FW, 27<sup>th</sup> June 1845, Eld, Principal Assistant to the Agent to the Governor General to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong 20<sup>th</sup> May 1845.

Major Butler was sent into the Angami hills in winter 1845/46. The small villages on his way into the interior received him in a conciliatory way, presenting him with gifts, that he took mistakenly as signs of submission. When he arrived on the well-settled and well-cultivated Angami plateau he encamped near Mozema village, and all the Angamis came fearless and friendly to him at all times to trade with him. The chiefs of the villages, especially of Khonoma, told him that they had no power to force the attackers on the Shan militia to surrender themselves to the British, moreover, they pretended not to know the names of the perpetrators. But they swore all the oaths to him that he wanted to hear – those of abstaining from warfare among themselves, from raiding on the plains, and finally the one of submission to British supremacy. That these oaths were not only a mere opportunistic show on the side of the Angamis but probably also carried a complete different meaning for them, if they carried one at all indeed, becomes evident when considering that shortly after, the chief of Mozema asked Butler for a guard of twenty *sepoys* for his village with whom he could fight all his enemies, but first of all, he would take his revenge on Khonoma. When Butler reminded him that he just had taken an oath to abstain from any fighting, the chief did not understand at all. In Butler's own words: "This the chief could not at all comprehend, and he did not want any guard if he was not allowed to make war on his enemies."<sup>131</sup> When Jenkins then related to Fort William that all the smaller villages had asked Butler for protection, this was based on a misunderstanding of the real situation, and out of Jenkins' desire to portray a positive picture to his superiors, in order to attain the permission to further open communications towards the Angami hills and to establish military posts as bridgeheads in the western fringes of their territory.<sup>132</sup> That the Angamis, despite their conciliatory approach towards Butler, resisted this British encroachment on their sovereignty becomes apparent through their subsequent attacks on Hasung Hajoo and Samaguting. The first one, though it failed, was aimed at the established military post, the second one on Samaguting, for not opposing Butler's party when on its way into the interior,<sup>133</sup> indicating clearly that they had understood who to target. When Butler, during the cold season 1846-47, was thus again dispatched to the Angamis to either apprehend the actual perpetrators of the raids or the chiefs of the respective villages it came to the earlier described attempted attack that I used to convey a picture of the democratic warfare of the Angamis. Shortly after the party of warriors had retreated "...the principal chiefs of Joshe-mah and Gohee-mah [Jotsoma and Kohima]..." visited

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<sup>130</sup> IPFP Vol. P/197/23, 22<sup>nd</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> August 1845, Doc. 143. listed under FW, 22<sup>nd</sup> Aug. 1845, Eld to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong 6<sup>th</sup> May 1845.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., Doc. 31, Captain John Butler, Principal Assistant Nowgong, to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong, 16<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1846 and Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, pp. 32-45.

<sup>132</sup> IPFP Vol. P/197/23, 22<sup>nd</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> August 1845, listed under FW, 22<sup>nd</sup> Aug. 1845, Doc. 30, Jenkins to Bushby, dt. Gowhatti, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1846 and Doc. 32, Bushby to Jenkins, dt. FW, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1846.

Butler in his camp and again took the oath of submission to the *Raj*. Butler, due to sickness, retreated empty-handed. Yet he was accompanied by Angamis who wanted to go shopping in Tezpur and Gauhati, again demonstrating that the area could not have been as murderous and apocalyptic as the British liked to depict it. On his way back Butler established a military post at Samaguting, in addition to the one already existing at Hasung Hajoo.<sup>134</sup>

The *thana* at Samaguting was manned with a Shan militia under the command of the *suzerain* Bhog Chand, the Angami Naga country put under his control. When shortly after his installation Angamis from Mozema came to Samaguting asking for revenge for one of theirs that had become victim of a headhunting raid of Angamis of the village of Lakeh-mah, Bhog Chand was sent in to investigate the case. Chand on his assignment had not even twenty fighting personnel with him and was threatened and harassed by at times more than 1,500 warriors whom he and his party held at bay with disciplined volleys of gun fire and thus secured their retreat to the stockade at Samaguting. The Lakeh-mah fighters seemed not to have been acquainted to bullets, since they were stunned that their wooden shields did not protect them from them. It might have been this courageous and impressive performance that made the Angamis respect Bhog Chand and conveyed security to his stockade for the time being. A school and a market was established at Samaguting, and Angami chiefs simultaneously continued to come down to Nowgong, where they were hosted by the British and presented with gifts.<sup>135</sup>

For the next two years peace ensued, with the exception of one local headhunting raid, and the British extended and consolidated their bases at Dimapur, Samaguting and Hasung Hajoo. Communications were improved and settlement of Kukis and Mikirs encouraged in North Cachar. Angamis came down to Dimapur and Samaguting in substantial numbers to trade, but otherwise abstained from raiding on British held territory and from attacks on British bases.<sup>136</sup> The Angamis, at least for the time being, had accepted their new political neighbour and took advantage of the trade possibilities.

<sup>133</sup> IPFP Vol. P/197/44, 5<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1846, listed under FW, 19<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1846, Doc. 18, Butler to Jenkins, dt. 29<sup>th</sup> May 1846 and Butler to Jenkins, dt. Now Gong 12<sup>th</sup> June 1846; and *Ibid.*, Doc. 17, Jenkins to Bushby, 19<sup>th</sup> August 1846.

<sup>134</sup> IPFP Vol. P/197/57, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> April 1847, Doc. 38, listed under FW, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1847, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong, 10<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1847 and Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, pp. 166 – 167.

<sup>135</sup> IPFP Vol. P/197/57, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> April 1847, Docs. 16-20, listed under FW, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1847, Jenkins to Bushby, dt. Gowhatti 7<sup>th</sup> May 1847 and Doc. 22, P. Melville, Offig. Under-Secy. Govt. India to Jenkins, dt. FW, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1847 and Doc. 24, listed under FW, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1847, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Gowhatti, 13<sup>th</sup> May 1847; IPFP Vol. P/197/59, 12<sup>th</sup> June 1847, Doc. 47, listed under FW, 12<sup>th</sup> June 1847, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong 21<sup>st</sup> May 1847 and Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, pp. 168-171.

<sup>136</sup> IPFP Vol. P/198/28, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1848, Doc. 136, listed under FW, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1848, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong, 5<sup>th</sup> May 1848; Doc. 135, Jenkins to Elliot, Secy. Govt. India, FD, FW, dt. Gowhate, 15<sup>th</sup> May 1848.; Doc. 137, Jenkins to Butler, dt. Gowhatti, 12<sup>th</sup> May 1848; Doc. 138, Elliot to Jenkins, dt. FW, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1848. IPFP P/198/29, 10<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> June 1848, Doc. 97, listed under FW, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1848, Jenkins to Elliot, Secy. Govt. India, FD, dt. FW, 17<sup>th</sup> May 1848. IPFP Vol. P/198/34, 16<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept. 1848, Doc. 134, listed under FW, 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept. 1848, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong, 4<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1848; Doc. 136, Elliot to Jenkins, dt. FW, 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept. 1848. IPFP Vol. P/198/35, 30<sup>th</sup> Sept. – 21<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1848, Doc. 24, listed under FW, 14<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1848, Jenkins to Elliot, dt. 8<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1848. IPFP Vol. P/198/46, 28<sup>th</sup>

However, after an interlude of two peaceful years the internal power struggle of the Angamis and requests for protection by the village chiefs of Mozema and Kohima delivered the pretext for British intervention and their push into the Angami heartland:

...and a road could be made via Mozepameh to Kohema when this routes would be open throughout the year and by increasing the number of schools and making roads, it is possible that the whole of the Nagas might be subdued at no very distant day.<sup>137</sup>

This move was sold to Fort William as humanitarian intervention, to stop “...the constant murderous attacks of one village upon another...”.<sup>138</sup> By now we should have learned not to take such statements for valid expressions on the situation, but rather for deliberate exaggerations to justify further extensions of power for the local officers. We should also doubt the reality and substance of the requests for protection. The real extent of the “...constant murderous attacks...” was one homicide committed by members of one clan of Mozema on a member of another clan of the same village. Whether this killing triggered clan rivalry or whether it was an expression of it we do not know. It seemed that both parties were building alliances, though the configuration is not completely clear: at one time one party had the support of Khonoma, while the other used Cacharie mercenaries as back-up; at another time one party used both – Khonoma and mercenaries – and the British were called in by a former Manipur official, who in again other reports is stated to be the leader of the mercenaries. What was reported to the British was certainly part of the power struggle, and what the British officers, in turn, reported to their superiors was thus manipulated to render intervention necessary. What we know is that one killing had happened and that Bhog Chand, determined to investigate this case, was, on his arrival at Mozema, well received by both chiefs of the village. Chand, by then, was well known by the Angamis, had learned their language and had toured their hills extensively with only a small escort. He demanded the surrender of those who committed the murder. Niholey, that is the name given to the chief to whose clan the perpetrators belonged, entreated Chand that he could not allow for the seizure of anyone of his clan, that this would humiliate him beyond repair. Chand instead should arrest himself and his rival chief Jubili and to take them both to Nowgong where the affair could be settled in the presence of Butler. Chand, on his part, scorned Niholey

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April – 5<sup>th</sup> May 1849, Docs. 60-61, listed under FW, 5<sup>th</sup> May 1849. IPFP Vol. P/198/47, 12<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> May 1849, Doc. 42, listed under FW, 12<sup>th</sup> May 1849, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong Assam, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1849; Docs. 42 and 49, listed under FW, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1849, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong, 17<sup>th</sup> April 1849.

<sup>137</sup> IPFP Vol. P/198/47, 12<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> May 1849, Doc. 42, listed under FW, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1849, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong, 17<sup>th</sup> April 1849.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 41, Jenkins to Halliday, Secy. Govt. India, FD, FW, undated; Doc. 42, Butler to Jenkins, dt. 26<sup>th</sup> April 1849 [there are sometimes a whole series of communications under one Doc. and sometimes not, there is no one logic behind the ordering]; Doc. 43, Jenkins to Butler, dt. Gowhatti, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1849; Doc. 44, Grey, Officiating Under-Secy. Govt. India, FD, to Jenkins, dt. FW, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1849.



and detained two men of his clan. On this Nilholey, together with his clan, left the village, and attacked Chand and his party when it was staying in another village on his way back to Samaguting. Chand and several of his men were killed, the remainder of the party was left to escape to Samaguting.<sup>139</sup> Yet, the fact that the *sepoys* were running for their life, leaving behind their weapons and equipment, possibly resulted in a loss of reputation in the eyes of the Angamis (“the empire of opinion”), and could have been responsible for the following attacks on Samaguting. But it also could have been that the arrogant conduct of Chand trespassed what the Angamis considered as bearable and thus led them to react in this violent way. Taking the chiefs to Nowgong to arbitrate or to hold responsible was possibly not seen as such, also that the western part of their country had been taken over by the British, and that British parties toured their territory, but to arrest members of the clan obviously was not tolerable.

What followed now, from November 1849 until March 1851, was an ever greater escalation during which, for the first time, British troops nearly uninterrupted stayed on in the Angami hills, moving about destroying villages and crops, but for the most time were besieged in their own stockades. The Angamis, on their part, attacked in retaliation villages under British jurisdiction, that in turn, were armed by the British with guns. More and more clans and villages of the Angamis united and finally forced the British to withdraw from the hills and contributed to their decision to disconnect themselves from Angami affairs. From all evidence that we have it seems that the presence and conduct of the British troops triggered a temporary rallying-around-the-flag in this hills. The British had to call on artillery and regular troops and still were only able to take a formidable fortress above Khonoma, because it was vacated by the Angamis. The massive outlay of the fortress alone shows the extent of collective endeavour, though it might have been brought about in an egalitarian way. The Angamis did not have to hold on to villages or fortresses, since the British could not at all control their movements, and were soon not able anymore to distinguish between population and foe. British presence also triggered challenges of neighbouring mighty villages, located further to the east, not under the political influence of the Tengima group of villages. Those Nagas were obviously unaware of the firepower of British arms and stubbornly engaged them in open combat, resulting in hundreds of casualties.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>139</sup> IPFP Vol. P/198/59, 17<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1849, Doc. 156, listed under FW, 17<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1849, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong Assam, 9<sup>th</sup> August 1849; *ibid.*, Jenkins to Halliday, Secy. Govt. India, FD, FW, dt. Gauhatti, 14<sup>th</sup> August 1849; Doc. 157, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong, 14<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1849; *ibid.*, Jenkins to Halliday, dt. Gowhatti 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1849; Doc. 159, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong, 15<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1849; Doc. 161, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1849 & Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, pp. 174-179.

<sup>140</sup> See the following documents on the ensuing war: IPFP Vol. P/199/3, 19<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> April 1850, Doc. 287, listed under FW, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1850, Butler to Masters, Subassistant to the Commissioner Golaghat, dt. Nowgong Assam, 12<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1850; Doc. 277, Jenkins to Grey, dt. Gowhatti, 16<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1850; Doc. 278, Jenkins to Grey, dt. 21<sup>st</sup> Feb. 1850; Doc. 285, Jenkins to Butler, dt. 17<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1850; Doc. 290, Butler to Lt. Vincent, dt. Nowgong Assam, 15<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1850; Doc. 294, Jenkins to Grey, dt. Gowhatti, 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1850; Doc. 296, Jenkins to Butler, dt. Gowhatti, 24<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1850; Doc. 297, Grey to Jenkins, dt. FW, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1850; IPFP Vol. P/199/5, 31<sup>st</sup> May – 7<sup>th</sup> June 1850, Doc. 139, listed under FW, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1850, Lt. Vincent to Butler, dt. Camp Mozumah, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1850; Doc. 140, Jenkins to Grey, dt.

Hitherto I have tried to show, via a careful reading of the accessible sources, that the endemic violence prevailing on the edges and inside the Angami hills, was an invention of the officers on the spot, designed to convey legitimacy to their desire for conquest. Further, that it was British intervention that then created the havoc in the first place that it was allegedly intended to stop. Grey, the then officiating under-secretary to the government of India, came to pretty much the same conclusion when analysing the communications of the officers on the frontier:

The present state of affairs in the Naga Hills bordering upon Nowgong to the eastward and lying North of Muneepore would seem to have arisen entirely out of the endeavours made by the British authorities in Assam to restrain the violent and deadly feuds existing among different tribes and villages of Nagas.<sup>141</sup>

It was only the missing evidence of the reality of the “deadly feuds” inside the hills that eluded Grey, but he had established the fact that the raids had become more lethal, in other words the number of killings during single raids had become higher, that every intervention, so he continued, was a failure, the adopted measures did lead to new failures and on the situation of the British troops, that had then been in the Angami hills “...with the exception of Jabulees immediate followers [the one allied clan from Mozema], the whole race is up in arms and prepared to offer the most determined opposition to the British Troops.”<sup>142</sup> Approximately thirty years later, when the British were in the process of establishing themselves in the middle of the Angami hills, with preceding events similar to the one we have witnessed here, an attack of the Merhema clan of Khonoma on a British detachment unleashed again a general uprising. In the process of this the British were besieged in their stockade by thousands of Angami warriors, busy

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Gowhatti, 9<sup>th</sup> April 1850; Doc. 141, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Nowgong, 28<sup>th</sup> March 1850. IPFP Vol. P/199/4, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1850, Doc. 11, listed under FW, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1850, Jenkins to Halliday, Secy. Govt. India, FD, FW, dt. Gowhatti, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1850. IPFP Vol. P/199/5, Doc. 142, listed under FW, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1850, Jenkins to Grey, dt. Gowhatti, 25<sup>th</sup> April 1850; Doc. 145, Communications between Jenkins, Butler and Lt. Vincent, dt. between 16<sup>th</sup> of April and 6<sup>th</sup> of May 1850. IPFP Vol. P/199/4, Doc. 13, listed under FW, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1850, Grey to Jenkins, dt. FW, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1850. IPFP Vol. P/199/5, Doc. 144, listed under FW, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1850, Jenkins to Grey, dt. Gowhatti, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1850; no Doc. No., listed under FW, 12<sup>th</sup> July 1850, Lt. Vincent to Capt. Butler, dt. Camp Mozemah, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1850. IPFP Vol. P/199/12, 23<sup>rd</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> August 1850, Doc. 66, listed under 30<sup>th</sup> August 1850, Jenkins to Grey, dt. Gowhatti, 28<sup>th</sup> May 1850; Doc. 68, Jenkins to Grant, Secy. Govt. Bengal, Judicial Dept., FW, undated. IPFP Vol. P/199/17, Doc. 88, listed under FW, 8<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1850, communications between 20<sup>th</sup> Sept. and 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct.; Doc. 89, Grey to Jenkins, dt. FW, 6<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1850; Doc. 144, Grey to Jenkins, dt. FW, 8<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1850. IPFP Vol. P/199/21, 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1850, Doc. 303, listed under FW, 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1850., Lt. Vincent to Butler, undated; Doc. 304, Jenkins to Grant, dt. Gowhatti, 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 1850. IPFP Vol. P/199/28, 7<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> Feb. 1851, Doc. 195, listed under FW, 7<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1851, Fougett to Butler, dt. Camp Mozemah, 12<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1850; Doc. 194, Butler to Jenkins, dt. Mozemah, 17<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1850; Doc. 248, dt. 5<sup>th</sup> March 1851. IPFP Vol. P/199/38, 11<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> June 1851, Doc. 95, Reid, Commanding Troops in Naga Hills to Jenkins, undated; Jenkins to Halliday, dt. Nowgong, 17<sup>th</sup> March 1851; Doc. 96, Grey to Jenkins, dt. FW, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1851 and Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, pp. 179-211.

<sup>141</sup> IPFP Vol. P/199/21, 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1850, Doc. 308, listed under FW, 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1850, Note by Officiating Under Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Dept., Grey, dt. FW, 19<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1850.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, refers to Doc. 303 of the same Volume.

driving trenches up to the British fortification. One of the besieged later narrated the following incident:

On the night of 24<sup>th</sup>, a Nāga who spoke Hindustani harangued us from behind one of the barricades. He said we had come here and occupied land, we had cut their trees, bamboos, and grass, we wanted revenue from them and made them furnish coolies. His speech ended with a query. – “What will happen now?”

The next morning (24<sup>th</sup>) some friendly gaonbura of Kohima khels came to us and gave us to understand that our enemies wanted to let us go away if we liked. We were informed that the whole country was rising to annihilate us; that the villages of Viswema, Cheduma, Jakhama, Khonoma, Jotsoma, and Chetonoma khel of Kohima were determined to combine against us, but that now we might get away. At that time, there were at least 4,000 men surrounding us, and of these about 300 had guns.<sup>143</sup>

The British finally were relieved, and the Angamis, after a protracted war, defeated. We will now try to make sense out of the previous narrative and at the end of what follows will have formed our opinion on why the Nagas took up general resistance and why they finally surrendered.

## 2.6 Refuge-area warrior society

The title of this sub-chapter is taken from Boehm’s study on feuding,<sup>144</sup> and nicely depicts that we are only to understand these hill societies by placing them into the wider political context.<sup>145</sup> We will now subsequently turn shortly to the phenomena of headhunting, raiding, feuding, and war, in order to place the previous narrative into a wider context, before we will try to make our deductions on the constitution of contemporary Angami society.

Headhunting has to be differentiated from the pure trophy taking in wars and raids existing at all times in all places, and may be defined as “...an organized, coherent form of violence in which the severed head is given a specific ritual meaning and the act of headtaking is consecrated and commemorated in some form.”<sup>146</sup> There is no one symbolic meaning or reasoning, hence social and political factors have to be taken into consideration when trying to

<sup>143</sup> IFP-P, Vol. P/1551, Jan. 1880, Doc. 330, Cawley to Colonel J. Johnstone, Political Agent Manipur, dt. Kohima, 28<sup>th</sup> October 1879, pp.268-269.

<sup>144</sup> Christopher Boehm, *Blood Revenge: The Enactment and Management of Conflict in Montenegro and Other Tribal Societies* (Pennsylvania, 1984), chapter 3. That Boehm’s book is both, a treatise of Montenegrin feuding and one on feuding in a comparative and theoretical way, see Keith F. Otterbein, ‘Feuding – Dispute Resolution or Dispute Continuation?’, In idem (ed.), *Feuding and Warfare: Selected Works of Keith F. Otterbein* (Amsterdam, 1994), pp. 133-146.

<sup>145</sup> Thomas Gibson, ‘Raiding, trading, and tribal autonomy in insular Southeast Asia’, In Jonathan Haas (ed.), *The Anthropology of War* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 125-145, pp. 140-141.

<sup>146</sup> Hoskins, ‘Introduction: Headhunting as Practice and as Trope’, p. 2.

make sense out of headhunting acts.<sup>147</sup> For the Angamis we have very little evidence of such pure headhunting cases. One of these was the killing of four women: “These murders were committed...as propitiatory offerings for a good harvest, the limbs of the persons killed as well as the skulls being carried off to be stuck up in the Rice fields.”<sup>148</sup> The explanation given here points to some fertility concept involved, a reasoning widely accepted among Nagas today (personal communications) and in the literature on them. The head-hunter was glorified as life-giver, and thus was his status enhanced.<sup>149</sup> As the quote above lists the killed body as a whole was important and would have been carried off, if not considered far too impracticable, so for convenience mostly only the head was taken, especially when one was chased by the relatives of the victim.<sup>150</sup> However, we have to keep in mind that the evidence about actual headhunting cases is scant, and that the existence of the practice was welcomed by the British as conveying further legitimacy to their conquest, as was the case elsewhere in Southeast Asia: “The battle over tribal sovereignty was largely waged over the suppression of headhunting.”<sup>151</sup> Headhunting was always the outcome of considerations at a specific time and place and did not follow from an automatic application of rules.<sup>152</sup> Moreover, headhunting acts could as well be understood as statements on power relations,<sup>153</sup> and related to that, as acts that symbolised one’s political autonomy.<sup>154</sup>

Raids, as Boehm has demonstrated with the help of his Montenegrin case study, were especially conducted when subsistence failed and/or to prove oneself as a man, in which case also heads were taken to give evidence of one’s deeds.<sup>155</sup> Thus raiding for Montenegrins could be a rite de passage as was headhunting for Ilongots.<sup>156</sup> Raiding depended as much on historical circumstances and contemporaneous considerations as did headhunting, that is to say it was undertaken only after weighing the pros and cons and not if severe retribution was to be expected in return.<sup>157</sup> Also, the composition of raiding parties could reflect real or projected political alliances, and thus could be an instrument of home politics.<sup>158</sup> Raiding among the

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., pp. 18 and 40-41.

<sup>148</sup> IPFP P/198/29, 10<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> June 1848, Doc. 97, listed under FW, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1848, Jenkins to Elliot, Secy. Govt. India, FD, dt. FW, 17<sup>th</sup> May 1848.

<sup>149</sup> Julian Jacobs, *The Nagas, Hill Peoples of Northeast India: Society, Culture and the Colonial Encounter* (Stuttgart, 1990).

<sup>150</sup> An interesting interpretation, and aimed at universal value, stems from the German anthropologist A. E. Jensen, who claims these killings as sacrifices, originating from the universal belief in planter cultures that death releases life, and the glorification of the killer as a remnant of the glorification of death as life-giver. A. E. Jensen, *Mythos und Kult bei Naturvölkern* (München, 1992 [1951]).

<sup>151</sup> Richard Allen Drake, ‘Construction Sacrifice and Kidnapping Rumor Panics in Borneo’, *Oceania* 59, 1989, pp. 269-279, p. 277, cf. Hoskins, ‘Introduction’, p. 33.

<sup>152</sup> Rosaldo, *Ilongot Headhunting, 1883-1974: A Study in Society and History*, p. 135-136 and passim.

<sup>153</sup> Sandra Pannel, ‘Travelling to Other Worlds: Narratives of Headhunting, Appropriation and the Other in the Eastern Archipelago’, *Oceania*, 62, 1992, pp. 162-178, p. 173, cf. Hoskins, ‘Introduction’, pp. 33-34.

<sup>154</sup> Hoskins, ‘Introduction’, p. 41.

<sup>155</sup> Christopher Boehm, *Blood Revenge: The Enactment and Management of Conflict in Montenegro and Other Tribal Societies* (Pennsylvania, 1984), pp. 40-41, 46, 72.

<sup>156</sup> Rosaldo, *Ilongot Headhunting, 1883-1974*, pp. 140 ff.

<sup>157</sup> Boehm, *Blood Revenge*, pp. 43-45.

<sup>158</sup> Rosaldo, *Ilongot Headhunting*, p. 168.

Angamis will have been motivated and regulated in the same way. Yet in addition to the material and status enhancing incentives, raiding in Southeast Asia could also be driven by the desire for captives that could be ransomed or sold as slaves, or to adopt them into one's own society and in this way acquire manpower, a general objective of Southeast Asian warfare, as we have learned above.

Raiding, on the other side, has to be differentiated from feuding, and Boehm follows here Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard, and Gluckman<sup>159</sup> in stating that feuding happened only inside the tribe between its component clans and had a regulatory function.<sup>160</sup> The basis of feuding was the moral system in which everyone was the Other's equal and had the obligation that he was taught from childhood on to defend one's honour and revenge one's blood.<sup>161</sup> Yet to escape the crude and ahistorical functionalism of the British school of social anthropology, Boehm states that the institution of feuding was a conscious historical solution to the problem of the possibility of homicidal violence in a society without central authority and therefore contributing to social stability.<sup>162</sup> Boehm stresses that the extent of feuding was always exaggerated by visiting foreigners and that the percentage of people actually involved in feuding at a time, constituted only a tiny fracture of the total population, so that casualties were low and the majority of the people could conduct their daily affairs in peace.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, feuding did not evolve in an automatic and inevitable fashion, every stage rather presented a turning point at which several considerations had to be made, and where arbitration to prevent escalation could either be offered or enforced by the community. Honour had to be bent and truces announced for the sake of social stability or in case of an outside threat or simply during harvest. Feuding was thus rather characterised by invention and modification rather than by following tradition,<sup>164</sup> as were and must have been the feuding units, the clans: "...the bertan [Ilongot for clan] and the feud, far from being a timeless bedrock of synchronic social structure, are historically conditioned and socially constructed."<sup>165</sup>

The Montenegrins, according to Boehm, constituted a segmentary political system, in which households made up clans, and clans made up tribes. Clans were military and feuding units and tribes made up the one for territorial defence. The constitution of the tribes was, as the one of the clans, situational. While clans were competing with each other, inter-tribal feuding, that, if it happened, could develop into warfare, was rare. Rather they were conscious of the larger and more powerful plains neighbour (in this case, the Turks) and united in case of threats coming

<sup>159</sup> M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard (eds.), *African Political Systems* (London and New York, 1987 [1940]).

<sup>160</sup> Boehm, *Blood Revenge*, pp. 195-197.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51-63, 85 and 187.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 187, 203-205 and 207.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 119, 121-142, 144, 153 and 162-163.

from this side “...to defend their territory and autonomy.”<sup>166</sup> The term “segmentary political systems” was coined by Meyer Fortes and Evans-Pritchard to come to terms with African societies that the British encountered in Africa and which lacked any discernible central authority that could be co-opted or coerced into the imperial enterprise.<sup>167</sup> The evidence for the Angamis of our case and time of scrutiny represented rather a polity that was constituted out of ranked clans that vied with each other for dominance. In other words, they were organised in an egalitarian way internally, and their composition must have been changing, reflecting ideology, not sociology,<sup>168</sup> but these clans were ranked among themselves, and thus egalitarianism extended only as far as clan boundaries. The reach of the clans’ ritual dominance, that should not to be confused with effective rule, depended on their respective power, in accord with Tambiah’s galactic polity. Also it seems from our evidence, and this would differentiate it from Tambiah’s concept, that several clans could radiate their dominance at a time inside the same space (though it seemed that newly acquired firearms worked towards a centralisation of power), and Reid gives us examples of indigenous Southeast Asian state-formations based on balancing clans making up a federal structure:

Though tension between these rival authorities was the rule, in the ideal Southeast Asian polity they could be overcome by a process of discussion and consensus. At their best, these institutions of pluralism provided a modest basis for contractualism within state structures. Most often, however, they also inhibited progress towards the bureaucratic institutionalization of state authority.<sup>169</sup>

For African societies that shall serve us here as to give us a rough idea, despite all their fission and fractions, unity as whole was produced and perceived by the people themselves through numerous cross-cutting kinship ties, material interests, and common ritual values. Political units,

<sup>165</sup> Rosaldo, *Ilongot Headhunting*, p. 221.

<sup>166</sup> Boehm, *Blood Revenge*, pp. 43-45, 48-49 and 184-185.

<sup>167</sup> M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, ‘Introduction’, In idem (eds.), *African Political Systems* (London and New York, 1987 [1940]), pp. 1-23. It is widely taken that they took the term “segmentary societies” from Emile Durkheim’s *De la division du travail social* (1902), see for example Irene Leverenz, ‘Segmentäre Gesellschaft’, In Bernhard Streck (ed.), *Wörterbuch der Ethnologie* (Köln, 1987), pp. 191-195 and Christian Sigrist, ‘Gesellschaften ohne Staat und die Entdeckungen der social anthropology’, In Fritz Kramer and Christian Sigrist (eds.), *Gesellschaften ohne Staat. Band 1: Gleichheit und Gegenseitigkeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1978), pp. 28-44. Gellner, though, points out that the such described mechanism, albeit without using the term itself, was already noted by Emile Masqueray, *Formation des Cités chez les populations sédentaires de l’Algérie* (Paris, 1886) and conveyed to Durkheim, again without the term itself, by his teacher N. Fustel de Coulanges, *La Cité antique* (numerous editions). Gellner, *Anthropology and Politics: Revolutions in the Sacred Grove*, p. 163. Though, at least for the case of West Africa, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard seemed to have deliberately neglected the presence of states and empires to propagate their segmentary scheme, see Elizabeth Tonkin, ‘Borderline questions: people and space in West Africa’, In Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson (eds.), *Border Approaches: An anthropological Approaches on Frontiers* (Lanham, 1994), pp. 15-30, p. 21.

<sup>168</sup> As Reid writes in another context, idem, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680. Volume Two: Expansion and Crisis*, p. 122.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., pp. 263-265. In a similar vein Tambiah finds evidence that polities contemporary to Buddha could be “...better described as segmentary states with ranked lineages rather than as democratic and republican in Western terms.” Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, p. 48.

that may be defined narrowly in relation to military actions and legal sanctions, could under no circumstances be understood in isolation. They were based on interlocking social systems transgressing their highly unstable political boundaries, and made the drawing of the latter to a certain degree into a wanton matter.<sup>170</sup> The mobility of African people made rights over persons important not over things, borders had less importance which in turn was assigned to key points and centres rather than to bounded space,<sup>171</sup> and again is congruent to Tambiah's findings that we discussed above, that, as we have just learned, have to be qualified by our own evidence and Reids' that several clans could rule a territory in a pluralist way.

In Chapter Four we shall hear more on the political constitution of the populations inhabiting the Naga hills with the help of more later dating evidence and literature. Here it shall suffice to liken contemporary Angami polity to segmentary political systems described elsewhere at other times. Without further research in oral history<sup>172</sup> (and maybe not even with that) we will not be able to pin down how exactly the Angamis then were politically constituted.

Yet from what was hitherto discussed it should have become clear that there existed no such social and ritual ties or relations with the newly on the scene arrived British conquerors. The British were clearly located outside the social systems, perceived as radically different and as predatory. This may account for the general resistance that was rallied to oppose British intrusion. Like Boehm's Montenegrins the Angamis united to fight this obvious Other. Although they fought in a decentralised way, they not only concerted their actions to a certain degree but also hit at their enemy's bases and allies. The totality of armed interactions and confrontations can safely be called war, according to modern definitions.<sup>173</sup> That the Angamis in general avoided high numbers of casualties was in accord with the then practised warfare in Southeast Asia that for one avoided the wasting of precious manpower,<sup>174</sup> but also becomes understandable from the fact that it was fought along real or fictional kinship ties that, as was explained above, did not allow for the idea of dying for a higher good. That the Angamis surrendered relatively easy in 1880 can be ascribed to the fact that it was outside their imagination that the British would want to stay.<sup>175</sup> They surely must have thought that this campaign, as all the ones before, was a

<sup>170</sup> Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 'Introduction', pp. 17-23.

<sup>171</sup> Tonkin, 'Borderline questions: people and space in West Africa'.

<sup>172</sup> To be sure Visier Sanyu, *A History of Nagas and Nagaland: Dynamics of Oral Tradition in Village Formation* (New Delhi, 1996) is a study in oral history of Khonoma and Kohima, but thoroughly lacks a critical interrogation of his findings. He neither cross-checks them with historical sources, nor does he (to any satisfying extent) embed them theoretical.

<sup>173</sup> See István Kende, 'Terrorism, wars, nuclear holocaust', *International Social Science Journal* 110, 1986, pp. 529-538.

<sup>174</sup> To name again Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680. Volume One: The Lands below the Winds*, pp. 17-18 and 120-124 and Douglas M. Peers, 'Introduction', In idem (ed.), *Warfare and Empires: Contact and conflict between European and non-European military and maritime forces and cultures. (An Expanding World: The European Impact on World History, 1450-1800: Vol. 24, Aldershot, 1997)*, pp. XV-XXXIV.

<sup>175</sup> What was also one of the reasons for the easy conquest of Vietnam by the French: "...the court did not fully understand the intentions of the French, thinking that since they came from so far away they would be interested only in obtaining certain trade advantages rather than conquering the country and occupying it by force." Ngo Vinh

temporary affair, and that the British, once they had received their tribute and were assured of allegiance, would return back to where they had come from. In other words, the surrender in the 1880s meant something else for the Angamis than for the British. The actual surrender of the Angamis was not a punctual affair but a slow process of disbelief and realisation, a successive accommodation to the presence of the foreign occupants. The rather light administration that the British kept up, once the Angami hills were pacified, certainly helped the people to acquiesce to it.

In order to investigate further into the reasons for resistance, I want to make another leap, right into our century. In Summer 2001 I conducted interviews with several Nagas in London. One of my main interviewees was Mr. Yong Kong, an elderly Ao Naga gentleman who came to London in the early 1960s to support Zaphu Angami Phizo, the pivotal figure of Naga nationalism, of whom we will hear more later, in his struggle to make the Naga case publicly known. My main interest was to find out why the Nagas had taken up arms against the Indian state and remained fighting after nearly 50 years. I had met him already for the third day and continued to come back to the point why the Nagas had given in to the British and why suddenly they demanded independence from the Indians. I argued in an awfully hair-splitting way and managed to get him furious, but suddenly, leaving all the proximate reasons aside, he very angrily said:

No, you see, what outside world, or even people like you, do not understand is the Nagas are not fighting for independence, they are defending their territory, their territory, if your country is invaded.<sup>176</sup>

As Walker Connor writes: "...grasping the obvious has always been a problem for academics and policy-makers."<sup>177</sup> There is a difference between "fighting for independence" and "defending one's territory", or homeland as Connor would term it.<sup>178</sup> I would say that the Angamis from the 1830s to 1880 were defending their territory, the occupation was not yet effected, every one could see the actual act of violent penetration and out of place of the foreign conquerors. Yet, since the British were very thinly present in the Naga hills, the subsequently subjugated groups could somehow arrange themselves with their ineffective rule. Though they had lost their political freedom, for most of the time they retained their individual one. The case was different with the sudden influx of Indian personnel in the aftermath of the transfer of power. Now, their

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Long, 'Vietnam: The Real Enemy', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 21, Nos. 2-4/ April-Dec. 1989, pp. 6-34, p. 7.

<sup>176</sup> Interview with Yong Kong, London, 7<sup>th</sup> August 2001.

<sup>177</sup> Walker Connor, 'Homelands in a World of States', In Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson (eds.), *Understanding Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 53-73, p. 60.



land was really taken away, of course there were other factors too, but here it is to stress that what happened in 1947, and before in 1849 and 1879, were invasions, only that by 1947 the Nagas already knew that the Indians came to stay. We will come back to this in Chapter Six. Here I simply want to suggest that the reason for the Angamis fighting the British in 1849/50 as in 1879/80 was that they defended their territory. As Connor has demonstrated not only intra- but also inter-state wars were and are fought by individuals on grounds what he calls homeland psychology and which in turn eludes cold academic analysis: “Psychological perceptions of homelands and the emotions to which they give rise are the stuff that dreams – *and nightmares* – are made of.”<sup>179</sup>

Until now we repeatedly stated that wars were not fought for land, that populations simply moved away in case of an attack.<sup>180</sup> How then can I claim that the Angamis and later the Nagas fought to defend their territory? One factor might have been that the villages of the Nagas, other than those of their plains neighbours, were in general heavily built and resembled fortresses with a high labour input, the same was (and still is) true for the terraced rice fields of the Angamis. Yet the solution to our impasse may lie rather more in the fact that the lowland peasants simply moved from one polity and ruler to another, in case of a threat, or a too oppressive regime, or they were forcibly moved. That is to say for lowland inhabitants it was (and still is) the normal state of affairs to live under one or the other regime. Hill people, on the other hand, lived in these “peripheral areas” in conscious opposition to and rejection of lowland tutelage as Gibson has stated for three Southeast Asian people.<sup>181</sup> In Schiller’s *Wilhelm Tell* Walter asks his father Tell whether there existed countries where no mountains were and Tell confirming this describes the plains to him in the most lush detail. Walter then with incomprehension queries why they then should toil and fear in the mountains instead of quickly descending into the paradisiacal lowland. Tell explains to him that the fields, forests, lakes and rivers of the plains belong not to the people themselves but to the king and church, and that the people in turn receive protection instead of bravely protecting themselves. Thus sobered Walter replies that he started to feel rather confined in the wide plains and in this case preferably would live under the threat of avalanches and glaciers.<sup>182</sup> The Angamis, like the Swiss and Montenegrins, inhabited a

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., pp. 58-60 and quote p. 72. Though I agree with the general line of this argument I feel the need to qualify the total emotional commitment implied by this interpretation, and would say that many soldiers fight with less enthusiasm than is generally attributed to them, and possibly only because they are forced to in several ways and then also very likely for other reasons like for immediate comradeship or self-defence. However, in my case of the Angamis here the incentive to fight is not a remote or abstract one mediated by politicians and officers, but an immediate and nearly individual defence of one’s home and family.

<sup>180</sup> See for example Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680. Volume Two Expansion and Crisis*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>181</sup> Thomas Gibson, ‘Raiding, trading, and tribal autonomy in insular Southeast Asia’, In Jonathan Haas (ed.), *The Anthropology of War* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 125-145.

<sup>182</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell* (Stuttgart, 1979 [1804]), pp. 61-62.

refuge-area, had a distinct sense of their individual and collective autonomy and were conscious about the fact that their freedom depended on the inaccessibility of their territory that they, in turn, were willing to defend. The defence was conducted by every man, voluntarily, since everyone was one's own master, fighting for one's own independence. Their "high military participation" foreshadowed in this later national armies. And to bring the female side in, the band of brothers will have been encouraged by their mothers, sisters, wives, and wives to be, as Gertrud in Schiller's *Tell* sweeps away her husband's hesitation to fight with her affirmation that they (the Swiss), too, are men (and maybe that he should not make her question that), that they also know how to handle a battle-axe, and that god helps the brave: "Ihr seid *auch* Männer, wisset eure Axt Zu führen, und dem Mutigen hilft Gott!"<sup>183</sup> Gertrud's husband was left with neither choice nor excuse. While in the lowlands legitimacy trickled down to the people from the god-king, in the hills it was constituted out of the consensus of the collective will and at all times open to negotiation, a fact bringing us to our last point in this chapter.

## 2.6 Nationalism, nothing new in the West

Assamese historiography, in trying to trace back the prehistoric racial and genetic core of the Nagas in order to demonstrate their mixed origin,<sup>184</sup> serviced the project of a greater Assam. The same is true, for their opposite number. Naga scholars too feel the need to legitimise present-day demands for recognition as a separate nation with the demonstration of Naga foreign relations going back to the third century A.C.<sup>185</sup> Both claims follow the logic of nationalism that demands a nation in order to legitimately set up a state, i.e. a nation-state. A nation, in turn, must be presented as something like an endogamous kinship group that has already existed from time immemorial.

Following the same logic are efforts to find historical sources purportedly relating to the Nagas in Vedic or ancient Greek or Chinese sources that,<sup>186</sup> though interesting per se, and demonstrating the long history of settlement in those hills, will yet not have been the decisive element in the formation of Naga polities in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and thus neither can be made accountable for the resistance to the British, nor, for that matter, for the

<sup>183</sup> Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell*, p. 15, italic in the original.

<sup>184</sup> Like H. K. Barpujari is doing in his 'Introduction' to the first volume of idem (ed.). *The Comprehensive History of Assam. Vol. I: From the Pre-historic Times to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, pp. 1-24, trying to reconstruct the history of Assam with the anthropometric pseudo-science of so-called races, comparing hair types and asking for genetic studies to clarify why, for example, the Nagas are not homogeneous (17). To use Assamese sources in relation to the Nagas is problematic, since in their histories two directly competing national narratives are meeting. We are warned when we see that someone seriously refers and uses still anthropometric data, as we are when we read that writing and compiling this comprehensive history of Assam is a task of national importance as is Satish Bhattacharyya doing in his 'Publishers Note' (pp. V-VI) and H. K. Barpujari in his 'Preface' (IX-XII) to the above mentioned volume.

<sup>185</sup> Shimmi, *Comparative History of the Nagas: From Ancient Period Till 1826*.

<sup>186</sup> D. C. Sircar, 'Epic-Puraanic Myths and Allied Legends', In H. K. Barpujari (ed.), *The Comprehensive History of Assam: From the Pre-historic Times to the Twelfth Century A.D.* (Guwahati, 1990), pp. 81-82 and 88.

formation of modern Naga nationalism and resistance to Indian occupation in the twentieth century.

This school of thought implicitly carries the notion that there are discrete biologically self-reproducing groups that share and possess a distinct language and culture, a congruence of race, language and culture, whose bearers should make up one society, its nation, and in turn be granted with its territory, its nation-state.<sup>187</sup> Cultures and their bearers travelled through time in an unadulterated way “...they could not mix, they had hard edges like billiard balls.”<sup>188</sup> Yet since there is no scientific way to determine who belongs to what people, ethnic group, or nation, such undertakings in the end boil down to a blatant racist point of view and always are the product of politics.<sup>189</sup>

Frank Proschan takes the widespread existence of orally transmitted myths of origin in highland Southeast Asia as evidence for the existence of autochthonous, i.e. pre-colonial, conceptualisations of ethnicities that he considers as primary and the colonial influence as secondary, in opposition to Benedict Anderson. The myths decidedly conceptualise and represent a world of common humanity, that is pluralistic, multiethnic, multilinear and inegalitarian in which different groups may be differentiated according to phenotype, cultural markers, social status, economic opportunity, technological knowledge, and, and this is important for us, political authority.<sup>190</sup> Butler, if we remember, related to us such a kind of myth prevalent among the Angamis in the first half of the eighteenth century, and thus alone could suffice to support us in our statement that the Angamis had a conception of themselves as different and that this under any circumstances included a political notion of them as well. Proschan draws support from Ronald R. Atkinson who, with the help of oral history, re-constructed the pre-colonial:

...ideological underpinnings and sociohistorical processes that contributed to the development...(...)[of a] common social order and political culture...over almost all of what is now the Acholi District of Uganda – processes that laid fundamental foundations and set crucial parameters for the further

<sup>187</sup> For this doctrine mostly the German Romantic is blamed. See Isaiah Berlin's essays on the romantic school and on nationalism in his *The Crooked Timber of Humanity. Chapters in the History of Ideas* (London, 1990 [1959]) and on nationalism in his 'Nationalism: Past Neglect and Present Power', In *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (London, 1997 [1959]). Berlin credits Herder with having created the basis for nationalist thinking. The central writings of Herder for this are: Johann Gottfried Herder, *A bhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (Stuttgart, 1966) and idem, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1967).

<sup>188</sup> Edmund Leach, 'Tribal Ethnography: past, present, future', In Elizabeth Tonkin et al (eds.), *History and Ethnicity* (London, 1989), pp. 34-47, p. 43.

<sup>189</sup> Charles Keyes, 'Presidential Address: "The Peoples of Asia" – Science and Politics in the Classification of Ethnic Groups in Thailand, China, and Vietnam', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61, no. 4 (November 2002): pp. 1163-1203. Keyes asserts that this was especially true for the modern nation-state. In pre-nationalism time the markers for people were either related “...to either Sinitic or Buddhist civilization, locality and kinship, not biology or even spoken language” (p. 1171).

<sup>190</sup> Frank Proschan, 'Peoples of the Gourd: Imagined Ethnicities in Highland Southeast Asia', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60, no. 4 (November 2001), p. 999-1032.

evolution of Acholi societal formation and ethnic consciousness over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>191</sup>

Atkinson's central point is that we have to go back to pre-colonial times to understand the effect (and maybe the approach also) of colonial workings. Acholi by the mid- to late seventeenth century was characterised by kinship based groups inhabiting single-village political communities, with occasional multi-village groupings. At that time it constituted a "...multicultural frontier region..." in which the inhabitants shared common features but did not form a single society. This changed with immigration in the course of the eighteenth century when new populations brought with them the new ideas and institutions of chiefship that brought about increased centralisation what in turn resulted in the processes described in the previous quote.<sup>192</sup>

Prasenjit Duara argues that to conceptualise political identity as only modern is wrong, and criticises the notion

...that nationalism is a radically novel mode of consciousness. ...because this position ignores the complexity of the nature of historical memory and causality and because it remains tied to the idea of self-consciousness as a uniquely modern phenomenon. In neither modern nor premodern society is it possible to sustain the notion of a unified consciousness presumed by the concept of nationalism.<sup>193</sup>

Rather, so he continues:

Whether in India or China, people historically identified with different representations of communities, and when these identifications became politicized, they came to resemble what is called modern "national identities."<sup>194</sup>

And:

I will argue that there were totalizing representations and narratives of community with which people identified historically and with which they may continue to identify into the modern nation. Of course, premodern political identifications do not necessarily or teleologically develop into the national identifications of modern times and there are significant ruptures with the past. A new vocabulary and a new political system – the world system of nation-states – selects, adapts, reorganizes and even recreates these older representations. But the historical memory of archaic totalizations does not

<sup>191</sup> Ronald R. Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity: The Origins of the Acholi of Uganda Before 1800* (Philadelphia, 1994), p. 1.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66-81.

<sup>193</sup> Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago, 1995), pp. 51-52. For bringing my attention to both, Atkinson and Duara, I am indebted to the article of Proschan.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

always disappear, and as this memory is periodically re-enacted, it often provides potent material along which to mobilize the new community.<sup>195</sup>

The Tengima group of the later Angamis and Nagas, as becomes evident from our data, constituted such a politicised community that according to Duara qualifies as nation. Since Walker Connor sees passive resistance to an authority that is perceived as foreign as sufficient evidence for the existence of popular national consciousness, and hence the existence of a nation,<sup>196</sup> the here demonstrated prolonged and sustained violent resistance to the British invasion by the Tengimas might then surely suffice to proof my point. The Naga hills were home to a whole range of political identities whose bearers were conscious on themselves as on that fact. How and that these identities transformed into a larger one was not due to some genes but to history and it will be this history that will form the subject of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

## *2.7 Conclusion*

Hill people, as has become evident here, were conscious on the fact that their lowland neighbours were superior in numbers, arms and organisation to them, and that it was the inaccessibility and undesirability of their territory that protected them from permanent subjugation, if not from occasional devastating invasions. Hence they were cautious not to unnecessarily provoke the wrath of their mighty neighbours. So far we have seen that the extent and number of raids carried out by the Angamis was greatly exaggerated by the men on the spot, the murderous zone a product of their reports. We have evidence of sometimes two, sometimes one, but also of none violent assaults a year. Attacks that have been mixtures of raids for property and testing one's manliness, and such exclusively to attain heads and limbs of victims to ensure fertility for the fields. Also, we have clearly political operations aiming at British forces, their bases, or as sanctions against subordinate villages for not opposing the British intruder. Finally, we witnessed a power struggle between two of the more powerful clans, a fight that must have been greatly exasperated by the additional firepower gained with either directly winning British support or the acquisition of guns, when we remember the fortress-like villages. However, the two years peace from 1847 to 1849 show that the Angamis for one had decided to give in to the British, if only for the moment, and that this must have been understood by all Angami clans, or they were made to understand by the stronger clans. This period of intensified communication between British held territory and Angamis, in a way a blind spot, since peace makes bad, in the sense of few, news, must have greatly enlarged the knowledge of the Angamis on their white vis-

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., pp. 55-56.

à-vis, and thus influenced their decisions in their dealings with them. On the other hand the pattern of the interaction will in general have followed the one the Angamis had with the central organised predecessors of the British. The point here is to reiterate that neither feuding nor headhunting were automatic reflexes of Angami culture but subject to political considerations and decision-making.<sup>197</sup> Further, that the Angami hills were, at the time we are concerned with here, a polity organised in a segmentary way, in which clans may have split and rivalled with each other for domination, in which clans also may have called in outside allies for support in this internal power struggle, but on the understanding that these outsiders never wanted to stay on permanently. In this the Angamis simply mirrored the alliance politics of their lowland neighbours. Finally, that the Angamis were conscious about themselves as being different and separate in a political way, and thus determined to govern themselves, as may be surely deducted from the concerted and determined resistance to the British invasion. This resistance easily renders the whole sum of events from 1849 to 1851 liable to be qualified as war, respectively of conquest or resistance, depending on ones point of view, but confirming the notion of two opposed polities.

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<sup>196</sup> Walker Connor, 'The timelessness of nations', *Nations and Nationalism* 10 (1/2), 2004, pp. 35-47, p. 46, note 9.

<sup>197</sup> These are central statements of both Boehm's *Blood Revenge* and Rosaldo's *Ilongot Headhunting*.

## Chapter Three

### *Imperial Conquest and Withdrawal, 1860s-1947*

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The concerted resistance of the Tengima group of the Angami Nagas and the limited interest of the British in the Naga hills brought about a change in British policy by 1851. Pivotal in this decision to call back the imperial personnel from the Naga hills was the then governor general Dalhousie who was not disinclined to entertain an aggressive forward policy, as can be seen, for instance, from his handling of the neighbouring Burma case unfolding at the same time.<sup>1</sup> This chapter explains the Naga hills' place in the British empire during the time of "high imperialism", documents and delineates the partial conquest of the Naga hills and the type of regime the British set up there, and their eventual retreat.

#### **3.2 Imperialism Unbound**

Chapter One located the reasons for British expansion into Naga territory in the general ideology of the empire, in the search for ever new revenues to finance a military-fiscal state that had resulted out of the incessant warfare among competing European states at the global level. In this respect the picture didn't change much from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. Quite to the contrary, once acquired, the fact of empire created an understanding of the British of themselves as an imperial race, and the more the real empire was falling to pieces the more British greatness and empire-being was enacted, evoked, and asserted.<sup>2</sup>

To be more precise, global competition between European states provided the main incentive for attacks on extra-European countries leading to massive territorial occupations in the time between 1760-1830.<sup>3</sup> Geopolitics, though a little more relaxed in the post-1815 period, continued to shape British foreign policy and often provided the impulse for territorial

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<sup>1</sup> A policy already criticised by a contemporary, see Richard Cobden, *How wars are got up in India: the origin of the Burmese war* (London, 1853). Besides Lower Burma, Dalhousie also had annexed Punjab, Oudh, Nagpur, Berar and Satara, in order to add "...profitable revenue-bearing territory...", see E. T. Stokes, 'Bureaucracy and Ideology: Britain and India in the Nineteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, Vol. 30, London 1980, pp. 131-156, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition", c. 1820-1977', In Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 101-164, p. 153ff.

<sup>3</sup> C. A. Bayly, 'The First Age of Global Imperialism, c. 1760-1830', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XXVI, May 1998, No. 2, pp. 28-47. See also Nicholas Tarling, *Imperialism in Southeast Asia: 'A fleeting, passing phase'* (London and New York, 2001), chapters 1 and 2.

expansion. This drive was heightened again by renewed imperial rivalries after 1870.<sup>4</sup> Adhering to the same logic, British cabinet members' war aims in World War One were the dismantling of rival empires and the enlargement of their own, an attitude that Edwin S. Montagu, secretary of state for India, found quite agonising:

...equally acquisitive [as his cabinet colleagues] was the rounded Lord Curzon who for historical reasons of which he alone is master and geographical considerations of which he has peculiarly studied, finds reluctantly, very much against his will, that it would be dangerous if any country in the world is left to itself, or in control of any other country but ourselves, and we must go there, as I have heard him say, 'for diplomatic, economic, strategic and telegraphic reasons'.<sup>5</sup>

Even after World War Two neither US-Americans nor Europeans wanted to de-colonise Asia and Africa but faced with the Cold War planned to exchange formal for informal control.<sup>6</sup>

Certainly also for this later period, generally described as high imperialism, reasons for empire are not only seen to be rooted in geopolitics: one approach fuses metropolitan geopolitics and peripheral interests, seeing the first as the driving force and the second as shaping the peculiar form of the actual outcome;<sup>7</sup> another one argues in favour of the decisive role the personnel of the proconsuls played in the overseas possessions;<sup>8</sup> then there is still the reasoning for British finance being the driving and determining force behind British imperialism and its disengagement;<sup>9</sup> furthermore, we come across the factor of imperial politics serving home and party political interests in an age of increased suffrage;<sup>10</sup> and we encounter an ideological hardening, the belief in the racial superiority of the British race having the duty to rule others for their own good, resulting from the facticity of an extensive existing empire and the necessity to

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Porter, 'Introduction: Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth Century', In idem (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. III, The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 1-28. For the decisive importance of geopolitics in British Foreign policy, see also Ronald Hyam, 'The Primacy of Geopolitics: The Dynamics of British Imperial Policy, 1763-1963', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XXVII, May 1999, No. 2, pp. 27-52. Marvin Swartz believes that from 1865 onwards the decision-makers of the British empire already saw themselves challenged by a new round of global competition, see idem., *The politics of British foreign policy in the era of Disraeli and Gladstone* (New York, 1985), pp. 6 and 12.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. John S. Galbraith, 'British War Aims in World War I: A Commentary on "Statesmanship"', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XIII, October 1984, No. 1, pp. 25-45, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald Robinson, 'Wm. Roger Louis and the Official Mind of Decolonization', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XXVII, May 1999, No. 2, pp. 1-12, p. 9. Wm. Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson, 'The imperialism of decolonization', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XXII, 1994, No. 3, pp. 462-511, p. 493. British military advisors, for example, were still around in India and Pakistan after the transfer of power. H. W. Brands 'India and Pakistan in American Strategic Planning, 1947-54: The Commonwealth as Collaborator', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XV, October 1986, No. 1, pp. 41-54.

<sup>7</sup> Hyam, 'The Primacy of Geopolitics: The Dynamics of British Imperial Policy, 1763-1963'.

<sup>8</sup> John Benyon, 'Overlords of Empire? British 'Proconsular Imperialism' in Comparative Perspective', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XIX, 1991, No. 2, pp. 164-202.

<sup>9</sup> P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, vol. I: Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914; Vol. 2: Crisis and Deconstruction, 1914-1990* (London, 1993). Albeit heavily criticised for oversimplification and mono-causality by D. K. Fieldhouse, 'Gentlemen, Capitalists, and the British Empire', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XXII, 1994, No. 3, pp. 531-541.



justify that.<sup>11</sup> That is to say, really new, compared to what we encountered in Chapter One, seemed only to be the latter two rationales. Hence, even more so as with what Bayly has called the first age of global imperialism, the reasons for empire during the age of “high imperialism” were equally profound as they were diverse, or as Uday Singh Mehta puts it:

The empire was a complex phenomenon informed by the multiple purposes of power, commerce, cultural and religious influence, and the imperatives of progress, along with the myriad subsidiary motives of pride, jealousy, compassion, curiosity, adventure, and resistance.<sup>12</sup>

Hence it would be absurd, in David Cannadine’s words, to reduce a phenomenon as complex as the British empire to single causes that are supposed to be applicable across the imperial period and for all affected places, as well as for all involved processes and events. Rather, it was the study of factors in isolation leading to a neglect of scrutiny of “...essential connections between overseas expansion, foreign policy, international relations and great-power rivalries...”.<sup>13</sup> An integral approach bringing the strands together concludes that in principle mid-Victorian British imperial expansionism knew no limits, but was constrained by the practical considerations a widely overstretched power had to make that at best “...enjoyed an extra-European ‘semi-hegemony’ – a series of discontinuous regional hegemonies.”<sup>14</sup> It were therefore limitations in power that tamed an otherwise unbound and all-out British drive for expansionism.

Though it is an important lesson to learn that there existed a (near) pan-British acceptance of, a dedication to, and an desire for British imperialism, and that this ambition was only curbed by a lack of means, and it might help to explain why which territories were annexed or not, subjected to informal control or not, it does not absolve us from looking into the intricacies of every single case, since the mixture of motivations and factors for the followed up policies varied and determined the actual outcome and performance of, for example, a respective imperial occupation. To phrase it differently, if we want to understand a certain territory and its people under imperialism and after, as is the case for this work, we do best to look into the details of the given case, and then embed it into the wider field. This sounds trivial, but I think we might be able to make statements about British imperialism by comparing superficially several cases of British imperial holdings, but we will only be able to do the same on the respective

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<sup>10</sup> Swartz, *The politics of British foreign policy in the era of Disraeli and Gladstone*, especially chapter 6, pp. 123-144.

<sup>11</sup> R. J. Moore, *Liberalism and Indian Politics, 1872-1922* (London, 1966), passim. For the connection between democracy and racism in the 1860s and 1870s, see also Thomas R. Metcalf, ‘Ideologies of the Raj’, *The New Cambridge History of India*, Vol. III, 4 (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 56-59 and Hugh Tinker, *Viceroy: Curzon to Mounbatten* (Karachi, 1997), pp. 45-46.

<sup>12</sup> Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: India in British Liberal Thought* (New Delhi, 1999), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> David Cannadine, ‘Empire’, In idem, *History In Our Time* (New Haven and London, 1998), pp. 143-154.

<sup>14</sup> John Darwin, ‘Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion’ *English Historical Review*, CXII (1997), pp. 614-642, p. 628.

holdings when we have examined their pre-colonial time, as well as having looked into their specific cases of colonial subjugation and occupation, precisely if we want to understand their post-colonial predicament. That is to say we understand the particular only against the general, but it is also necessary to conduct detailed case studies in order to fathom the general, or as Bayly puts it: “The effects of imperialism are as much part of its character as its causes.”<sup>15</sup>

The conquest of India was the result of the war with France. Once it had been conquered its paramount significance and considerations of how to protect it and how to ensure the communication with it determined the conquest of new territories that served either as buffer or support bases for either military or trade.<sup>16</sup> Taking this into account, the importance of the *Raj* for the empire in its material and psychological effect might explain the general reluctance to let go of it.<sup>17</sup> India was only surrendered since it was becoming ungovernable, the Indian army seen as unreliable and authoritarian rule thus not possible,<sup>18</sup> since this then would have involved massive military action and cost,<sup>19</sup> and would furthermore not have been condoned by the United States on which the British then depended.<sup>20</sup> In this particular case it was the shifting balance in power to the advantage of the Indian independence movements that forced the British to yield, otherwise it held true what Burke, according to Mehta, had already been conscious about: “Another people’s independence...is always the limiting point of our vision – the darkness that reason does not illuminate.”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Bayly, ‘The First Age of Global Imperialism, c. 1760-1830’, p. 29.

<sup>16</sup> Hyam, ‘The Primacy of Geopolitics: The Dynamics of British Imperial Policy, 1763-1963’, p. 32 and 38-39. About the paramount value of the *raj* for the British, in general see Benyon, ‘Overlords of Empire? British “Proconsular Imperialism” in Comparative Perspective’, pp. 168-169 and 173-175; in financial respect see Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism, vol. I: Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914*, chapter 10, pp. 316-350; in respect to deliver the means to great power status, see D. A. Washbrook, ‘India, 1818-1860: The Two Faces Of Colonialism’, In Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. III, The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 395-420, p. 419; or India’s crucial importance for Britain’s imperial defence, even after WW II, see Pradeep Barua, ‘Strategies and Doctrines of Imperial Defence: Britain and India, 1919-45’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XXV, May 1997, No. 2, pp. 240-266; and for a combination of these reasons, see Robin J. Moore, ‘Imperial India, 1858-1914’, In Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. III, The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 422-446, pp. 441-443 and Judith M. Brown, ‘India’, In idem (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. IV, The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 421-446, p. 426.

<sup>17</sup> A. P. Thornton, ‘With Wavell on to Simla and Beyond’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. VIII, October 1979, No. 2, pp. 175-185.

<sup>18</sup> P. J. Marshall, ‘The Transfer of Power in India: Lord Wavell and his Political Masters’ (Review Article), *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. V, October 1976, No. 1, pp. 331-334 and Tinker, *Viceroy: Curzon to Mountbatten*, p. 207ff.

<sup>19</sup> But this did not mean that Labour was willed or even planned to surrender the rest of the empire, nor that it relinquished further imperial enterprises. Far from that, the imperial idea by then had firmly taken root among Labour. Kenneth O. Morgan, ‘Imperialists at Bay: British Labour and Decolonization’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XXVII, May 1999, No. 2, pp. 233-244.

<sup>20</sup> Louis and Robinson, ‘The imperialism of decolonization’, pp. 464-466.

<sup>21</sup> Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: India in British Liberal Thought*, p. 39.

### 3.3 Return to the Naga Hills

The renewed British forward policy leading to the partial annexation and occupation of the Naga hills is explained in retrospect by the failure of the policy of non-interference. The retreat into the plains and protection of the frontier had proved itself unfeasible. More than 150 people, whom the British considered as their subjects, were reported to have either been killed or abducted in 1851 alone. In 1854 Manipur invaded the Angami hills and the Angamis in turn asked the British for protection which was declined. The British shortened their line of defence, but were still unable to defend North Cachar, which remained subject to incursions by the Angamis. The proposal was made to give up North Cachar and the district commissioner (DC) of Assam approved it. Yet, this was rejected by the then lieutenant governor of Bengal Sir C. Beadon,<sup>22</sup> who did not like the idea of giving in to “wild tribes”.<sup>23</sup> The reality of the raids and the direction they came from should not be taken at face value, since these reports were certainly bent to suit the personnel of the garrison state and condoned by the presence of interests, transcending the field of Assam, for instance the competition with the colonial rival France in neighbouring Southeast Asia, the surge for trade routes in Assam, and possibly also the search for oil in Upper Burma.

In 1866 it was again Sir Cecil Beadon who had vetoed the surrender of North Cachar and it was thereon suggested to move the head-quarters from Asalu back to Samaguting to again close in onto the Angamis.<sup>24</sup> This suggestion was made by lieutenant colonel J.C. Haughton, then officiating agent to the governor general, Northeast Frontier. He had been sent to the Northeast Frontier “...to find a suitable location for an office to manage the Naga tribes, at present under our rule...”,<sup>25</sup> referring to those Nagas living in Cachar. Haughton, after he had made himself a picture of the situation on the spot, together with an analysis of the previous correspondence on the Angamis, came to the conclusion that an officer, stationed at the frontier, would not be able to protect these, due to the inclination of the Nagas, as he saw it, to continuously wage war.<sup>26</sup> Haughton did not believe statements repeatedly made over the years claiming the Angamis would refrain from any aggressions when left unprovoked.<sup>27</sup> To him, the lack of any perceivable central authority among the Angamis alone proved the impossibility of any guarantee to stop the raids.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Summarised in ‘Office Precis (1875)’, In *India Foreign Proceedings – Political* (IFP-P), Vol. P/1035, August 1877, Doc. 127, p. 124.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125. On the other hand the British had other problems in the mid-1850s and after (the Mutiny in general and the wars with the Bhutanese and Mishmis in the Northeast), so that reports on the Nagas ceased for the time being, see Vols. Z/P/1775 and Z/P/1777, Indexes for 1854 and 1855.

<sup>24</sup> IFP-P, Vol. P/1035, Aug. 1877, Doc. 127, p. 125.

<sup>25</sup> IFP-P, Vol. P/437/66, January 1866, Doc. 49, Lieutenant-Colonel J.C. Haughton, Officiating Agent to the Governor General, North-East Frontier, to the Hon’ble A. Eden, Secretary to Government of Bengal, - No. 60C., dated River Soormah, the 4<sup>th</sup> January 1864, pp. 174-178, p. 175.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

Objections against this version were raised by lieutenant Clarke, who at that time was assistant commissioner in North Cachar. Several Angamis, serving with him in the North Cachar Police Force, insisted that the Angamis were well disposed and that not them but other Nagas were responsible for the raids. These protestations should at least caution us towards the real basis for this renewed interventionist forward policy. As long as further research has not been able to shed more light on this area at that time we might as well take this story as the pretext for conquest, since Haughton swept Clarke's objections aside with his observation: "To me all the Nagas appeared essentially one people."<sup>29</sup> Haughton even saw the question as to who really was responsible for the raids as utterly irrelevant, since he was already convinced that the protection of the frontier was not practical like this and that a solution was only to be found in "...avow[ing] our sovereignty over the whole of the Naga tribes not included within Munnipore or Burmah, and gradually to bring them to order."<sup>30</sup> Legally or morally this did not pose a problem for him, for he concluded: "Ever since the first Burmese war, I believe, we have claimed the whole of the Angamee and Kutcha Naga territory as within our boundary."<sup>31</sup> Conquest by force here clearly conveyed legitimacy to the conquistador.

It was suggested that Samaguting be reoccupied and made into the headquarters for that area. Lieutenant Gregory, up to then based in Asalu and in charge of the sub-division North Cachar was to be shifted there. This was agreed by the lieutenant governor of Bengal Cecil Beadon. Consequently Asalu was abolished as headquarter and a new district was created with Gregory as DC, consisting of the part of the former Asalu subdivision, lying on the right bank of the river Dhansiri, and a considerable new stretch of Naga country. The proximate objective was the protection of the plains. There was no reason lying for in the hills themselves as we may read from the following orders made by the government of India in 1866:

Lieutenant Gregory may take up the proposed position at Samagooting, and do his best by tact and good management, supported by a moderate display of physical force, to bring that portion of the hill tract adjacent to the plains into order. He will remember that our main object in having any dealings with the hill people is to protect the lowlands from their incursions. Instead, therefore, of exerting himself to extend our rule into the interior, he will rather refrain from such a course. Subject to this general principle his line of action may advantageously be left in great measure to his own good judgement. A conciliatory demeanour will of course be indispensable, and perhaps the expenditure of a little money to leading men will be useful. When conciliation fails, punitive measures will not be shrunk from. In some instances a blockade of the passes, so as to exclude the offending tribe or village from our bazaars, may be attended with good results. But in all cases the great point will be to select a penalty suitable to the circumstances of the particular affair. When roads are necessary, they

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

must be constructed in a simple and inexpensive manner, just sufficient for the opening of the country to the extent actually required.<sup>32</sup>

Lieutenant Gregory with a police force of 150 took up position at Samaguting “...and began the work of civilisation.”<sup>33</sup> The country populated by Nagas was described as being located roughly between “...longitude 97° on the east to longitude 93° on the west.”<sup>34</sup> The Naga hills district (NHD), it said,

...forms its western extremity. From the eastern frontier of that district the Naga country stretches along the Sibsaugor border in a narrowing Strip hemmed in to the southward by the Saramethi and Patkoi ranges. At the north-east extremity of Assam it is perhaps thirty miles in depth.<sup>35</sup>

Samaguting was connected with Dimapur by a new road.<sup>36</sup> The move to Samaguting stopped the attacks upon the plains, but not the feuds among the Angamis themselves. Yet for the time being the British strictly adhered to their policy of non-interference.<sup>37</sup>

On 6<sup>th</sup> February 1874 the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the Naga Hills, the Garo Hills, and the district of Cachar were separated from Bengal and turned into a chief commissioner-ship.<sup>38</sup>

### *3.4 Beyond Samaguting*

The renewed move into the heartland of the Angami territory was instigated when in spring 1874 captain Johnstone, then officiating for captain Butler at Samaguting, took two Naga villages under British protection which he saw under an imminent threat of an attack by another Naga group. Although the government was aware of the danger of creating a precedent, it was willing to accept this extension of protection in case it suited the interest of the already administered country.<sup>39</sup> Johnstone, in the same year, took a third village under protection and saw this as the beginning of the voluntary submission of the Nagas. He was very much of the opinion that the Nagas should be taken under British protection to stop the “tribal feuds” and that the Nagas

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> IFP-P, Vol. P/1035, August 1877, Doc. 127, p. 125.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., P. 125.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> “By a proclamation dated the 6<sup>th</sup> February 1874, the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the Naga Hills, the Garo Hills, and the district of Cachar were separated from the administration of the Government of Bengal, and taken under the immediate authority and management of the Governor General in Council. By a notification of the same date they were formed into a Chief Commissionership, Lieutenant-Colonel R. H. Keatinge...being appointed the first Chief Commissioner.” Report on the Administration of Assam for the year 1921-22. Shillong: Government Press, Assam, 1923, p. 40.

themselves would then look to the British “as benefactors.”<sup>40</sup> Contrary to that, the government of Bengal had issued orders in 1872 to leave the Nagas to themselves:

Any attempt to bring the country between the settled districts of British India and Burmah under our direct administration, even in the loosest way that could be contrived under the Act of Parliament, or to govern it as British territory, should be steadily resisted.<sup>41</sup>

By 1873 then, the government had extended the mandate to “political control and influence” but excluded actual rule. This was done in relation to the establishment of the Sibsagar boundary.<sup>42</sup> In March 1875 the chief commissioner (CC) of Assam colonel Keatinge suggested continuing with what he called the “political occupation” in order to stop feuding.<sup>43</sup> Keatinge received permission from the secretary of state to extend the British protectorate over certain Angami Naga villages on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1877.<sup>44</sup> In June the same year the government of India informed the secretary of state for India that it will have to extend its measures vis-à-vis the Naga tribes “...in its own interests, as well as in those of common humanity.” It had decided that the protection of the plains which had by then been achieved, did not suffice any more, and that the repression of feuds among the tribes across the border that involved massacres and bloodshed, also of women and children, would have to be addressed. Moreover, and possibly more important, the rapid extension of tea production in the Sibsagar district made it necessary to exert influence over the Nagas further to the east. Hence, suggestions were made to shift the headquarters into the interior of the Naga hills.<sup>45</sup> In addition to the reasons of local importance relevant for the administration on the ground, we may assume that the secretary of state’s decision to agree with that forward policy was guided by a rationale transcending Assam and the Naga hills. Among them were for instance the possibility of finding a trade route to China, the speculations about petroleum in Upper Burma and the presence of the colonial rival France in neighbouring Indochina, and are reflected in contemporary expedition reports.<sup>46</sup> Additional reasons that would finally contribute to the

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<sup>39</sup> IFP-P, Vol. P/1035, Aug. 1877, Doc. 127, p. 126-127.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., ordered by the Govt. of Bengal in 1872 when the extension of Act 33 Vic., Cap. 3, to Assam was under discussion.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., the villages were in the then spelling: “Meziphemah, Sitikemah, Pherimah, Tesephimah, Jalukemah, Phuimah, Intu, Zowna, Nidzuma, Henima, Thesima, Injas or Injaoma, and Insang.”

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., Doc. 109, Govt. of India to Secretary of State of India, dt. Simla, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1877, pp. 129-130. S. K. Barpujari argues that since the 1860s numerous European settler-planters had moved into the hills and mixed with the tribals. It was this encroachment that forced the British to a forward policy. The successive extension of tea cultivation and the annexation of Upper Burma helped to receive the approval for a further push deeper into the hills by 1886, see S. K. Barpujari, ‘Paramountcy in the Hills, 1874-1914’, In H. K. Barpujari, *The Comprehensive History of Assam Volume IV.: Modern Period: Yandabo to Diarchy, 1826-1919 A. D.* (Guwahati, 1992), pp. 220-257.

<sup>46</sup> See for example the following contemporaneous reports, demonstrating a decided interest in the region: Captain Henry Yule, ‘On the Geography of Burma and its Tributary States, in illustration of a New Map of those Regions’,

decision to annex Upper Burma were the presence of private British agents that had already ahead of the state penetrated into Upper Burma, stressing the importance of the forest products of the northern hill regions. Further contributing were reports of the Rangoon chamber of commerce on an increase of British teak exports from this region, and finally the argument brought forward by the London chamber of commerce that the complete annexation of Burma would be the best remedy against the recession of that time.<sup>47</sup>

Reports between November 1876 and August 1877 convey a picture of an escalation of raids by men from the Angami villages Khonoma, Jotsoma, Kohima, Vizwema, Kezama and Pheseama, sometimes with a high number of casualties (that again, we have to bear in mind, might have been exaggerated), possibly enabled by the use of firearms, especially by the Merhema clan of Khonoma, and maybe encouraged by the threatening presence of the British as rivals. The plan of Khonoma and Mozema to attack Samaguting, the then stronghold of the British, would be an indication for that.<sup>48</sup> We know that on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1877 the secretary of state for India ordered the government of India to take steps, as quickly as possible, to prevent such “outrages” in the future, i.e. London now wanted something to be done,<sup>49</sup> and on August, 23<sup>rd</sup> the India office authorised the administrative changes to shift the headquarters into the interior of the Naga hills:

...to prevent and put an end to the anarchy and bloodshed which prevail among the Naga tribes. (...)...in the opinion of the Majesty's Government, an attitude of indifference to the internal feuds amongst the Nagas, which result in wholesale massacres of women and children, could no longer be maintained without discredit to the British Government. The facts now reported show that both in the interests of our own subjects and for the sake of the Nagas themselves, a more active policy than as hitherto been pursued should be adopted towards the tribes inhabiting the hills on the south-east borders of Assam.<sup>50</sup>

This change of policy marked the end of a series of weak viceroys that entertained a spectrum of foreign policy that had moved from passive non-interference to one of active alliance-building. With the return of the Conservatives to power in Britain, and Disraeli as prime minister and

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*Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol. 27, London, 1857, pp. 54-108; General Sir Arthur Cotton, 'On a Communication between India and China by the Line of the Burhampooter and Yang-tse', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol. 37, London, 1867, pp. 231-239. J. Coryton, 'Trade Routes between British Burmah and Western China' *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol. 45, London, 1875, pp. 229-249; According to Alastair Lamb, *Asian Frontiers* (London, 1968), it was the French challenge in Burma that contributed to the decision to annex Upper Burma in 1886 (p. 57), and his injection, if China had been a great power in the nineteenth century, then Assam today would be part of a buffer zone (p. 65).

<sup>47</sup> Eric Tagliacozzo, 'Ambiguous Commodities, Unstable Frontiers: The Case of Burma, Siam, and Imperial Britain, 1800-1900', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 46, No. 2, April 2004, pp. 354-377.

<sup>48</sup> IFP-P, Vol. P/1035, April – August 1877, Docs. 133-177, dt. between 1<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1876 & 13<sup>th</sup> August 1877, pp. 135-154.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., Doc. 160, Secy of State India to Govt. of India, dt. India Office, London, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1877.

<sup>50</sup> IFP-P, Vol. P/1036, Oct. 1877, Doc. 468, Secy of State India to Govt. of India, dt. India Office, London, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1877, p. 364.

Salisbury as secretary of state for India, this changed, and “...was the beginning of the new Conservative imperialism, motivated by a determination to make Britain a great power in Asia.”<sup>51</sup> Lytton, who became viceroy in 1876 was briefed to entertain a forward policy, expressed in regard to Afghanistan, but his desire for conquest was also directed to Upper Burma and together with the general inclination to expansion might well have influenced the policy towards the Naga hills.

The move into the Naga hills in winter 1877-78 was heavily resisted by the Angamis,<sup>52</sup> followed by the cessation of hostilities in February 1878. However, the Angamis did just stop fighting for the moment, and the British on their side also halted their attacks, in their words, to avoid further destruction, suffering and antagonising.<sup>53</sup>

By March the shift of the headquarters to the site of Kohima into the middle of the Angami Naga hills was decided on.<sup>54</sup> Half a year later, in November, the assistant secretary to the CC of Assam notified the foreign secretary in Lahore by telegram that Kohima had been occupied without opposition on November 14<sup>th</sup>.<sup>55</sup> Shortly after, by 5<sup>th</sup> December 1878 the secretary of state agreed to the gradual extension of British power over the Nagas:

...such extension, although involving a considerable increase of responsibility without much probability of proportionate fiscal advantage, as practically unavoidable. The continuance in immediate proximity to settled British districts of a system of internecine warfare, conducted principally against women and children, cannot be tolerated...<sup>56</sup>

By April 1879 the CC of Assam notified that the headquarters of the NHD had been transferred from Samaguting to Kohima on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1879.<sup>57</sup> In August 1879 Ridsdale reported to the government that, after having established themselves at Kohima, the Nagas still could hardly believe that the British would want to stay.<sup>58</sup> In October of the same year the political officer

<sup>51</sup> S. Gopal, *British Policy in India, 1858-1905* (Cambridge, 1965), this quote p. 74; the paragraph is based on chapter 1 and 2, pp. 1-128. Yet the conclusions drawn in respect to the Naga Hills are completely mine, Gopal doesn't even mention them once, a good indicator for their complete marginality to British policy.

<sup>52</sup> IFP-P, Vol. P/1216, Jan.-Feb. 1878, Feb. 1878, Docs. 11, 32, 35 and 42.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, Docs. 74-76, dt. between 21<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1878 and 8<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1878, pp. 47-48.

<sup>54</sup> IFP-P, Vol. P/1219, Doc. 29, T. C. Plowden, Offg. Under-Secy. Govt. India, FD, to CC Assam, dt. Simla, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1878, p. 44.

<sup>55</sup> IFP-P, Vol. P/1551, Doc. 504, Telegram, Assistant Secy., Shillong, to Foreign Secy., Lahore, dt. 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. 1878, p. 407.

<sup>56</sup> IFP-P, Vol. P/1391, Dec. 1879, Doc. 533, Secretary of State for India, to Govt. of India, dt. India Office, London, 5<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1878, p. 572.

<sup>57</sup> IFP-P, Vol. P/1551, Jan. 1880, Doc. 497, 'Notification - By Chief Commissioner of Assam.', dt. 14<sup>th</sup> April 1879, p. 392.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 507, Ridsdale to Secy. Govt. India, FD, dt. Shillong 19<sup>th</sup> August 1879, pp. 415-419, p. 417.



Damant and some of his men were killed by men from Khonoma.<sup>59</sup> This marked the starting point to the collective uprising of the Angamis, answered by the British with massive military operations,<sup>60</sup> that lasted until the end of March 1880, and ended with the submission of the Angamis.<sup>61</sup> By August 1880 London gave its permission to the extension of the NHD so as to include the Lhota and Angami Nagas.<sup>62</sup>

The return closer to the Naga hills, the establishment of the NHD, and above all the decision by the Indian government to take action against the Nagas culminated in the last stand of the Angamis, their final defeat and subjugation. British interests were the invested capital in Assam, the possibility for trade routes to China, the proximity of the colonial rival France, and, last but not least, the general move to the supremacy of Asia, arguments not brought forward in the communications and not the reasons the local officers took as guidance for their action. While for these local officers the state and prospect of this area, and thus their careers, was of primary importance, this was not the case for the authorities in the administrative centres – the decision makers in the Indian government and in the India office. Therefore we may safely state that the Nagas were not finally defeated and occupied for their own sake. According to the chronicler of the Northeast, Alexander Mackenzie, with the takeover of Assam, the British had come into contact with the hill people, and had to decide on their policy vis-à-vis them:

...we found the Assam Valley surrounded north, east, and south by numerous savage and warlike tribes whom the decaying authority of the Assam dynasty had failed of late years to control, and whom the disturbed condition of the province had incited to encroachment. Many of them advanced claims to rights more or less definite over lands lying in the plains; others claimed tributary payments from the villages below their hills (...). It mattered of course little to us whether these claims had their basis in primeval rights from which the Shan invaders had partially ousted the hill men, or whether they were merely the definite expression of a barbarian cupidity. Certain it was that such claims existed, and that they had been, to some extent and in some places, formally recognised by our predecessors. (...) When we did arrive in any case at a definite understanding as to the rights of any tribe, we were ready, as a rule, to treat them fairly and liberally; (...). But we are met to this day by difficulties arising from the indefinite nature of the connection subsisting between the Assam sovereigns and their savage neighbours.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., February 1880, Doc. 249, Telegram, CC Assam, Darjeeling, to Foreign Secy., Simla, dt. 18<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1879, 19h.39m: recd. 19<sup>th</sup>, 11-30 A.M., p. 223 & Doc. 253, Telegram, Viceroy, Simla, to Secy. of State, London, dt. 21<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1879, p. 223.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., Docs. 250 – 260 Docs. 275 – 335; *ibid.*, March 1880, Docs. 575-582.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., April 1880, Doc. 220, Telegram, CC Assam to Foreign, Calcutta, dt. Dibrugarh, 29<sup>th</sup> March 1880, 6h25m, Recd. 11-45 A.M., p. 249.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., Doc. 616, India Office London, dt. 26<sup>th</sup> August 1880, p. 585.

<sup>63</sup> Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1884), p. 6-7.

According to Mackenzie the British decided out of financial reasons on a policy of non-interference towards the hill people.<sup>64</sup> Yet, contrary to what Mackenzie had written, and in his following most of the other authors that had worked on the Nagas, the British did never care about leaving the Nagas to their independence as we have already seen at length during Chapter One. This was never a point of interest to them. They conquered them the way and to the extent that suited and came cheapest to them. The Nagas lost their self-determination to an imperial and economic enterprise, covered up as a civilising mission, without even being a desired object of this enterprise themselves. Their freedom and well-being have been, as will have to be shown later, and still are, a kind of collateral damage.

### *3.5 Penetration and Consolidation*

In early 1881 the British contemplated the measures to be taken to install their rule in the Naga hills.<sup>65</sup> First, the boundaries of the district and its sub-divisions were to be fixed, to delineate the geographic extent of the measures to be taken.<sup>66</sup> The next step was the assessment of revenue to finance or at least levy a contribution to the financing of the administration. Revenue was fixed at two rupees per house per year, and to be paid in two instalments. In March 1881 more than a hundred Naga villages had already paid house-tax.<sup>67</sup> The British still had to rely on the village elders for information on the number of houses in each village, but projected to change this and to check these themselves.<sup>68</sup> This was to turn into one of the major tasks for the district officials during their incessant touring through the district. Related to this was the creation and keeping of revenue registers.<sup>69</sup> The revenue register therefore seemed to have been the mother of all files, the documentation that followed right on the geo-, topographical and meteorological data that had been necessary for the conquest.<sup>70</sup> The point that followed was directly connected with the collection of revenue: the creation of a new authority – the elected or appointed headmen – who were to be responsible for the collection of revenue and who were to receive a commission for that service. This is more interesting since the British here aimed to transform the society of the Angamis from a radical democratic into a hierarchical one:

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> IFP-P, Jan. 1882, Doc. 135, Memorandum on the Administration of the Naga Hills District. By C. A. Elliott, CC of Assam, dt. March 31<sup>st</sup> 1881, pp. 141-147.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> The stored intelligence regarding the natural conditions of the Naga hills as well as the till then collected knowledge on the distribution of the populations and their political organisation, including here also the social and political geography.

...the appointment of elected headmen, who might...become the nucleus of some sort of village organization, and gradually grow to be possessors of power and authority over the young men of the village. Such a change, from the democratic and independent habits which the people now practice into one of subordination to a council of elders under a village headman, must necessarily be slow, but, if it can be effected, it will be a great help to good government.<sup>71</sup>

“Good government” obviously was the one that was the cheapest to the British and structures of hierarchy allowed them the form of indirect rule involving the least of their own resources. “Good government” to the British then meant a clear power structure and chain of command and the subsequent involved responsibilities.<sup>72</sup> Further, Elliott suggested to register all adult males, who were each to work for the British for 15 days a year.<sup>73</sup> In addition to that he proposed the establishment of a small staff of permanent coolies to be flexible in regard to transport.<sup>74</sup> After revenue, power-structure, labour supply and transport were addressed, Elliott went on to argue for the disarmament of the Nagas:

In order to change the Nágas from a warlike and marauding to a peaceful race, it is essential that the habit of carrying arms around should be stopped, and that everything should be discouraged which has a martial tendency, or leads the people to believe that they can successfully resist our arms. (...) Thus in a few years the habit of handling arms, and the proficiency in their use acquired by warlike exercises, will have passed away.<sup>75</sup>

The material fact of being not used to carrying arms anymore was seen not only to have the impact of being simply physically unable to defend or attack, besides having lost the ability of handling arms, but moreover creating a shift in mentality from martial to peaceful. This is the more astonishing as we here find the colonialists engaged in the conscious demartialisation of the Nagas, although the British were and still are blamed by post-1947 Indian media and political and anthropological writings as well, for being responsible, for what they see as the Nagas having become a martial race. However, this is to be discussed at a later stage. Here it is to be added that behind Elliott’s thinking was the theoretical line drawn from the material to the mind. The biggest obstacle on the way to this achievement was seen by Elliott in the formidable defences of the villages:

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> At the moment of writing this – end of February 2003 – the US has openly stated that the military conquest of Iraq would be the opportunity for the democratisation of the whole of the Middle East and that history from now on will be written by the US and its allies. This for one makes it clear that legitimate interests are or can be defined by power, and the range of it. It makes one wonder if the introduction of authoritarian power structures by the British in the Naga hills and the aspired democratisation of the Middle East by the US are not related phenomena.

<sup>73</sup> IFP-P, Vol. P/1916, Jan. 1882, Doc. 135, Memorandum on the Administration of the Naga Hills District. By C. A. Elliott, CC of Assam, dt. March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1881, p. 142.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

This practice must be altogether put to a stop. (...)...the villages should be made as open and accessible to attack as the natural difficulties of their sites permit. (...)...it is no longer necessary that they should take upon themselves the burden of private defence.<sup>76</sup>

To relieve the Nagas of the burden of private defence was surely not asked for in a perfectly altruistic state of mind, but to remove together with the village defences the will of the Nagas to defend themselves, above all against their new masters. The fall of the material fences should be followed by the fall of the defences in their mind. This proposition was to change the structure of the settlements of the Nagas; from closed concentration to opening up to the outside and finally dispersion and dissolution into the surroundings – a metaphor for forced assimilation. The way the Naga landscape was now re-designed reflected their loss of self-reliance and sovereignty. Once the defences of the villages were destroyed, thought Elliott, one could think of issuing gun licenses, around 2-3 per village, or permit the carriage of spears for the defence against wild animals. At the same time the *sepoys* were to be encouraged to kill all the wild animals.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, the use of the dispensary in Kohima should be encouraged to convince the Nagas via the healing of their ulcers, prevalent among them, about the good intentions of the British. The same was to be done regarding vaccinations, and here especially against the by then rampant small-pox:

...it has often been found that wild and savage races recognise these benefits, and are led, by the receipt of medical treatment, to acknowledge with gratitude the benevolence of our motives.<sup>78</sup>

After he had stressed the importance of medical work, he emphasised the “civilising and pacifying influence” of schools. He lamented the ignorance of Naga languages among the British officers and urged teaching the Nagas Assamese and Bengali.<sup>79</sup> The local officers were also to be encouraged to learn the local Naga languages and rewarded for achieving proficiency in them as for the preparation of Naga grammar and vocabulary books. In addition to that, especially the younger officers were to conduct an ethnography of the Nagas, since this was for one interesting in itself, furthermore important from a conservative point of view, and finally showed the rulers

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp. 143-144.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., pp. 144-145.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 145, on this occasion he referred to the presence of a missionary of the American Baptist Society in Kohima, who obviously had not yet acquainted himself with the Angami language but Elliot was sure he would soon do so and was prepared to support him in the way it was sanctioned by the government.

interest in the matters of the ruled.<sup>80</sup> Another point of interest was the preservation of forest, and related to that the restriction of slash and burn cultivation, or *jharung*, and the encouragement of permanent, that is to say, terraced and irrigated cultivation.<sup>81</sup> Finally, the CC of Assam highlighted the paramount importance of direct and personal intercourse between ruler and ruled that had to be achieved through the incessant touring of the district officers and their assistants. Elliott fell into raptures when describing the fruits of the direct intercourse between a British officer and the natives via these tours:

The brightest chapters of the history of our rule in India are those which record the civilizing influences exercised over Bháils, Santhals, and other tribes as wild and as difficult to manage as the Nágas, by officers who have distinguished themselves by their justice, their sympathy, and their kindly interest in the people under them. Such sympathies and interests can best only be cultivated on tour, and I should wish that the Political Officer may be able to say at the close of each year that he or one of his Assistants has visited every village in his jurisdiction, entered into communication with the villagers, and inquired into their revenue assessment, their supply of contributed labour, their cultivation and forest clearance, their troubles from wild animals or diseases, and any other subject of local interest or importance which may come up.<sup>82</sup>

Elliott's scheme for the administration of the Naga hills received the approval from the government.<sup>83</sup> The boundaries of the NHD now included:

...the Angamis, the Lhotas in the neighbourhood of Wokha, and a small portion of the Semas dwelling to the west of the Doyong, with the Rengma Nága lying between them and the Angami country...<sup>84</sup>

This excluded the people then known by the British as Ao Nagas, then still called Hatigorias, the Eastern Angamis and the greater part of the Semas. The eastern boundary was roughly constituted by the Doyang river, the northern by the Inner Line of the Sibsagar, the western by the Nowgong district, and the southern boundary by the North Cachar district.<sup>85</sup>

In August 1884, three and half years after Elliott's memorandum, in *The Administration Report on the Nága Hills District for the year 1883-1884* the officiating secretary to the CC of Assam,

<sup>80</sup> "...to carry out a systematic record of the institutions which have hitherto existed among the Nágas, - the village constitutions, the origin of clans, the laws of marriage, inheritance, and private rights in land and water, the superstitions, legends, religious belief, historical traditions, folk-lore, and the like." Ibid., pp. 146-147.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., pp. 145-146.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., Doc. 136, dt. Simla, 11<sup>th</sup> June 1881, p. 149, from Secy. Govt. India, Foreign Department (FD), to CC Assam. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October London got informed about the final selection of Kohima as the central military station for the Naga hills. Ibid., Doc. 137, dt. Simla, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1881, from Govt. India, to Secy of State for India, London, p. 150.

<sup>84</sup> IFP-P, Vol. P/1917, Feb.-Apr. 1882, April 1882, Doc. 207, from C. J. Lyall, Offg. Secy. CC Assam to C. Grant, Secy Govt. India, FD, p. 175.

Stack, complained about the high wages in the NHD, and that they were hindering progress, and about the intention of the administration to reduce them step by step, however, without yet knowing how this was to be achieved.<sup>86</sup>

Documented was also an increase in wealth in the Naga hills, showing itself for the British in the increase in the consumption of salt and cattle.<sup>87</sup> McCabe, the DC of the district, had been 135 days of the year on tour in order to acquaint the Nagas with him and vice versa and reported that on the one hand the villagers on the Manipur side had asked to be taken under British authority, while on the other hand the Semas threatened to cut him up, if he dared to visit them. Hence, the Semas were considered by McCabe as “...the most uncouth and uncivilised tribe on my frontier... ”<sup>88</sup>

Though he had not yet established his stand among the Semas, he had done so among the Hatigorias,<sup>89</sup> among whom he had carried out a military strike on the village of Ratami to show his power and to convey to them his sense of justice:

...the conviction that our power to avenge insult could not be questioned, or the justice of our dealings doubted. A great increase to the prestige of the British name was caused by the expedition against the Hatigoria village of Ratami, some men of which had murdered two Lhota boys in order to carry off their heads as trophies. Mr. McCabe’s party, consisting of sepoy of the 44<sup>th</sup> Regiment under a British officer and Frontier Police, crossed the Doyong in full flood by a cane bridge 220 feet in length and scattered the Ratami Nagas, 500 or 600 in number, who opposed their advance with much boldness, though armed only with bows and spears. It was unfortunately impossible to seize the real offenders, and it was necessary to burn and destroy the village, the whole of which had sided with them.<sup>90</sup>

Ratami was also punished as a warning to others on that side of the river. Otherwise house-tax was paid by 164 villages of the five tribes of the Angami, Kacha, Sema, Lhota and Rengma Nagas, totalling 17,933 houses. Yet the revenue did not even cover a quarter of the expenses of the administration. Tax moral had improved since in cases of delays the British withheld the commission that the appointed or elected headman received for collecting the tax. Houses, claimed by the Nagas to be uninhabited, and therefore not subject to house-tax, were pulled down by the British.<sup>91</sup> Excise was mainly on opium, *garja*, country-spirits and imported wines. Large bodies of coolies, working in transport or in roadwork, contributed heavily to the

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., pp. 175-177.

<sup>86</sup> *Proceedings of the Chief Commissioner of Assam (PCCA)*, Vol. P/2183, Judicial Department, Doc. 7, dt. Shillong, 9<sup>th</sup> August 1884, pp. 11-17, p. 11.

<sup>87</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/2183, Doc. 7, p. 12.

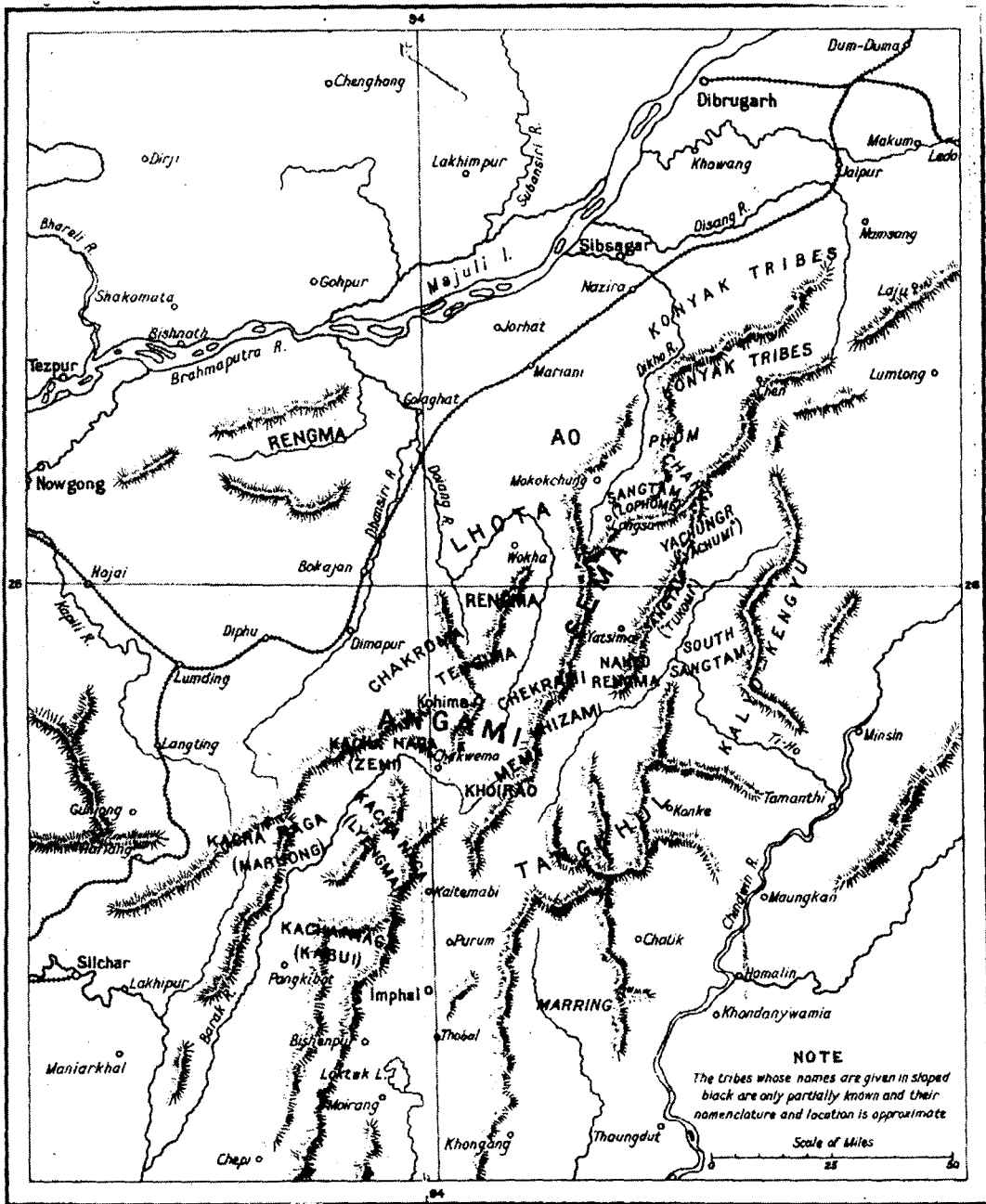
<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> This is the Assamese name for the tribe that called itself “Aos”, and would soon be called such by the British.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., pp. 12-13.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

consumption of country-spirits. Further sources of revenue were the selling of stamps, licences to capture elephants and fishery rights.<sup>92</sup> A mission school had been opened at Kohima, teaching Assamese and English, in order to train copyists or clerks for the administration.<sup>93</sup> For regular police work the British had enlisted a small body of detectives from among the Angamis, Semas and Kukis, since the normal police force were, despite promised rewards, not competent in any Naga languages.<sup>94</sup>



<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

Together with the administration the British also had started to build-up the infrastructure, the houses for the officers in Kohima, a fort, *cutchery*, treasury and jail were in the progress of being built. The water-supply had been established, the filter-bed was projected. Several rivers had been bridged, roads, bridle- and foot-paths were either in the progress of being built or planned. Immigration from Assam and Nepal was encouraged, since local labour was hard to come by and forced labour difficult to get, but still used as means for transport. A postal line was established between Dimapur, Kohima, and Wokha. Medical help was increasingly being accepted by the Nagas, an Assamese doctor in Kohima and a young Naga had been trained as vaccinators. Stress was still laid on the acquirement and textualisation of Naga languages.<sup>95</sup>

### *3.6 Policy Towards Trans-Frontier Tribes*

The newly established NHD, still in the process of being realised, was a frontier district of the British empire. Although the British had tentatively laid down boundaries, in reality they were frontiers, unmarked, zones rather than lines. Local people used to cross them without being aware of them. The problem the British faced there was how to deal with the Nagas living beyond the line they the British themselves had marked on their maps as boundaries. In June 1884 the DC of the NHD requested advise and guidance from the CC of Assam on the policy to be pursued vis-à-vis these trans-frontier Nagas. Up to that point the DC had punished those raids conducted among those Nagas residing inside the British district, then those carried out by those living under British jurisdiction on those living outside and, finally, raids by trans-frontier groups on villages under British jurisdiction, leaving aside only those among the trans-frontier people themselves. The DC also tried to serve as mediator in the area adjacent to its district. This territory contiguous with the district boundaries was called by the British to be under “political control”, yet ill-defined in territorial extension and depth as well as in what kind of influence and authority should be exercised there. The DC thus advocated the slow but decisive extension of British control over the whole of the Nagas, since he was of the opinion that nothing else would work with the Nagas than direct subjugation.<sup>96</sup> The report of the DC suggested an increase in violent raids. So it is that the secretary to the CC of Assam wrote about a considerable increase in incidents when referring this question to the government.<sup>97</sup> This notwithstanding the government this time did not agree on any change of policy since it feared it would result in an extension of the administrated area. The territory concerned was the hill area bordering on the districts of

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>96</sup> PCCA in the Foreign Department (FD), Vol. P/2429, November 1885, Doc. 14, from Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Naga Hills (NH) to the Secretary (Secy) to the Chief Commissioner (CC) of Assam, dated (dt.) Kohima, 10<sup>th</sup> June 1884, pp. 16-17.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., Doc. 16, from Secy CC Assam to Secy. Government (Govt.) of India, FD, dt. Shillong, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1884, p. 19.



Lakhimpur, Sibsagar and Naga hills. The extent of the area under political control was left to the decision of the CC Assam but there was not to be a change in policy:

...interference with inter-tribal quarrels should, as a rule, be limited to those cases where they involve-

- (1) Outrages on British subjects.
- (2) Violation of the Inner Line.
- (3) Danger to the interests of people inside the British borders by reason of the proximity of disturbances outside, such disturbances, for instance, as would be likely to intimidate coolies employed upon tea-estates or cultivators.<sup>98</sup>

The government was thus for the moment averse to any extension of the administered area, but left it to the CC of Assam which area he thought expedient to be taken under political control. The CC therefore decided on an extension east of the country of the Lhotas. This affected all the villages of the Angamis and all of the Hatigorias. The CC used for the first time the term "Ao" instead of "Hatigoria", the name they carry until this day. The political control over all the Angami villages and the Ao villages lying west of the Nanga – the headstream of the Dikhu – was to be exercised by the NHD and the DC McCabe was ordered on an expedition to bring the fact that they were now under political control home to these communities. East of the Nanga the political control over the Ao villages was to be exerted by Sibsagar and DC colonel Clarke was to convey that message to them.<sup>99</sup> Accordingly McCabe toured the area termed by the British as the Eastern Angamis. The villages there offered to pay house-tax, since they wanted to be safe from raids and looting conducted by Manipur.<sup>100</sup> On the whole McCabe saw the impact that his presence had even on the unadministered areas as positive, feuding scarcely happened anymore, and he threatened every village with summary punishment, if it took place.<sup>101</sup>

Colonel W. S. Clarke, the DC of Sibsagar, toured the Ao area east of the Nanga in early 1885, to inform the Nagas there of their new status. The new area then included under political control contained three Lhota villages, those Semas living close to Manipur and the area west of the Dikhu inhabited by the Aos.<sup>102</sup>

McCabe toured his part of the Ao area "To bring home to the Ao tribe the fact that it is politically subordinate to the British Government."<sup>103</sup> He destroyed the village drum of Ungma to

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., Doc. 15, from Secy. Govt. India, FD, to CC Assam, dt. Simla, 20<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1884, pp. 17-18.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., Doc. 17, from Secy. CC Assam to DCNH, dt. Shillong, 21<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1884, pp. 25-26.

<sup>100</sup> McCabe then forced the Nagas of villages who were unwilling to serve as coolies to do so. Ibid., Doc. 20, from R. B. McCabe DCNH to Secy. CC Assam, dt. Kohima, 11<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1885, pp. 28-30.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., Doc. 23, from Colonel W. S. Clarke, DC Sibsagar to Secy. CC Assam, dt. Sibsagar, 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 1885, pp. 37-42, p. 37.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., Doc. 24, McCabe DCNH to Secy. CC Assam, dt. Kohima, 16<sup>th</sup> March 1885, p. 43.

force the people there to serve him as coolies.<sup>104</sup> McCabe was advised on his tour by the missionary Clarke on “...this semi-barbarous race.”<sup>105</sup> McCabe investigated the reasons for feuds, and fined villages he found guilty.<sup>106</sup> In order to exercise political control McCabe was in favour of establishing a military post rather than carrying out annual promenades, since:

“...the punishment inflicted would follow at such a lapse of time after the commission of the offence that the motives of our actions might be misconstrued, and the inhabitants would simply regard us as a superior class of looters and murderers to themselves.”<sup>107</sup>

Hence he suggested a post at Ungma staffed with a 100 men, in his opinion enough to control the country between the rivers Doyang and Dikhu and the plains. Communication with Wokha was to be maintained by a road that was to lead via Nankam, the river Doyang was to be crossed by a suspension bridge.<sup>108</sup> McCabe’s tour financed itself through the fines taken from the Ao villages.<sup>109</sup>

In October 1885 the CC of Assam suggested that the whole territory then brought newly under political control should be put under the DC NHD, and not conjointly under Sibsagar, on grounds of greater accessibility from Kohima, the bigger force stationed there, the acquaintance of the Nagas with the DC NHD and his acquaintance with them.<sup>110</sup>

By 1884-85 the NHD contained 60 villages of Angami Nagas, 27 Kacha Nagas, 7 Semas, 54 Lhotas, 8 Rengmas, 8 named Miscellaneous, and 8 Kukis, in total 172 villages with 18,783 houses. House-tax and land revenue amounted to 30, 283 *rupees*, double the amount compared with 1881-82, and were brought by the headmen of the villages to the sub-divisional officer (SDO), who encamped at different central points. Excise was taken mainly from opium, alcohol and *ganja*. Education had not yet made substantial progress. Then, in order to renew and foster their authority the British assaulted five villages.<sup>111</sup>

On 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1886 the government approved of the extension of the area under political control made by the CC of Assam in the previous year, and that the so defined territory should be put under the DC of the NHD, but it cautioned not to hasten the result of amalgamation that this extension would probably have as a result. The government therefore was

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., Doc. 26, dt. Shillong, 8<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1885, Offg. Secy. CC Assam to Secy. Govt. India, FD.

<sup>111</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/2429, FD, Resolution on the General Administration Report of the Naga Hills district for 1884-85, dt. Shillong, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1885, pp. 5-11.

sure that the extension of political control meant the incorporation of that area into the administration in the not too distant future.<sup>112</sup>

Feuding among Ao villages in the vicinity of the borders of the NHD, around the middle of 1886, gave the British the pretext to intervene. The refusal to comply with British orders on the side of the Aos brought the officers on the ground to ask for a permanent military post amongst their midst, yet which for the time being was rejected by the government. Political control was to be exercised by arbitration.<sup>113</sup> Despite the build-up of the administration and the efforts made to enforce the monopoly of violence, from a military point of view, that is to say in regard of the distribution of troops and their strength, the British did not trust the Nagas yet and considered not only the unadministered part of the Naga hills, but also the NHD itself still as enemy territory.<sup>114</sup>

In February 1887 the DC NHD reported to the CC of Assam an appeal for help by the Eastern Angamis against a group called Mezamis, which were conducting raids on them. The Mezamis inhabited five to six villages, which contained in total approximately 500 houses, just outside the area of political control to the north-east of Kohima and were under the leadership of a man named Sakhai. The DC further wrote that the Mezamis were unable to understand the distinction between villages under British control and protection and those outside. He asked for permission to carry out a punishment expedition against them.<sup>115</sup> This punishment expedition against the Sema villages of the Mezamis was taken as opportunity by the officiating DC NHD Porteous, to undertake his annual tour through Sema territory, considered to be under political control. Porteous wrote about 20-50 casualties as a consequence of the raids conducted by the Semas. The British, although obviously having defined the Sema country, had difficulties in identifying the villages, due to their apparently confusing names. Hence, besides punishment of the perceived culprits of the raids, reconnaissance was the other objective of the tour, called “promenade” by the British and to make them understand that from now on, the British would not allow them to take the law into their own hands anymore.<sup>116</sup> However, punitive expeditions and promenades were often one and the same. After Porteous had entered the Sema village of Letsomi against the will of its inhabitants, he wrote: “...I explained to them the future policy of

<sup>112</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/2429, FD, Doc. No. 246-E, from Secy. Govt. India to the Offg. CC of Assam, dt. Fort William, 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb. 1886. In the following Doc. No. 494, dt. Shillong, 9<sup>th</sup> March 1886, the Secy. CC Assam communicated the orders of the Govt. to the DC NHD with a new, more flexible interpretation of what political control meant, yet, without substantial change simply acknowledging that the realities on the spot were to complex as to be carried out alongside perfectly fixed rules without scope for interpretation and modification.

<sup>113</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/2657, Docs. No. 1,430 and 1,590, dt. 12<sup>th</sup> June 1886 and 6<sup>th</sup> August 1886.

<sup>114</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/2880, Military Department, Shillong, Feb. 1887, Doc. 1, Memorandum on the distribution of Troops and Transport, Eastern Frontier Districts, by J. J. Gordon, Brigadier – General, Eastern Frontier District, dt. Shillong, 12<sup>th</sup> August 1886, pp. 1-3.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., Shillong Oct. 1887, FD, Doc. 7, from Offg. DC NHD, to Secy. CC A, dt. Kohima, 21<sup>st</sup> Feb. 1887.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., FD, Oct. 1887, Doc. 4, Punitive Expedition against Mezami Nagas and promenade through Sema Country, dt. Kohima, 11<sup>th</sup> June 1887, from A. Porteous, Offg. DC NHD to Secy. CC A, pp. 3-11.

Government in the matter of inter-village feuds... . To show them I was in earnest, I destroyed their trophies of skulls.”<sup>117</sup> Porteous encountered hostility everywhere he went. On his approach the villagers were evacuated (women, children, old people, property), then the male villagers told the British that they were not allowed to enter the village and when they did so, retreated with threats and the throwing of stones.<sup>118</sup> The reception changed when Porteous came to the large Ao village of Nunkum, bordering Sema country: “The people possess a much higher civilisation than their Sema neighbours, and live apparently save from attack, their village being almost quite unfortified.”<sup>119</sup> He reported that he had been well received and without fear by this village and that the Aos were differentiated by the way they disposed of their dead, not burying them, but lining them up. Notwithstanding his friendly reception Porteous also here burned all the skulls-cum-trophies he could lay his hand on in front of the *gaonburra*.<sup>120</sup> From Nunkum he went to Pangti, a formerly hostile Lhota village: “Pángti is a large Lhota village. It was here that captain Butler was killed. The people are now as submissive as our own Lhota villagers, and coolies and supplies are readily furnished.”<sup>121</sup> The supply of coolies and rations were expected to be delivered or enforced at gunpoint. As a result of his promenade Porteous counted the pacification of the Mezamis, the adding of knowledge on the Semas, and the building up of influence among them. He cautioned expectations regarding the stop of feuding in stating that experience has shown that only permanent military posts could stop that completely, but nevertheless he hoped to have made an impact in this respect. Finally, he stated that promenades were costly, and this one did cost 700 *npees*, but that the realised fines, the sale of the cattle taken instead of money, summed up to Rs. 844.-, achieving a surplus of 144 *npees*.<sup>122</sup> Porteous afterwards got scolded by Lyall, the secretary to the CC of Assam, for not having produced a tour map with the printed names of the visited places.<sup>123</sup>

McCabe, after having returned to his position as DC NHD, set out on a promenade through Ao Naga country in March 1888, the first after the lapse of three years. He went from Kohima to Wokha, to Yekum, Sanigaon, Lakhuti and Mekula, all Lhota villages, before arriving at the first Ao village Changki/Borodubia (first, Naga name, second, Assamese name for the village), then via Colemsen/Mukhigaon (ditto) to the small village Munching and then to Waromung, where he met the missionary Clarke, and where Ao delegations were awaiting his arrival to present him cases of murder and raids that had happened during these three years. In

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., e.g.: p. 9.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., Judicial Department, Doc. 5, from C. J. Lyall, Secy. CC Assam, to the DC NHD, dt. Shillong, 29<sup>th</sup> July 1887, p. 22. This shows that not only we today become confused by the random transcription.

total there were ten murder cases, involving six villages, three of them trans-Dikhu ones, and therefore located outside the area of political control. McCabe found out that some strong villages took tribute from others, or not, in which case they preferred to take heads from them. The village of Kongan refused to give up those involved in killings and told McCabe to burn their village, if he so wished, 250 houses, and that is what he did and then also burned Tamlu for the same reason. He was attacked at Yajim and burned that village too, together with Chihu, containing 500 houses and proceeded to Noksen and Letum and burned them as well. Besides, McCabe reported about the establishment of a new Christian village – Asongma – converts were to establish their own villages, either because they were forced to, or they wanted that themselves. McCabe enclosed a list of all Ao villages inside the area of political control, being 43, containing 8,485 houses, leaving only one Ao village outside political control. McCabe made the case that since his last promenade in 1885 only three murders had been committed by those villages and that inter-village warfare had practically ceased, so he argued in favour of an incorporation of the Aos into the NHD in order to bring them “...into as civilized and amenable a state as that of the Lhotas and Angámis...”<sup>124</sup>

The then secretary to the CC of Assam C. J. Lyall, in his accompanying writing to McCabe’s report to the government, justified the burning of the villages as partially regrettable and partially as the only possible choice, since he was of the opinion, that: “You can get no good out of these wild people unless you begin with making them thoroughly fear you.” The suggestion to include the Aos into the NHD, so we can deduce from Lyall’s writing, would be a well-advised one, in case they were willing to pay revenue. This, so Lyall, was to be investigated for the Aos as well as for Eastern Angamis and Khezamis.<sup>125</sup> The assistant commissioner Naga hills A. W. Davis had toured among the latter in April 1888, and reported that during the last 20 years there had been only single incidents of head-taking, but no big raids, hence, that they were pacified, followed orders, of which he gave us an example: “13<sup>th</sup> – Losemi to Lozaphehmi 5 ½ miles. (...) As not a single coolie had turned up by 6.30 a.m., I had one pig shot. The result was excellent, as in ten minutes from the time we were off.”<sup>126</sup> Since they not only gave into forced labour when blackmailed, but were also willing to pay revenue, Davis suggested their incorporation into the NHD, hence Lyall’s statement above.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>124</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/3166, FD, June 1888, Doc. 5, McCabe’s Promenade through the Ao Country, 1888, dt. Kohima, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1888, pp. 2-11, p. 10.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., Doc. 4, from the Secy. CCA to the Secy. Govt. India, FD, dt. Shillong, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1888, pp. 1-2.

<sup>126</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/3351, July 1889, FD, Doc. 19, Diary of Mr. A. W. Davis, Assistant-Commissioner, Nága Hills, from 4<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> April 1888, Tour to visit the Eastern-Angámi and Khezami Villages lying within the area of Political Control, pp. 15-21, p. 17.

### 3.7 Incorporation of Aos into the NHD

During his 1888 tour through Ao country McCabe had, among others, destroyed the trans-Dikhu villages of Letum and Noksen to punish them for murder committed by some of the men of Aos living inside the area of political control. McCabe was then confident to have brought peace to this strip of land and to have definitely enforced the British monopoly of violence. Later in 1888 it so happened that these two villages, Letum and Noksen, carried out a raid on the two villages inside political control Mongsemdi and Lungkhung “...burning the former partially and the latter completely, and massacring in all over 200 people.”<sup>128</sup> This raid, the British themselves acknowledged, was carried out in retaliation for McCabe’s attack on the trans-Dikhu villages, whose populations, when seeking refuge in the jungles, were massacred “...by a rabble of some hundreds of friendlies who had followed from Susu, Mongsemdi, Lungkhung, Salachu and other villages in the wake of our force.”<sup>129</sup> The proposed answer of the CC of Assam was renewed punishment of Letum and Noksen and the permanent occupation and inclusion into the NHD of the Ao area until hitherto only under political control,<sup>130</sup> due to the impracticability of the latter.<sup>131</sup> Thence the CC suggested to “...make the Dikhu our boundary in the strictest sense, and have nothing whatever to do with the people beyond...”, argued against any further demarcation of areas under political control and proposed measures to restrict movement across the Dikhu.<sup>132</sup>

The part which had thus been newly incorporated into the district contained 45 Ao villages with a total of 5,901 houses (every village was visited and all the houses counted), four Lhota villages with 560 houses in total, and two Langta or naked Naga villages (so-named by the British).<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., Doc. 31, Visit to certain trans-Dikhu Naga Villages and occupation of Ao Naga Country, from the Offg. Secy. CC Assam F. C. Daukes, to Secy. Govt. India, FD, dt. Shillong, 14<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1888, pp. 39-45, p. 39.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>131</sup> “It is the merest commonplace to observe that in engaging in conflicts of this sort with people like the trans-Dikhu Nágas we do so on very unequal terms. We can never inflict on them any damage which can compare with that which they can inflict on the Aos within our border. Even if there were not material difficulties in the way, the most ordinary views of morality as entertained by us would forbid it. As a rule, the most we can do is to burn a village, and if, which rarely happens, the people resist, to shoot a few of them. But the burning of a village or the loss of a few members of the tribe are with them such very ordinary events that they make little impression.” Ibid., p. 43. The CC forgot that they were nearly always so-called friendlies following on the British punishment expeditions, trying to prey on those having been driven out of their villages by the British and in this way being without protection. However, what the CC had in mind here was to argue the case that political control was not feasible and that the only alternative was permanent occupation.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., Doc. No. 191, from Porteous, Offg. DC NHD, to Secy. CC A, dt. Kohima, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1889, pp. 29-31 and *ibid.*, Judicial Dept., Sept. 1889, Doc. 3, Addition of a new Sub-Division to the Naga hills, By Order of the CC of Assam, F. C. Daukes, Offg. Secy. CC A, p. 2.

The extension of the NHD was a success. The following years were uneventful, years of consolidation, and so it seems, years in which one accustomed oneself to the other. Groups, villages and tribes outside the NHD left those inside in peace.<sup>134</sup>

In 1893-94 the relations with the trans-Dikhu tribes and the British remained good, although the DC A. E. Woods reported many cases of head-taking happening among them, as was the case among the Semas in the Tita valley, and apparently everywhere outside the area of political control. That is why Woods, keeping up the tradition with all of his predecessors, made a strong case for the incorporation of the Semas and Eastern Angamis.<sup>135</sup> For 1894-95 Woods relayed the good message that small-pox had completely died out in the area of political control, but that, what he called, inter-tribal quarrels, were on the increase.<sup>136</sup> We do not know about the real constellation of the fighting, nor about the reality of the reports, yet, what is striking is that the Nagas seemed to have by then perfectly understood the policy of the British, banishing and persecuting cases of head-taking inside the district and area of political control and those that were carried out across its boundaries, regardless of their direction, but non-interference in anything that happened among the people beyond the frontier. This remained the same for 1895-96.<sup>137</sup>

The rest of the century was quite as uneventful as the previous few years. Relations with the tribes outside the district and areas of political control were good, yet, among themselves “...head-taking is going on merrily...” as DC Davis put it,<sup>138</sup> or as lieutenant W. M. Kennedy’s statement confirms “Head-taking is as prevalent as ever among themselves....”<sup>139</sup> These statements were always followed by more or less urgent explicit or implicit requests for intervention that would have meant the annexation of the adjoining areas. The requests, so it was brought forward, also came from the weaker villages affected themselves.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/3807, FD, May 1891, Doc. 22, Political Report of the Naga Hills District, 1890-91, from A. W. Davis, DC NHD, to Secy. CC Assam, dt. Kohima, 28<sup>th</sup> March 1891, pp. 21-22 and *ibid.*, Doc. 24, Copy of the Tour Diary of the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, forwarded by A. W. Davis, DC NHD, dt. Kohima, 8<sup>th</sup> July 1891, pp. 25-26.

<sup>135</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/4477, FD, Aug. 1894, Doc. 20, Political Report of the Naga Hills District for 1893-94, from Capt. A. E. Woods, DC NHD to Secy CC Assam, dt. Kohima, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1894, pp. 19-20.

<sup>136</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/4673, FD, May 1895, Doc. 5, Political Report of the Naga Hills District for 1894-95, from Capt. A. E. Woods, DC NHD to Secy. CC Assam, dt. Kohima, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1895, p. 5.

<sup>137</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/4878, FD, Aug. 1896, Doc. 4, Political Report of the Naga Hills District for 1895-96, from Capt. A. E. Woods, DC NHD to E. A. Gait, Offg. Secy. CC Assam, p. 5.

<sup>138</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/5098, FD, May 1897, Doc. 8, Political Report of the Naga Hills District for 1896-97, from A. W. Davis, DC NHD to Secy. CC Assam, dt. Kohima, 9<sup>th</sup> April 1897, pp. 7-8, p. 7.

<sup>139</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/5337, FD, May 1898, Doc. 4, Political Report of the Naga Hills District for 1897-98, from Lieutenant W. M. Kennedy, Offg. DC NHD to Secy. CC Assam.

<sup>140</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/5558, FD, May 1899, Doc. 20, Political Report of the Naga Hills District for 1898-99, from Capt. A. E. Woods, DC NHD to Secy. CC Assam, pp. 19-20, p. 19.

Inside the district and area of political control only minor incidences happened, resulting mainly from disputes over land,<sup>141</sup> an omnipresent feature of the following years, especially of the dreadfully boring and repetitious tour reports.

At the end of the nineteenth century roads, bridges and bridle paths were obviously improving everywhere in the Naga hills, since this was constantly positively remarked by the officers.<sup>142</sup> Yet, the betterment of communications and the increased intensity of contacts also contributed to the spread of diseases and helped them developing into epidemics of fever and dysentery.<sup>143</sup>

Cole's diary also tells us about the new missionary settlement at Impur, that later on would develop into the mission centre. The missionary Clarke was joined by two more missionaries, in addition to that the missionary Rivenburg was active in Kohima.<sup>144</sup> But it had not yet happened that many Nagas had taken to the offered western education for whatever reasons. However, this seemed quite alright for the colonialists, who, once the Nagas didn't pose a military threat anymore, could do without Christianity and education. Though, these two initially were hoped to contribute to the pacification of the previously unruly Nagas, but once that had been achieved without them, and then only with military means, they only bore the potential for creating new disturbances:

Nagas don't take to education very freely, and I think possibly that is just as well that they don't. An uneducated Naga is bad enough, but an educated Naga generally turns into an unmitigated scoundrel as we have experienced.<sup>145</sup>

Wood's statement is exemplary for the attitude of the British officers on Nagas and education and Nagas and Christianity for years to come, constituting a constant throughout the imperial personnel, and not only among the British.<sup>146</sup>

However, at the end of the nineteenth century the Naga hills were of no real concern anymore for the British, who had successfully established their rule there. The Naga hills were

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. and PCCA, Vol. P/5558, FD, May 1899, Doc. 20, p. 19.

<sup>142</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/5098, FD, May 1897, Doc. 8, p. 8; PCCA, Vol. P/5337, FD, May 1898, Doc. 4; *ibid.*, Oct. 1898, Doc. 9, Tour Diary of Captain A. E. Woods, I.S.C, Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, for the month of June 1898, pp. 9-10.

<sup>143</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/5337, FD, Oct. 1898, Doc. 8, Diary of Capt. H. W. G. Cole, I.S.C. DC NHD, for the month of Sept. 1897, pp. 7-8, p. 8. and *ibid.*, Doc. 9, p. 9.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 8, p. 7.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 9, p. 9.

<sup>146</sup> See for example on French West Africa Michel Leiris, *Phantom Afrika: Tagebuch einer Expedition von Dakar nach Djibouti 1931-1933*. Erster Teil. Ethnologische Schriften Band 3 & Zweiter Teil. Ethnologische Schriften. Band 4 (Frankfurt am Main, 1985; French edition *L'Afrique fantôme. De dakar à Djibouti 1931-1933* [Paris, 1934]). Leiris, for example, counters the colonial mantra that educated city Africans were corrupted and not any more real Africans with the astute observation that this would come equal to assert that a Parisian was not a real French compared with,



now routine and if I were to choose a quote exemplifying this, it were the following one by Woods: “13<sup>th</sup> [June 1898] – Nankam-Mokokchong, 11 miles. – Crops everywhere excellent. Roads very good.”<sup>147</sup>

Although the pattern of the tours remained the same, with the usual proceedings of surveying, of being welcomed by the villages, rice and coolie labour either supplied or forced to be given, the solving of land disputes, the information on certain illnesses (leprosy in 1900), the comparison by the British of certain basic words of the vernaculars, sometimes, we get some new piece of information. In 1900, so it seems, the British had started to use the heliograph, a device to signal from elevated positions over far distances, yet that only worked in good weather.<sup>148</sup> And that some officers were of the opinion the Nagas would see them as gods, as “terhoma” “...beyond the control of mortal man...”.<sup>149</sup> This god-like quality might have induced Woods to proceed far beyond the area of political control, forcing his way into the village Yachumi, against the expressed will of the population, killing some of the defenders, and letting his men loot the village and gave order to burn the village of 400-500 houses to the ground, and believed “...this lesson to Yachumi will have a salutary effect in this valley and elsewhere...”.<sup>150</sup> This work of god was condemned by the CC of Assam Cotton who ordered Woods to ask in the future for permission for any expedition beyond the area of political control.<sup>151</sup> The government approved of Cotton’s order, yet, went one step further, and even demanded that whenever a risk of complications with the trans-frontier tribes could be involved, the previous approval of the government of India was to be obtained.<sup>152</sup> Woods’ destruction of Yachumi went up the hierarchy and was even condemned by Lord Curzon as unauthorised and deplorable.<sup>153</sup> The officiating DC of the Naga hills lieutenant Kennedy complained that due to these orders following the Yachumi incident, he was not allowed to interfere beyond the boundary. Most pressing, he saw was the need of intervention in the Tizu valley where Semas tried to push the Angamis out. Kennedy pleaded for the extension of the area of political control so as to cover the whole of the Sema tribe, otherwise, so he feared, the whole Tizu valley would relapse into,

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for instance, a Breton farmer. For the Punjab, see Ian Talbot, ‘British Rule in the Punjab, 1849-1947: Characteristics and Consequences’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XIX, No. 2, pp. 203-221, pp. 204-205.

<sup>147</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/5337, FD, Oct. 1898, Doc. 8, Diary of Capt. H. W. G. Cole, I.S.C. DC NHD, for the month of Sept. 1897, Doc. 9, p. 9.

<sup>148</sup> *Assam Secretariat Proceedings* (ASP), Vol. P/5796, Foreign Department (FD), April 1900, Doc. 4, Diary of Captain A. E. Woods, I.S.C., Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, for the month of February 1900, pp. 5-11, p. 5.

<sup>149</sup> ASP, Vol. P/6032, FD, May 1901, Doc. 5, Diary of Captain A. Woods, I.S.C., DC, NH, for the month of January 1900.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 7, from the Offg. Secy. CC Assam to DC, NHD, dt. Shillong, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1900.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 8, from the Deputy Secy. Govt. India, FD, to the CC of Assam, dt. Simla, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1900.

what he perceived as, anarchy, and in addition, this happening in sight of the British, would damage their authority.<sup>154</sup> The CC Fuller supported an extension of the administration not only over the Tizu valley but also over the whole of the Semas and Eastern Angamis, since this “...would possess the advantage of bringing under our protection the people of one tribe, intimately connected by descent and marriage and by trade, this making the work of Administration an easy one.”<sup>155</sup> The reasons for that extension were still in the main moral ones, to stop “...the constant occurrence of barbarous outrages close beyond our border.”<sup>156</sup> In January 1904 the government granted the permission for the incorporation of the Sema and Eastern Angami tribes. It was understood that these tribes had been already under close political control, that is to say, they enjoyed protection without being taxed, and since there were no objections yet reported on the side of the respective tribes for being taxed, and no additional costs for the administration to be expected, the extension of the district was permitted.<sup>157</sup> The annexation, of course, first only manifested in the conveyance to the people that from now on they were taxed, met no opposition when the DC and SDO toured the newly incorporated territory,<sup>158</sup> a strip of land being 40 miles long and 15 miles deep.<sup>159</sup>

In a minute on the territorial redistribution of India, Curzon made a devastating judgement on the Assam district and its administration as being backward, not viable, and not attracting the best of people for employment. Curzon wanted to sever Assam from Bengal, to transform it from a chief commissioner-ship into a self-contained province playing a more vigorous role than hitherto was the case.<sup>160</sup> This in part did lead to the erection of Eastern Bengal and Assam as an independent province in 1905.<sup>161</sup> A further reason was the break-up of the influence of the Congress party, then a “...purely Bengali movement.”<sup>162</sup>

In June 1906 the government of Eastern Bengal and Assam reported that the extension of the district in 1904 could be considered as a success, that the Nagas were positively inclined to

<sup>153</sup> Curzon Collection, MSS Eur F 111/536. (Confidential) Summary of the Principal Events and Measures of the Viceroyalty of his Excellency Lord Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy and Governor-General of India, in the Foreign Department, for the time-span of Jan. 1899 – April 1904. Volume 5, p. 12.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., Aug. 1901, Proposal for extending the area of political control of the Naga Hills in the direction of the Tizu river, Doc. 27, from Lt. W. M. Kennedy, I.S.C., offg. DC, NH, to Secy. CC Assam, pp. 35-36.

<sup>155</sup> ASP, Vol. P/6504, FD, Nov. 1903, Doc. 15, Extension of the Eastern Boundary of the Naga Hills district, from F. J. Monahan, I.C.S., Secy. CC Assam to Secy. Govt. India, pp. 13-18, pp. 16-17.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>157</sup> ASP, Vol., P/6733, FD-A proceedings, Aug. 1904, Doc. 41, Proposal for the extension of the eastern boundary of the Naga Hills district, from the Under – Secy. Govt. India, FD, to CC Assam, dt. Fort William, 26<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1904, p. 59.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., Docs. 45 and 46; *ibid.*, Sept. 1904, Doc. 16.

<sup>159</sup> Curzon Collection, MSS Eur F 111/536. (Confidential) Summary of the Principal Events and Measures of the... . Volume 5, p. 12.

<sup>160</sup> Curzon Collection, MSS Eur F 111/323, Minute by His Excellency the Viceroy on Territorial Redistribution in India, dt. 1<sup>st</sup> June 1903, pp. 9-10.

<sup>161</sup> Report on the Administration of Assam for the year 1921-22. Shillong: Printed at the Government Press, Assam 1923, p. 49.

<sup>162</sup> Tinker, *Viceroy*, pp. 29-32.

the British and that life inside the district was as secure as anywhere in the plains, but that just across the frontier hundreds of persons were killed. This was brought forward as a reason why the lieutenant governor proposed to the government of India to simply push forward a line 12 miles in depth or two days march away in which political control was to be established and raiding stopped.<sup>163</sup> The proposal was not sanctioned, on financial grounds. Nevertheless, the government of India called for opinions from the local officers whether the already administered areas paid for their administration and whether the same could be expected from the new area that was suggested by the lieutenant governor to be incorporated.<sup>164</sup> In its reply the government of Eastern Bengal and Assam opined that sooner or later the narrow strip of 60 miles of unadministered area of Naga hills between the British held territories in Assam and Burma had to be closed anyway.<sup>165</sup> The lieutenant governor again stressed the responsibility of “...sovereignty...for pushing back the pale of barbarism from its borders.”<sup>166</sup> He argued that costs mainly arose out of measures to erect the infrastructure of rule and once that was done, would not come up again, and, the greatest part of expense was for defence, and could not be seen as simply attributed to the district itself, but for the defence of the whole frontier area. In truth, so he continued, in this case the annexation saved expenses, since it made not only the protection of Assam possible, in the first place, but enabled the reduction in the numbers of troops in general.<sup>167</sup> Yet, not enough was yet known on the territory, tribes and villages beyond the frontier as to make any precise statement on the expected revenue.<sup>168</sup> This time the government of India supported the proposal for extension, especially in the light of escalated raiding just across the district boundary in the Naga hills,<sup>169</sup> but the secretary of state for India did not sanction it, fearing that it would just lead to ever wider responsibilities, not covered by revenue.<sup>170</sup> This notwithstanding, prospects of oil and coal resulted in the quick annexation of 14 Konyak villages

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<sup>163</sup> *Proceedings of the Govt. of Eastern Bengal and Assam* (PEBA), Vol. P/7222, Political Department (PD), July 1906, Doc. 32, from J. E. Webster, I.C.S., Offg. Secy. to the Govt. of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Judicial Department (JD), to the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Foreign Department (FD), dt. Shillong, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1906, pp. 29-31.

<sup>164</sup> PEPA, Vol. P/7783, PD-A, March 1908, Doc. 1, Proposal for the extension of the eastern boundary of the Naga Hills District, from the Assistant Secy. Govt. India, FD, to Secy. Govt. Eastern Bengal and Assam, JD, dt. Fort William, 12<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1907, pp. 1-3.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, JD, Doc. 12, from G. Milne, I.C.S., offg. Secy. Govt. Eastern Bengal and Assam, to Secy. Govt. India, FD, dt. Shillong, 7<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1907, pp. 15-21, p. 17.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21. This showed that tribes, though existing, were then not predominantly political units, but cultural ones.

<sup>169</sup> PEPA, Vol. P/8060, PD-A, May 1909, Doc. 22, from the Govt. of India, FD, to His Majesty's Secretary of State for India, dt. Simla, 16<sup>th</sup> July 1908, pp. 13-14.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 23, from His Majesty's Secretary of State for India, to Governor General of India in Council, dt. India Office, London, 13<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1908, pp. 14-15.

on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1910 to the NHD,<sup>171</sup> no moral reasoning brought forward, demonstrating beautifully that annexation was unproblematic if there was considerable expected material return.

The CC of Assam, confronted with what seemed an escalation of trans-frontier raids involving sometimes hundreds of dead, at times in sight of British officers not allowed to interfere, strongly argued for the slow but steady extension of British control over the whole of the hill tracts in full view of the fact that the areas won't pay for their administration. The CC saw this as his duty on humanitarian grounds. Moreover, according to the CC, the existing situation at times forced the British to carry out punishment expeditions against villages, which as a rule were burned down, leaving their inhabitants defenceless to their enemy neighbours, and amounted to a death sentence.<sup>172</sup>

However, the government of India from then on had, even more than before, other problems than the Naga hills. First, there was the First World War, then afterwards troubles on the Northwest Frontier, and so the government allowed the local officers friendly tours across the frontier until further decisions were carried forward.<sup>173</sup> That being so, nothing was done on that matter from the last extension in 1910 onwards.<sup>174</sup> Then, the area in question now bordered on the newly incorporated Somra tract, administered by the government of Burma and the recently established subdivisions of the Manipur hills, and hence began to have closer relations with British administration. The gap was slowly closing, so to speak, and, according to the CC of Assam, Marris, it had to, in the name of the civilising mission.<sup>175</sup> A month later Marris, while in Simla, was advised by the foreign secretary Bray to present his case for extension in such a way as to give definite reasons for the pushing of the line exactly to this or that point (e.g. towards some tribal boundaries), and therefore would not have to be changed again for a long period afterwards.<sup>176</sup> The government of India then supported the proposal for extension "...on humanitarian grounds...", but qualified that a definite and lasting boundary could only be found

<sup>171</sup> *Proceedings of the Chief Commissioner of Assam (PCCA)*, Vol. P/9110, August 1913, Doc. 53, from J. E. Webster, DC, NH, to the Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Districts, pp. 35-54, p. 46. "The annexed strip is bounded on the west by the Dikhu river, on the south by the Yangnyu and Anyang rivers, on the east by the Shiniong and Tigham streams, and on the north by the Taukok river and the Inner Line of the Sisagar district." *ibid.*, p. 35. On the people Webster wrote that they called themselves "Yamanyuha", that their neighbours, the Aos, called them either "Miris", meaning enemies, or "Abors", meaning savages, and that they otherwise were called "...*lengta* or naked Nagas." *ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>172</sup> PCCA, Vol. P/9363, May 1914, PD, from W. J. Reid, Chief Secy. to the CC of Assam, to the Secy. Govt. India, Foreign and Political Department (F&PD), dt. Shillong, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1914, pp. 7-13.

<sup>173</sup> *Proceedings of the Government of Assam (PGA)*, Vol. P/11282, Feb. 1923, Doc. 13, Extract (Paragraph 3) from Despatch No. 16, dt. 27<sup>th</sup> January 1921, from the Govt. of India, F&PD, to Secy. of State for India, p. 5.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 14, from A. W. Botham, Chief Secy. to the Govt. of Assam, to Major F. H. Humphreys, Deputy Secy. to the Govt. of India, FD, Demi-official, dt. Shillong, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept. 1921, pp. 5-9, p. 6.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 15, from A. W. Botham, Chief Secy. to the Govt. of Assam, to J. E. Webster, Commissioner Surma Valley and Hill Division, Demi-official, dt. Shillong, 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1921, p. 9. Despite the fact that Marris in his previous communication had just established the fact that tribal boundaries were not relevant for boundary drawing.

after extensive survey operations.<sup>177</sup> The whole argument was based on the arbitrary character of the present line and that the impression was to be made vis-à-vis the secretary of state that a lasting tribal boundary could be found. The strategy paid off, and London gave its approval.<sup>178</sup>

In his proposal for extension to the east, the new DC Hutton tried to combine tribal and geographical points. He included the whole of the Chang, Sema, and Sangtam tribes, some Kalyo-Kengyu villages for political reasons, and as few as possible Konyak villages, for geographical reasons, since the relations with the Konyak were good, and since they did not desire to be included.<sup>179</sup> Now the NHD included Angamis, Kacha-Nagas, Kukis, Kacharies, Rengmas, Lhotas, Semas, Southern Sangtams, Aos, some Konyaks and some Kalyo-Kengyus.<sup>180</sup> Not all Naga-inhabited territory had been incorporated. The area outside of the district, by the British called the “Naga Tribal Area”, remained until the end of British colonial rule only under political control.<sup>181</sup> The term “Tribal Area” described territory, which belonged neither to British India nor to any other state, and legally (although one might ask according in whose legal code, and anyhow to the complete ignorance of the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of that area), at this stage, was regarded by the British as being under the direct executive power of the governor general. This status was only reversed after the Transfer of Power.<sup>182</sup> Later, with the proclamation of the state Nagaland, this territory was turned into the Tuensang district. The NHD initially constituted administratively a part of Assam, but was excluded from the criminal code of India through the application of the *Assam Frontier Tracts Regulation* (1880) on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1884.<sup>183</sup> The Morley-Minto constitutional reform in 1909 was not even concerned with the hill areas surrounding Assam.<sup>184</sup> In the next step, the Montagu-Chelmsford reform in 1919, brought about by the major contribution India had made to the British war efforts,<sup>185</sup> the hill districts of the province of Assam were entirely excluded and put under the administration of the governor, based on paternal principles.<sup>186</sup> The committee did so on the advice of the CC of Assam, whom they met in Calcutta. The committee never went to the province itself.<sup>187</sup>

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., Doc. 45, the Governor General of India in Council, to Secy. of State for India, dt. Delhi, 2<sup>nd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1922, pp. 25-27.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., Doc. 47, from Secy. of State, to Viceroy (F and PD), Telegram, dt. London, 19<sup>th</sup> (received the 20<sup>th</sup>) Dec. 1922, p. 27.

<sup>179</sup> PGA, Vol. P/11448, June 1925, A&PD, Political Branch (PB), Doc. 108, from J. H. Hutton, DC, NH, to the Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Division, dt. Kohima, 7<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1923, p. 21.

<sup>180</sup> J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas* (London, 1926), p. 404.

<sup>181</sup> Shibankinkar Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-East India* (New Delhi, 1973), p. 14.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>184</sup> Government of India Proposals and Dispatch of the Secretary of State, 1907, Vol. I.

<sup>185</sup> Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *A history of India* (Calcutta, 1991 [1986]), p. 273.

<sup>186</sup> *Report of the franchise committee, 1918-1919* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India), p. 269.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

### 3.8 Self-rule, Simon-Commission and Exclusion of Backward Tracts

In the middle of December 1928 the SDO NHD C. R. Pawsey, based in Mokokchung, brought forward a proposal for the formation of a tribal authority among the Nagas, namely first only for the Lhotas as a test-run for self-government. The DC Hutton was positively inclined to the proposal but the Assam government called them back. It did not wish the scheme to be carried out at this particular time, when the statutory commission was on its way to India. It wanted the NHD separated from Assam and therewith removed from the reach of the legislative council and hoped to win over the statutory commission for this exclusion of the hill districts. More self-government in the hills would only have endangered this.<sup>188</sup>

The statutory commission, composed of English members of parliament, was also called the Simon Commission, after their chairman Sir John Simon. The commission was appointed in 1927 and sent to India in 1928 to inquire into a new reform scheme that resulted in the *Government of India Act* of 1935.<sup>189</sup>

Hutton, the then DC of the NHD, called in a meeting with the Naga leaders, to be briefed about how they envisioned the time after the British departure. The Nagas, although isolated from the Indian independence movement, had realised that the British would not for ever remain on the subcontinent and so had started their own national movement for the regaining of their sovereignty, according to a brief description of Panmei.<sup>190</sup> It seems certain to most of the authors that the Nagas had conveyed to Hutton their desire for independence. Hutton passed his report on, which resulted in the visit of the Simon Commission, led by John Simon, Clement Atlee and E. Cadogan, in January 1929 to Kohima.

When the commission arrived in Kohima on January, 10<sup>th</sup> 1929, members of the Naga Club handed over a memorandum in which they described themselves as the representatives of their people, empowered to articulate its wishes. The memorandum furthermore said that the Nagas had already heard about reforms, but since they were still administered by the British, they did not see a reason to complain. Now they had to realise to their regret that they were included in future reforms, without their knowledge, and that they would be falling under any provincial government, and demanded to be administered in the future directly by the British government: "We never asked for any reforms and we do not wish for any reforms."<sup>191</sup> The *Naga Memorandum to the Simon Commission* continued that they always had been at war with the Indians and Assamese

<sup>188</sup> PGA, Vol. P/11738, Appointment and Political Department. Political-A. June 1929. Proposal for the formation of a tribal authority among the Lhotas in the Naga Hills district. Docs. 105-114, dt. between 15<sup>th</sup> December 1928 and 27<sup>th</sup> May 1929, pp. 1-5.

<sup>189</sup> Kulke and Rothermund, *A history of India*, p. 274.

<sup>190</sup> Nehemiah Panmei, Naga movement and its ramifications. In: R. Vashum, Aleube Iheilung u. a. (eds.). *Nagas at Work*. New Delhi, 1996), pp. 85-100, p. 87.

<sup>191</sup> Naga Memorandum to Simon Commission, dated 10<sup>th</sup> January 1929. Appendix I., In R. Vashum, Aleube Iheilung et al (eds.), *Nagas at Work* (New Delhi, 1996), p. 151.

before the advent of the British and that they had never been conquered, that they were not unified among themselves, and that the only thing unifying them was the British administration. Education was still only rudimentary among them, and they had as yet no-one who could represent all the tribes to the outside world, let alone in a provincial council. Their population was small, compared to those in the plains and a however designed representation on their side would have no weight at all. Their languages were completely different from those of the plains and they had not the slightest social affinities with either Hindus or Muslims who looked down on them, the former because the Nagas ate beef, the latter due to their diet of pork and both despised them on grounds of their lack of education which, however, was not the Nagas' fault. These statements were followed by fear of becoming dominated socially, culturally, politically and economically by the Assamese and Indians, if the Nagas were included under the reforms. Thus they asked to remain either under British protection and administration or to be left alone:

If the British government, however, want to throw us away, we pray that we should not be thrust to the mercy of the people who could never have conquered us themselves, and to whom we were never subjected, but to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times.<sup>192</sup>

The memorandum was signed by 20 members of the Naga Club – mainly interpreters by profession - representing the different tribes. It is not so much the desire for independence speaking out of the memorandum, but the realisation filled with consternation that the future could lie with the plainsmen who were superior to them in every way, especially in numbers. The fear they might be culturally and economically overpowered by those despising them, and the realisation that they themselves were not yet advanced enough to represent their political interests to the outside world, led them asking for a postponement.

The government of Assam suggested in their memorandum to the commission the exclusion of the backward tracts – including Naga hills – following the advice of the then DC NHD Hutton. The backward tracts were to be continued to be administered by British officers,<sup>193</sup> under the “...Governor-in-Council, as agent for the Governor-General in council, and at the cost of central revenues.”<sup>194</sup> Therewith the Naga hills were to be put under central rule. Hutton, who had been working on this proposal together with other officers stationed in the hills, mainly argued that the union between the plains and the hills was artificial, only brought about by British conquest and that their inclusion into any legislative scheme would be a farce, since the hill people neither had the education nor were they politically united in any organised

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<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

<sup>193</sup> ‘Memorandum submitted by the government of Assam to the Indian statutory commission 1930’, In *Indian Statutory Commission*, Volume XIV. London: Published by his Majesty's stationary office, p. 100.

form as to make sense for them to be part in a representation scheme.<sup>195</sup> The Simon Commission then consequently followed their advice in their recommendation for constitutional reform, without working out a specific scheme:

Nowhere in India is the contrast between the life and outlook of these wild hillmen and the totally distinct civilisation of the plains more manifest. The main areas classed as backward tracts are the Lushai Hills, the Naga Hills, the Garo Hills, the North Cachar Hills, and the British portion of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. To these must be added the Lakhimpur frontier tract, the Balipara frontier tract, and the Sadiya frontier tract – the last running up to the Abor country and the borders of Tibet. (...)

These races must be among the most picturesque in the world, and until their energies are sapped by contact with civilisation they remain among the most light-hearted and virile. To the economic self-sufficiency of the indigenous hill races – the Nagas, Kukis, Mishmis, and the rest – the tea-planter and the immigrant Bengali alike constitute a real danger. To the loss of self-respect, of confidence in their warlike prowess, of belief in their tribal gods, and of unfettered enjoyment in their patriarchal (or rather, in some tribes, matriarchal) customs – changes which tend to exterminate so many primitive races – there has now been added the curtailment of freedom to burn down the forest and sow seeds in its ashes. The process has already begun and the best judges doubt how far the recent quiescence of the hill tribes – for the last expedition against them was in 1918 – is due to contentment. If progress is to benefit, and not to destroy, these people, it must come about gradually, and the adjustment of their needs with the interests of the immigrant will provide a problem of great complexity and importance for many generations to come.

The great majority of the hill tribes are far from forgetting their warlike past, with its long record of raids upon the plains. Many of them probably regard the *pax Britannica* as a passing inconvenience.<sup>196</sup>

The Assam government's stand was motivated on the one hand by a concern for the survival of the hill people: "...the lesson of the history throughout the world appears on the best authority to that primitive tribes, robbed of their own culture and faced with the competition of another on unequal terms, speedily decay and die out."<sup>197</sup> This lesson, it reads, caused them to question their own moral responsibility: "...it is a matter for the most serious consideration whether the British Government, which found the hill tribes independent, can leave them dependent."<sup>198</sup> A consideration that would later be drowned in the empire's post-war struggle to muddle itself out of the *raj*. A rather weightier motivation will have been the fear of rebellion, if the hill tracts were

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>195</sup> J. H. Hutton, 'Note, dt. Kohima 17<sup>th</sup> March 1928', In *Indian Statutory Commission*, Volume XIV, Appendix B, 1930, pp. 111-117.

<sup>196</sup> *Report of the Statutory Commission*, Volume 1, Paragraph 94, quoted from PGA, Vol. P/11892, Political-A, September 1931, Government of Assam. The Governor in Council. Appointment and Political Department. Doc. 134, from W. A. Gosgrave, Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Assam to Secy. Govt. of India, Reforms Office, dt. Shillong, 29<sup>th</sup> July 1931, p. 2.

<sup>197</sup> PGA, Vol. P/11892, Political-A, September 1931, Government of Assam. The Governor in Council. Appointment and Political Department. Doc. 134, from W. A. Gosgrave, Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Assam to Secy. Govt. of India, Reforms Office, dt. Shillong, 29<sup>th</sup> July 1931, p. 4.



included into the constitutional reforms, with the following change of rule and administration: “...it would be difficult, and might be dangerous, to entrust to the Legislative Council the final administrative control of the hill districts and frontier tracts.”<sup>199</sup> Its fears of the consequences would prove prophetic:

The Ministers of the future would find the demand that the hill districts should be brought into line with the regulation districts in the plains irresistible, both on political and financial grounds. Any uncontrolled invasion of foreign officials into the Naga Hills, the frontier tracts or the Lushai Hills, would inevitably cause serious trouble.<sup>200</sup>

The government resolved that the hill areas should be excluded, and be put under the governor of Assam, as agent for the central government.<sup>201</sup> Furthermore, that officials, missionaries, ethnologists and leading natives should in co-operation develop a policy to guide the hill people to self-organisation and eventually to self-rule, aiming at the political unification of the hills: “What is needed for the future is a policy of development and unification on lines suited to the genius of the hill peoples...”<sup>202</sup>

In the Naga hills that meant to continue with the establishment of tribal committees and tribal self-rule. The Lhotas’ was, as mentioned before, the first one, and in 1934 it was a success and supported by every Lhota village.<sup>203</sup> Alemchimba writes that the Lhota council was already founded in 1923, and that it continued from then on. The Aos had theirs running only from 1939, and the other tribes from the middle of the 1940s, yet he does not specify anything further.<sup>204</sup>

In May 1935 the report of the Simon Commission was fiercely debated in the British parliament and the members of the commission said the Nagas did not ask for self-determination, but for protection.<sup>205</sup> On the basis of the recommendation of the commission the NHD was declared an excluded area of the Assam province on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1937.<sup>206</sup> This meant the exclusion of the NHD from all reforms carried out in the rest of India, and that the legislation was not applicable there. The NHD was to be administered on the orders of the governor of

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>203</sup> *Hutton Papers*, Tour Diaries, 26<sup>th</sup> July 1934.

<sup>204</sup> M. Alemchimba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland* (Kohima, 1970), p. 165.

<sup>205</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*. Fifth Series – Volume 301 H.C., (London, 1935), 10 May 1935, columns 1343-1449.

<sup>206</sup> M. Horam, *Naga Insurgency: The last thirty years* (New Delhi, 1988), pp. 40-41.

Assam who again functioned as deputy for the governor general of India. This arrangement remained active until the Transfer of Power.<sup>207</sup>

### 3.9 *The Transfer of Power*

The Second World War took the initiative from the British colonialists. Though they hadn't lost the war they had lost what they had possessed in hegemony to their ally the United States. In India that meant they had to organise their departure.

Although basically of least importance, this was true for the Northeast in general and the Nagas in particular, the British felt they had a moral obligation towards the "backward tribes" and their future protection. While it seems that there had been plans back in 1928 to exclude the tribal areas of Burma and Assam and bring them together under a separate but united provincial administration, by 1944 it was recognised that such a scheme would be unworkable, since it would incur the ferocious opposition of the Indian National Congress (INC).<sup>208</sup> And while in August 1944 Amery still envisioned a crown colony scheme, with the accession of that territory to the Indian union after a generation or so,<sup>209</sup> he dropped this scheme a month later as being impracticable for a number of reasons, among them again the objection of the INC, but also the lack of any strategic or economic benefit that could arise out of such an arrangement for Britain. Hence, agreed on was some tentative scheme to put the "backward tribes" under the central government in order to protect them from provincial politics and legislature, and, for this reason to appoint an advisor on the backward tribes to the central government.<sup>210</sup> To work out the details of a future constellation the governor of Assam Clow supported the set-up of a special commission to investigate on the spot.<sup>211</sup> The representatives of Congress and League for Assam, respectively Bardoloi and Sa'adullah, on their part were also only marginally interested in the tribes' fate, but both took their inclusion into a provincial scheme for granted, albeit for different

<sup>207</sup> Asoso Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study* (Delhi, 1974), p. 133-139.

<sup>208</sup> Extract from private and secret letter from Lord Wavell to Mr. Amery, dated 27<sup>th</sup> July, 1944, OIOC: L/PJ/7/6787

<sup>209</sup> Extract from private and secret letter from Mr. Amery to Lord Wavell, dated 9/10<sup>th</sup> August, 1944, In *ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> Amery to Field Marshall Viscount Wavell, India Office, 28 September 1944, in Nicholas Mansergh and Penderel Moon (eds.), *The Transfer of Power, 1942-7, Volume V, The Simla Conference: Background and Proceedings, 1 September 1944 – 28 July 1945* (London, 1974), No. 25, pp. 52-56; Field Marshall Viscount Wavell to Mr Amery, The Viceroy's House, New Delhi, 3 December 1944, In *ibid.*, No. 128, pp. 263-264. Lord Pethick-Lawrence to Sir J. Colville, India Office, 24 August 1945, In Nicholas Mansergh and Penderel Moon (eds.), *The Transfer of Power, 1942-7, Volume VI, The post-war phase: new moves by the Labour Government, 1 August 1945 – 22 March 1946* (London, 1974), No. 66, pp. 153-154.

Nearly two years later, some or other solution under the central government was implicitly confirmed, among others, the Naga hills, since for one the economic development of those hills was seen as beyond the capacity of any provincial Government, and the exploitation of the hill people, it was stated prophetically, following from an unprotected scheme, would trigger sustained resistance that would need a long time and considerable funds to quell, see 'The Tribes of the North-West and North-East Frontier in a Future Constitution. Note by Government of India, External Affairs Department', In Nicholas Mansergh and Penderel Moon (eds.), *The Transfer of Power, 1942-7, Volume VII, The Cabinet Mission, 23 March – 29 June 1946* (London, 1974), No. 15, pp. 30-35.

<sup>211</sup> Summary of views of Sir O. Caroe and Sir A. Clow on the tribal question given to the Cabinet Delegation in discussions at the Vicroy's House, new Delhi on 28 March 1946, In *ibid.*, No. 16, pp. 35-39.

and conflicting reasons.<sup>212</sup> By May-June 1946 it had been decided that the constitution making body, the union constituent assembly, was to set up an advisory committee that had to deal and make recommendations for the proper representation of India's minorities in independent India. Due to the fundamentally different situations of, for example, the tribals in the Northwest and those in the Northeast, the advisory committee was to set up special subcommittees that should deal with these respectively. Stress was laid on the expertise and independence of its personnel and the weight that its suggestions should carry forward vis-à-vis the constituent assembly.<sup>213</sup> Yet by the end of the year the Congress-dominated preliminary constituent assembly had decided that the advisory committee's proposals could be overruled by the constituent assembly, making sure as to grant just as many safeguards as to not endanger Congress dominance.<sup>214</sup> The constitutional safeguards reached by this procedure for the Northeast were later called "sixth schedule". When by February-March 1947 the Naga National Council (NNC) sent a memorandum to the British prime minister, with copies to Simon and Churchill, asking for the setting-up of a 10-years interim government, during which they could develop themselves politically and decide afterwards whether they would prefer complete independence or some arrangement with the Indian union, the secretary of state for India Pethick-Lawrence was assured by Sir Henry Knight, former short-time acting governor of Assam, that the NNC represented no-one but itself and hence might be safely ignored.<sup>215</sup> When shortly after the governor of Assam Clow confirmed to the contrary, this did not matter much, and Mountbatten, on pragmatic grounds, agreed on the inclusion of the Naga hills into Assam, with some safeguards.<sup>216</sup> In July Hydari informed Mountbatten on his reaching an agreement with the Nagas<sup>217</sup> and with the *Independence Act* the Nagas were ceded to the Indian union.<sup>218</sup>

<sup>212</sup> Minutes of Meeting between Cabinet Delegation, Field Marshal Viscount Wavell and Mr Gopinath Bardoloi on Monday, 1 April 1946 at 4.50 pm, In *ibid.*, No. 35, pp. 76-80 and Note of Meeting between Field Marshal Viscount Wavell, Cabinet Delegation, Mr Qaiyum and Sir M. Sa'adullah on Tuesday, 2 April 1946, in *Ibid.*, No. 40, pp. 88-90.

<sup>213</sup> Text of Sir S. Cripps' Press Convergence given on 16 May 1946. The Cabinet Mission's Statement, In *ibid.*, No. 305, pp. 595-599; Record of Meeting of Cabinet Delegation and Field Marshal Viscount Wavell on Saturday, 8 June 1946 at 4 pm, In *ibid.*, No. 474, pp. 842-843; Record of Meeting of Cabinet Delegation and Field Marshal Viscount Wavell on 18 June 1946 at 10 am, In *ibid.*, No. 559, pp. 967-969; Office Memorandum on the Advisory Committee on the Rights of Citizens, Minorities and Tribal and Excluded Areas, undated, In *ibid.*, No. 614, pp. 1055-1057.

<sup>214</sup> Cabinet. India and Burma Committee. Paper I.B.(47)14. Indian Policy. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, India Office, 6 February 1947, In Nicholas Mansergh and Penderel Moon (eds.), *The Transfer of Power, 1942-7, Volume IX, The fixing of a time limit, 4 November – 22 March 1947* (London, 1974), No. 355, pp. 628-630.

<sup>215</sup> Lord Pethick-Lawrence to Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma, India Office, 12 April 1947, In Nicholas Mansergh and Penderel Moon (eds.), *The Transfer of Power, 1942-7, Volume X, The Mountbatten Viceroyalty: Formulation of a Plan, 22 March – 30 May 1947* (London, 1974), No. 134, pp. 217-220.

<sup>216</sup> Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma to the Earl of Listowel, 24 April 1947, in *Ibid.*, No. 210, pp. 399-402.

<sup>217</sup> Sir A. Hydari (Assam) to Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma (Extract), Government House, Shillong, 11 July 1947, In Nicholas Mansergh and Penderel Moon (eds.), *The Transfer of Power, 1942-7, Volume XII, The Mountbatten Viceroyalty: Princes, Partition, and Independence, 8 July – 15 August 1947* (London, 1974), No. 68, pp. 104-105.

<sup>218</sup> The Gazette of India Extraordinary. Secretariat of the Governor-General (Reforms). Notification, New Delhi, the 14<sup>th</sup> August, 1947. The Indian Independence (Rights, Property and Liabilities) Order, 1947, In *ibid.*, No. 471, pp. 713-720.

More suspense can be found in the developments on the spot in the Northeast. The British officers there thought they really had the task of arranging matters for the hills in relation to the new state of independent India. They were searching frantically for a solution. At first they also didn't take the Nagas serious as actors on the political scene,<sup>219</sup> seeing themselves as their advocates who would represent and negotiate their case vis-à-vis the Indians. Yet, the NNC fast emerged as the political mouthpiece of the Nagas, so that the British officers found themselves in the role of mere interlocutors, or advisors to the Nagas. The problem here for Pawsey was mainly that the NNC consisted mainly of government servants. So if he advised them, as they expected from him, this would have been unacceptable to both Congress and the League, and Pawsey would have risked his own transfer.<sup>220</sup> By February 1947, the superintendent of Lushai hills, in a document that was supposed to serve as one of the models, and addressed to the secretary to the governor of Assam, with respect to the Lushai hills and other previously excluded areas, suggested autonomous self-rule, except in areas of foreign policy and defence.<sup>221</sup> The governor of Assam Sir Akhbar Hydari, in a personal answer to these suggestions, disagreed with him, demanded on the contrary a single administrative unit, since the autonomy Macdonald, the SP Lushai hills, was proposing was associated with "independent sovereignty". Furthermore, that the hill people had been isolated too long, and would be greatly profiting from intense intercourse with the plains, and finally the plains would pay for many of the facilities in the hills, consequently the hill people would have to give back something in return, and the governor here was thinking in terms of co-operation and participation in the running of the province. This, according to the governor, would be greatly beneficial, since the hill people were not part of the communal problem, and moreover, had a better understanding of democracy than the inhabitants of the plains.<sup>222</sup>

Special consideration was given to the tribal areas, and Mills, in his position as advisor to the governor of Assam for tribal areas and states cautioned Walker, the political officer Tirap Frontier Tract, who beforehand had uttered his concerns to Mills and had asked him for advise that Sir B. N. Rau, constitutional advisor to the constituent assembly, was of the opinion that no constitution could be forced upon the Naga hills tribal area. Mills quoted Nehru who, in his opinion, had gone even further in saying during a speech held on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1947: "We do not want to compel any Province or portion of the country to join Pakistan or Hindustan." It is clear that both these statements assured Mills that the tribal areas were to be dealt with in, what he

<sup>219</sup> Private correspondence from Mills to Archer, dt. Shillong, 25<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1946, In *Archer Papers*, MSSEur F 236/80.

<sup>220</sup> *Archer Papers* MSS Eur F 236/78, paper 2c, note, dt. 26<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1946.

<sup>221</sup> A. R. H. Macdonald, S. P. Lushai Hills, to the Secretary to the Governor of Assam, dt. Aijal, 14<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1947. In *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur F 236/78, paper 7.

<sup>222</sup> Confidential. D. O. No: 58/47/C-621-23. Governor's Secretariat, to A. R. H. Macdonald, SP, Lushai Hills, Aijal, dt. Shillong, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1947, In *ibid.*, paper 30.

considered, a decent way, and so he told Walker to advise the Nagas in Tirap that they should ask for the present system to be continued. Furthermore, that they should be aware of being part of India which might put up military posts in their area, and would give them also assistance in other respects. All in all Mills was satisfied with the developments at this stage and had faith in a continuation of an administration that he deemed as appropriate.<sup>223</sup> This is also shown by the fact that he sent a copy of this document to Pawsey, commenting that he did not see any objections why the Nagas in the tribal area might not accept any constitutional arrangement that might be made for the NHD.<sup>224</sup> The British officers in the Northeast therefore contacted the Nagas and informed them about what would happen and how they could take part in shaping the changes.

The drama between the agents of the former colonial power, unfolded its full dimension by the end of April 1947, when Mills, now visibly alarmed, informed the British officers that the advisory subcommittee indeed came with a pre-fabricated plan and was determined to push that through. It was the crucial point, where the frontlines became clear and the British agents fought an uphill battle until not much later, when they gave in and sided with their successors, in state agents solidarity.<sup>225</sup> Consequently, he urged the officers to advise the hill people to be unanimous in their negotiations with the subcommittee, and in case of any surprise questions, to ask for time to think it over, although, so he went on, this had been taken as differences in opinion in the case of the Lushais. Secondly, he stressed that excluded and tribal areas should, under any circumstances, be dealt with separately, since the latter were "...completely independent and at liberty to negotiate its own terms...".<sup>226</sup> Mills had attached to this memorandum a draft he had written on the legal status of the tribal area, where he came to the conclusion that the "...Naga Tribal Areas of the Naga Hills District and Tirap Frontier Tract are both technically and for practical purposes outside British India, for there is a statutory boundary between them and the adjoining districts of the Province."<sup>227</sup> Of course, Mills considered them independent as Indian states under the suzerainty of the British crown, not as having the right to stay outside the new Indian union, although for the most cases they might not have been aware of either. The reason why Mills wanted to ascribe to the tribal areas the status of Indian states was because he was convinced that the tribals were not able to speak for themselves and that the Indians could not do that either, since the latter were in no way acquainted with the

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<sup>223</sup> Confidential. S.O.No. A. 11/46. J. P. Mills, Office of the Adviser to the Governor of Assam for Tribal Areas and States, dt. Shillong, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1947, to G. E. D. Walker, Political Officer, Tirap Frontier Tract, In *ibid*, paper 13.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>225</sup> Memorandum. Most Secret and Personal. Mills to all P.Os and D.C. Naga Hills, dt. Shillong, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1947, In *ibid*., papers 32 – 34.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid*., papers 35-39. Draft attached to previous document.

former, and that therefore British officers should be made into the representatives of the tribal areas, although he was aware of the fact that this was unacceptable to the subcommittee.<sup>228</sup>

Mills reported that the subcommittee gave considerable weight to the written word, such as recorded treaties, likewise his own draft on the legal status of the tribal people was based on recorded treaties. Pawsey, on the contrary, wrote to Mills that any divided administration for the Naga hills (i.e., separate solutions for the tribal area and the excluded area or NHD) was unworkable, and he suggested a unitary solution under the central government. This would also have the advantage of being compatible with the NNC's demand for a ten years interim period, in order to establish their own standing. The only problems Pawsey saw were that Hydari was utterly opposed to it, and the question as to what the subcommittee was up to. Pawsey's proposal was motivated by his conviction that it was more important to stop headhunting, than who was actually in charge of the area.<sup>229</sup>

Archer, SDO Mokokchung, agreed with Mills that the required solution was the creation of a state under the central government, which would allow for the gradual development of relations with the province of Assam, but was aware that his prime minister Attlee had said in the house of commons that the hills of the Northeast would be grouped with Assam. Attlee, as quoted by Archer, said: "In regard to the hills in the Northeast frontier they come into the Province of Assam and they will be dealt with by the Constitutional Assembly of which Assam forms a part."<sup>230</sup> Mills then informed Archer that the ministry had declared him a *persona non grata* and that he had to have left by the 1<sup>st</sup> August. Mills by then was convinced that everything he said was refused, simply since it was him who had said it.<sup>231</sup>

Eight days later we encounter a much more liberated Mills who in a very personal language informed Archer that the Transfer of Power definitely was now fixed for the 16<sup>th</sup> August the same year, and that due to the drain of Indian civil service officers out of Assam, Archer, if he wished so, might be able to stay on without problems, as Pawsey was to do until January 1948.<sup>232</sup>

In a last and desperate stand, just before his departure, Mills informed the governor that, according to the *Indian Independence Bill*, the tribal areas had to be considered as independent and free to decide whether they would wish to join India or not:

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Communication from Pawsey to Archer, dt. Kohima, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1947, In *ibid.*, paper 42 and Secret D. O. No./3/C., C. R. Pawsey, Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, to J. P. Mills, Adviser to the Governor of Assam Tribal Area and States, Shillong, dt. Kohima, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1947, In *ibid.*, paper 43.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*: Notes, paper 54, dt. 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1947.

<sup>231</sup> Letter from Mills to Archer, dt. 15<sup>th</sup> June 1947, In *ibid.*, paper 55.

<sup>232</sup> Letter from Mills to Archer, dt. Shillong, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1947, In *ibid.*, paper 56.

- (1) Clause 2 Section 1. – confines the two Dominions to British India, apart from States which may accede to them (Section 4).
- (2) Clause 2 Section 7. – Sub-section 1(c) – refers specifically to the tribal areas. Treaties and agreements lapse, as do any obligations of His Majesty. Apparently therefore the tribal areas become completely independent until new treaties and agreements are entered into.<sup>233</sup>

Mills was not suggesting that the people in the tribal areas should be independent, but that a legal exposition on their constitutional status should be drawn up and that they in turn were to be informed about that.<sup>234</sup>

Pawsey, in a pre-Transfer of Power communication to Archer, where he laid open his antipathy to the demand of some Nagas, a minority in his opinion, for complete independence, and in which he assured himself that the British needn't have any reason to feel guilty. At the same time he regretted that they did not have more time to set everything right:

I don't know what the eventual fate of the Nagas will be – there's nothing we can do to help them that we haven't already done. But it seems a pity that we couldn't have had a few more years to get things straight.<sup>235</sup>

This letter exemplifies the mental position of the British officers on the spot in the Northeast. They were in a paternal way genuinely concerned about the future fate of the Nagas. They were surely averse to the Indian takeover, but they were enough children of their time, enough propagandists of nineteenth century state theory to be utterly opposed to the idea that the Nagas could be independent again. Their antagonism towards the Nagas' demand for independence and later to their struggle for freedom followed from that. As agents in the field of action we may safely assume that as long as they were on the spot they did work for an integration into the Indian union, even though they would have preferred a more protective scheme. This is demonstrated by the fact that they sided with the group of the Nagas that was opposed to complete independence.<sup>236</sup> And although the British officers of the NHD were advising the Nagas and trying to exert their influence on them,<sup>237</sup> we now know that the British officials wanted to have a protected arrangement for the Nagas, but under no circumstances did they want them to become independent, nor did they believe that the majority of the Nagas wanted

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<sup>233</sup> Copy of U. O. (Memo) No. A.11/46 dt. 8.7.47. from J. P. Mills, the Adviser to the Governor of Assam Shillong to the Governor's Secretary U/O, dt. Shillong, 8<sup>th</sup> July 1947, In *ibid.*, paper 71.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> Letter from Pawsey to Archer, dt. Kohima, 18<sup>th</sup> July 1947, In *ibid.*, paper 72.

<sup>236</sup> Letter from Archer to Mayangnokcha, dt. 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1947, In *ibid.*, paper 75-76.

<sup>237</sup> Letter from Mayangnokcha to Archer, dt. Mokokchung, 15<sup>th</sup> September 1947 & Communication to The President of the Naga National Council from members of the NNC, dt. Mokokchung, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1947, In *ibid.*, unnumbered.

that in the first place.<sup>238</sup> The more the NNC demanded independence the more hostile the British became towards them, and even advised their successors to just ignore them. The then president of the NNC Aliba Imti got singled out as hated figure – the caricature of the westernised savage.<sup>239</sup>

### 3.10 Conclusion

The partial conquest of the Naga hills and the light administration that was imposed on them followed from the interplay between, on the one side the metropolitan and global imperial orientation that, as we have learned, was only restrained by its limitations in means and power, and, on the other side from the *raj*'s personnel' inclination to ever further annexations. The retreat from the subcontinent and the hand-over of the Naga hills to the successor creation of the *raj*, the Indian union, was forced on the British by their dramatic loss in standing and power in the course and wake of World War Two. We have seen that there never had been serious contemplation on the side of the British decision-makers to give back the Nagas their independence. This was never a matter of concern to them.

The colonial conquest was followed by the delineation of the area to be permanently occupied and the efforts to acquire the geographical knowledge about it, including about its inhabiting populations. The next step was the enforcement of the monopoly of violence, the disarmament of the population and the removal of the village defences, followed by the levying of house-tax and the installing of headmen responsible for its collection. Then, a labour-force was registered, permanent cultivation was encouraged and *jburning* discouraged. The forests were taken over into British possession, as were rivers, lakes and wild animals. Medical services and schools were established and efforts made to acquire knowledge on Naga languages and society. Immigration was encouraged to supply the labour market. The hard-ware, the infrastructure – public buildings, roads, bridges, paths – were built or extended and the Nagas asked or encouraged to move around, to travel, to go on trade excursions, to appreciate their newly won general freedom, even when it was forced upon them. However, the administrative penetration was incomplete and rudimentary. As we shall see in the following chapter all this had profound but far from determining consequences on the Nagas' socio-political identity formation.

<sup>238</sup> Letter from Mills to Archer, dt. Shillong, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1947. In: *ibid.*, paper 84; Letter from Pawsey to Archer, dt. undated [sometime in October 1947], In *ibid.*, paper 87.

<sup>239</sup> Letters from Pawsey to Archer, dt. 24<sup>th</sup> October and 5<sup>th</sup> November 1947, In *Archer Papers* MSS Eur F 236/76.



## *Chapter Four*

### *The Transformation of Naga Societies under Colonialism*

#### *4.1 Introduction*

In the previous chapter we learned why the Naga hills were partially conquered and how they were administered. In this chapter the aim will be to delineate the consequences the British colonial rule had for the populations of the Naga hills in respect of their socio-political identity formation. It is often argued that the post-independence Indo-Naga war is a child of British colonialism, the result of their devious divide-and-rule policy. The line of argument runs roughly like this: before the British arrival the Nagas originally did not exist as a distinct people and entertained cordial relations with the plains population. Through British categorisation and drawing of administrative boundaries the people of the hills became the Nagas, now separated from the people of the plains. In short, British and missionaries then made the Nagas into Christian nationalists and implanted in them their hatred for the Indians. Striking is here that European agency and its rudimentary rule is ascribed the power to have created radical new political identities.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of the colonial rule the Nagas had an élite that was conscious of their own nation-being, and could consequently form themselves into a national organisation. We may say that five factors – categorisation, administration, Christianity, the First and the Second World War – in their interplay with local agency, were decisive in this. For, since most of the factors were driven or at least imported by foreign agency, it will in the end have been the local people who decided how to act on them, and thus shaped the outcome. The organisation of this chapter will be as follows: first a brief theoretical discussion of the above-mentioned process, followed by a discussion on the possible pre-colonial socio-political organisation of the Nagas, and finally an assessment of Naga identity formation.

#### *4.2 Colonialism, Categorisation, Administration, Christianity, and War*

Colonial empires were conquered by violence, with often devastating consequences for the conquered.<sup>2</sup> Where the colonial powers did not encounter central organised polities, their personnel set out to bring what lay before them into a meaningful order:

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<sup>1</sup> See the critique of the more recent literature on the Nagas in the Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> C. A. Bayly, 'The British and indigenous peoples, 1760-1860: power, perception and identity', In Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (eds.), *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600-1850* (Philadelphia, 1999), pp.

The state, confronted with a diverse set of colonial subjects, set about the task of classifying them. (...) The science of colonial domination required a process of sorting and labelling; early colonial archives are filled with the results of the laborious inquests into local societies earnestly conducted by the first generation of field administrators.<sup>3</sup>

They assumed that these stateless societies were organised in tribes, and tribes were socially, politically, culturally, and even biologically bounded units. Administrators, who turned into anthropologists, were there to identify and understand these tribal units as a basis for indirect rule as Illife demonstrates in the case of East Africa:

The term 'tribe' constituted the pivotal point of the indirect rule in Tanganyika. The colonial administrators refined that in the German period prevalent thinking in racial categories and assumed that every African belonged to a tribe, as every European belonged to a nation. This idea owes itself doubtless to a large degree to the Old Testament, Tacitus and Caesar, and to the academic distinctions between tribal societies, which are based on status, and modern societies, based on contracts, as on post-war anthropologists, who preferred the term 'tribal', rather than the more negative one 'savage'. Tribes were considered as cultural units, which 'do have a common language, a non-complex societal system and an established code of customs'. Their political and societal system was based on kinship. The membership to a tribe was inherited: The history of Africa presented itself as a enormous family tree – small tribes were off-springs of big ones, so that they, as parts of the bigger whole, when needed, could be re-joined again.<sup>4</sup>

Ranger argues that Africans, together with Europeans, invented tribes, that African societies before European arrival constituted itself out of overlapping associations of ideas of social organisation, which allowed for a wide range of possible identities.<sup>5</sup> But when subsequently colonial bureaucrats were striving for effective units for administration, the Africans were striving for effective units in which they could act. The Europeans presumed that Africans belonged to tribes, and the Africans were just doing that, they created them.<sup>6</sup> Ranger is not saying that African

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19-41. The less centralised the harder these societies were affected by their incorporation into the global political economy of the empire (ibid.). Moreover, many epidemic diseases could not sustain themselves among relatively small and isolated tribal societies, i.e. they could not develop antibodies against them, so once exposed to them they suffered heavy epidemics, see Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: the fates of human societies* (London, 1997), pp. 203-205.

<sup>3</sup> Crawford Young, 'Ethnicity and the Colonial and Postcolonial State in Africa', In Paul Brass (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and the State* (London, 1985), pp. 57-93, p. 74.

<sup>4</sup> J. Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 323-324, cf Terence Ranger, 'Kolonialismus in Ost- und Zentralafrika: von der traditionellen zur traditionellen Gesellschaft – Einsprüche und Widersprüche', In Jan-Heeren Grevenmeyer (ed.), *Traditionale Gesellschaften und europäischer Kolonialismus* (Frankfurt/M., 1981), pp. 16-46, pp. 19-20, my re-translation.

<sup>5</sup> Ranger, 'Kolonialismus in Ost- und Zentralafrika: von der traditionellen zur traditionellen Gesellschaft – Einsprüche und Widersprüche', p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

tribes are European constructions, but that they were created by Africans as answer to the colonial situation.

An opposite standpoint is to state, like Maybury-Lewis, that “...Africa which the colonialists conquered was a continent of distinct peoples, who came to be known as tribes.”<sup>7</sup> This would, in contradistinction to Ranger, mean that the term “tribe” is just a new name for something that was already there.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, the classificatory work of the colonial masters would have just identified existing units, and not have stimulated the creation of new ones.

And when we take into consideration, as Connor reminds us, that the term “tribe” was never a hundred percent defined, that it was used, for instance, in Asia in such a way that one people consisted of several tribes (e.g. Pashtunes and Kurds), while in non-Arabic Africa, on the other hand, the term “tribe” was mostly applied to groups that presented separate people (e.g. Ashanti, Hausa, Ibo, Xhosa, Zulu),<sup>9</sup> then the solution that suggests itself is to question, as Young is doing, the defining power of the colonialist and to concede only a modification of collective representations.<sup>10</sup> Young reminds us, for instance, that the French in North Africa had tried and failed to create an overarching Berber identity.<sup>11</sup>

One of the first who questioned the usefulness of the concept of the “tribe” was Edmund Leach. Struggling with the lived complexity in Upper Burma he rejected it as unusable,<sup>12</sup> and as fictitious:

...I would claim that it is largely an academic fiction to suppose that in a ‘normal’ ethnographic situation one ordinarily finds distinct ‘tribes’ distributed about the map in orderly fashion with clear-cut boundaries between them. (...) My own view is that the ethnographer has often only managed to discern the existence of ‘a tribe’ because he took it as axiomatic that this kind of cultural entity must exist. Many such tribes are, in a sense, ethnographic fictions.<sup>13</sup>

Leach demonstrated that social systems and cultures were not congruent,<sup>14</sup> and that societies only could be understood, if one studies them as they are – being in an interdependent relation with each other:

<sup>7</sup> David Maybury-Lewis, *Indigenous Peoples, Ethnic Groups, and the State* (Boston, 1997), p. 53.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>9</sup> Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The quest for understanding* (Princeton, 1994), pp. 107-108.

<sup>10</sup> Young, ‘Ethnicity and the Colonial and Postcolonial State in Africa’, p. 75.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>12</sup> Edmund R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structures* (London, 1964 [1954]), p. XV.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 290-291.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

It seems to me axiomatic that where neighbouring communities have demonstrable economic, political and military relations with each other then the field of any useful sociological analysis must override cultural boundaries.<sup>15</sup>

To what extent new categories concurred with old ones will have to be different in every case, but we can assume, that as a rule, colonial categorisations had to be congruent, at least partially, with existing identifications, to be effective. Further, that assumptions of "...discrete, bounded groups, whose distribution could be captured on an ethnic map",<sup>16</sup> were then as they are today: not corresponding with a more complex and interconnected reality. Neither was the unit monolithic – other units of identification remained intact – nor completely bounded to the outside: the so-called tribes were overlapping socially, politically, culturally, and biologically with other formations. How these networks worked in detail would have to be the topic of intense further research, but how we may have to imagine, at least approximately, the dynamic of more inclusive identity formation and delimitation might become clearer with the following observation of Prasenjit Duara:

Sociologically, communities may be thought of not as well-bounded entities but as possessing various different and mobile boundaries that demarcate different dimensions of life. These boundaries may be either soft or hard. One or more of the cultural practices of a group, such as rituals, language, dialect, music, kinship rules or culinary habits, may be considered soft boundaries if they identify a group but do not prevent the group from sharing and even adopting, self-consciously or not, the practices of another. Groups with soft boundaries between each other are sometimes so unself-conscious about their differences that they do not view mutual boundary breach as a threat and could eventually even amalgamate into one community.

An incipient nationality is formed when the perception of the boundaries of community are transformed, namely, when soft boundaries are transformed into hard ones. This happens when a group succeeds in imposing a historical narrative of descent and/or dissent on both heterogeneous and related cultural practices.<sup>17</sup>

Seen like this, then in the case of the Southeast Asia, including the Indo-Burma region, there are only soft boundaries among the hill people, and Leach considered them as essentially one people. Thus from a hill people perspective the potential for hard boundaries runs between hills and plains.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>16</sup> Young, 'Ethnicity and the Colonial and Postcolonial State in Africa', p. 74.

<sup>17</sup> Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago, 1995), pp. 65-66.

<sup>18</sup> Edmund Leach, "The Frontiers of "Burma"", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Oct. 1960, pp. 49-68.

However, the relative impact of colonial categorisation and of the other factors associated with colonialism on the life and consciousness of the local populations depended on the respective penetration of the lived reality through the colonial actors, their assistants and institutions. Communications, density and effectiveness of administration, proximity to economic and administrative centres, and the change of the mode of production – from subsistence economy to employment, from barter to money economy – all played a role.<sup>19</sup> Dependent on the relative confrontation with the Other and its categorisation will have been the impact on self-identification.<sup>20</sup>

An important factor for the reformulation, extension and strengthening of social identities in the colonial encounter were the standardisation and textualisation of languages and the introduction of school systems.<sup>21</sup> This was mostly done by missionaries, who functioned as informal extension of the colonial state in the area of cultural politics:

In organising their labours, mission congregations faced immediate decisions on language. Unlike the state administrators, they did not really have the option of working only in the metropolitan language, as the nature of their task compelled much more intimate contact. Missionaries thus set themselves to the task of identifying, classifying, and reducing to writing selected African languages. On the basis of the most slender knowledge, resource-maximising choices were necessary, to identify a language which ideally could serve throughout the territorial domain of the congregation. The very act of producing grammars and dictionaries, printing manuals and catechism materials (and, for Protestants, Bibles), and using this new mission-standard form as the base for the embryonic primary schools and evangelical instruction introduced a radically new element into the dynamics of linguistic change in Africa.<sup>22</sup>

Missionary activities were often only carried out, or allowed and supported by the colonial authorities, where there was no prior existing larger political unit and/or a high, ergo book religion, and where it was perceived of having the potential for contributing to pacification. Especially if we recall the experience of Europe, where the standardisation of languages was, in established states, the open project of the state (as in Northwestern Europe), or among a self-perceived cultural nation the project of a cultural élite (as in Central Europe), we may concede to it an unifying effect. Even more so since missionaries trained locals to carry out this work, and where the former failed to achieve the objective, the latter were often more successful. This task necessitated the establishment of educational and religious centres that provided a network in which members of beforehand often different and more localised societies now conversed in a

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<sup>19</sup> Young, 'Ethnicity and the Colonial and Postcolonial State in Africa', p. 85; Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, 1985), p. 75.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking ethnicity: arguments and explorations* (London, 1997), passim.

<sup>21</sup> Young, 'Ethnicity and the Colonial and Postcolonial State in Africa', p. 76.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

common medium. But in stressing local agency, we have to see education and Christianity, made accessible by missionary translations, as welcome new means to counter white dominance, which the converts could turn to their own advantage, and which had an empowering and liberating effect. So did, for instance, the impact of the existence of indigenous missionaries convey the message of equality.<sup>23</sup>

Further, social identity by its very nature depends on the context: group borders tend to change with the political context. One of the most important factors of the political context are, in Horowitz's view, territorial borders, which tend to give rise to persistent groups, because they are structuring the context for group interaction.<sup>24</sup> When a territory, for example, is inhabited by two (in Horowitz' term) ethnic groups, then the membership to either of them is important. If the territory becomes divided, the importance of this membership declines and other identifications are stepping to the fore, like region, religion and politics. During the colonial time territorial horizons were widened in Africa and Asia and led to a corresponding subgroup-amalgamation. The colonial masters created territories out of loosely connected villages and regions, which led to, according to Horowitz, the formation of many new groups, for example the Malay in Malaysia, the Ibo in Nigeria, Kikuyu in Kenya, Bangola in Zaire, Moro in the Philippines.<sup>25</sup> Colonial authorities and missionaries did bring them into a relationship or tied them into a coherent ethnic unit:

Some amalgams emerged because other, lower-level identities were no longer apt, though many such groups also retained the older identities as alternatives, available for frequent invocation in appropriate circumstances.<sup>26</sup>

Horowitz cites the examples of the Malay and the Kikuyu. Both are presenting cohesive units, who are still able to split along places of birth, but:

Everywhere...participants in the process of amalgamation had to adjust their identity upward to conform to the new and larger environment. (...) They changed their identity by a process of shifting and sorting among the range of peoples they now confronted. ...identity was forged through the interplay of self-definition and definition by others.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Andrew Porter, "Cultural Imperialism" and Protestant Missionary Enterprise, 1780-1914', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 25, No. 3, September 1997, pp. 367-391.

<sup>24</sup> Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, p. 66.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Even when differences inside the cohesive group were perceivable, the colonial context brought together groups whose differences were larger in extent. Identities with small differences transformed in opposition to those with bigger differences to cohesive units, that means that a heterogeneous group per se could transform itself, in a even more heterogeneous context, into a homogenous one. Affinities were stressed and differences that were important in the past, were neglected. The previously heterogeneous Malays today are a homogeneous group vis-à-vis the Chinese immigrants:

If assimilation involves the simplification of identities in a more heterogeneous environment, differentiation entails drawing fine distinctions among people in a less heterogeneous environment,<sup>28</sup> [and] Changing context can work for fission as easily as for fusion, and lower and higher levels of identity can coexist and be activated as territorial boundaries change.<sup>29</sup>

Taking this into account, not the drawing of arbitrary borders was important, but the creation of territories that by far surpassed in size preceding political units.<sup>30</sup> This could lead to the adaptation of prior existing social institutions, which were not posing a danger to colonial rule, meaning that prior existing kinship-based groups got more inclusive “...one of the most powerful influences on the scope and shape of “we” and “they” has been the scope and shape of political boundaries.”<sup>31</sup> Colonial units of administration turned into the dominant frames of reference for their inhabitants.<sup>32</sup> The more the colonial administration effectively penetrated the respective territory, the more this was the case for its population. Otherwise, at least, and most probably in the first place, was the local élite affected by the drawing of colonial boundaries, their journeys and acts that took these as their frame of reference. Anderson’s insights into the effects of the journeys of the élite, are based on the élite of the dominant groups inside colonial empires.<sup>33</sup> Yet the dynamics Anderson describes surely worked in the same way, although on a smaller scale, for those segmentary groups who came under colonial administration and, as hinted at before, were subject to the work of missionaries. In the case of many segmentary societies, living on the margins of the colonial empires, administration and missionary networks served in the way Anderson describes for the élite of the dominant populations. The contact with western ideas, in especially the idea of the nation, affected group formation in the colonial empires. The diminishing legitimacy of the European dynasties and the upcoming of the nationalisms of

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 76. Yet was only consequential when improved communications and increased interaction made these boundaries effective and meaningful.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>32</sup> Young, ‘Ethnicity and the Colonial and Postcolonial State in Africa’, p. 80.

Europe forced the European aristocracy to jump on the bandwagon of nationalism and to perpetuate an official policy of nationalisation.<sup>34</sup> They wanted to save their empires with the help of the national principle.<sup>35</sup> The European model of the nation-state with its component of planned nationalisation-campaigns turned into a model<sup>36</sup> that was exported via imperialism to Asia and Africa. Financial considerations made it expedient to create a bilingual élite in the colonies, who, through the language of their colonial masters, got access to print-media and to western ideas, and therewith to the "...models of nationalism, the nation-being and the nation-state."<sup>37</sup> This bilingual élite was denied career opportunities in the colonial metropolis, and only found employment in their colonial units of administration. On their journeys inside these units, between the peripheries and the centres, they developed a growing sense of community.<sup>38</sup> In the beginning these bureaucrats were not very many, but because of the growing needs of the colonial state in the twentieth century, they were joined by a whole army of bilingual intermediaries. They got their education in highly centralised colonial school systems, which corresponded structurally to the bureaucratic units of the colonial empires. The centralised form of the education system resulted in the young élite undertaking journeys from all parts of the colonial administration units to their centres, journeys which were similar to those of the bureaucrats. In those centres they developed a sense of community, with those who shared the same experiences.<sup>39</sup> Thus the administrative unit turned into their world, inside which they, on the basis of a common language for administrative duties, developed an imagined community. This élite were provided with models of nationalism via the print media and herewith the instruction for putting them into action.<sup>40</sup>

Yet, as already noted, we are not to understand these factors as starting out on a blank page, but as adapted to the existing situation:

The state and its agencies certainly penetrated and modified society itself, but they entered it as tree-roots grow into rock – along its extant fractures and potential flaws. Dissatisfied claimants and feuding subalterns often sought such intervention against their enemies. Social groups usually knew and sometimes had to account for their members, and enumeration was used and understood.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Die Erfindung der Nation: Zur Karriere eines folgenreichen Konzepts* (Frankfurt, 1983 [*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*]).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 132-133.

<sup>41</sup> Sumit Guha, 'The Politics of Identity and Enumeration in India c. 1600-1990', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2003, Vol. 45, pp. 148-167, p. 155.



Further, as had been said already in Chapter Two, political communities and societies existed prior to the advent of European colonialism:

Community structures of feeling and communication survived into the colonial era, and used the colonial public sphere to assert their claims. Some fissures closed and others opened. ... These communities had always been political; they now responded to the dialectic of colonialism and the opportunities of a new politics without being thereby transformed into creatures of the colonial or post-colonial imagination.<sup>42</sup> ...the social processes of identity formation continued independent of the official classifications.<sup>43</sup>

That is to say we have to do more research into local agency that always has to be placed into the interplay with the wider framework. We have to take both seriously, and we have to take into account the limitations of a foreign power stretched thin on the ground, unless we may adopt its self-image of an omnipotent culture-hero (or villain). To try to ridicule people's assertions of their own difference as colonial, post-colonial, modern etc. constructs an assertion that often is formulated

...precisely in opposition to a foreign-imperial presence. (...) [and] ...entails the people's attempt to control of the technical and political means that up to now have been used to victimize them. ...an attack on the cultural integrity and historical agency of the peripheral peoples, ...[and is to] do in theory what imperialism attempts in practice.<sup>44</sup>

Having made space for this authoritative voice, it is time to explore briefly the pre-colonial socio-political organisation of the Naga hills.

### ***4.3 The Pre-Colonial Socio-Political Organisation***

To understand the consequences of colonialism we have to try to fathom the pre-colonial starting point. In Chapter Two we tried to embed the Nagas in their pre-British colonial political landscape and showed in the example of the Tengima group of the later Angamis that there were groups around the Naga hills which had a consciousness that was political and not much different from nationalism. We will now set out to sketch a little more closely the socio-political design of several groups that later would be called tribes and today make up parts of the Naga nation.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 162-163.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>44</sup> Marshall Sahlins, 'Goodbye to *Tristes Tropes*: Ethnography in the Context of Modern World History', *Journal of Modern History* 65 (March 1993), pp. 1-25, pp. 4 and 7.

<sup>45</sup> The origin of the word "Naga" is not clear, despite efforts by anthropologists and historians (see, G. Kamei, 'Origin of the Nagas', In R. Vashum, Aleube Ihlelung et al (eds.), *Nagas at Work*, (New Delhi, 1996), pp. 7-20, p. 7).

However, since our data is unfortunately itself the product of colonial investigation we will consider our findings as preliminary.<sup>46</sup> The easiest to say is that the social organisation of the Nagas consisted of crosscutting ties among different groups. To be more precise the individual and the household were integrated into the society via being part of different units like lineages, clans, age-groups, classes, *morungs*<sup>47</sup> and villages. These attachments were sometimes complementary and at other times in conflict with each other, as when a *morung*, for instance, had members from two or several clans, which opened the possibility for conflicting loyalties to either *morung* or clan. The Konyaks considered the loyalty towards the clan as of paramount importance, while the Aos, on the other side, rated the one towards the *morung* as higher. But in general no one was allowed to kill someone from his own clan.<sup>48</sup> A child, as a rule, belonged to the clan of the social father, and clans often stretched over several villages. These clans, sharing and extending through a number of villages came closest to something like a tribe-type community. A clan, per definition, is a kinship group with an assumed common ancestor. Clan relationships among the Nagas, however, could be manipulated to establish the wanted constellation between lineages. The clan defined how one was to address others, what one was allowed to eat, who one could marry and whom ones most likely foes were.<sup>49</sup>

A village consisted of different groups. The respective importance of these lineages, clans, age-groups, *morungs* and classes depended on the emphasis which the different communities put on them, and varied from one to the other. Among the Semas and Thendu Konyaks the structuring principle were the rules of residence, among the Aos and Thenkohs this role was taken on by the age-groups, and among the Angamis by kinship relations. The respective

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There are references to the *kiratas* in old Sanskrit texts and Indian scholars argue that *Kirata* means "Indo-Mongolian". Then the term "Naga" would be derived from Sanskrit *Naga* – snake, or *Ng* – mountain/hill. Another theory says that the "Naga" developed out of the Assamese *Noga* – mountain-dweller. Further, there is the theory "Naga" stems from Sanskrit *Nanga* – naked. Ptolemy, who visited India in the second century A. D., writes in his *Geographia* about the *Nangalogae* (Sanskrit *loga* – people), of whom was assumed that they lived in eastern India. Others assume "Naga" is a derivation from the Tibeto-Burmese *Nok*, it meaning "people", or see it as originated from the language of the Kachari, where the word *Nok* or *Nokhar* means warrior – there were frequent armed conflicts between Kacharis, Angamis and Zeliangrong (R. Vashum, "Some reflections on Naga society: An Anthropological perspective", in *ibid.*, pp. 61-77, p. 63). Yet, it is sure that "Naga" was an exogenous term, used in a wider sense for all hill peoples by the Assamese, Ahoms and Bengalis (Y. L. Roland Shimmi, *Comparative History of the Nagas: From Ancient Period Till 1826* (New Delhi 1988), p. 49). It only was popularised and accepted as an endogenous and generic term through the use of it by the British (Kamei, 'Origin of the Nagas', p. 10). For the possibility that the Aryans, in the course of their conquest of the subcontinent, called all hill people "Nagas", see A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India* (Calcutta, 1992 [1967]), pp. 65 and 319.

<sup>46</sup> Possibly in the way of oral history as conducted in Uganda by Ronald R. Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity: The Origins of the Acholi of Uganda Before 1800* (Philadelphia, 1994).

<sup>47</sup> In societies in which the *morung* was an important institution children in the age between 6-12 years stopped sleeping in their parents house, and instead moved into the *morung*, where they were prepared for their role as adults, and where they stayed until marriage, see Julian Jakobs, *The Nagas: Hill Peoples of Northeast India* (Stuttgart 1990), p. 56.

<sup>48</sup> Jakobs, *The Nagas: Hill Peoples of Northeast India*, p. 53.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

dominant units among these groups therefore were the village, the *morung* and the village council, and the clan.<sup>50</sup>

Among the Thendu Konyaks, the chiefs, called *angs* were not only political rulers, but also had ritual functions. They served as medium and vehicle of and for fertility. Nevertheless, the power of the *angs* could be challenged, for example in the case of failing crops or the loss of tribute from other villages, a rebellion could be staged and the village might move to a more egalitarian system.<sup>51</sup> This must have happened in the case of the Thenko Konyaks, whose villages were ruled by councils of elders, and in which the *morungs* were the largest buildings, not those of the *angs*, as it was among the Thendus. Both communities knew the differentiation between classes of aristocrats and those of commoners. Yet, while the Thendus were organised in commoners and aristocrats, the differentiation was without meaning among the Thenkohs. Jakobs, in following Leach,<sup>52</sup> sees herein two possible transformations of one form of society.<sup>53</sup>

Among the Aos the political unit was the village.<sup>54</sup> Every village was divided into two or more *kebel*,<sup>55</sup> corresponding to a territorial division. The *kebel* were constituted of members of different clans.<sup>56</sup> Every *kebel* had 2-3 *morungs*<sup>57</sup> whose members came from different clans, but always only from the respective *kebel*. The individual identified him-/herself with the *morung*.<sup>58</sup> The organisation of the village was based on age-groups, which moved periodically into the *morung*, and that, depending on age, were responsible for different social tasks. The political affairs of the village were looked after by a village council. There was no village chief. The village council only assembled to deal with important decisions, and consisted of delegates of the different *kebel* councils, which again split into independent councils, made up of members of the different *morungs*. Every one of these councils was independent on its respective level,<sup>59</sup> disputes were decided on and solved by the councils of the concerned levels.<sup>60</sup> Each decision-finding was preceded by a simultaneous noisy exchange of different opinions. This led the British to conclude that there was no-one among the Aos who had real power.

We already learned about the Angamis and the absence of any real authority among them, and consequently they were considered as the most egalitarian of all Naga groups.<sup>61</sup> The political, social and religious unit of Angami society was the clan, reflected in fortifications between the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>52</sup> Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structures*.

<sup>53</sup> Jakobs, *The Nagas*, p. 70.

<sup>54</sup> Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, pp. 176-177.

<sup>55</sup> A *kebel* is the territorial division of villages, sometimes more sometimes less obviously marked.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 73-76.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 73-76.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 181-185.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>61</sup> Jakobs, *The Nagas*, p. 72.

territorially separate living clans sharing a village. Clans of the same village often were engaged in a headhunting relationship with each other. These clans were by no means rigid institutions, but tended to split due to exogamous marriage rules. A village only united, if at all, in times of war with an external enemy.<sup>62</sup> The political organisation of the Angamis was not completely clear even to Hutton who worked for decades among them. There must have been something like chiefs in every clan, according to Hutton, whose influence rested on their personal achievements, but manifested itself again, if at all, only in times of war. Their authority was nominal, and orders were only followed if they coincided with the wishes of the community, stressing again the consensual outlook of Angami society. Disputes mostly were discussed by an informal council of elders, under the participation of the public. The discussions went on until a consensus was reached, the decisions, however, were neither binding nor always followed.<sup>63</sup>

The Rengmas divided each village into several *khels*, the lines between which were clearly drawn for everyone, yet not marked physically in any way. Every *kel* was inhabited by only one clan or, if otherwise, dominated by one, after which it also was named. Each *kel* had at least one *monang*,<sup>64</sup> representing an important institution,<sup>65</sup> its state indicating the wealth of the respective *kel*.<sup>66</sup> The members of a *monang* were also mostly members of the same *kel* and the *monang* represented the primary unit of identification.<sup>67</sup> A village chief was chosen from one clan at a time and his office went from one clan to the other. He had no compulsory measures at his disposal and could be dismissed by public opinion. The respective clans chose the one among them whom they considered as the most able when it was for them to fill the office of the village chief. Disputes between clans often resulted into the decision to split, and could result in such a distancing that they could develop into marriage partners.<sup>68</sup> It often happened that villages and/or clans headhunted on each other, but at the same time exchanged marriage partners. In that case, women who originated from the enemy village, could, despite headhunting, visit their parents, and enjoyed immunity for that time.<sup>69</sup>

The basis of Sema society was either the village, or a part of it, the *kel*, under the control of a hereditary chief. The chief and his patrilinear relations (kinship) constituted the pivotal point among the Semas. He had considerable powers, but was assisted by a council of elders when important decisions had to be made or serious disputes had to be settled. A *kel* consisted of

<sup>62</sup> J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas: With Some Notes on Neighbouring Tribes* (Bombay 1969 [1921]), p. 109.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 142-144. We have discussed the Angamis' decision-finding process at some length in Chapter Two.

<sup>64</sup> J. P. Mills, *The Rengma Nagas* (Gauhati 1980 [1937]), pp. 55-56.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

members of several exogamous clans, yet played only an organisational role in the area where the territory of the Semas bordered that of the Angamis.<sup>70</sup>

Among the Lhotas the village represented an independent political unit inside the tribe, and it was only in times of war that these villages united under the leadership of the most powerful of them. War was waged only against villages of other tribes.<sup>71</sup> Headhunting inside the tribe was forbidden. Outside of times of war each village respected the sovereignty of the other one.<sup>72</sup> Every village was divided into two or more *khels*, the division sometimes marked by a narrow strip. *Khels* were mostly inhabited by members of several clans, and each *kel* had a *morung*.<sup>73</sup> The affairs of a village were dealt with by a council of elders coming from the whole village, only when the village was very big, then the council consisted of the most influential persons of the different *khels*.<sup>74</sup> Disputes were settled by a council of elders with the participation of all concerned.<sup>75</sup>

These sketches of the social and political organisations of different societies are idealised and standardised descriptions for which always only a part served as model for what was claimed to be covered. From the data presented here, I would say that Aos and Lothas had a different and more elaborate system than the others, and that theirs was not simply the democratic end of the scale (that in my view was wrongly ascribed to the Angamis who tended to be more dominated by pure clan politics), but an elaborate system that seemed to incorporate more segments of society and to have in-built checks and balances that may have made it possible for large populations to live together in a democratic way. However, before we proceed, we have to state the obvious, namely that these sketches, though presented and received as extra-temporal truths, were taken at a particular time (that is in the main during the first quarter of the twentieth century) and only conditionally transferable to, for instance, earlier periods. There is some evidence that the Angamis might have had real chiefs at an earlier stage,<sup>76</sup> like their neighbours the Semas still had.<sup>77</sup> Among the Konyaks the population of a village killed the chief and his family, if unsatisfied, and installed his son as chief, yet with lesser powers.<sup>78</sup> Other villages of the Konyaks had given up their democratic practice only shortly before the contact with the British, and invited *angs* from hierarchically organised villages to settle among them.<sup>79</sup> The democratic villages of the Konyak were those bordering their democratic neighbours the Aos and were the

<sup>70</sup> J. H. Hutton, *The Sema Nagas* (London 1921), p. 122ff.

<sup>71</sup> J. P. Mills, *The Lhota Nagas* (London 1922), p. 96.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>76</sup> Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, p. 142.

<sup>77</sup> Jakobs, *The Nagas*, p. 72.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 70-2.

same that had been annexed by the British in 1910, both facts that might have contributed to the decision in favour of a more democratic constitution. Moreover, in the year of the annexation the SDO Naga Hills still speaks that “There are Chiefs in every village who command a lot of authority.”<sup>80</sup> The Lhotas, on their part, once had powerful chiefs and then also developed a more egalitarian system of ruling councils of elders.<sup>81</sup>

At the beginning of British colonial intrusion into the Naga hills, the Nagas were not politically united, there was no central authority, nor did they carry the wish to unify. Rather, they were organised in a multitude of independent political systems. The Nagas as a unit existed, if at all, only in the generalisations of the plainsmen. For the inhabitants of the hills themselves this question most probably did not arise at that point in time. Though we have evidence of clan-alliances and of villages that enacted some influence and could demand tribute, the political landscape remained fluid, and far from anything like effective rule, not to speak of any governance. Yet Jacobs sees the Nagas as having constituted one society: “The answer is that Naga society is one society, an aggregate of communities who share a set of structures or principles in common, but who emphasise them differently.”<sup>82</sup> Jacobs, in writing that, employs here an ahistorical argument that simply is wrong, since, as we have learned earlier, in Chapter Two, there is simply no scientific way to define a people, and, the answer to that question always has to be found in politics,<sup>83</sup> and thus in history. Kamei even writes that the categorisation of Nagas according to cultural features proves difficult, since many neighbours share the same,<sup>84</sup> and let us now see how the British tried to tackle this question.

At the beginning of the 1870s the British still knew only a little about the populations living in the Naga hills, except that they had to be Nagas. Butler, who was Deputy Commissioner (DC) in the Naga hills in 1873, left us the following description of the area of settlement of the Nagas:

Roughly speaking, they may be said to extend from the Kopili River on the west to the Bori Dihing on the east. Towards the north they occupy the whole hill country bordering upon the plain districts of Nowgong, Sebsaugor, and Luckhimpore. In a southerly direction we now know positively that they not only extend up to, but actually cross over, the great main watershed between the Irrawady and

<sup>80</sup> *Proceedings of the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam (PEBA)*, 1910, P/8340, Nov. 1910, From The Subdivisional Officer Mokokchung, To The Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, No. 744G., dated Mokokchung, the 26<sup>th</sup> March 1910, p. 52 and *Proceedings of the Chief Commissioner of Assam (PCCA)*, 1913, P/9110, August 1913, Doc. No. 53, From J. E. Webster, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, To The Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Districts, No. 250G., dated Kohima, the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1913.

<sup>81</sup> Jacobs, *The Nagas*, p. 72.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>83</sup> Charles Keyes, ‘Presidential Address: “The Peoples of Asia” – Science and Politics in the Classification of Ethnic Groups in Thailand, China, and Vietnam.’ *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61, no. 4 (November 2002): pp. 1163-1203, p. 1171.

<sup>84</sup> Kamei, ‘Origin of the Nagas’, p. 10.

Brahmaputra, how far, however, they really go down and extend into the valley of the Kaindwen or Ningtih<sup>85</sup> has never yet been clearly ascertained.<sup>86</sup>

He went on:

...our knowledge of a great portion of the Naga country really rests almost entirely upon 'pure conjecture', and that beyond the fact of its mountainous character we know nothing at all about it up to the present date...[and called the Naga Hills a]...very terra incognita...<sup>87</sup>

Butler tried to isolate the tribes as units, seeing at the same time their relatedness. The Arung Nagas of northern Cachar were for him part of the Kacha Nagas, whom he again saw as related to the Angamis.<sup>88</sup> The Angamis did not know that they were so described, as Butler found out, except those among them who could speak Manipuri or Assamese. They called themselves "Tengimah" and "Chakromah", yet were further sub-divided in groups and sub-groups that called themselves again differently. Therefore Butler decided to use the term "Angami" for the sake of simplicity.<sup>89</sup> The Khezamis, living east of the Angamis, were difficult to differentiate from the latter by Butler, but still he understood them as a different unit.<sup>90</sup> Only much later the Khezamis would be seen as belonging to the Angamis.

About the Semas and Rengmas the British knew only where they settled, and on the Lhotas only that they divided themselves into three groups. In the Sibsagar district Butler recognised Hatighorias, Assyringias, Dupdorias and Namsangias, to each of whom he allocated a number of villages and he saw these four groups as four different tribes. The names of the groups were all terms given by the Assamese.<sup>91</sup> Later, these four groups would merge into the tribe of the Aos.

Other denominations of tribes, like "Tablungia", "Jaktoongia", "Mooloong", "Changnoi"<sup>92</sup> and many others, were later to disappear. The British adopted these names from the Assamese, who called the groups according to the valleys through which they came into the plains.<sup>93</sup> In the beginning, the British perceived smaller units of villages as tribes, whose boundaries were small streams and rivers, and easy recognisable. Later on, however, the tendency

<sup>85</sup> The nowadays Chindwin in western Myanmar.

<sup>86</sup> Captain Butler, 'Butler's account of the Naga tribes, 1873', In *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*, Alexander Mackenzie (Calcutta 1884), pp. 77-88, pp. 77-78.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 400.

was towards the identification of larger units,<sup>94</sup> and despite the cursory knowledge and the well perceived differences, there was no doubt for Butler about the unity of the “race”:

I may here remark that the shades of difference dividing one Naga tribe from another, especially if that other happens to be a close neighbour, are often very slight indeed. Thus, if we compare an Angami of Mezomah with a Kutcha Naga of Paplongmai, or with a Khezami of Kezakenoma, we should probably say they were very much alike; but let us miss over the nearest link or two, and compare the Angami with the Zami or Lahúpá, and we see how almost totally unlike they are. Portions of the dialect, manners, customs, and dress of any one tribe we may like to take up will constantly keep cropping up in other tribes as we go on, thus clearly proving the unity of the race.<sup>95</sup>

Yet other opinions existed as well, the *Assam Census Report* of 1881 writes:

The term Naga covers a variety of languages as well as of races. The ‘Kacha Nagas’ of North Cachar have no connection as far as we are aware, with the Nagas or the Nagas in the hills south of Sibsagar, of whom several branches exists, differing in tongue or at least in dialect (...) as far as the Patkoi range; and in the Naga Hills District there are four races, the Angamis, Lhotas, Rengmas and Semas, who differ completely both in language and in dress...<sup>96</sup>

and in an article of *The Pioneer* from March 24<sup>th</sup> 1870 the term “Naga” was seen as a generic term for a whole group of tribes, who inhabit a certain geographical region:

...but they have no inter-tribal relations, no common bond of union. Each village is self contained and self governed; stockaded to meet the open attack; and ever on its guard against the treachery of its nearest neighbour. The smaller villages it is true obey for their own sakes the behests of the more powerful; but in most things each community stands alone.<sup>97</sup>

The Nagas would only unite to fight off enemies from outside, like the Manipuris or British, but with the external threat the internal coherence would also disappear.<sup>98</sup>

Woodthorpe, on the contrary, in 1881 divided those then known as Nagas into “Angami” and “non-Angami”, who, for him, represented two different people.<sup>99</sup> And Hutton later, after a long service first as sub-divisional officer (SDO), then as DC among the Nagas with extensive studies among and of them, concluded, that it was impossible to differentiate between those

<sup>94</sup> Butler, ‘Butler’s account of the Naga tribes, 1873’, p. 86.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Assam Census Record (Extracts from)’, In Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*, pp. 537-550, p. 549.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 556.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.



groups called Nagas and other groups living in Assam and Burma,<sup>100</sup> thus confirming Kamei's statement above. He found affinities between Kacha Nagas and Bodo-Kacharis, and between the Changs and Konyaks, and the Kachins and Singphos.<sup>101</sup> At the same time the Nagas themselves fell into a variety of linguistic sub-groups and a multitude of cultural features,<sup>102</sup> manifesting themselves even in physical appearance and cementing their image as being a mongrel race:

...just as each tribe, almost, contains traditions which cannot be reconciled with a homogeneous origin, so marked differences of type and physique are everywhere traceable, not only as between different tribes, where they are in some cases mostly pronounced, but as between individuals in the same tribe.<sup>103</sup>

The question "Who are the Nagas?" was overshadowed for the British by the question what kind of political organisation their adversary had. Between the rivers Dikhu and Doyang the British had, on earlier expeditions, encountered villages that seemed to have proper chiefs, yet west of the Dikhu, in an area better known to the British, the villages seemed to be ruled in a democratic way. Hence Butler wrote in his report:

...that a Naga nowhere really accepts a chief in our sense of the term. Chiefs they do have, but they are merely the nominal heads of each clan, men who by dint of their personal qualities have become leaders of public opinion but without the least particle of power beyond that given them by the vox populi and that only pro tem, upon the particular question that may happen to be exciting attention at the time being. The Government of every Naga tribe with whom I have had intercourse is a purely democratical one, and when ever anything of public importance has to be undertaken, all the Chiefs (both old and young) meet together in solemn conclave, and then discuss and decide upon the action to be taken, and even then it often happens that the minority will not be bound by either wish or act of the majority; and as to anyone single Chiefs exercising absolute control over his people, the thing is unheard of.<sup>104</sup>

Woodthorpe reported about the Angamis in 1881: "...virtually every man does that which is right in his own eyes, and is a law unto himself."<sup>105</sup> Both Butler and Woodthorpe were influenced by their contact with the democratically organised groups of the Nagas.

The British, in Jakobs' view were confronted with what presented itself to them as an ethnographic chaos: "...hundreds, if not thousands, of small villages seemed to be somewhat similar to each other but also very different, by no means sharing always the same customs,

<sup>99</sup> R. G. Woodthorpe, 'Meetings of the Anthropological Institute', In Verrier Elwin (ed.), *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century* (Bombay 1969 [1881]), pp. 46-82, p. 49.

<sup>100</sup> J. H. Hutton, 'Introduction', In Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*, pp. XI-XXXIX, p. XVI.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XX.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XVI.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XXI, and only to indulge afterwards in an intense calf-study of the Nagas (*ibid.*, p. XXII-XXIII).

<sup>104</sup> Butler, 'Butler's account of the Naga tribes, 1873', p. 86.

<sup>105</sup> Woodthorpe, 'Meetings of the Anthropological Institute', p. 56.

political system, art or even language.”<sup>106</sup> Moreover, the Nagas seemed to live in a constant state of inter-tribal warfare,<sup>107</sup> in which even parts of the same villages seemed to fight against each other, while neutral groups in-between went ahead with their daily routines unhindered.<sup>108</sup>

Though the classification of the different groups as “Nagas” was not without difficulties, the British had to agree with the fact that had been established before their arrival that the hill dwellers had been ascribed with the generic term “Nagas”. Subsequently they had to begin with the identification of effective administrative units, the tribes.

Today the tribe is an important unit of identification and no Naga contemporary has any doubts about her tribal belonging, as there are no doubts about being a Naga. Moreover, tribes played, and still play, an important political role in the history of resistance, and as product of a well-aimed divide-and-rule policy carried out by the Indian state, tribalism today provides one fig-leaf for the Indian administration not to tackle the Naga question in earnest.

In the course of the gradual extension of their control over the Naga hills the British first preferred natural borders, then a mixture of the former and perceived tribal borders, in order to draw, if possible, tribal borders and not to split tribes by this.<sup>109</sup> Then the British government asked its officers on the spot to write studies about the subjugated societies, which would serve as handbooks for future administrators, something to base their policy on, since, as Henry Balfour writes in his foreword to Hutton’s monograph about the Semas:

Lack of ethnographic knowledge has been responsible for many of the misunderstandings and fatal errors which have tarnished our well-meant endeavours to control wisely and equitably the affairs of those whose culture has been evolved under environments which differ widely from those of civilised peoples.<sup>110</sup>

The British government made an effort to understand the hill communities since it aimed at the cheap administration of them. Misunderstandings, resulting out of ignorance, led to problems, insurgencies, and those had to be countered with costly punishment expeditions, that were to be avoided, if possible. As a result several voluminous monographs were written about some of the groups that had been identified and delimited as tribes. Woodthorpe still wrote that the Nagas identified themselves with their home-village, or sometimes with a group of villages.<sup>111</sup> British knowledge in the beginning was based on old Ahom maps that divided the Naga hills into districts that supposedly referred to different tribes. The names of the districts were at the same

<sup>106</sup> Jakobs, *The Nagas*, p. 17.

<sup>107</sup> Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 122.

<sup>108</sup> Woodthorpe, ‘Meetings of the Anthropological Institute’, p. 56.

<sup>109</sup> Sir Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam From 1883-1941* (Guwahati 1997 [1942]), p. 159.

<sup>110</sup> Henry Balfour, ‘Foreword’, in Hutton, *The Sema Nagas*, pp. XV-XVIII, p. XV.

<sup>111</sup> Woodthorpe, ‘Meetings of the Anthropological Institute’, p. 47.

time names of the different tribes, derived from the names of the paths into the plains, which were used by different groups. The Nagas themselves did not know anything about these names.<sup>112</sup> It was then up to the British to understand the bases for these categorisations. Ahom practice had resulted in the division into smaller units, i.e. small congregations of villages represented tribes, also for the British in the beginning. Therefore, in the reports of the nineteenth century one often comes across tribal names that later on do not turn up again, or tribal names get an adjectival direction attached or simply village names. In the course of time, however, with more knowledge, the tendency was to be more inclusive:

The gradual extension of British control of the area was therefore accompanied by a number of tools which helped to create a classificatory system according to which the diversity of facts could be arranged. Photography, map-making, the collecting of objects, anthropological and anthropometrical research, all contributed both to knowledge and to a subtle form of control: indeed, some would argue that these were one and the same thing.<sup>113</sup>

However, as the British acquired more and more knowledge about the Nagas, the writing of monographs about separate tribes did not become much easier. The culture of the Semas, for example, was for Hutton just a conglomeration of different elements, which they adopted on their migrations from other groups.<sup>114</sup> Where there was a common border with other groups, they mixed with them and they were differentiated again among themselves.<sup>115</sup> The ideal type of a Semas became a question of degree and so Hutton's monograph about the Semas reads like a constant cross-referring to neighbouring groups. Among the Angamis it even seemed impossible for him to represent all differences inside the tribe: "Such an undertaking would necessitate a separate monograph for each Angami village."<sup>116</sup> Therefore he concentrated on the villages of the Tengami group.<sup>117</sup> Mills had problems with the Rengmas "...describing adequately and simultaneously three widely sections of the same tribe..."<sup>118</sup> and in the obligatory chapter on the special character of the tribe he starts out: "No part is more difficult to write, for I know so many individuals, all differing one from the other, that it is hard to say that this or that trait is typical for the race."<sup>119</sup> Mills did not seem to have such problems with the Aos, among whom he found six cultural characteristics, which differentiated them from their neighbours, the Semas and

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., which is unlikely, at least those who travelled to the plains must have been confronted with the external terms for them.

<sup>113</sup> Jakobs, *The Nagas*, p. 17.

<sup>114</sup> Hutton, *The Sema Nagas*, p. VII.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>116</sup> Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, p. 11.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, p. V.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 44-

Lhotas,<sup>120</sup> and there was one difference that for Mills manifested itself even in the physical appearance, albeit difficult to grasp: “...Aos have a distinct average appearance of their own which distinguishes them from other tribes, though it is difficult to put into words just where the difference lies.”<sup>121</sup> Only on the fringes of Ao settlement area did Mills get into difficulties with definition and delineation: “Yachum and their small neighbourhood (...) speak a dialect resembling Chongli,<sup>122</sup> but follow Phom or Konyak customs to a great extent. Yachum recently told me that they really did not know what they were – Aos would not recognise them as Aos and their trans-Dikhu neighbours would not accept them as kinsmen.”<sup>123</sup> The Lhotas were generally believed to be a rather new formation and their origin of mixed nature,<sup>124</sup> hence Mills’ monograph reads similar as Huttons’ about the Semas: a relative description - while one feature differentiates them from one group, the same feature identifies it again with another. Yet Mills, at last, could isolate one characteristic unique to the Lhotas: the tendency to commit suicide, mostly after tragic love affairs.<sup>125</sup>

Mills and Hutton lived and worked long enough among the Nagas to be aware of the complexities, but as children of their time they subscribed to one people, one race, one origin, one language etc., and therefore tried to identify the pure forms and when and where the mixing happened, which they encountered every day:

No Naga tribe is of pure blood, but the area which they inhabit has been the scene of a series of immigrations from north-east, north-west and south, and the different stocks introduced in this way have entered into their composition.<sup>126</sup>

Hence tribal entities could only be represented as either ideal-typical or as relative.<sup>127</sup> Still the same sense of duty that made them reveal the incongruities also encouraged the British to at least try to relate to existing structures in their process of categorising. So we learn from Mills that the Lhotas were only known to the British government under this name, and they called themselves “Kyon”, meaning “human” in their own language. Further, they had also a generic term for western and eastern Kyon, respectively called “Ndrung” and “Liye”.<sup>128</sup> In addition oral traditions

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<sup>120</sup> Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, p. 1.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>122</sup> An Ao-dialect.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>124</sup> Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>126</sup> Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, p. XXXV.

<sup>127</sup> If Hutton and Mills had started out not as administrators but as professional anthropologists of the nascent discipline social anthropology they surely would have smoothened the dissonance and presented monographs on neatly demarcated tribes.

<sup>128</sup> Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*, pp. 1-3.

testified a common origin of Lhotas and Southern Sangtams, Rengmas and Semas,<sup>129</sup> and relate to us that parts of the Aos were driven out<sup>130</sup> or assimilated,<sup>131</sup> that refugees of the Semas were ancestors of Lhota-clans,<sup>132</sup> and that both - Lhotas and Rengmas - confirmed to have formed one common tribe in the past.<sup>133</sup> The same was the case with all the groups other than the Lhotas. The Aos called themselves "Aor", possessed a tribal consciousness, and fenced themselves off vis-à-vis other groups.<sup>134</sup> Hutton wrote on the Semas that they, without having the respective organisations, nevertheless possessed a clan- and tribal consciousness,<sup>135</sup> and the Konyaks called themselves "Yamenu Ha", composed out of two clans, called "Then Ko" and "Then Du".<sup>136</sup> Were these historical facts or invented traditions? We have to keep in mind that both, Mills and Hutton, wrote in the 1920s, several decades after the subjugation of most of the groups concerned here.

All tribes were divided into phratries (compositions of several clans) and clans that more or less influenced types of rule, marriage rules, war and headhunting. Yet, those phratries and clans did not stop at the limits of the respective tribes, but had their equivalents in all other neighbouring groups, serving for instance as marriage partners and in this way had population exchanges as a consequence. Thus a network of relationships between the tribes developed,<sup>137</sup> which made the borders fluid and therefore also the therewith delineated units, called tribes or not. The same was true for the periphery of the tribes designed as Nagas, where they lived in interaction with other groups that today are not Nagas.

So it seems that units were there that could be called tribes, but they were not the sole ordering principle, not a unified whole, so they could split and rearrange, and consequently were not hermetically sealed and self-reproducing.<sup>138</sup> Rather to the contrary, they were embedded in a network of, at least, social relations, with possibly the religious, the political ones following from that. The Naga tribes had soft boundaries, which could have allowed for a process of fusion with relative ease. The lack of communications and possibly also of hard boundaries, however, neither

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>133</sup> Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, p. 4.

<sup>134</sup> Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, p. 1.

<sup>135</sup> Hutton, *The Sema Nagas*, p. 121.

<sup>136</sup> *Proceedings of the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam (PEBA)*, 1910, P/8340, Nov. 1910, From The Subdivisional Officer Mokokchung, To The Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, No. 744G., dated Mokokchung, the 26<sup>th</sup> March 1910, p. 52.

<sup>137</sup> Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*, pp. 92-95.

<sup>138</sup> The formation of tribes is a continuous process. Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*, counts 17 tribes; Verrier Elwin, *Nagaland* (Guwahati, 1997 [1961]), counts 14; Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, 35; Kamei, 'Origin of the Nagas', 41; and R. Vashum, *Nagas' Right To Self-Determination: An Anthropological-Historical Perspective* (New Delhi, 2000), even 49. Even though we acknowledge that these authors partially took different geographical units as frameworks of reference, there is an undeniable tendency towards multiplication. Tribes split, form alliances, change into tribes - all that makes one

made this process of wider nation-building possible nor necessary. If we take this as the pre-colonial starting point, then we now may try to find out what consequences the British colonial period had for the social-identity and nation-formation of the groups that would develop into the Nagas.

#### ***4.4 Colonial Conquest, Rule and Impact on Naga Identity***

British colonial rule in the Naga hills was always portrayed as a success story: it stopped headhunting and perpetual warfare, and brought peace and prosperity. Even the Nagas themselves today look upon the time under the British as having been greatly beneficial. This, however, is nostalgia, resulting from a contrast of the past with the bleak present of the ongoing military occupation.

Contemporary reports in the wake of conquest from the Naga hills painted a dark picture on the dramatic deterioration of the living conditions. Fields and grain stores were destroyed, epidemics of small-pox and cholera were rampant, the British demanded house-tax, supplies in rice, and pressed the Angamis into the forced labour of coolie work. So, the political agent major T. B. Michell reported that the house-tax of 2 *rupees* was the maximum that the Angamis were able to pay and consequently he recommended dropping the extraction of rice from them.<sup>139</sup> Michell and the brigadier general J. S. Nation were arguing for the establishment of permanent transport arrangements that meant the hiring of coolies and ponies from somewhere else, since the Nagas were so averse to what the reports then called excessive seizure for coolie labour. To keep the peace other means of transport had to be used.<sup>140</sup> And still in 1884 the DC NHD noted:

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wonder if there was not just only a new name given to an old thing, even though collective identities during British colonial time became wider and more inclusive.

<sup>139</sup> *India Foreign Proceedings – Political (IFP-P)*, Vol. P/1743, Aug. – Sept. 1881, Aug. 1881, Document 628, Major T. B. Michell, Political Agent, Naga Hills, to Secretary. CC Assam, dated Kohima, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1881, pp. 659-662, p. 659.

<sup>140</sup> IFP-P, Vol. P/1916, Jan. 1882, Doc. 88, Brigadier – General J. S. Nation, Commanding Eastern Frontier District to Quarter-Master-General in India, Head – Quarters, dated Shillong, 25<sup>th</sup> June 1880, pp. 91-92:

...the experience we have gained up to the present time clearly shows that, as long as the force in the Naga Hills is maintained at its present strength, it can only be fed by means of an independent transport. Reports from the political and military Officers now at Kohima all show that the Nagas are perfectly willing to submit to our rule in every way except one – and that is the excessive demand for forced labor. This they object to so strongly as to say openly that, if enforced, it will again cause them to rise against us. It is quite probable that, as they settle down, they will give labor voluntarily and in sufficient quantities as they are, as a rule, fond of money; but they are utterly averse to being seized for labor, and there is no doubt that such a practice, carried to the great extent which has hitherto been necessary, is a most fertile cause of discontent and ill-feeling which might at any time burst out into rebellion. (...) If we are to retain possession peaceably of the Naga Hills, it is imperative that we should as much as possible avoid the pernicious and dangerous system of forced labor...

And *ibid.*, Document 101, Political Officer Naga Hills to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, dated Kohima, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1880, pp. 101-103:

I have mentioned that whatever labor is required from this district must be impressed. No free labor is obtainable. The Nagas have not been accustomed to do the work of coolies, and there is nothing they dislike so much. During the late expedition large numbers of them were compelled to work, and even

Hillmen generally have a strong dislike to any restrictions on their liberty ...[t]hey are too well off to necessitate recourse to seeking employment. They can earn an easier livelihood by cultivating their fields or by trading than would be offered under the most liberal terms Government could give.<sup>141</sup>

The Nagas not only had an aversion towards dependant labour, but also could make a better living without it. Either they had to be dispossessed of their means of production, or they had to be made to want to enter into dependent work.

The NHD under British rule was part of the Province of Assam. The district was divided into the two sub-districts of Kohima and Mokokchung. The headquarters for the whole district were in Kohima. There the DC was posted, who was responsible for the whole and also functioned as sub-divisional officer (SDO) for the sub-district of Kohima, both connected by a bridle path. Mokokchung was the base of the SDO. Among the most important tasks the DC and SDO had to perform was the estimation and collection of taxes, as well as the settlement of disputes.<sup>142</sup> The DC had nearly unlimited powers and only in extreme cases was he to get the permission of the chief commissioner (CC) of Assam, and he had to write an annual report for the British-Indian government.<sup>143</sup> The administration was supposed to be based on the principle of personal rule, not only on an apparatus or an institution.<sup>144</sup> Present were a veterinary surgeon, a surgeon, an assistant of the DC, recruited among the Anglo-Indians,<sup>145</sup> and four British officers, who commanded the paramilitary police-battalion of the Assam Rifles, manned mainly by Gurkhas or members of other hill tribes. The British also had created a regular police force, whose jurisdiction was limited to the city of Kohima and the road leading to Manipur.<sup>146</sup>

In villages without chiefs the British asked the village population to elect or decide on one chief who was then supposed to function as the representative of the village vis-à-vis the British government, and had to be confirmed in office by either the DC or the SDO.<sup>147</sup> These chiefs, called *gaonburas*, turned into the representatives of the British administration. Granted official authority, they were empowered to collect taxes or functioned as village police officers, entitled

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now I find coercion necessary whenever labor is required for work in the station, or for assisting in bringing in supplies. Any large requirements for labor which must be impressed would cause general disaffection...

<sup>141</sup> *Proceedings of the Chief Commissioner of Assam (PCCA)*, Military Department, Shillong, September 1884, Doc. 3, DC NH to The Personal Assistant to the Chief Commissioner (CC) of Assam, dt. 19<sup>th</sup> March 1884, pp. 3-4.

<sup>142</sup> Mills, *The A o Nagas*, p. 404.

<sup>143</sup> Asoso Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study* (Delhi, 1974), p. 109.

<sup>144</sup> P. D. Stracey, *Nagaland Nightmare* (Bombay, 1968), pp. 12-13.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>146</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study*, p. 110.

<sup>147</sup> Mills, *The A o Nagas*, p. 407.

to settle minor disputes, and could impose fines up to 50 *rupees*.<sup>148</sup> As sign of their authority they either received a scarlet jacket or blanket.<sup>149</sup>

The British employed interpreters, called *dobashis*, among whose tasks it was to translate from the different languages into Nagamese, a regional lingua franca, and to advise the DC or SDO in matters of culture and tradition of the respective groups. They were, by virtue of their office, the guardians, i.e. the interpreters, of traditions.<sup>150</sup> The *dobashis* received, like the *gaonburas*, scarlet jackets and blankets as signs of their office.<sup>151</sup> The British tried to decide disputes on the basis of tradition, "...except where it is repugnant to our sense of justice...",<sup>152</sup> for which they needed the *dobashis*, about whom Mills wrote:

They are very carefully picked men and the posts are much sought after, for though the pay is not high, the prestige is great. Care is taken that no tribal interests are overlooked. For instance, at Mokokchung there are interpreters from every tribe of the Subdivision. Among the Ao interpreters the interests of Ancients and Christians, of Chongli, Mongsen and Changki and of each phratry are represented.<sup>153</sup>

Minor disputes, however, were decided by the *gaonburas* and the councils of elders, in order not to subvert their sense of responsibility. Despite being not valid in the NHD, justice was dispensed of by the DC and SDO in the spirit of the *Indian Penal Code* and the *Codes of Criminal and Civil Procedures*.<sup>154</sup>

The taxes per annum and per household for the Angamis were three *rupees*, for the other groups two, and for foreigners five.<sup>155</sup> The *gaonburas*, old and sick people and those having served with the Naga Labour Corps in France, were exempted from taxes, as were government servants, whose salary was below 30 *rupees* a month. As noted in the previous chapter, a register for every village was started, listing all houses, those taxed and those exempted. The number of the houses was periodically checked by the DC, SDO and their assistants, also revising and/or granting tax-exemptions.<sup>156</sup> The actual collection of taxes was done by the *gaonburas*, who received for that a

<sup>148</sup> Shibani Kinakar Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-East India* (New Delhi, 1973), pp. 33-34.

<sup>149</sup> Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, p. 409.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 406.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 409.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 406.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* That the *dobashis* were also important in another respect was already stressed in the wake of conquest: "I am to remind you that these interpreters are also delegates, who are accredited to the political officer on the part of the principal villages and tribes of the Naga hills, and that besides acting as interpreters, they serve as the medium for all communications between the political officer and those whom they represent. They reside at the head-quarters, and convey the orders of the political officer to their villages, and in various ways render themselves useful to him." C. J. Lyall, Officiating Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, to Sir A. C. Lyall, Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, IFP-P, Vol. P/1743, Aug. - Sept. 1881, Aug. 1881, Document 283, dated 20<sup>th</sup> June 1881, pp. 239-240.

<sup>154</sup> Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, p. 406.

<sup>155</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 110.

<sup>156</sup> Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, p. 404.



commission of 12.5 per cent of the revenue. In addition, a kind of indirect taxes for the population was their duty to look after the bridle paths, carry loads for government expeditions, and if necessary, to supply them with provisions. Besides this, they had to provide construction material for inspection bungalows and other government buildings, which were spread all over the country. For all other possible public works the Nagas were paid.<sup>157</sup>

This burden was heavy at times. The former governor of Assam Sir Robert Reid reported complaints among the Angami in the years 1886-87, due to the extensive recruitment for forced labour for the army, in addition to the 16,500 Nagas, who were enlisted as porters.<sup>158</sup> In 1891-92 the British again enlisted 20,500 Nagas for forced labour.<sup>159</sup> This is in line with the situation described at beginning of this section.<sup>160</sup>

In return the Nagas received security. The battalion of Assam Rifles guaranteed the complete end to raids inside the district. Further, all homicides committed inside the distance of a two-days journey outside the district borders, i.e. in the Tuensang area, were punished. In addition, the Nagas had access to free education,<sup>161</sup> free treatment, medicine, and food in the dispensaries, and a team of veterinary surgeons looked after the working animals, free of charge. Further, rivers were bridged that previously were impossible to cross for six months a year, and thus trade flourished, due to the improved communications and the abolition of headhunting.<sup>162</sup>

However, the increased interaction and communication inside the Naga hills, and again between them and the plains, resulted in a devastating spread of diseases.<sup>163</sup> And so it happens that the overall impact of the civilising mission on the Naga hills was in Mills eyes a negative one, and that we find him writing about the good old headhunting times.<sup>164</sup>

The conversion of the administrative centres into little towns, the above-mentioned improvement of communications, and the payment for services, food and other goods had the

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p. 405.

<sup>158</sup> Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam From 1883-1941*, p. 110.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>160</sup> Yet Fürer-Haimendorf tells us that many Nagas volunteered, especially as porters for punitive expeditions, since these were the only occasions, where they could get into contact with the killed, and might even be able to lay hand on a finger or an ear and thus, according to downgraded requirements due to the colonial ban on headhunting, could acquire the status of a head-hunter. Very often it was sufficient to touch a killed one with ones' own *dao*. Fürer-Haimendorf wrote in his report about the participation in one such punitive expedition, that the Nagas, who participated in it as porters, lived in permanent fear that the differences could be settled peacefully and that therefore no-one would be killed, see Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, *Die nacketen Nagas: Dreizehn Monate unter Kopffägern Indiens* (Wiesbaden, 1946 [Leipzig, 1939]).

<sup>161</sup> According to Yonuo the Nagas had to pay fees. Until 1903-04 there were 22 primary schools in the NHD, one secondary school and two special schools. More than two thirds of the 647 students were in primary schools, the literacy rate was ca. 1 per cent, see Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 110.

<sup>162</sup> Mills, *The A o Nagas*, p. 405.

<sup>163</sup> Mills, *The A o Nagas*, p. 405.

<sup>164</sup> Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*, p. 48.

monetization of trade as a consequence and the emergence of a small community of shopkeepers and petty entrepreneurs in the hills.<sup>165</sup>

Chaube further sees the erosion of the clan and for the first time the introduction of a territorial authority in this area as a product of the British administration:

...at the beginning of British rule ... the people's primary loyalty was to the clan. Inter-clan disputes used to be solved either in conferences or through clashes. The 'village authority' under the new procedure was a territorial chief and the disputing clans were to accept his verdict.<sup>166</sup>

The delegation of disputes to the DC or SDO widened the perspective of the village population up to the borders of the district and weakened the orientation towards kinship in favour of a territorial one.<sup>167</sup>

The *dobashis* were the bridge between the British and the *gaonburas* and were, according to Chaube, the first privileged class in the Naga hills. They were educated and came mostly from wealthy families, and in the beginning there was no other job possibility for them. Only much later were administrative positions made accessible to Nagas, which were then, in most cases, filled with *dobashis*.<sup>168</sup> These young Nagas, who either were able to acquire higher education in Assam or Bengal, due to the financial power of their families, or on grounds of the help of church institutions, turned into a new élite and they began "...to look upon Europeans as models and tended to become pro-western in taste and attitude."<sup>169</sup> They received their education in English, which gave them access to western literature and ideas. Traditional claims to their land were now fed with the concepts of self-determination, democratic principals and nationalism, and later on, would also be termed as such. The English language enabled Nagas from all areas to communicate for the first time with each other and represented "...eventually a common unifying bond among themselves as well as with the outside world."<sup>170</sup> This new élite claimed leadership in the political as well as religious sphere.<sup>171</sup>

Colonial administration was reduced to a minimum. With reference to Jenkins and Young we are in a position to assume that the relative confrontation of the Nagas with colonial categorisation was nearly non-existent. The category "Naga" remained irrelevant for the majority of the Nagas.

<sup>165</sup> Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-East India*, p. 41.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>169</sup> Lal Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Missionary Movement in Northeast India With Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai hills 1894-1947* (Shillong, 1988), p. 117.

<sup>170</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 155.

<sup>171</sup> Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Missionary Movement in Northeast India With Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai hills 1894-1947*, p. 117.

The beginning monetization and the extension of the ways of communication also remained modest until the Second World War. Among the collective identities tribe became more relevant, though the clan and other foci of identity retained their importance. The impact of the administrative borders was also of much less relevance than the determining role that is ascribed to them by Anderson and Horowitz, simply due to the persistence of social, cultural, economic and political ties which could not be superseded or substituted by the weak structures of the colonial administrative unit. Even though the categorisation of the Nagas by the British remained for the average village people negligible in its impact, it nevertheless was not lost on the élite of the Nagas. They began to think in the category of the “Nagas”, thus seeing themselves as a nation that was entitled to self-determination, but were also aware about the fact that the nation in its consciousness about itself was yet to be realised.

#### *4.5 Christianity as Factor and Function*

Christianity nowadays is seen as the strongest factor responsible for the Naga nation formation and is subject to intense research. This is partly due to sponsorship of Naga scholars by theological studies, and partly because today's Nagas take Christianity as proof of their right to difference and thus as an important focus for identification. That is to say that other works than this deal more extensively with Christianity than will be possible here, but also that to take Christianity as the prime mover is an ahistorical and incorrect retrospective reasoning, as I will try to show.

Christianity, and the work of the missionaries, was seen as one of the major, if not the principal cause for the lack of integration of the hill tribes into Indian society, for the desire of the Nagas for independence, and finally for their separatist movement.<sup>172</sup> Consequently the Indian government later accused the missionaries of lending support to the separatists and asked them to leave the region:<sup>173</sup>

A unique feature of the political developments in the hills areas of the Northeast is the prominent role by Christians. The politically active tribal elites in the hills are mostly Christians, and hence in these areas Christians played a leading role in political developments of all kinds. When there was conflict between different political philosophies and objectives within a single hills area, the leadership on both sides was made up of Christians. The Naga and Mizo rebellions were led by Christians who sometimes sought general public support for their movements by describing them as something akin to Christian crusaders; but the peace movements in both areas have been initiated by the churches and the leaders of the government who reject the separatism of the rebels are also Christians.<sup>174</sup>

<sup>172</sup> Frederick S. Downs, *North East India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Bangalore, 1992), p. 18.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>174</sup> Frederick S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India: Historical Perspectives* (New Delhi, 1983), pp. 47-48.

The constitution of the Naga federal government (the government of the Naga resistance, inaugurated 1956) proclaimed Christianity as state religion, while at the same time guaranteeing freedom of religion.<sup>175</sup> All of Nagaland's (post-colonial) political agents are and were Christians,<sup>176</sup> although still in 1951 only 66,7 per cent of the Nagas were Christians.<sup>177</sup>

English colonial policy, initially in the hands of the British East India Company (EIC) was highly sceptical of missionary work, rooted in the fear that missionary activities might provoke hostile reactions from locals, thus bearing the potential for disturbing peace and business.<sup>178</sup> In 1813, however, the British parliament lifted all restrictions that had been imposed until then on missionary work in India.<sup>179</sup> Local British officers in India's Northeast were from an early moment on convinced that missionary work among the hill tribes, untouched by either Hinduism or Islam, would have a positive effect on their relations with the EIC.<sup>180</sup> Consequently the Baptist Missionary Society opened a mission-centre in Gauhati in 1829 on the invitation of the then chief commissioner (CC) of Assam, David Scott.<sup>181</sup> Eight years later, on the request of major Francis Jenkins, three missionaries of the American Baptist Missionary Society – reverend Nathan Brown, O.C. Cutter and Miles Bronson – came into Upper Assam, to start their work there.<sup>182</sup> At first they established themselves in Sadiya, then later in Sibsagar. The American missionaries were very pleased about the possibility of working in eastern Assam, since they saw the hill tribes of this region as a spring board to China, the real object of their proselytising desire.<sup>183</sup>

Bronson made survey trips to the Nagas and was seen by them as an agent of the EIC that was pushing advances into their territory. Nevertheless, Bronson was able to take up his work at the beginning of the year 1840, in Namsang, a village of the Konyak Nagas, and was allowed to open a school there. Although it proved difficult for him to find students. The

<sup>175</sup> Downs, *North East India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, Footnote 32.

<sup>176</sup> Downs, *Christianity in North East India: Historical Perspectives*, p. 48.

<sup>177</sup> Richard M. Eaton, 'Conversion to Christianity among the Nagas, 1876-1971', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 21, 1, (1984), pp. 1-44, p. 18, table 2. Therhuja sees Christianity as the most important factor in the newer history of the Nagas: "If one responsible dynamic factor were to singled out for an overall change in the life of the Nagas, it would undoubtedly be the introduction of Christianity among them." See, Khrieleno Therhuja, 'The Christian Church among the Angami Nagas', In K. Suresh Singh (ed.), *Tribal Situation in India* (Simla, 1972), pp. 294-301, p. 294.

<sup>178</sup> Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism*, p. 2.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.* Scott as well as Jenkins had to get permission for that from the government in Calcutta (*ibid.*). Despite and because the government tried as much as possible to keep missionaries out of the plains, where otherwise complications were expected and therefore a policy of neutrality in religious matters was pursued, did it indirectly encourage the Assamese authorities to invite Christian missionaries to take up work among the hill tribes of the north-east to contribute to their pacification, see S. K. Barpujari, 'Early Christian Missions in the Naga Hills: An Assessment of their Activities', *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XLVIII, Part I., April 1970, S. 427-435, p. 427.

<sup>183</sup> Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism*, p. 23.

Konyak were of the opinion that only the young men related to the village chiefs were capable of learning to read and write. All others were either indispensable for field- or housework. Yet Bronson's efforts bore fruit in the sense that all chiefs from the neighbouring villages did send their children to his school. Notwithstanding that they all took the opportunity to learn reading and writing; no-one converted to Christianity. The attitude and behaviour towards Bronson changed in a sense that the initial distrust gave way to a helpful familiarity. However, due to sickness, Bronson had to give up his work among the Konyak. This meant the end for a long time for any missionary work among the Nagas, which only resumed again in 1871 with the arrival of reverend E.W. Clark in Sibsagar.<sup>184</sup>

Bronson was perfectly in line with contemporary British strategy when he was advertising his Christianising campaign, in order to receive support from the EIC: it would lead to an adaptation of the Nagas to and an inclusion of them into the market economy, and seemed to equal or go along with their subjugation under and incorporation into the EIC's rule. Bronson was helped by British plantation owners to set himself and his family up among the Nagas. He informed Jenkins, the agent to the governor general of the Northeast Frontier, about his plan to introduce the cultivation of green tea among the Nagas, which could then be sold to Mr. Bruce (one of the plantation owners who had helped him), but the profit, however, would fully belong to the Nagas. Bronson was of the opinion that this would cultivate the Nagas' "industrious habits", stimulate the market, civilise the Nagas, and would tie them to the EIC, and, above all, they seemed more than willing to do so:

The Nagas appear to be ready to enter into the business as well as to cultivate anything that would be useful and profitable I feel desirous of introducing several things such as wheat Potatoes, - garden vegetables of all sorts - also Cotton which would grow here finally - apples would grow here and all fruit trees. The change in people is striking when I first came up here, men women and children were running this way and leaping down precipices and fleeing to the woods for their lives now they are ready to keep about my house all day and each one seems desirous to supply with some thing which I need...<sup>185</sup>

Jenkins, in his report to his superior, supported the idea of encouraging the Nagas to cultivate tea, remarked that Bronson was the first white to reside among the Nagas and to have learned their language, that they had accepted him, and that he Jenkins thought it was to have a civilising effect and that it would work for a positive reception of British power; further, that Bronson possibly would receive financial support from the Assam company or other independent

<sup>184</sup> Barpujari, 'Early Christian Missions in the Naga Hills: An Assessment of their Activities', p. 429.

<sup>185</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/38, 4<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> May 1840, Jenkins to Maddock, Secy. Govt. India, Pol. Dept., FW, dt. 14<sup>th</sup> April 1840, includes undated letter from the Missionary Bronson to Jenkins [now directly under Government of India].

speculators. Yet Jenkins asked the government to support the school that Bronson had started with 100 Rupees a month, in order to give permanency to this institution, and added: "The Nagas...have no priesthood and nothing like a received religion, and there are consequently no religious prejudices to oppose or offend."<sup>186</sup> On May 11<sup>th</sup> 1840, the assisting secretary to the government of India, H.V. Bayley informed Jenkins that the government had approved of his request for one year "...in consideration of the peculiar circumstances ... to the civilization of the wild Naga tribes...", although it is not "...consistent with the principles upon which the Government has hitherto acted...".<sup>187</sup> More than two months later, on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1840, Bronson reported to Jenkins about problems; his family had fallen sick due to the rains, there was no line of communication open with the plains due to the same reason, and that it was anyhow impossible to carry on without an elephant. Jenkins beforehand had asked Bronson to inquire about copper, and Bronson had been told by the Nagas that the copper works were done by upper Nagas, but he himself, Bronson, thought they were coming from Ava, the Burmese empire. Bronson's plan was to tour the upper hills in the cold season, yet the Nagas did not give him any information "...concealing everything they can."<sup>188</sup> Finally, Bronson asked Jenkins if anything could be done to make the Nagas feel dependent in their internal affairs, i.e. he encouraged him to subjugate them, since he perceived their freedom as detrimental to any endeavour to their civilising:

...no thing that is so highly to prevent their improvement in civilization at least as their perfect independence of feeling and this is strengthened by the ready sale of their salt – which is ample to support them should they increase a hundred fold..<sup>189</sup>

Bronson was aware of the EIC's plan to annex half of the Nagas' salt wells and to incorporate them into the magistracy of Jaipur (then Jaypore), and at the same time to request the Nagas to work for the British. Bronson was definitely in favour of this plan, hoped that this would make them listen to him, and claimed that the late Purunder Singh had had these Nagas under Ahom control, but that they now were without authority, something he disliked and so he made a strong point for their subjugation: "Nothing keeps these people under like the feeling that they are subject to the directions of someone else."<sup>190</sup> They refused to cultivate tea and used him when they thought that it was to their benefit, but otherwise refused to listen to him; accordingly Bronson asked for their political and economic subjugation. Not much later Bronson abandoned

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/38, 4<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> May 1840, Doc. 129, H.V. Bayley, Assist. Secy. Govt. India., dt. FW, 11<sup>th</sup> May 1840.

<sup>188</sup> IPC Vol. P/195/47, Bronson to Jenkins, dt. Nam Sang, Naga Hills, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1840, included as copy in Doc. 82, listed under FW, 9<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1840, Jenkins to Rev. Bronson, Naga Hills.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

his work among the Nagas and left the Naga hills, due to a death in his family and his own and his sister's sickness. However, he again had argued for the removal of their independence, so that they would be willing to become civilised, industrious, and plant and manufacture tea.<sup>191</sup> Taking Bronson as an example, it becomes easily comprehensible why foreign missionaries failed in their work, and why it was only when Christianity was taken up by locals for proselytising, that the new religion took any notable hold in the hills. Bronson's episode also illustrates how the Nagas perfectly understood the missionaries' complicity with the colonial project, which aimed at their subjugation, and that they not only tried to use Bronson for their own benefit vis-à-vis the British, but also to get advantages inside their own local field of power.

Renewed missionary activity started in 1871 with the missionary Clark, who started to work among the Aos. The territory of the Aos is south of Sibsagar, and was then outside British jurisdiction. Members of the tribe, however, often visited the plains and that was how Clark met Subongmeren, a Naga from the Ao village Deka Haimong. Clark encouraged the Christian Assamese Godhula to learn the language of the Aos with the help of Subongmeren. Both were later sent by Clark to Deka Haimong to spread Christianity there. In November 1872 they succeeded in bringing a group of nine Nagas to Sibsagar, who allowed Clark to baptise them. After their return, these converts built a chapel in their home village. Clark several times visited Deka Haimong and was allowed to baptise 15 more Nagas. He planned to open a permanent mission among the Aos and asked permission for that from the then DC of Assam colonel Hopkinson. Hopkinson, on his part, was sceptical towards this plan, especially because of the *Inner Line Regulation* (1873), and therefore submitted a correspondingly negative report to the government.<sup>192</sup> The government, nevertheless, gave Clark the permission, with the qualification not to do any commercial business and to start the mission among the Aos at his own risk. In Winter 1876 Clark and the Christian Aos founded the new village Molungyimsen, in the vicinity of Deka Haimong.<sup>193</sup> In March 1878 Clark's wife joined him there. Clark visited neighbouring villages, established schools, and handed them over to teachers who were to reside in the respective villages. He transcribed the language of the Aos, translated the gospel, and at the same time tried to adapt the translations as much as possible to the cultural understanding of the

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> IPC Vol. P/196/2, 15<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1841, Doc. 124, listed under FW, 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. 1841, Jenkins to Maddock, dt. 8<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1841.

<sup>192</sup> Barpujari, 'Early Christian Missions in the Naga Hills', p. 429.

<sup>193</sup> The presence of Clark and the other Christians in the village, and the latter's refusal to take part in what they perceived as heathen practices, posed a challenge to the non-Christians of the village. Clark reacted in the founding of a new village – Molung/Molungyimsen – which remained the centre of Baptist missionary work until 1894, when it was shifted to Impur, see Gordon E. Pruett, 'Christianity, history, and culture in Nagaland', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (New Series), 1974, No. 8, pp. 51-65, p. 52.

Aos.<sup>194</sup> By 1885-1886 the church among the Aos had 79 members and many children visited the schools of the mission. Clark saw the necessity of sending more missionaries to the Nagas, to begin the work in the more innermost part of the Naga hills. Therefore in 1894 two more missionary-families arrived and they opened the new mission station at Impur, eleven miles north of Mokokchung.<sup>195</sup>

Clark also wanted missionary work among the other tribes of the Nagas and in 1878 asked reverend C.D. King to take up his post amidst the Angamis. For this, however, the British government refused to give permission, on grounds of the hostile attitude of the Angamis towards the British. This notwithstanding, King proceeded into the Naga hills and began with preparations to start a mission station at Samaguting, close to Dimapur. The uprising of the Angamis in Oktober 1878, however, forced him to flee to Sibsagar. After the uprising had been put down, King returned and opened, with the help of an Assamese Christian, a mission and a school in Kohima. The Baptist church of Kohima was organised in 1883 and by 1887 had only seven members. King's family had to leave the Naga hills due to illness and Dr. Rivenburg replaced King by February 1887, continuing his work there until he retired in 1922. Rivenburg established a Christian community, opened schools and wrote Christian literature in the Angami language. Among the Lhotas, living north-east of the Angamis, the missionary family Witter had started to work as a recruit of Clark's encouragement, so that by the end of the nineteenth century, missionaries were active only among the Aos, Angamis and Lhotas.<sup>196</sup>

Their work only very slowly bore fruit, despite great efforts, which was partly due to the reluctant attitude of the British and their lack of protection, since they feared that unnecessary interference contained the risk of unrest and wars. Moreover, the work of the mission was seriously hampered by the insufficient means of communication, the lack of funds and other adversities, but above all by the Nagas' extremely hostile attitude towards the missionaries.<sup>197</sup> Even though the latter tried not to be perceived as too much in alliance with the British, the Nagas saw in them the agents of those who through their incursions into their land challenged their sovereignty.<sup>198</sup> Clark did not make friends in trying to outlaw headhunting (before the Aos came under British jurisdiction), escaped only by chance an assassination attempt,<sup>199</sup> and Clark's

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<sup>194</sup> Barpujari, 'Early Christian Missions in the Naga Hills', p. 430. Pruett writes that Clark neared himself as much to the Ao way of life as his own Christian self-understanding and American heritage could allow him, see Pruett, 'Christianity, history, and culture in Nagaland', p. 53.

<sup>195</sup> Barpujari, 'Early Christian Missions in the Naga Hills', p. 431.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 431-432.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 432-433.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 433.

<sup>199</sup> Pruett, 'Christianity, history, and culture in Nagaland', p. 53.



assistants, together with the converts, were discriminated against, threatened and put under pressure by their fellow Nagas, to return to their old faith.<sup>200</sup>

Limited success among the Aos came only in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The revitalisation of the Ao church followed on a crisis caused by the decision of the missionaries to tighten the conditions for church membership. Ao church members often broke the rules, laid down by the missionaries, like the ban on the consumption of opium and rice-beer and on the participation at traditional religious practices, and it was thus decided in 1894 to disband the Molung church and to reconstitute it again under a stricter code. The result was a drastic reduction of the membership: only one Naga accepted the new code of conduct, and in the beginning of 1895 a second Naga doubled this number of church members to two, after 20 years of missionary work. However, one Naga with the name Caleph, to whom readmission into the reconstituted church had been denied, together with an Assamese friend, also living in Molung, started to preach with great zeal in a number of Ao villages. Although not being church members, they impressed many young people through their work, and succeeded in gaining 200 members for the Ao church by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>201</sup>

Around the same time the mission centre was transferred to Impur, close to Mokokchung, and developed into an important educational centre. There preachers and teachers were trained for churches and Christian schools in the whole of the northern Naga hills. Around the turn of the twentieth century the Nagas developed a greater interest in education. The Aos became more active in the spread of the gospel among their own people as well as among other tribes. In 1905 there were around 551 church members from different tribes, though the majority were Aos. The growth of the Christian community alarmed the guardians of tradition, and in the villages around Impur they tried to force the converts to participate in religious festivals and to obey the *germa*<sup>202</sup> – days during which it was forbidden to work. This case was presented to the DC, who decided in 1907 that the Nagas had the right to free choice of religion and that they could not be forced to support any religion but their own. This represented a closing of ranks with those who were then called traditionalists and heightened the pressure on the Christians, with the effect that it strengthened Christianity's case and filled the church with life.<sup>203</sup>

By 1915 the Ao churches had 1,700 members. Then World War One became something of a turning-point in the Christian movement among the Nagas. Approximately 4,000 Nagas went with labour corps to France and the Middle East, an experience that not only changed fundamentally the worldview of those who had lived through it, but also of those who were told

<sup>200</sup> Barpujari, 'Early Christian Missions in the Naga Hills', p. 433.

<sup>201</sup> Downs, *Christianity in North East India*, p. 127.

<sup>202</sup> *germa* is the term for ritual-religious days, during which certain activities were taboo.

<sup>203</sup> Downs, *Christianity in North East India*, p. 128.

about it. This was especially true for young and educated Nagas, who by now became convinced that a new time had been established, against which resistance was futile, so that more and more tried to participate therein and to acquire parts of it in the form of Christianity.<sup>204</sup> Independent churches had been established in nearly all Ao villages by the end of the 1920s, and Christian Aos were active in proselytising their neighbouring tribes, and by 1950 17,000 of the 50,000 Aos had become Christians.<sup>205</sup> However, the most dramatic rise in the Christian population was between 1941 and 1951, from 34,000 converts out of 189,641 to 93,423 out of 205,950, ergo from 17.9 per cent to 45.7 per cent, indicating that the Second World War played a major role. The percentage then rose to 52.9 per cent in 1961 and to 66.7 per cent in 1971.<sup>206</sup>

The pace in which the Naga tribes adopted Christianity varied considerably. Even today, there are Naga tribes who are nearly completely Christian, and those in which Christians are still in the minority. After the Aos who in the second decade of the twentieth century converted in large numbers, came the Semas in the late 1920s, followed by the Lhotas in the 1930s. Resistance among the Angamis against Christianity started to crumble away in the 1930s and considerable numbers of conversions among other tribes occurred in the 1940s.<sup>207</sup> The conversion of the Konyaks, the biggest tribe of the Nagas, only really started after the end of the British *raj*.<sup>208</sup>

The conversions among Aos and Semas were not conducted by professional missionaries, but by indigenous laymen. Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century, missionaries in Kohima were informed of the existence of Christian communities among the Semas, about whose origins they were completely in the dark. The first Christian Sema was a student in the Baptist school of Kohima, baptised in 1907. The converted Semas were subject to heavy persecutions at the hands of their fellow tribesmen, despite which their numbers increased to 500 in 1925, doubled in 1926, and reached the figures of 6,500 in 1936, and 16,000 in 1950. A church centre was built in Aizuto, equipped with educational and medical facilities.<sup>209</sup> Resistance was also strong among the Lhotas: only 10 per cent of the tribe were Christians by 1936, and by 1950 there were just about 3,000 church members.<sup>210</sup> Despite the relatively early establishment of a missionary centre at Kohima, it was the Angamis who presented the most determined resistance against Christianity. There were only two Angami churches after nearly 40 years of missionary work, with 248 members altogether; in 1936 this number increased to 630 and in 1950 to 1,500.<sup>211</sup> The British had prohibited missionary work in the unadministered Tuensang area, the territory of

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>206</sup> Eaton, 'Conversion to Christianity among the Nagas, 1876-1971', p. 18.

<sup>207</sup> Downs, *Christianity in North East India*, p. 133.

<sup>208</sup> It were above all the *angs* of the Konyaks who put up the most stubborn resistance against Christianity, *ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

the Sangtams, Changs, Chakesangs and Konyaks. Here, it were laymen of the Semas and Aos, as well as tradesmen from these communities, who spread Christianity. Resistance was fiercest here, and many were killed in their attempt to proselytise. By 1950 the church of the Sangtam tribe had 2,800 members, that of the Changs 1,500, and that of the Chakesangs 700.<sup>212</sup>

The staunchest opposition came from chiefs and elders, who feared for their control over the converts, and when the latter, for instance, refused to brew rice-beer for ritual use, this was seen as direct challenge by the traditional authorities. Consequently, converts were threatened, beaten up and/or driven out of the village, and their property confiscated.<sup>213</sup>

The appearance of the colonial power broke down traditional barriers and defence mechanisms. Hitherto, the base for socio-political structures had been autonomous village states, which became eroded through the imposition of a foreign administration. Now the people were organised alongside districts and sub-districts, which were under the control of foreign DCs and magistrates. Their authority was based on the presence of a foreign and superior army. New was not only that there was now an overall authority, but for most hill people that there was any paramount authority at all. Even though British colonial policy aimed at the least possible interference with traditional tribal cultures, they nevertheless passed laws, like the prohibition of warfare and headhunting, hitherto fundamental parts of these societies, which had a devastating effect on their socio-political structure.<sup>214</sup> Additionally, increased contact with Assam and Bengal due to trade, despite the *Inner Line Regulation*, drove further inroads into their societies. The initial reaction of the Nagas everywhere was violent resistance, and after this had failed, they tried to arrange themselves with British rule as well as with Christianity. Both, later on, were seen as giving protection against the larger perceived threat of being dominated by the Hindus.<sup>215</sup> Downs thus clearly sees the acceptance of Christianity by the Nagas and other hill tribes as a strategy of acculturation in times of radical change and not as a prime mover:

...the Christian movement in the North East is thus best understood not so much as a primary agent of change but as offering a means for at least some of the people to find and develop a satisfactory identity in the face of irresistible change imposed from without, most notably by government – first British and then Indian.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>213</sup> Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism*, p. 89.

<sup>214</sup> Downs, *Christianity in North East India*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., p. 279.

Chiefs, for example, who saw their authority as hopelessly undermined, could regain support by trying to monopolise Christianity, in order to save or regain some of their power.<sup>217</sup> Conducive for the acceptance of Christianity were also the medical activities of the missionaries, who employed western medicine deliberately as a method to convert people.<sup>218</sup> Sickness and religion were inseparably connected in traditional societies: the healing of sicknesses was a religious activity. When the Nagas realised that the medical treatment of the missionaries was not only cheaper, but also more successful than that of their priests, they concluded from that that the missionaries also had more power.<sup>219</sup> Moreover, the presence of a superior foreign power allowed the questioning of traditional power structures and herewith also the traditional system of beliefs.<sup>220</sup>

Helpful for Christianity was also the interplay of cosmology with the socio-political order among the hill tribes. The basic cosmological structure of the indigenous religion knew the concept of subordinated spirits and one supreme being. The spirits took part in the events and processes of the microcosm of the local community, while the supreme being was the underlying principle of the events and processes of the macrocosm, in other words of the whole world. Since the microcosm constituted a part of the macrocosm, the spirits were either understood as manifestations of the supreme being, or as receiving their power directly from it. Where the subsistence economy governed traditional life, the social relationship of the people of a certain area happened inside certain limits of the microcosm. The people were conscious about the wider world, yet as something which did not matter much to them. As long as the boundaries of the microcosm were intact, the whole attention was given to the spirits. This showed itself in that, despite the conceptual existence of the supreme being, all prayers and sacrifice were directed to the spirits of the local microcosm.<sup>221</sup> Colonial rule and the alongside improvement of communications gradually weakened the boundaries of the microcosm. Now, life in this changing world brought with it a multitude of relationships that transgressed the boundaries of the microcosm and which were then, according to the indigenous cosmology, based on the supreme being. The hill tribes saw the Christian concept of one god as being related to their own concept of one supreme being and seen this way, it presented merely a continuity of their cosmology. Moreover, Christianity was also seen by the converts as being somehow connected with the changing world and with all its concomitants like education, medicine and technological and material superiority. The British outlawed warfare between villages and therewith made the spread of Christianity easier. The erosion of the traditional socio-political systems and the

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<sup>217</sup> J. H. Hutton, 'Anthropology as Imperial Study', In *Hutton Papers*, (1938), Doc. 7.

<sup>218</sup> Downs, *Christianity in North East India*, p. 238.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>220</sup> Jakobs, *The Nagas*, p. 154.

dawning of a new era made Christianity appear as a possible approach to it, while the reception of Christianity was made easier by already existing cosmological concepts.<sup>222</sup>

Another productive element was the translation strategy of the missionaries, who tried to modify the Christian concepts in their translations so as to make them as close to the indigenous one as possible. The traditional cosmology of the Aos, for example, knew the concept of a supreme god, named *Lungkizurba*, yet one which had rather less meaning for everyday life. For that were more important the spirits of the earth, called *tsungrem* were more important. The first missionaries, who translated the Bible into the language of the Aos, decided to translate “god” as *tsungrem*. This did not directly challenge *Lungkizurba*, and established the Christian god in a well-known way as one participating spirit, even though this one had obviously more power than the other *tsungrem*.<sup>223</sup> The traditional cosmological concepts of the Semas also knew a supreme god, called *Alhou*, with omnipotent and omnipresent qualities. Therefore it made more sense to translate “god” with *Alhou* and not with *tsungrem*. Hence, both cases were not impositions of a foreign deity, but autonomous adoptions for one’s own aims.<sup>224</sup> The Angamis, as the only group among the Nagas, had the concept of a female supreme being, with the name *Ukepenopfu*. Initially missionaries tried to use the term *Ukepenopfu* for god, which, however, failed due to the contradiction of god, the father and the female character of *Ukepenopfu*, and might have been one of the reasons for the rather hesitant adoption of Christianity among the Angamis.<sup>225</sup>

Downs sees the traditional socio-political organisation of the Nagas as based on the village and the frequent warlike state between villages or even *kebels* inside villages was conducive to the genesis of different dialects inside one tribe, often leading to the creation of a new tribe. Christianity stopped that drifting apart by taking one of the dialects, transcribing it and using it as the base for the written language of the whole tribe. The transcription and reduction to writing of tribal dialects and the creation of a Christian literature was one of the most important factors in the creation of tribal identities above village level.<sup>226</sup> The first church structures were established along linguistic boundaries and in this way included for the first time all communities belonging to a tribe. These newly created structures transcended for the first time the previously existing separating lines between villages, clans and mountain ranges (the villages of the Nagas were mostly situated on these).<sup>227</sup> Therefrom developed clear circumscribed tribal identities, building the basis later for tribal objectives in modern politics.<sup>228</sup> Yet extensive proselytising work of

<sup>221</sup> Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism*, p. 87.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>223</sup> Eaton, ‘Conversion to Christianity among the Nagas, 1876-1971’, pp. 27-28.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>225</sup> Jakobs, *The Nagas*, p. 156.

<sup>226</sup> Downs, *Christianity in North East India*, pp. 262-263.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167, footnote 345.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

members of one tribe among other ones, together with wider church structures and their organisations, brought members of different tribes into close contact with one another and resulted for the first time in the commencement of a regional identity.<sup>229</sup> The missionaries initiated and financed schools that at a later stage were taken over by the indigenous churches and supported by the British government. The educational system in this way was nearly exclusively in the hands of the churches and responsible for training a new élite that had to cope with the new situation under the British administration.<sup>230</sup> By supporting the educational endeavour of the churches the colonial administration hoped to receive in turn loyal and disciplined citizens, with whom they could staff their administrative apparatus. However, the aim of the missionaries to create independent churches under local leadership injected the idea of independence into the colonised population.<sup>231</sup>

Though this analysis could be smoothly reconciled with Benedict Anderson's, it is in my opinion turning the facts upside down. Firstly, we know by now that the socio-political ties of the Nagas did not stop at the village perimeter, and were most probably more inclusive; secondly, that the perpetual warfare and constant headhunting, which was allegedly so divisive, was more an intrinsic part of the coloniser's legitimising discourse than really a fact among the Nagas; thirdly, different languages (not dialects) were often normal inside one tribe and did not necessarily function in an isolating way in a doubtless multilingual environment; fourthly, the data on Christianity suggests that it was always other events that served as catalysts for Christianity and not the other way round. An Andersonian approach might be true for the élite but not for the mass of the Nagas, and it is the overwhelming majority that is decisive when we want to make statements on whether an agglomeration of individuals, or groups, is a nation, proven by a collective expression of will, like, for instance, a protracted guerrilla war.<sup>232</sup> Lastly, the idea of independence in this language and terminology surely came with Western education spread by Christian institutions, but was only a translation of an indigenous concept that had even more radically and decidedly insisted on personal freedom, compared with the independence of the whole people, which the Nagas now had to adopt to survive in the new state system. As we have seen, both, World War One and Two served as catalysts for the spread of Christianity, and thus were instrumental in making large parts of the Naga populations approachable for their small westernised, educated and often young élite, and we will come to this in a minute. Proof of this is that the Indo-Naga war though started only in the 1950s - turned out to have been the decisive catalyst for Christianity (and the Naga nation), and not the other way round - as was claimed by

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid., pp. 210-211.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., pp. 276-277.

<sup>231</sup> Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism*, p. 11.

<sup>232</sup> And not only occasional terror attacks that can be carried out without support of the population.

the Indian Government's agents and press alike.<sup>233</sup> And it is the continuation of that war and/or that military occupation by India that gave Christianity the dominant role it has today.

#### 4.6 *The Two World Wars*

In the course of the First World War the British asked every village in the Naga hills to provide a certain number of men for deployment for work on the battlefields in France and the Middle East. Consequently approximately 4,000 Nagas joined the Naga Labour Corps and were deployed to the respective theatres of war. Apart from those serving in the Labour Corps, there were also Nagas who, being part of regular units in Manipur and Assam, saw active service.<sup>234</sup> In his "Foreword" to Hutton's monograph on the Semas, Henry Balfour wrote that he came across several Nagas in France and wondered what consequences these experience might have on the Nagas, and how they would look at the British afterwards:

In September, 1917, in Eastern France, I came across a gang of Nagas, ...engaged in road-repairing in the war-zone, within sound of the guns. They appeared to be quite at home and unperturbed. Earlier in that year I just missed seeing them in Bizerta, but the French authorities there described to me their self-possession and absence of fear when they were landed after experiencing shipwreck in the Mediterranean – a truly novel experience for these primitive inland hill-dwellers!

One wonders what impressions remain with them from their sudden contact with higher civilisation at war. Possibly, they are reflecting that, after what they have seen, the White Man's condemnation of the relatively innocuous head-hunting of the Nagas savours of hypocrisy. Or does their *sang-froid* save them from being critical and endeavouring to analyse the seemingly inconsequent habits of the leading people of culturedom? Now that they are back in the hills, will they settle down to the indigenous simple life and revert to the primitive conditions which were temporarily disturbed?<sup>235</sup>

According to Naga authors (who as a rule do not give their sources) it was indeed the case that the Nagas perceived what they saw on the European battlefields as contradictory to the statements of condemnation about their barbarous headhunting practices. The same "civilised" people engaged in the conduct of a massive carnage, stretching over years, forbade the Nagas a comparatively harmless, yet for their culture essential, practice.<sup>236</sup> The Nagas, according to Horam, saw therein a heightened hypocrisy, and this contributed to the general discontent and resentment against the British that had always been there. Even after parts of the Nagas had

<sup>233</sup> See for example Rawle Knox, 'Nagaland To-day: Why Nehru Cannot "Free" Hill Tribesmen', New Delhi, Jan. 7, *The Observer*, Jan. 8, 1961; Gavin Young, 'Commonwealth's Unknown War – 2: Jungle Baptists Fight It Out With India' *The Observer*, May 7, 1961; Ursula Graham Bower, 'Sifting the Evidence on Naga Problem' *The Observer*, July 2, 1961 and George Patterson, 'Nagas: Indians killed one in ten', Karachi, June 9, *The Observer*, June 10, 1962.

<sup>234</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, pp. 123-124.

<sup>235</sup> Balfour, 'Foreword', pp. XVI-XVII.

<sup>236</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, pp. 126.

converted to Christianity and entertained a friendly intercourse with missionaries and administrators, they were, as Horam expresses it, "...never crazy about the British."<sup>237</sup> No Naga, in Horam's view, would have done anything for the British just because of their white skin. Initially the Nagas called the British "half-cooked" and perceived them as portentous, yet accommodated themselves with their presence, and tried to make the best of it, believing anyhow that it would only be a temporary affair.<sup>238</sup> Further, Nagas returning from the front lines brought home with them stories about how their imperial rulers took severe beatings at the hands of the Germans. If the deteriorating image of and growing resentment against the British was one outcome of this war, so, as Horam argues, did the contact and interaction in France and the Middle East between Nagas of all different groups, including those from the unadministered areas, give rise to a sense of belonging among them.<sup>239</sup> The majority of the recruits of the Labour Corps had been recruited from the "...independent trans-frontier Nagas...", as they were called then, and this resulted in a closer relation between the British and those Nagas.<sup>240</sup> Alemchimba goes even further and says that it was now that the Nagas saw the necessity for their political unification to be able to represent their interests in a world which would never be the same.<sup>241</sup> Yonuo writes that the Nagas in France had passed a verbal resolution to resolve all their differences and disputes on their return and to work from then on for the political unification of the Nagas, and this, for Yonuo, constituted "...the spirit which spearheaded an upsurge of the Naga nationalist movement."<sup>242</sup> On their return some of those Nagas founded the Naga club in Kohima and Mokokchung in 1918, which for Panmei marked a turning point in the history of the Nagas, since it was the first organisation representing all tribes.<sup>243</sup> Among the founding members were important *gaonburas*, *dobashis*, government servants, priests, and other educated Nagas.<sup>244</sup> The club was unofficially supported by the local administration.<sup>245</sup> In the beginning the club's objectives were rather social than political; the members ran a co-operative shop, founded a football team and were supposed to support the district-administration, yet it developed into a political force, and, according to Yonuo, "...raised its will against the British imperialism..."<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> M. Horam, *Naga Insurgency: The last thirty years* (New Delhi, 1988), p. 35.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>240</sup> *Proceedings of the Government of Assam*, 1923, P/11282, February 1923, Doc. 14, From A. W. Botham, Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam, To Major F. H. Humphrys, Deputy Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, dated Shillong, the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1921.

<sup>241</sup> M. Alemchimba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland* (Kohima, 1970), p. 162.

<sup>242</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, pp. 126.

<sup>243</sup> Nehemiah Panmei, 'Naga movement and its ramifications', In R. Vashum, Aleube Iheilung et al (eds.), *Nagas at Work* (New Delhi, 1996), pp. 85-100, p. 86.

<sup>244</sup> Alemchimba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, p. 62.

<sup>245</sup> Jakobs, *The Nagas*, p. 151.

<sup>246</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, pp. 131.



although in a peaceful and loyal manner.<sup>247</sup> Panmei, in the same vein, sees the Naga club as an instrument against British imperialism,<sup>248</sup> and Horam assumes that the members of the club already anticipated the dawning of India's independence:

They were preparing themselves politically in the event of India gaining her Independence from the British – a happening they then visualized as being imminent. Thus their chief concern was the political future of their homeland after the exit of the British. The Naga Club was still in its infancy then, but the pattern of the future had already been installed in their minds.<sup>249</sup>

None of the authors writing on the Naga club lays open his source of information. There are few details subsequent to its foundation, solely that it grew into the centre of social and political gatherings, and represented a “...sustained pressure group...”<sup>250</sup> When we recall the contents of the *Memorandum to the Simon Commission* (see previous chapter), we may agree that here Nagas had come together who, discussing their predicament, were aware of their plains neighbours' superiority; there was a danger that their future could be with them; were cognisant of their own disunity, and lack of consciousness on the part of the mass as Nagas; and that despite these negations, formed themselves as Naga population as such. However, they failed to realise that there was no way back to an existence outside of the state-system, and thus, rather than starting to work on a unification of the Nagas, they accepted the disunity as given. That being so we may speak of an incipient national élite, whose characteristic trait was passivity, possibly rooted in the understanding of their people's indifference towards potentially national affairs.

This was to change with World War Two, which led to the hitherto most dramatic disruption and radical change of the people's life in the Naga hills. Before 1942 there were no lines of communication capable of supporting large numbers of troops east and south of the Brahmaputra. While the Northwest always had been expected to be the most likely route for a potential invader, the Arakan chain was simply seen as too difficult and unhealthy terrain. The Japanese assault on Burma, however, proved this view wrong and the threat to India's Northeast Frontier set off a massive allied war-effort to connect Assam with the rest of India by rail, road, river, and air. With that the Naga hills became first part of a potential and then virtual barrier against a Japanese invasion, and finally the central part of the front. Dimapur was turned into a base depot, initially to handle a 1,000 tons of supplies per day.<sup>251</sup> As a consequence thousands of

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Panmei, 'Naga movement and its ramifications', p. 86.

<sup>249</sup> Horam, *Naga Insurgency: The last thirty years*, p. 37.

<sup>250</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, pp. 160.

<sup>251</sup> See Central Office of Information, *The Campaign in Burma* (London, 1946), p. 15; Vice-Admiral The Earl Mountbatten of Burma, *Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff by the Supreme Allied Commander South-East Asia, 1943-1945*

Nagas and other workers, recruited from all over India, were used by the British as forced labour to build this infrastructure. Lack of medical care, provisions and hygiene, together with the hard manual labour, resulted in the death of many of these coolies,<sup>252</sup> in Mountbatten's own words:

In Assam, as in Arakan, we were faced with considerable difficulties. At Dimapur (Manipur Road), which was the advanced base for the Central front, work on a completely new base had had to be undertaken in a highly malarial area. In addition to the operational troops, there was a labour force of about 60,000 employed on the construction of roads, airfields and other works.<sup>253</sup>

The central office of information gives different numbers. Here, from March 1942 onwards 28,000 tea estate labourers were working on the Dimapur – Kohima – Imphal road, provided by the India tea association. Later that number was to increase to 82,000 as a regular labour force. However, the total number of the labour force employed on the central front was three times as high, in other words approximately 250,000 labourers, consisting of imported but also local (Naga) labour.<sup>254</sup>

In 1942 streams of Indian refugees coming from Burma flooded through the Naga hills: starved, they took everything eatable that they could lay their hands on. They also brought with them new epidemics into the Naga hills.<sup>255</sup> Almost 190,000 of them reached Imphal alone, while others used more northern routes, following the retreating Indian, British, and Chinese forces.<sup>256</sup> The Indian auxiliary troops escaping from Burma, chased by the advancing Japanese, in the course of their escape route to the plains, fell upon the villages of the Nagas, drove their populations out, looted them,<sup>257</sup> and finally burned them down.<sup>258</sup> In addition to that east-to-west invasion of the hills, a large number of Indian auxiliary troops had been already stationed in the Naga hills.<sup>259</sup> Imphal plain was made into the allied advance base for the defence of India and the re-conquest of Burma. The material was transported via air and the Dimapur – Kohima – Imphal

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(New York, 1951 [London, 1951]), pp. 12-14 and Basil Collier, *The War in the Far East, 1941-1945: A Military History*, (London, 1969), pp. 314ff.

<sup>252</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 142.

<sup>253</sup> Mountbatten, *Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff by the Supreme Allied Commander South-East Asia, 1943-1945*, p. 14.

<sup>254</sup> Central Office of Information, *The Campaign in Burma*, p. 155.

<sup>255</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 142.

<sup>256</sup> Collier, *The War in the Far East, 1941-1945: A Military History*, p. 316. Among the first refugees using the hitherto un-surveyed route from the Hukawng valley across the Paungsao pass to Ledo was the Life magazine photographer George Rodger who, in his personal account, wondered himself about the friendliness of the Nagas who were supposed to be fierce headhunters, and resolved "Perhaps it was not the headhunting season." See George Rodger, *Red Moon Rising* (London, 1943), p. 125. Later, however, this route was to be used on a regular basis to get troops (in the main American and Chinese) into Northern Burma, see Mountbatten, *Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff*, Map on pp. 9-10.

<sup>257</sup> Ursula Graham Bower, *Naga Path* (London, 1950), pp. 205-212.

<sup>258</sup> W. J. Slim, *Defeat into Victory* (London, 1961 [1956]), p. 65.

<sup>259</sup> Arthur Campbell, *The Siege: A Story from Kohima* (London, 1956), p. 34.

road, which had been turned into a two-lane all-weather route.<sup>260</sup> In 1943 alone the tonnage per month transported along this road increased from 17,000 to 40,000, and again in 1944 to 2,500 a day.<sup>261</sup> By January 1944 the lines of communication of Assam maintained 450,000 men, and by April 620,000.<sup>262</sup>

By the end of March 1944 three Japanese divisions (approximately 100,000 men) had fought their way westward into the Naga hills and encircled 155,000 British and Indian troops in the Imphal area, and in early April they reached Kohima and besieged the garrison there.<sup>263</sup> The battles of Imphal and Kohima were among the toughest in the war in this part of the world and were fought with enormous deployment of planes, tanks, artillery, and men,<sup>264</sup> thus leading to comprehensive destruction.<sup>265</sup> To supply Imphal area by air alone it needed 300 sorties or supply flights per day, adding up to 8,000 in total.<sup>266</sup> To prevent the Japanese from outflanking them, allied troops also were dispatched further north and east into the Naga hills, to Jotsoma, Phekekrima, Mokokchung, Sakhalu, Zubza, and Wokha, and Japanese troops advanced to these positions,<sup>267</sup> extending the area directly affected by the war over the majority of the hills, which brought them temporarily under Japanese administration:

When the Japanese offensive was fully extended, only 25,000 tribesmen remained under our administration; but by the end of June, when the Naga Hills and other territories had been recovered, their number rose to 186,000.<sup>268</sup>

The Japanese remained for roughly four months in the Naga hills, set up their administration and tried to win over the Nagas to co-operate with them. Though the Japanese administration was thus rather temporary, Yonuo is of the opinion that it nevertheless effected the abolition of the arbitrary division of the Naga hills by the British administration into administered and unadministered areas. The Japanese advanced without provisions and were supposed to live on what they could find on their way. Consequently they requisitioned everything that they could find in the Naga villages and paid for it with fake 10-Rupee notes. The Nagas also were forced by the Japanese to work as porters and guides for them, or were locked up so that they were not in a position to warn the allies. In the case of any suspicion of collaboration with the British, the

<sup>260</sup> Central Office of Information, *The Campaign in Burma*, p. 91.

<sup>261</sup> S. Woodburn Kirby, *The War Against Japan. Volume III: The Decisive Battles* (London, 1961), pp. 23 and 30.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319.

<sup>263</sup> Collier, *The War in the Far East*, p. 415.

<sup>264</sup> Kirby, *The War Against Japan. Volume III: The Decisive Battles*, pp. 329-341.

<sup>265</sup> So wrote Mills, for example, when informing Archer in August 1946 on his posting in Kohima: "Kohima was completely wrecked in the war & a accommodation there is...very bad." *Archer Papers* MSS Eur F 236/80, Oct. 25<sup>th</sup> 1946, Shillong.

<sup>266</sup> Central Office of Information, *The Campaign in Burma*, p. 157.

<sup>267</sup> Kirby, *The War Against Japan. Volume III: The Decisive Battles*, pp. 302-306.

<sup>268</sup> Mountbatten, *Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff*, p. 196.



Nagas were tortured and killed. According to Yonuo, the Japanese generally behaved in a fair way, apart from a few cases of rape, torture and murder. This notwithstanding, many villages were destroyed in the heavy fighting, the granaries burnt during retreats, and bombardments did not discriminate between civilians and combatants. The Nagas took refuge in the jungle.<sup>269</sup>

To the Allies the Nagas served as stretcher-bearers,<sup>270</sup> and porters,<sup>271</sup> and the British officer in command afterwards praised the Nagas:

Despite floggings, torture, execution, and the burning of their villages, they refused to aid the Japanese in any way or to betray our troops. (...) they guided our columns, collected information, ambushed enemy patrols, carried our supplies, and brought in our wounded under the heaviest fire...<sup>272</sup>

In the battle of Kohima the DC Charles Pawsey seemed to have been instrumental in gaining the support of the Nagas.<sup>273</sup> The *dobushi* Kosazu of the village Kigwema later told Archer that Pawsey, prior to the Japanese invasion, had ordered the Nagas to kill as many Japanese as possible:

...I asked if any Japanese heads were taken in the fighting. Kosazu then explained that when the war approached the hills Pawsey issued an order urging the Nagas to kill all the Japs they could, but forbidding them to take their heads. Instead of this he but authorised them to remove a finger and an ear (Pawsey tells me that was done to avoid reprisals). Following this announcement, Willie Angami, a Naga of Kigwema killed two Japs but he is the only member of the village who did so.<sup>274</sup>

The allies considered the hill tribes of the Indo-Burma region as brothers in arms, and the Nagas as their most faithful ones.<sup>275</sup> Yonuo writes that many Nagas helped the allies, hoping to receive something in return in the future.<sup>276</sup> This is definitely an allusion to promises for independence, which later on, when not realised, were perceived as a betrayal of the hill tribes in general and the Nagas in particular, especially by British who had served during the war in the Naga hills.<sup>277</sup> That there was not always enthusiasm on the part of the Nagas to get drawn into the war more than

<sup>269</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 146-147.

<sup>270</sup> Central Office of Information, *The Campaign in Burma*, p. 161.

<sup>271</sup> Kirby, *The War Against Japan. Volume III: The Decisive Battles*, pp. 336-337. Kirby reported that all men from Khonoma volunteered to serve the Allies "...as porters, on condition that troops were sent to protect the village during their absence." Ibid., p. 337.

<sup>272</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp. 291-292.

<sup>273</sup> Kirby, *The War Against Japan. Volume III: The Decisive Battles*, p. 300.

<sup>274</sup> *Archer Papers*, Tour Diary, 31.12.1946 - 11.2.1947, MSSEur F 236/74, dt. 8.1.1947, p. 8.

<sup>275</sup> Central Office of Information, *The Campaign in Burma*, p. 166-167.

<sup>276</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 147.

<sup>277</sup> So we find in an outline of a presentation Ian Bowman gave on the 28<sup>th</sup> April 1971 at the Stirling and Clakmannen Burma Club under points three and four: "1942 - Nagas + Lushais loyal... Promise of backing by British after War (...) 1947 - 'Betrayal' of Tribes by . Political expediency and ignorance." *Bowman Papers*, MSSEur F 229/26.

was necessary, may be seen from Bower's description of how she convinced a group of Nagas to fight for the allies: at first they did not really see why they should do this for the British, but then gave in reluctantly to Bower's mixture of promises and blackmail.<sup>278</sup> The co-operation of the Nagas with the allies could anyhow not have been too ambitious, for the latter were entirely in the dark about Japanese movements and positions,<sup>279</sup> which would confirm what I was told by T. Muivah who grew up and experienced the war in Tangkhul area, northern Manipur.<sup>280</sup> This view, though, is challenged by Yong Kong, who aged roughly 15 at that time and living in Mokokchung, had two brothers in the Labour Corps working on the Imphal road, and who insists that the Nagas from the NHD supported the British war effort to a hundred percent.<sup>281</sup>

The end of the actual fighting left the Naga hills as a transit and rest area, and for the sake of the reconquest of Burma, the lines of communication through the Naga hills, especially the Dimapur – Kohima – Imphal – Tamu road, were improved to serve as support lines,<sup>282</sup> and Kohima remained a rest-area for at least two divisions.<sup>283</sup>

Several authors see the Second World War as the central and most traumatic experience of the Nagas since the British conquest of the Naga hills: "...it was the Second World War which had propelled psychological cataclysm far beyond its confines than anything that had taken place during the British rule for about 70 years".<sup>284</sup> And:

The large-scale contact with British, Indian and Japanese soldiers, over a period of some months, touched off a revolution in the minds of the Nagas. A window was opened to the outside world, and through it blew in the winds of change that disturbed a stagnant life and wafted in new ideas and concepts.

It kindled a new awakening among them. It brought to them new ideas of living and new concepts of freedom. Their social outlook underwent change. It all generated a mental ferment and restlessness among the post-war generations of Nagas.<sup>285</sup>

Nibedon, though writing rather less metaphorically, saw the war as having achieved no lesser a consequence than the Nagas' entry into history: "No, not a single Naga remained entirely unaffected...In fact, there was utter chaos in the tribal societal fabric...[the Nagas]...were plummeted into history."<sup>286</sup> A window was torn open and the wind of destruction came in, but not due to some supra-history, but because of the affairs of others. Rustomji, who after the

<sup>278</sup> Bower, *Naga Path*, pp. 186-192.

<sup>279</sup> S. Woodburn Kirby, *The War Against Japan. Volume IV: The Reconquest of Burma* (London, 1965), p. 32.

<sup>280</sup> Two weeks of conversation with Mr. T. Muivah in Bangkok in March 2001.

<sup>281</sup> Telephone conversation with Mr. Yong Kong, Heidelberg – London, 28<sup>th</sup> October 2004.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>284</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 150.

<sup>285</sup> D. R. Mankekar, *On the Slippery Slope in Nagaland* (Bombay, 1967), p. 22.

Transfer of Power often had the opportunity to talk to Nagas, due to his position as adviser to the governor of Assam in tribal affairs, writes that the Second World War and the extensive destruction of their country, above all, gave rise to the conviction among the Nagas that they wanted to be left alone.<sup>287</sup>

After the war the British started a programme of reconstruction. Temporary business transactions with the allies and the Japanese, together with compensations paid for services provided during the war, raised the standards of living in the Naga hills far above other hill tribal areas in the Northeast, and gave rise to a petty bourgeoisie among the Nagas. The contact with numerous nationalities, about which the Nagas beforehand had only heard, made the Nagas perceive themselves as part of a larger whole. Military requirements brought an immense improvement of the lines of communication and “...transformed tremendously the economic, political, social, moral and cultural life of the Naga people.”<sup>288</sup> The massive confrontation with the outside world put their traditional way of life in question, resulting in “...synthesizing western life into all aspects of their life.”<sup>289</sup> An increased interaction among the Nagas themselves, and their shared experience, made them forget their old feuds and made them start talking in terms such as “unity” and “nation”. The inscription honouring the dead of the battle of Kohima reads as follows: “When you go home tell them of us, and say for your tomorrow we gave our today”<sup>290</sup> for Yonuo it mirrors “...the sentiments of the Nagas of sacrifice their life for the sake of the nation, rising above the narrow bounds of selfish ends.”<sup>291</sup> While World War Two thus is seen by most authors as a collective trauma for the Nagas which destroyed their supposedly traditional life, Yonuo is of the opinion that the war, though not being the father of the Naga nation, was definitely its midwife.

I have tried to sketch the war-time Naga hills, since I am convinced that it was this common experience and endurance on part of the Nagas that made the mass of them for the first time receptive to whatever political programme their small élite might had. Prior to this cataclysm, talks of unification, self-determination, etc. must have appeared as utterly irrelevant.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

The partial subjugation of the Naga hills had been carried out for reasons lying beyond them. Consequently, the administrative set-up was limited to the minimum, thus the categorisation of the hill tribes as “Nagas” by the British could not take hold among the mass of the Nagas, and

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<sup>286</sup> Nirmal Nibedon, *Nagaland: The Night of the Guerrillas* (New Delhi, 1983), p. 23.

<sup>287</sup> Nari Rustomji, *Imperilled Frontiers: India's North-Eastern Borderlands*, Delhi, 1983), p. 21.

<sup>288</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 149.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*

only made its impact on a comparatively small élite. In their process of ordering and categorising the population into tribes, the colonial masters tried to orientate themselves along the line of existing structures. The *dobashis*, the cultural interpreters and political envoys, played an advising, if not, decisive role. The result was the strengthening of already existing units of identification and organisation, possibly with a reifying tendency, but not superseding those units of the lower order. A supporting role was played by the language policy of the missionaries, and by the educational- and church structures, created and maintained in the main by indigenous people. This, together with the rudimentary administrative structures, presented a much wider framework, inside which a more closely knitted network constituted the field of action for the newly emerging élite among the Nagas. In their intercourse with British, missionaries and plainsmen, this élite started to see itself not only as members of different tribes, but most probably also as members of the Naga people. This was definitely the case after thousands of Nagas had served overseas in the war-zones of Europe and the Middle East. Not only did it give these men a wider vision of themselves, but it also placed that vision in a broader context. However, till the end of the 1920s this new Naga élite was also aware of the fact that the overwhelming majority of their people, far from seeing any necessity to unify, was not even aware of that question. Moreover, this élite, despite what they had witnessed, may have believed that there still was the possibility of a return to a life outside the world-wide state system. This all changed when the Naga hills themselves became forward base, frontline, and battle field of the war in the east in World War Two. The connection of the Naga hills with the wider region, accompanied by the rapid improvement of the lines of communication, the fast-moving penetration of the hills themselves, and the flood of people and armies of all kinds. Moreover, the battle of personnel and matériel also must have revealed to them their absolute powerlessness against states that could employ, move, and if necessary, designate to wholesale destruction. Notwithstanding this, the fact that the Japanese had been temporarily victorious, and had had the British on the run, demonstrated that the white man was anything but invincible and damaged his image beyond repair. This was the beginning of the end of European colonialism in all South and Southeast Asia. Having said this, we may conclude that while colonial administration and Christianity delivered a small élite, it was the Second World War that widened political consciousness among the population.



## *Chapter Five*

### *India's Nation-building and the Nagas, 1947-64*

#### *5.1 Introduction*

This chapter sets out to shed some light on the actors in the Nehruvian era, in order to explicate in detail that despite claims at the centre for unity in diversity, the policy was to pursue unity violently and eradicate diversity. In the case of the Nagas the initial strategy was to give verbal assurances about constitutional safeguards, while at the same time non-implementing them. That was to ensure that the Naga hills as a separate unit would cease to exist after the first post-independence decade. Once the Nagas protested, the Indo-Assamese actors sent out contradictory signals of appeasement and imposition, not allowing for a clear counter-position. When thereupon the Nagas finally came back to their original demand for immediate independence and continued to insist on that, the Assamese administration sent its paramilitary to make the Nagas change their mind. This terror campaign fired back and Shillong had to ask Delhi for the assistance of the Indian army (IA) that was subsequently committed to it by Nehru. The IA, unable to break the resistance and hard pressed itself, started a genocidal campaign that also did not achieve the objective. Thus, the government of India (GOI), via its intelligence bureau (IB), created with the cooperation of some Nagas, a pro-Indian faction that was to head a future Naga unit, and soon after was decided to be transformed into a state. This move was destined to split the Nagas. As this was also proved to be ineffective, Nehru, in his last month, allowed for some initiatives that resulted in a genuine cease-fire which, though not ending the war, was to give the Naga population some breathing time.

The Indo-Assamese protagonists' stand vis-à-vis the Nagas was not different from the one we have encountered among the British in Chapter One and Three. They agreed on the same policy of state terror that made the IA into the main Indian agent in the Naga hills. Yet there was a crucial difference between the former British empire and the newly independent Indian state: imperialism had lost its legitimacy, and the doctrine of self-determination and democracy demanded a voluntary union of equals.<sup>1</sup> This being so neither formal nor informal imperialism was left as a choice and nation-building had to be the order of the day, necessitating the total penetration of the projected territory and population. When the latter, however, proved highly

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Die Erfindung der Nation: Zur Karriere eines folgenreichen Konzeptes* (Frankfurt, 1983 [*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*]), pp. 90-91.

recalcitrant, the Indian state resorted to terror, and then to nation-killing, genocide, to achieve its aim.<sup>2</sup>

## 5.2 Nation-building

The initial aim to create the independent India as a decentralised polity with autonomous states was dropped when Muslim League and Congress were competing for power. Moreover, the carnage of partition, the resistance of some princely states and the weakness of Congress in the periphery provided the impetus to create a strong centralised state, which was in any case favoured by Nehru and a section of the Congress leadership.<sup>3</sup> The states became functional to the whole:

These aims were explicitly enshrined in the legislative, financial and executive paramountcy of the centre. When to these provisions was added the residual and emergency powers invested in the centre, and the system of central planning in 1950, the autonomy of the states was severely curtailed.<sup>4</sup>

Though all the powers enabled the centre also to respond flexibly to demands for provincial and regional autonomy,<sup>5</sup> mainly it provided the centre with the power to impose its will on the states:

...the flexibility of the constitution, particularly with reference to centre-state relations, was dependent on political leadership at the centre which itself was hemmed in by the powerful compulsions of nation-building, economic development, and the need to win regular national mandates.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For the argument that this was widely practised by post-colonial regimes, see Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The quest for understanding* (Princeton, 1994), pp. 16, 20-24.

<sup>3</sup> This view is congruent with Robert L. Hardgrave and Stanley A. Kochanek, *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation* (San Diego, 1986), p. 112: "In India the nationalist elite, drawing on the colonial experience and faced by the chaos of partition, the integration of princely states, and demands for the creation of uni-lingual states, created a highly centralized federal system." And Ishtiaq Ahmed sees there already the root cause for the tough stand towards any sign of dissent on part of the minorities: "...the trauma of Partition made the central élite overly sensitive to the question of unity. Herein can be detected from the start the tendency of overreaction by the Indian state to all signs of separatism among non-Hindus." In idem., *State, Nation and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia* (London, 1996), p. 102. H. M. Rajashekara even lists the Nagas' demand for independence among the reasons for what he calls prefatorial federalism in India, a federal system with a central government that possesses overriding powers. Idem, 'The Nature of Indian Federalism: A Critique', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 37, No. 3, March 1997, pp. 245-253. For an altogether adverse view, that not only takes the Indian system as a genuine federal one, but also sees ideological foundations for that in ancient Indian political theory, see Myron Weiner, 'Ancient Indian Political Theory and Contemporary Indian Politics', In S. N. Eisenstadt, Reuven Kahane and David Shulman (eds.), *Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy and Dissent in India* (Berlin, 1984), pp. 111-129.

<sup>4</sup> Gurharpal Singh, *Re-examining Centre-State Relations in India* (Unpublished inaugural lecture, 2000), p. 2. "Under Articles 352-360 the central government can during an emergency take over the administration of a state and impose President's Rule. If the centre feels that the security of India or a part of it is threatened by external aggression or internal disturbance, Parliament can confer on the Union President the power of the legislature of the state to enact laws. Between 1947 and 1984 President's Rule had been imposed 70 times in different parts of India." See also Ahmed, *State, Nation and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia*, p. 104.

<sup>5</sup> Ahmed, *State, Nation and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia*, p. 103.

<sup>6</sup> Singh, *Re-examining Centre-State Relations in India*, p. 3.

Though Nehru initially had been opposed to any state reorganisation out of fear of precipitating the break-up of India, he finally gave in, since the demand was often either brought forward or supported by regional Congress units.<sup>7</sup> Hence, the political elite proved willing to redraw state borders along linguistic lines.<sup>8</sup> This happened in order to contain South Indian separatist aspirations.<sup>9</sup> However, this way of accommodation of Dravidian states was not feasible in the periphery, the border areas in the north-west and north-east. There, the threat to national integrity justified other methods than accommodation:

In Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and North-eastern states political accommodation soon gave way to coercion, electoral manipulation, and direct administration from New Delhi through President's Rule. The blatant subversion of legal and administrative structures was seen as necessary to manage the allegedly subversive regional forces.<sup>10</sup>

A similar line of argument is put forward by Paul Brass who also sees linguistic federalism as an adequate instrument to preserve the unity of India, but one that did not work in some areas:

States reorganization has either failed or been a far more prolonged and violent process before satisfying the political aspirations of the Sikhs in the Punjab and the tribal peoples in the northeastern region. Outright secessionist movements accompanied by bitter, prolonged, and bloody confrontations between insurrectionary groups and government security forces marked the politics of Punjab, Assam, and the Muslim-majority state of Kashmir as well in the late 1980's and early 1990s.<sup>11</sup>

The reason for the failure of the Indian state to accommodate itself with its non-Hindu minorities lies for Brass for one in its secular ideology<sup>12</sup> together with the centralising efforts of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Hardgrave and Kochanek, *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation*, p. 112.

<sup>9</sup> Ahmed, *State, Nation and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia*, p. 112.

<sup>10</sup> Singh, *Re-examining Centre-State Relations in India*, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Brass, *Indian Politics since Independence* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 192.

<sup>12</sup> For Brass it was not the rise of militant Hindu-nationalism which led to the failure of accommodation in the periphery, but the other way round: secular ideology denied any declaration of difference and justified an intensified centralisation that led to the failure which in turn provided the conditions for the rise of militant Hindu-nationalism. Nehruvian secular ideology was perceived as the pampering of minorities to the cost of the Hindu majority, was made out as the conceptual scapegoat for the near-total failure of the Indian state and was reversed under his daughter Indira, while the minorities were turned into the substantial scapegoats. Resulting in the Indian state as a formally Hindu one that remained factually in the hands of the upper castes, see Paul Brass, 'Secularism out of its place', *Contributions to Indian sociology* (n.s.) 32, 2 (1998), pp. 485-505.

The destruction of the Babri Masjid of Ayodhya and the rise of the openly Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to power has initiated a discussion of the religious content of the Indian polity and the reasons for it. Though it deals predominantly with the question of Hindu-Muslim accommodation, or the failure of it, it inherently is also concerned with the place of the periphery within the Indian state, even if it is not mentioned, since it deals with the capture of the Indian polity from the very start by a brahmanical elite (or not, depending on viewpoint), and the relegation of all others at best to a role as second-rate citizens. In the following I shortly sketch some of the arguments: Ashis Nandy, 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Toleration', In Veena Das (ed.), *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia* (Delhi, 1990), pp. 69-93 and R. N.

Indian state leaders and the never ending struggle for power at the centre, which just grew more intense during Indira Gandhi's time as premier.<sup>13</sup> Still under Nehru, the use of the states' reorganisation commission and of reserve powers for dealing with regional political opponents undermined further the centre-state relationship. Here, it was especially the economic and political centralisation that made the states economically dependent on the centre.<sup>14</sup>

Most authors draw a strong line between Nehru and his daughter Indira, seeing her, for example, as guilty for having reversed the devolution of power to the states, a process begun under her father, thus bringing about increased tensions in centre-state relations;<sup>15</sup> or, that she replaced the politics of accommodation with the politics of manipulation, and that the centralisation of power also centralised problems, nationalised issues that beforehand had been

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Madan, 'Secularism in its Place', In Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and its Critics* (Delhi, 1998), pp. 297-321; both see secularism as a foreign construct, inadequate for India, and both hold its imposition by a westernised élite on an essentially religious mass responsible for the emergence of religious nationalism, which is the instrumentalisation of religion for political aims. For Saral Jhingran, *Secularism in India: A reappraisal* (Delhi, 1995), every kind of communalism, in which every declaration of difference is included, can be traced back to colonial divide-and-rule policies, and therefore does not really exist. Secularism of the Nehruvian brand was prevalent in India three decades before and after independence and characterised by '*sarva dharma samabhava*', the support for all religions and the positive discrimination of minorities. For him an Indian form of secularism is possible when one differentiates between the core and the periphery of religion (respectively the personal and the doctrinal). Akeel Bilgrami, 'Secularism, Nationalism, and Modernity', In Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and its Critics* (Delhi, 1998), pp. 380-417, sees Hindu-nationalism not as legacy of a bad colonial past following on a good pre-colonial time of tolerance, as it was for the previous authors, but as a form of the modern phenomena of nationalism, and resulted out of the forcing of a secularism of an ideal Nehruvian make, who refused to put it to discussion in the public sphere, and therewith missed the opportunity of giving Indian secularism the value of a negotiated and agreed kind. Subratra K. Mitra, 'Desecularising the State: Religion and Politics in India after Independence', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 33 (4), October 1991, pp. 755-777, also takes Nehruvian secularism as an imposition on a religious population, for the sake of nation-building, that left no space for a formal role for religion in the public sphere, which that in turn re-conquered with vengeance after the demise of the Congress party. In Mitra's view Ayodhya and the destruction of the Babri Masjid was the turning point. For Mark Juergensmeyer, *Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Delhi, 1994), secularism is a Christian western concept, that never had any legitimacy in India (agreeing in this with Nandy, Madan, Jhingran, Bilgrami, and Mitra), and thus the Nehruvian form was always already discredited as an extension of colonialism, and the death of Nehru was the wake-up call for a religiously legitimated nationalism that for Juergensmeyer is simply the indigenous variant. Again, also Juergensmeyer finds the roots of Hindu nationalism in its confrontation with British colonialists and Christian missionaries, the success of it in the Hindus' sense of deprivation under the rule of Nehruvian secularism. The Sikhs, on the other side, saw secularism as disguised Hindu rule and a threat to their identity, and the rise of Hindu nationalism was responsible for the wars in Punjab as well as in Kashmir. Then, in the eyes of Partha Chatterjee, 'Secularism and Tolerance', In Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and its Critics* (Delhi, 1998), pp. 345-379, Hindutva is completely in line with the modern state, its institutions, and Western secularism. Like the European fascists, the Hindu nationalists are aspiring to use the state to terrorise and assimilate the minorities into the mainstream in order to realise their vision of an unitary state. Nehruvian secularism, however, was guilty of perpetuating a communal policy since, though it protected the minorities, it interfered with the religion of the majority. Finally, in a meticulous study Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics: 1925 to the 1990s*. London, 1996), gives us a model at hand that traces the strategies of Hindu nationalists and explains their success as heavily depending on the prevailing discourse. Space forbids me from sketching his elaborate model here. This little excursus, however, shall suffice to demonstrate the irrelevance of the periphery for Indian politics and Indian political science, as I will demonstrate in relation to the Naga case, in the main text, that the Indian state, at least on the periphery, was from the outset, not one that could be understood in terms of secularism etc. but rather in terms of subjugation, of conquest, and occupation, and it is only in Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994), that we find an argument that allows us not to hold colonial rule or Western concepts responsible for that.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Singh, *Re-examining Centre-State Relations in India*, p. 4. In contrast to Singh's view Chatterjee portrays the states as financially autonomous, see Partha Chatterjee, 'Introduction: A Political History of Independent India', In idem (ed.), *State and Politics in India* (Delhi, 1997), pp. 1-39, p. 11.

resolved locally, within the context of a state, or in the bargaining between the centre and the state.<sup>16</sup> Further, that the role of the central government changed to an interventionist one in regional conflicts, encouraging secessionists by negotiating directly with them;<sup>17</sup> that it exploited and/or aroused communal sentiments or the support of extremist groups for the sake of power politics and elimination of political opponents.<sup>18</sup> Finally, that it appeased Hindu sensibilities on the one side, while dealing firmly with others (like Sikhs and Kashmiris) on the other; and above all turned away from the previous Congress strategy of seeking the support of India's social and religious minorities.<sup>19</sup>

A different approach is to see a continuity:

Although Mrs Gandhi's rule stalled the broader processes of political regionalisation and decentralization, in labelling her as the Cleopatra of Indian politics we are, I believe, in danger of over-attributing to Mrs Gandhi the long-term structural, ideological, economic and constitutional causes of centralisation that pre-date her arrival as prime minister. ...far from introducing radical innovations she was merely tapping into the rich repertoire of constitutional controls that had gradually begun to be accepted as the rule, the states lacked embedded constitutional safeguards that could have prevented abuse, the flexibility of the constitution could be transformed into an elected dictatorship.<sup>20</sup>

Another continuance, according to Singh, was the upholding of the distinction, established in the Nehruvian era, between "peripheral" and "mainstream" states, which intensified in the course of the 1980s, when the full coercive power of the Indian state was applied to the insurgencies in Assam, Punjab, and Jammu & Kashmir.<sup>21</sup> Singh is of the opinion that it is wrong to blame the centralisation of Mrs Gandhi's rule for these developments, since such an argument is unable to explain why centralisation should have especially affected religious minorities who are in the majority in their states, like the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir, the Sikhs of Punjab<sup>22</sup> and the Christians of Nagaland. This reasoning draws a sharp distinction between the Nehruvian and post-Nehruvian eras which is unconvincing, because centralisation worked back then simply through different channels. Moreover, these claims for political sovereignty, in some cases go back to the time of independence and are not accommodable

<sup>15</sup> Hardgrave and Kochanek, *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation*, p. 112.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>17</sup> Brass, *Indian Politics since Independence*, pp. 153 & 203.

<sup>18</sup> Chatterjee, 'Introduction: A Political History of Independent India', p. 31.

<sup>19</sup> Ahmed, *State, Nation and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia*, p. 107.

<sup>20</sup> Singh, *Re-examining Centre-State Relations in India*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> One response to the authoritarian manner of the GOI to the states was the election victory in January, 1983 of the newly formed Telugu Desam Party, in Assam and Punjab regional opposition took on the character of insurgencies, see Chatterjee, 'Introduction: A Political History of Independent India', p. 31.

inside the Indian union.<sup>23</sup> In Singh's view Indira Gandhi "...merely accentuated existing policies...", but was not causal.<sup>24</sup>

Rather, neo-Gandhians<sup>25</sup> do not see the "...ethnic content of traditional Indian civilization..."<sup>26</sup> Moreover, India and its politics are dealt with in the respective works of political science as a case of exception. This is so due to its perceived and represented heterogeneity, diversity, complexity, and pluralism, which enables India, so it is portrayed, to combine and manage successfully in the main on account of its tolerant religion, Hinduism. Ethnicity either does not exist in the Indian context or is problematised. Hence, ethnic groups are constructed to serve vested interests, are not cohesive, and the Indian state is a neutral, secular arbiter. The reasons for the existing ethnic conflicts in India are thus to be found either in the perversion of Nehruvian values or in Nehru's modernising zeal, but the legitimacy of the Indian state is never questioned.<sup>27</sup>

Singh terms this view of Indian politics "conventional wisdom" and unveils it as an ideological construct, in being ahistorical by ignoring the partition, which in essence was the creation of a Hindu majority state at the disposal of a Brahmanical élite. Following from this ahistoricity these writings claim the Indian state to be a secular one, not captured by an ethnic group, while in reality Hindus are more equal than others, non-Hindu groups are discriminated and their expressions of identity defamed as "communalistic", "instrumentalistic", etc. This results in an inability to perceive cumulative cleavages in the periphery and to explain the ethnic conflicts persisting there in terms of the post-Nehruvian tendency to centralisation.<sup>28</sup>

Nation-building in India has brought in a "...sharp divide between the core and peripheral regions." Hence, in order to understand better this division, we would profit from a reconceptualisation of India as:

<sup>23</sup> Singh, *Re-examining Centre-State Relations in India*, p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> Singh especially targets here B. Parekh, 'Ethnocentricity of the Nationalist Discourse' In *Nations and Nationalism*, 1995, 1:1, pp. 25-52. One could also easily include the following three into the criticism: Nandy, 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Toleration'; Madan, 'Secularism in its Place' and Jhingran, *Secularism in India: A reappraisal*, for seeing pre-colonial Indian society in general, and the Hindu one in particular, as a never-never land of tolerance and niceties in which everything bad was in some way or other introduced by the West.

<sup>26</sup> Gurharpal Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India: A Case Study of Punjab* (London, 2000), p. 22. Support for this view is also to be found in Ainslie T. Embree, *Utopias in Conflict: Religion and Nationalism in Modern India* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990), who rather than tolerance and synthesis in Hindu society's history finds that "...all truths, all social practices, can be encapsulated within the society as strong as there is willingness to accept the premise on which the encapsulation is based" (ibid., p. 30), and in Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism Hindus and Muslims in India*, who clearly demonstrates not only the Hindu content of Indian nationalism but also its historical foundations (passim), and further that the complex term of "syncretism" is in a concealed way related to the processes of expansion and conversion (pp. 198-199).

<sup>27</sup> Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India: A Case Study of Punjab*, pp. 37-39.

<sup>28</sup> Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, pp. 39-44.

...an ethnic democracy where hegemonic and violent control is exercised over minorities, especially in the peripheral regions, thereby creating the conditions for the resilience of ethno-nationalist separatist movements in the latter regions.<sup>29</sup>

Post-colonial India can neither be understood as a form of secularized majoritarianism, nor as “...ethnically accommodative consociationalism...”, as Lijphart<sup>30</sup> has tried to demonstrate, but as an “ethnic democracy”.<sup>31</sup> The model and term of “ethnic democracy” was developed by Smootha in opposition to the viewpoint that “... democracy in deeply divided societies takes either a majoritarian or consociational form...”,<sup>32</sup> with the state as being neutral in both cases. Smootha argues that “...there are some countries that combine viable democratic institutions with institutionalized ethnic dominance.”<sup>33</sup> This he calls “ethnic democracy” and is applicable in his view to Israel, with respect to the citizenship status of the Israeli Arabs, who are disadvantaged on the level of individual and collective rights as in the access to the power structure but nevertheless are able to strive for the betterment of their predicament with democratic means.<sup>34</sup>

To see India in this way calls for a rigorous reassessment “... of Indian democracy since 1947...”, the partition facilitated to install “... a majoritarian and unitary state...” with the recognition of “... Hinduism as meta-ethnicity...” and:

...though the minorities have been granted individual and, in some cases, collective rights, the recognition of these rights has been based on a tactical accommodation with hegemonic Hinduism.<sup>35</sup>

The Hindu-majority exerts hegemonic control over its non-Hindu minorities, and when challenged, switches to violent control:

...whereas violent control resembles overt domination, suppression and open confrontation, hegemonic control combines elements of coercion with some degree of consent that often underpins administrative structures.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>30</sup> Arend Lijphart, ‘The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: a Consociational Interpretation’, *American Political Science Review*, 90:2 (June 1996), 258-268.

<sup>31</sup> Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>32</sup> S. Smootha, ‘Minority Status in an Ethnic Democracy: the status of the Arab Minority in Israel’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1990, 13:3, 389-414, p. 389.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 410. For a positive answer to this approach and its further development see Y. Peled, ‘Ethnic Democracy and the Legal Constraints of Citizenship: Arab Citizens of the Jewish State’, *American Political Science Review*, 86:2 (June 1992), 432-443, and O. Yftachel, ‘The Ethnic Democracy Model and its Applicability to the Case of Israel’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 15:1 (January 1992), 124-136. Latter labels India under the multi-ethnic consociational model (ibid.: 128).

<sup>35</sup> Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, pp. 45-47.

<sup>36</sup> Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, p. 47.

The north-eastern states, Punjab and Kashmir are examples of the exertion of hegemonic and violent control. The:

... *de facto* ethnic democracy... extends constitutional rights to minorities but mitigates their *de jure* application through the excessive application of residual controls and placation of dominant ethnic sentiment. Where ethnic groups have contested, often violently, the nature of hegemonic control, the Indian state has readily resorted to violent control and has made such contests 'unthinkable' by the ideological, economic and political resources at its disposal, and 'unworkable' by its coercive practice.<sup>37</sup>

A case in point is for Singh the work of Joyce Pettigrew<sup>38</sup> who, also working on the Punjab, drew most of her data from interviews with Sikh guerillas, and who clearly illustrates Singh's view that the "...psychosis of fear, the civil war conditions, and the brazen use of violence by the state is calculated policy."<sup>39</sup> Further, that "...state terror was a continuation, *by other means*, of the traditional policy of ethnic conflict management by the Indian state in Punjab."<sup>40</sup>

Although Singh's delineation of the Indian state comes closest to my findings when working on the Nagas, and, although Singh himself remarks that "language and definition are power," I deem the use of the term "ethnic democracy" as an unhappy one, and he may have overlooked that it had been created by an advocate of ethnic democracy.<sup>41</sup> I would rather be inclined to follow Connor's dictum who says there is no need for the existence of salt water in-between two groups to qualify their relationship for the term "colonialism", or in other words, an imperial subjugation is also possible between people sharing a land border,<sup>42</sup> and we could add, in the absence of any Europeans. The image of India was dominated by the non-violence preaching of the vegetarian Mohandas Gandhi and the non-alliance and peace to others lecturing Jawaharlal Nehru. However, there are signs of change, and in a recent publication already two articles on state terrorism in India are included.<sup>43</sup> The terms "imperialism", "military conquest and occupation", "state terrorism", and even "genocide"<sup>44</sup> are in my opinion more appropriate to describe long periods of relationship between the Indian state and some groups on its periphery than "ethnic democracy". Even though it, as a concept, includes the term "violent control", that to me sounds more as an euphemism for what we find in our data, and will be demonstrated in

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>38</sup> Joyce Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of State and guerrilla violence* (London and New Jersey, 1995).

<sup>39</sup> Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, pp. 29-31.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Peled, 'Ethnic Democracy and the Legal Constraints of Citizenship: Arab Citizens of the Jewish State'.

<sup>42</sup> Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The quest for understanding*.

<sup>43</sup> Jeffrey A. Sluka, *Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror* (Philadelphia, 2000). Therein on India: Cynthia K. Mahmood, 'Trials by Fire: Dynamics of Terror in Punjab and Kashmir', pp. 70-90 and Joyce Pettigrew, 'Parents and Their Children in Situations of Terror: Disappearances and Special Police Activity in Punjab', pp. 204-225.

<sup>44</sup> For the use of this term in the Indian case I receive support from Iqbal A. Ansari, 'Human Rights Situation in India - An Overview', In idem (ed.), *Human Rights in India* (New Delhi, 1998), pp. 1-23, p. 8.



the subsequent and last chapter. Singh's reason for choosing such a conciliatory terminology will be rooted maybe in the wish to be heard at all by the Indian political science community, to find at least some open ears and doors and not to be stigmatised as a radical from the outset.<sup>45</sup> If he would have employed the terms I suggested, he would have been outside of the "order of discourse", outside of what is considered as true.<sup>46</sup> Political scientists working on India tend to somehow get less enraged over violence than uneasy embarrassed by its naming in a direct language. A graphic language may contain the danger it deteriorating into a pornography of violence,<sup>47</sup> but nevertheless is trying to describe what is, but should be unacceptable. The question is rather who is being served by this "objectivity".<sup>48</sup> The scholars, like the mass media, represent the standpoint of the ruling elite of the Union, mutually assuring themselves that they are right, and it is not clear whether they are only out to deceive everyone else, or whether they are also duping themselves.<sup>49</sup>

This subjugation of peripheries by stronger centres is in line with a long history of state-formation. It is even more in line with the specific history of newly independent states that owe their territorial extent to colonial conquests, to the legacy of empires. The problem is, however, that these states, like India, achieved their independence because of the ideology of self-determination. The idea of the nation is based on the right to self-determination "...the refusal of people to accept political rule by those deemed aliens..."<sup>50</sup>, that forcefully served as catalyst for independence movements all over the world.<sup>51</sup> While this right to self-determination was

<sup>45</sup> Although if one follows the chronology of the articles one cannot but realize the strong tendency to a clearer standpoint and language.

<sup>46</sup> Michel Foucault, *Die Ordnung des Diskurses* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000; [in the original: *L'ordre du discours* (Paris, 1972)].

<sup>47</sup> E. Valentine Daniel, *Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence: Sri Lankans, Sinhals, and Tamils* (Delhi, 1997), p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> When P. Timothy Bushnell, Vladimir Shlapentokh, Christopher K. Vanderppol, and Jeyaratnam Sundram, 'State Organized Terror: Tragedy of the Modern State', In idem (eds.), *State Organized Terror: The Case of Violent Internal Repression* (Boulder, 1991), pp. 3-37, write "...the severe scholarly neglect of the subject of violence and terror is just a part of the neglect of the more general subject of repression." (ibid., p. 3), then this, in the Indian case, equals for me tacit support for this repression in the form of propaganda.

<sup>49</sup> Teresa Joseph demonstrates at the Kashmir example how the Indian mass media perpetrates the stand point of the central government in denouncing any criticism of the ISF as illegitimate interference into India's sovereignty, as defamation of India in general and of the brave Indian soldier in particular, and in the final analysis as anti-national. This reporting does not only shape public opinion but ironically also serves as basis for decision-makers. That is the mass media in an uncritical way takes government information at face value, and the government in turn sees that as confirmation of its view and takes it as a basis to act, see Teresa Joseph, 'Kashmir, human rights and the Indian press', *Contemporary South Asia* (2000) 9 (1), pp. 41-55. Already in the 1960s Galbraith has noted that "The Indian press is free but highly cooperative" in relation to the Indo-Chinese border crises. John Kenneth Galbraith, *Ambassador's Journal: An American View of India* (Bombay, 1972 [1969]), p. 118. Also in relation to the Indo-Chinese border war, the former *Times* correspondent for India Neville Maxwell writes how it is still not admitted in India that it was Nehru's forward policy that triggered the Indo-China war, and that this failure on part of the political élite of India - "...first duped, now self-deceived." - to have a critical reading of their country's own history has severe consequences also for contemporary Indo-Chinese relations. Neville Maxwell, 'Forty Years of Folly: What caused the Sino-Indian Border War and Why the Dispute Is Unresolved', *Critical Asian Studies*, 35:1 (2003), 99-112, p. 112. Hence, what we find in India is a vicious circle of self-deception with serious consequences not only for the minorities but also for the state.

<sup>50</sup> Connor, *Ethnonationalism the quest for understanding*, p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

proclaimed during and after World War One only by a few politicians, it developed into the official doctrine of the United Nations after the Second World War.<sup>52</sup> However, the post-colonial successor states were obviously multinational states, and this turned the elite of the therein dominant group, which proclaimed the right to self-determination for themselves, into advocates of multinational states.<sup>53</sup>

In their desire to preserve their multinational states, they received support from the United Nations Organisation (UNO), that placed the right to self-determination below the inviolability of state borders. Or stated differently, the right to self-determination is considered as an inviolable human right, but not one which can challenge the sovereignty of existing states.<sup>54</sup> After two world wars the main concern was to avoid further wars between states. The Cold War also stabilised the post-World War Two political map, both main protagonists and their followship tacitly agreed that the territorial integrity of existing states, or the states, which came into existence after the withdrawal of the imperial powers, should not be put into danger, whatever the doctrine of self-determination was saying in theory.<sup>55</sup> The new élite also drew ideological support from liberal advocates of the right to self-determination who at the same time were against granting the same to smaller groups taken to be inferior. These had for their own good to be absorbed by bigger nations, implying simply that education would lead to assimilation, and justified power on grounds of an evolutionist worldview.<sup>56</sup> So, after the achievement of independence, the task of the élite of the imperial successor state was now to focus the loyalty of the new citizens on the new state and to transcend rival loyalties. That is to say they emulated the export model of the European empires whose élites as Anderson<sup>57</sup> has shown, tried to transform their multinational empires into nation-states. The result was that despite official declarations in favour of multinational states and a secular, political notion of nation, the actual policy perpetuated was one of so-called nation-building, which actually was a policy of nation-destroying:<sup>58</sup> “The refusal of multiplicity, the dread of difference – ethnocidal violence – [is] the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> James Mayall and Mark Simpson, ‘Ethnicity is not enough: Reflections on Protracted Secessionism in the Third World’, In Anthony D. Smith (ed.), *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Leiden, 1992), pp. 5-25, p. 6.

The right to self-determination is blocked by Article 2 (7) of the Charter of the United Nations (UN), which guarantees the principle of the territorial integrity of states, see Owen Lynch, ‘Indigenous Rights in Insular Southeast Asia’, In *Cultural Survival Report 22. Southeast Asian Tribal Groups and Ethnic Minorities* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 27-46, p. 38. And herewith the right to ownership of the group that happened to capture the state.

<sup>55</sup> Mayall and Simpson, ‘Ethnicity is not enough: Reflections on Protracted Secessionism in the Third World’, p. 5. The UN was also anxious to grant self-determination only to people not to minorities, while at the same avoiding to define what a people is. States, however, only have minorities, no further people, see Nagengast, ‘Violence, Terror, and the Crisis of the State’, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1994, 23, pp. 109-136.

<sup>56</sup> Mayall and Simpson, ‘Ethnicity is not enough’, pp. 6-7.

<sup>57</sup> Anderson, *Die Erfindung der Nation: Zur Karriere eines folgenreichen Konzeptes*.

<sup>58</sup> Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, p. 22.

very essence of the state.”<sup>59</sup> Wherever protective measures for minorities were introduced, they were essentially disguised assimilation programmes.<sup>60</sup>

In the Indian case the major tool for this change on the periphery was the Indian Army. The post-Transfer of Power Indian army fundamentally resembled its imperial predecessor. One difference, however, posed the recruitment of its personnel, now aspiring a representative constitution, and in this way being intimately connected to nation-building and national identity what in turn delivered the reasons to fight.<sup>61</sup> One of the legacies of the *raj*, however, was the omnipresence of the military, especially in its role to uphold internal security. While this was generally opposed to by post-independence Indians and especially by their government, this, however, was not the case for the periphery where the military continued to play its traditional role. Indo-Pakistani hostility and the perceived threat posed by China prevented a reform of the armed forces, since in times of crises the civilians had to rely on the military, making it easy for the army to withstand any attempt to reform.<sup>62</sup> Though politicians and civil service successfully curbed the military’s part in the decision-making process,<sup>63</sup> where it was deployed and in command, like in the very peripheral Naga hills, it still had a free hand. This remains disturbingly true until today.<sup>64</sup> For then, it meant that a young and inexperienced officer corps,<sup>65</sup> probably eager to prove itself and earn its merit, found itself in charge of a major crisis in nation-building. Despite continuous affirmations of its professionalism and striking power, the reality probably was closer to an ill-equipped<sup>66</sup> and ill-trained force, clearly demonstrated by the contemporaneous debacle in the Indo-Chinese war.<sup>67</sup> This rout by the Chinese, however, unleashed a military build-up that bore fruits towards the end of the 1960s. It perhaps explains GOI’s assent to the ceasefire

<sup>59</sup> P. Clastres, ‘De l’ethnocide’ *L’Homme*, 1974, 14 (3-4), pp. 101-110, p. 110, cf. Nagengast, ‘Violence, Terror, and the Crisis of the State’, p. 110.

<sup>60</sup> See for example Kirk Endicott, ‘The Effects of Government Policies and Programs on the Orang Asli of Malaysia’ In Cultural Survival Report 22. *Southeast Asian Tribal Groups and Ethnic Minorities* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 47-51, about the Orang Asli of Malaysia, or David Maybury-Lewis, *Indigenous Peoples, Ethnic Groups, and the State* (Boston, 1997), pp. 17-21 about Chiapas.

<sup>61</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its contribution to the development of a nation* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1971), pp. 181ff.

<sup>62</sup> Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its contribution to the development of a nation*, pp. 170 and 181ff.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>64</sup> Even today and even in Assam the Indian Army has not only a free hand even against local officials but in general behaves like an occupational one, see Kunja Medhi, ‘Human Rights in North-East India: A Contemporary Perspective’, In Aftab Alam (ed.), *Human Rights in India: Issues and Challenges* (Delhi, 2000), pp. 289-304.

<sup>65</sup> Cohen, *The Indian Army*, p. 176. Cohen stressed that not only the officer corps had no experience, but also the political leadership, and especially Nehru and Menon meddled with detail military questions till the disaster of 1962.

<sup>66</sup> That the Indian soldiers had worse gear than even the CIA’s Tibetan guerrillas, see Kenneth Conboy and James Morrison, *The CIA’s Secret War in Tibet* (Kansas, 2002), p. 172.

<sup>67</sup> See Galbraith, *Ambassador’s Journal: An American view of India*, pp. 169ff and passim, and especially illustrative his recollection of Nehru’s reaction to the Chinese offer for ceasefire: “The Prime Minister was inclined to think that the Chinese offer of ceasefire and withdrawal was real. He cited two factors as inducing the Chinese offer. One of these was the unexpected anger of the Indian people when aroused – an anger that was unfortunately unmatched by military effectiveness. And the second factor was the speed of the American response.” *Ibid.*, p. 179. That the Indian Army’s prestige had been created by its predecessor and shattered only after a few days of fighting the Chinese, was

in the Naga hills and the proceedings of the peace mission as providing a breathing space to regroup and build-up its military potential and capability, in order to re-launch with even greater vigour subsequent assaults on the stubborn *junglis*.<sup>68</sup> Thus, when for example, in 1961 *The Times* correspondent wrote:

The Indian Army was committed soon after the underground had struck its first blows against the administration. The Army's natural strategy was to attempt to wipe out guerrillas as quickly as possible.

Villages thought to be supplying or supporting the underground were heavily punished or, if persistent, razed after their inhabitants had been brought together in stockaded centres to be held under guard. The guerrilla forces were also vigorously harried.

In the recollections of the Army officers and some officials those tactics brought the underground to its knees, and they grumble now that they were cheated of victory and condemned to a long and frustrating campaign by the Government's "Gandhian" hankering.<sup>69</sup>

Being humiliated by the Chinese was one thing, but being humiliated by the Nagas definitely smacked of a "myth of the stab in the back" and called for rectification as soon as possible. However, before this could be done, the IA had to fight the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965, and had to crush the Mizos in 1966-67, both campaigns possibly contributing to the explanation why the ceasefire held for so long in the Naga hills. When then the army was again unleashed unto the Naga hills it was better equipped and staffed but surely not better suited to fight a few recalcitrant insurgents. Even today though being deployed in the main for now more than five decades in operations against fellow-citizens, the IA still considers its main task as the territorial defence of the union. This has as a consequence that it behaves in its counterinsurgency operations as that what it is – a land-army that moves in massive force against an enemy, and till today could not be convinced of the impracticality of this approach in a guerrilla war, let alone in low-intensity insurgency.<sup>70</sup>

### 5.3 *The Indian Man's Burden*

The "Hill Tracts" of Assam feature just in about half a page of Volume III of the Round Table Conference in 1931. In Annexure 14, the *Memorandum regarding the position of Assam*, Srijut

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supported by its inability to come to terms with the Nagas, see Guy Wint, 'India faces the Shadows', *The Observer*, October 10, 1962.

<sup>68</sup> Judith M. Brown has it that the IA was in every respect in a miserable state after their rout by the Chinese, leading to a massive build-up, so that by 1966 the number of armed forces had been doubled as compared to a decade before and the expenditure more than trebled. Idem, *Nehru: A Political Life* (New Haven and London, 2003), pp. 325-330.

<sup>69</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, Jan. 15, *The Times*, 16.1.1961.

<sup>70</sup> See Rajesh Rajagopalan, 'Innovations in counterinsurgency: the Indian Army's Rashtriya Rifles', *Contemporary South Asia* 13 (1), March 2004, pp. 25-37.

Chandradhar Barooah argued against the separation of any part of the hills from the province of Assam. While he agreed on the continuation of certain “backward tracts” under the administration of the governor as agent to the governor general, he nevertheless stressed that every effort should be made to include the hills into the constitution of Assam, i.e. to end their protected status. Equally important, he went on, was the unhindered and legitimate access to and share of mineral wealth and other resources on part of the people of Assam that might be discovered in the hills. Barooah called the hill people “aboriginal inhabitants.”<sup>71</sup> This position had not changed much when fifteen years later the departure of the British was imminent and the Transfer of Power projected. The representatives of Congress and League for Assam, respectively Bardoloi and Sa’adullah, took only so much interest into the hill people’s destiny as to take their inclusion into Assam as given, Bardoloi on grounds of his Greater Assam thinking (he was of the opinion that Assam had formed a unit for approximately 3,000 years) and Sa’adullah in order to outnumber the Hindus and so to include Assam into the provinces grouped to join Pakistan.<sup>72</sup> In the words of the then governor of Assam Andrew Clow:

The Assamese, both Caste Hindu and Muslim, professed solicitude for the tribes, but neither had troubled to study the question, nor had any real sympathy with the tribes. This solicitude, which was very recent, was motivated almost entirely by considerations relating to their own differences, and especially the question of Pakistan. The Hindus felt that that the majority of the tribesmen in Assam would strengthen the case against its inclusion in Pakistan: the Muslims tended to stress the fact that the Hindus (like themselves) were a minority in the Province and that they and the tribes were in the same danger of Hindu domination. In consequence none of the parties concerned had made any serious attempt to face this complex problem in a constructive way.<sup>73</sup>

We further have already learned that the Congress-dominated constituent assembly had resolved to overrule proposals made by the advisory committee to ensure Congress dominance.<sup>74</sup> When the election of the members of the advisory committee was on the agenda of the constituent assembly, Govind Ballabh Pant, sitting for the United Provinces and in charge of moving this point, made it clear that the question of minorities had been used by the British to

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<sup>71</sup> Srijut Chandradhar Barooah, ‘Annexure 14. Memorandum regarding the position of Assam’, *In Indian Round Table Conference (Second Session), 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1931 - 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1931. Proceedings of Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee* (Volume III), (Calcutta, 1932), pp. 1497-1500.

<sup>72</sup> Minutes of Meeting between Cabinet Delegation, Field Marshal Viscount Wavell and Mr Gopinath Bardoloi on Monday, 1 April 1946 at 4.50 p.m., In Nicholas Mansergh and Penderel Moon (eds.), *The Transfer of Power, 1942-7, Volume VII, The Cabinet Mission, 23 March - 29 June 1946* (London, 1974), No. 35, pp. 76-80 and Note of Meeting between Field Marshal Viscount Wavell, Cabinet Delegation, Mr Qaiyum and Sir M. Sa’adullah on Tuesday, 2 April 1946. In *ibid.*, No. 40, pp. 88-90.

<sup>73</sup> Summary of views of Sir O. Caroe and Sir A. Clow on the tribal question given to the Cabinet Delegation in discussions at the Viceroy’s House, New Delhi on 28 March 1946. In *ibid.*, No. 16, pp. 35-39.

create disunity, and that the minorities' concerns were thus a child of imperialism: "So far, the minorities have been incited and have been influenced in a manner which has hampered the growth of cohesion and unity." Further on in his speech, while mentioning the necessity of safeguards to satisfy the minorities, he nevertheless clarified that the ultimate aim was to be the abolition of any minority status.<sup>75</sup> Nominated for the advisory committee was also one Naga whose name obviously gave some problems to K. M. Munshi who was reading out that part: "In Number 35, the name is wrongly spelt, it should be Shri Mayang Nokcha. I do not know how to pronounce it. He represents the North-Eastern tribal areas." The name was listed as "Shri Mayang Mokcha".<sup>76</sup> The Gorkha representative Damber Singh Gurung drew attention to the fact that there was no Gorkha nominated for the advisory committee: "Now, Sir, if there is no Gorkha on the Advisory Committee, who will speak for them and how will their interests and rights be safeguarded?"<sup>77</sup> His objection simply was ignored. Before him had already Jaipal Singh (sitting for Bihar), the most outspoken advocate of the *junglis*, as he called himself, pointed out that the tribes were underrepresented on the advisory committee. It was also Jaipal Singh who stated the absence of any minority representative from the union centre committee in charge of working out the centre-state relations.<sup>78</sup> The INC was determined not to let any cabinet mission's demands for minority safeguards interfere with its state-building project, irrespective of general and vaguely held assurances.<sup>79</sup>

Four months later J. J. M. Nichols-Roy (sitting for Assam, and a Christian) requested Nehru to make a statement, in his function as a member of the interim government, in which he should guarantee the people in the tribal and partially excluded areas of Assam that their hitherto protective scheme will not be withdrawn. Roy saw this as necessary in order to alleviate apprehensions and fears in the respective territories.<sup>80</sup> Nehru's reply is interesting in several respects:

<sup>74</sup> Cabinet. India and Burma Committee. Paper I.B.(47)14. Indian Policy. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, India Office, 6 February 1947, In Nicholas Mansergh and Penderel Moon (eds.), *The Transfer of Power, 1942-7, Volume IX, The fixing of a time limit, 4 November - 22 March 1947* (London, 1974), No. 355, pp. 628-630.

<sup>75</sup> *Constituent Assembly Debates*. Official Report. Vol. II, 20-1-1947 to 25-1-1947; 24<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1947, pp. 328-333.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 336 and 348. Mayangnokcha returned to the Naga Hills at the end of March 1947. His attention to the constituent assembly in New Delhi and his experiences there seemed to have changed him from someone propagating a union with India to someone close to the demand for complete independence. In *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/79, paper 15, dated March 31/47.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 357.

<sup>79</sup> See Clause 6 of 'India Office Press Release, 13 December 1946. Proclamation of Indian Independence, text of Pandit Nehru's Resolution', In Mansergh and Moon (eds.), *The Transfer of Power, 1942-7, Volume IX, The fixing of a time limit, 4 November - 22 March 1947*, No. 190, pp. 343-344: "And wherein adequate safeguards shall be provided for minorities, backward and tribal areas, and depressed and other backward classes."

<sup>80</sup> *Constituent Assembly Debates*. Official Report. Vol. III, 28-4-1947 to 2-5-1947; 30<sup>th</sup> April 1947, pp. 461-462.

I completely agree that the tribal areas and the tribal people should be protected in every possible way (*Hear, hear*), and the existing laws – I do not know what those laws are, but certainly the existing laws should continue and may be, should be, added to when the time comes. But thinking of this in terms of a fundamental right would be, I submit, entirely wrong. [Fundamental rights were on the agenda of the assembly on that day] (...) every care should be taken in protecting the tribal areas, those unfortunate brethren of ours who are backward through no fault of theirs, through the fault of social customs, and may be, ourselves or our forefathers or others; that it is our intention and it is our fixed desire to help them as much as possible; in as efficient a way as possible to protect them from possibly their rapacious neighbours occasionally and to make them advance. (...) <sup>81</sup>

Thus, initially Nehru gave a general assurance on the continuation of the existing laws, at the same time he admitted his ignorance on them, either genuinely or strategically, but already hinted at the eventually necessity of amending, i.e. altering these laws. In congruence with that was his clarification that these safeguards could not be taken as fundamental rights. Further, it becomes evident that he saw the claimed or actual difference as defective and something to be overcome in the direction of assimilation, and was in essence a denial of the recognition of *difference*. That nearly no-one perceived and stood up to this paternalistic aggression might be due to the fact that Nehru understood it quite well to wrap and bracket his paternalism with general and emotional assurances of tolerance, solidarity and communality that appealed to the hearts of the people, like when he ended his statement here: “...I want them to feel sure that they have the sympathy of the whole of India with them. (*Cheers*).” <sup>82</sup> It is very likely that he himself also believed in the good intentions of his policy, making it also more difficult for others to discern the violence behind such goodwill. Even more definite was Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel’s response that may be expressed in condensed form in one of his sentences: “It is not befitting India’s civilization to provide for tribes.” <sup>83</sup> The existence of tribes and all other separate interests for Patel had been the evil device of the British, and together with any special rights to be removed within ten years. <sup>84</sup>

Nehru, as late as 1944, when in prison in Ahmadnagar, still had allowed for “The right of any well-constituted area to secede from the Indian federation or union”, <sup>85</sup> despite the danger such secessions could pose to the unity of India. With reference to Jinnah’s Muslim League and to the princely states of India, and in view of the atmosphere which was to be expected to be highly emotional charged at the time of independence, Nehru made the restriction:

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 466.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 467.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*. (New Delhi, 1982 [1946]), p. 534.

Before any such right of secession is exercised there must be a properly constituted, functioning, free India (...). Thus it may be desirable to fix a period, say ten years after the establishment of the free Indian state, at the end of which the right to secede may be exercised through proper constitutional process and in accordance with clearly expressed will of the inhabitants of the area concerned.<sup>86</sup>

This seemed to reflect the standpoint of the INC leadership as well, since at that time they all were detained together with Nehru,<sup>87</sup> and Nehru explicitly had written about the above quotation: "The Congress has in effect agreed to it."<sup>88</sup> Yet, two years later, on August 1<sup>st</sup> 1946 Nehru, as president of the INC, had sent a letter to the secretary-general of the Naga National Council (NNC), T. Sakhrie, in which he had expressed his opinion that the territory of the Nagas was much too small to be politically and economically independent, further that the population was too backward, and therefore in need of considerable help. Consequently, Nagaland had to become an integral part of India. Nehru assured the Nagas' autonomy, while at the same time they should be included into the jurisdiction of Assam, sans separate electorate. On the one hand Nehru promised the Nagas their own law, on the other hand he did not see any reason why Indian law should not be applicable. Details that were to be clarified, he referred to the future advisory committee. In the question about the common language the Nagas surely had to choose. Nehru gave them a free hand to decide, but made himself perfectly clear that the choice had to be made between Assamese or Hindustani, while he himself would see the latter as the appropriate.<sup>89</sup> This letter, written approximately nine months before the above mentioned debate in the constituent assembly, extrapolates Nehru's theoretical good-will vis-à-vis the minorities. To make things worse, his paternalism was informed by complete ignorance of the local conditions of the northeastern hills. On the one side he favoured the integration of the minorities into the mainstream of Indian society, while simultaneously giving them written assurances and therewith guaranteeing them vaguely this or that protection. In essence the aim was integration via assimilation: the Nagas' insistence on difference was simply ignored. Nehru's letter was received

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid. Although a little earlier, in his treatise 'The unity of India' and in the collection of articles with the same name, Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India: Collected Writings 1937-1940* (London, 1942), he saw the unity of India as a fact for already 5 – 6,000 years. It even included Central Asia, a unity that was in essence culturally (pp. 13-15), but also mentally and laid down in a sacred geography by Shankaracharya (Buddha) (p. 16). The absence of political unification was only due to the lack of modern communications (p. 17). Conflict came into this area only with the Muslims (ibid.), and the equally divisive princely states were the creations of the British (p. 18). Pre-Muslim and pre-British India's nationalism had been not an imposed one but a natural one (p. 19). Nehru here rambled on his litany that India constituted a unit since India was a unit etc., every difference in reality was underlining its unity, and everything that worked against that unity, everyone that did not agree to belong to it, had to be a devious British creation.

<sup>87</sup> Neville Maxwell, *India and the Nagas* (London, 1973), p. 8.

<sup>88</sup> Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, p. 534.

<sup>89</sup> M. Alemchimba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland* (Kohima, 1970), pp. 166-169.



positively by the NNC. Its expressed empathy with and sympathy vis-à-vis the Nagas assured the NNC. Moreover, since the leadership of the INC was still held in high esteem by the NNC.<sup>90</sup>

The Nagas had positively taken Nehru's letter as a guarantee by Congress for safeguards and autonomy. Shortly after, however, the GOI and the external affairs department (EAD) requested the governor of Assam to withdraw or modify the *Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873* and the *Chin Hills Regulation, 1896*, both designed to keep the access to the area restricted. This order, as the Nagas understood it, had been motivated by party politics, and shattered their trust in Congress safeguards.<sup>91</sup>

Contributing further to the confusion must have been statements by Nehru such as the one on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1947: "We do not want to compel any province or portion of the country to join Pakistan or Hindustan." Or, as we have already learned that Sir B. N. Rau, constitutional advisor to the constituent assembly, said that no constitution could be forced upon the Naga hills tribal area. But we also know that he, too, assumed that they would have to join, especially because these areas were seen as vital for India's defence: India would have to establish military bases in these tribal territories.<sup>92</sup> Following the same line, Sir Akbar Hydari, the new governor of Assam, refused the autonomy plan for all previously excluded areas, made by S. R. H. Macdonald, the superintendent (SP) Lushai hills.<sup>93</sup>

The constituent assembly of India on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1947 informed the hill people of the Northeast that the British prime minister had announced the Transfer of Power from British into Indian hands not later than June 1948; further, that how India would be governed after that date was to be decided by Indians themselves, and that for this reason the constituent assembly was formed, which in turn had set-up an advisory committee and in turn several subcommittees, of which one would soon visit the hill people "...to find out from you how you wish the administration of your area to be carried on in future."<sup>94</sup> The document told those addressed that the advisory committee would not come with a pre-arranged plan, but wanted to promote the wishes of the hill people, since they would know best about their needs. This, however, was followed by a list of questions that were already prescribing the administrative structure

<sup>90</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study*, p. 196.

<sup>91</sup> *Archer Papers*, MSSEur 236/78, paper 5, dated 13<sup>th</sup> January 1947 & Copy of No. Ex/Misc/81/46/14-G.S. dt. 29.3.47 from the Secretary to the Governor of Assam, Shillong to the Deputy Commissioners, Naga Hills, Lakhimpur and Cachar, Superintendent, Lushai Hills; Political Officers, Sadiya, Balipara and Tirap Frontier Tracts. Subject: - Repealing of Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 (V of 1073) and the Chin Hills Regulation (V of 1896). As copy also in *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78.

<sup>92</sup> Confidential. S.O.No. A. 11/46. J. P. Mills, Office of the Adviser to the Governor of Assam for Tribal Areas and States, dt. Shillong, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1947, to G. E. D. Walker, Political Officer, Tirap Frontier Tract. In *ibid*, paper 13.

<sup>93</sup> A. R. H. Macdonald, S. P. Lushai Hills, to the Secretary to the Governor of Assam, dt. Aijal, 14<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1947. In *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78, paper 7. Confidential. D. O. No: 58/47/C-621-23 and Governor's Secretariat, to A. R. H. Macdonald, SP, Lushai Hills, Aijal, dt. Shillong, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1947. In *ibid.*, paper 30.

consisting of local self-governing bodies, a provincial legislature and ministry, leaving creative space only in the way they were elected and constituted.<sup>95</sup> It did not, for example, inquire whether they would like to be part of the Indian union in the first place. The local British officers were ordered to communicate this document to the representatives of the people in the excluded and partially excluded areas, but not to those in the tribal areas.<sup>96</sup> The case of the tribal areas then was considered as being different, and Mills, in personal communication to Archer, quoted the above mentioned constitutional advisor Rau: "The tribal areas are unofficially in the position of states..." (to use Rau's own words). Yet, time was short, the advisory committee was hard pressed to get its report out before the end of June 1947, and the problem was to acquire the opinion of, for example remote living tribes like the Konyaks or Changs, on their wishes regarding the future administrative arrangements.<sup>97</sup>

On the way the advisory subcommittee worked we get some glimpses from an obviously alarmed Mills who, and it is to be stressed, always was in favour of the incorporation of the hills into an independent India:

Most Secret and Personal.

To All P.Os and D. C. Naga Hills. Shillong, the 24<sup>th</sup> April 1947.

The Advisory Subcommittee of the Constituent Assembly has returned from the Lushai Hills to Shillong and I have had the opportunity in discussion of gaining a very clear impression of their methods and attitude. (...)

2. The outstanding impression gained is that the Subcommittee are quick to seize on any differences of opinion and to stress them. If no differences are immediately apparent cross-examination on points which have not occurred to the hillmen will usually produce them. Where differences of opinion can be shown the Subcommittee clearly consider themselves free to choose the alternative they themselves prefer or even to dictate to people "who do not know their own minds".<sup>98</sup>

Thus the subcommittee was clearly not out to inquire about the hill people's desire, but to find ways to impose on them a pre-arranged scheme. In the case of the Naga hills the subcommittee

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<sup>94</sup> Constituent Assembly of India, to The Hill peoples of the Naga Hills, Mikir Hills, Cachar Hills, Khasi & Jaintia Hills, and Garo Hills, signed R. K. Ramadhyani, Deputy Secretary Constituent Assembly of India, dt. 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1947. In *ibid.*, paper 25.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Memo. No. 688-371/C. To DC, Naga Hills; SP, Lushai Hills; SDO, North Cachar Hills; PO, Sadiya Frontier Tract; PO, Balipara Frontier Tract; PO, Tirap Frontier Tract; DC, Garo Hills; DC, Khasi and Jaintia Hills; DC, Sibsagar and DC, Nowgong. signed P. R. Adams, Secretary to the Governor of Assam, Governor's Secretariat Shillong, dt. 25<sup>th</sup> April 1947.

<sup>97</sup> Personal communication from Mills to Archer, dt. Shillong, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1947. In *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78, paper 28.

finally did neither go to Wakching (Konyak area) nor to Mokokchung (Ao area, sub-divisional headquarter of NHD), but announced its arrival on May 19, and planned to stay the following two days, the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>.<sup>99</sup>

That also the governor of Assam, Hydari, was unwilling to grant the Nagas any separate solution, and that his vision for Assam was inspired by the example of the United Kingdom may be taken from Archer's personal notes in which Archer, having obviously had a meeting with Hydari:

We can't have any of this Verrier Elwin nonsense – anthropologists' museum. They have got to come in. If they revolt; we shall shoot them up. It will be a pity but it will not be our fault; We couldn't give Nagas residual Powers.(...) They can have a council at the district board level. A Naga Government is out of question. We can't have lot of hill governments. I would like an Assam like the United Kingdom where English, Welsh and Scottish are all one. This is the best I can do for them. If they don't accept it, they must take the consequences.(...) I rely on you to make the Nagas understand.<sup>100</sup>

Archer also gives us his reaction to this, demonstrating that neither did the opinion of the British officers count, nor the wishes of the Nagas themselves, but only the ideal of one representative of the ruling class of India:

I came away with such despair – ... . our news mattered nothing – the Nagas also did not matter – Mills had also not been asked – Hydari had never even seen the hills – a whole minor autonomy that did not matter – The rest to the plains.<sup>101</sup>

Mills allowed himself to contemplate about the contradiction of the official Congress policy on the one side, verbally declaring that no-one will be forced into the union, and the furious reaction of Hydari to any scheme "...curtailing their hold on the hills."<sup>102</sup>

Discussions between Hydari and the Nagas were held from 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> June 1947 at Kohima. The outcome was the draft that later on should be called *Nine Points*, or *Hydari Agreement*, recognising the right of the Nagas to develop themselves according to their own wishes, and in general handing over affairs in the Naga hills – judicial, executive, legislative, land and taxation - to the NNC. Point six guaranteed the transfer of the forests previously included into Sibsagar and Nowgong districts and to include, as far as possible, all areas inhabited by Nagas. Point eight stated that the *Chin Hills Regulations* and the *Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations*

<sup>98</sup> Memorandum. Most Secret and Personal. Mills to all P.Os and D.C. Naga Hills, dt. Shillong, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1947. In *ibid.*, papers 32 – 34.

<sup>99</sup> Telegram to SDO Mokokchung, dt. Shillong, 7<sup>th</sup> May 1947, 11.55h. In *ibid.*, paper 45.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*: Notes, paper 53, dt. 6<sup>th</sup> June 1947.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

would remain in force, having bearing mostly for the barring of immigration of plainsmen into the hills, and point nine, which would develop into the main bone of contention, delimited the period for which the agreement was to be valid. It said the following:

The Governor of Assam as the Agent of the Government of the Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of 10 years to ensure the due observance of this agreement, at the end of this period the Naga Council will be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga people arrived at.<sup>103</sup>

Although granting a far-reaching autonomy in paper, Hydari had managed with this agreement not only to conciliate the NNC, but also to bring the Naga hills under the authority of the governor of Assam. This, later on, would leave enough room to manoeuvre, in order to bring the hills into Assam. However, the Nagas preferred to decide to see this last clause as granting them the right to self-determination, after the lapse of ten years. This was denied by the Indian side.

By the beginning of July the subcommittee presented its findings to the delegates of the hill people. No British officers were present. Except the Nagas, all hill people accepted the proposed scheme. The subcommittee treated the Naga hills as part of Assam, and doing this referred to Attlee's statement in the house of commons, and asserted that its own scheme would cover by and large the agreement reached between Hydari and the NNC, and in some points would even go further. The Naga delegates present at this meeting objected to this and wanted their territory treated as independent, and left for further consultations with the NNC.<sup>104</sup> In the immediate pre-Transfer of Power period information and communication from the centre to the periphery were delayed, since more urgent matters had to be settled. Hence, it was after that meeting that Nehru congratulated Hydari on his success in the negotiations with the NNC, and informed him that he would forward the papers to the constituent assembly.<sup>105</sup> Nehru, so it seems, was satisfied with the Hydari Agreement.

Around the beginning of August the Indians – including Nehru and Nicholas Roy - started to blame the British officials for the Nagas' demand for independence.<sup>106</sup> Archer, in an undated paper summed up the attitudes of the three main Indo-Assamese actors towards the hill areas around the Brahmaputra valley:

<sup>102</sup> Letter from Mills to Archer, dt. Shillong, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1947. In *ibid.*, paper 56.

<sup>103</sup> Secret. A. G. P. [G. S. (C.)] 3-50-5-7-1947. In *ibid.*, paper 58. I will give the full text in the next chapter.

<sup>104</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the Assam Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee at Shillong on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> July 1947. In *ibid.*, papers 60-70.

<sup>105</sup> Copy of D. O. No. 973/c dt. 18.7.47 from P. F. Adams, Adviser to the Governor of Assam, to C. R. Pawsey, DC, NH Confidential. Memo. No. 61/C, dated Kohima the 30<sup>th</sup> July, 1947. Copy forward to Mr. Archer, Addl. DC, Mokokchung for information. Please tell Mayangnokcha. In *ibid.*, paper 79.

Nehru's attitude – resentment at “..rk..p..l [unreadable] exclusion” at same time – a p..mma... w..h [ditto] not to harm their culture or impair their traditional way of life – a denial of “plains hostility” and “plains danger” – how to make them feel themselves a part of India – anger ...[at anything?] which might make them feel non-Indian – wish to give cargo grants ...[unreadable] –

Hydari's attitude – to make them “citizens of modern India” – to modernise the wildes - ...[unreadable] tribal council law by the IPC and CPC – Hindustani for the tribal languages – to make the Nagas Assamese - ...[unreadable] Indian Political Thought – the value of ...[ditto, real? high?] cultures – caste cultures –

Bardoloi – “integration of the hills and plains” – close ... ...[unreadable] – “bridging the gulf” -<sup>107</sup>

Difference had to be eradicated. Assimilation was the objective, rather unity than diversity. As Archer's wife noted:

But G [her husband W. G. Archer] felt all along that the Gouverneur's attitude was directionally opposed to his. There was this same air of condescension that we have found in all plainmen. The belief that these primitives can only be turned into Indians by eliminating all their individuality. The conception of an Indian that contains all types of people just does not appeal to them.<sup>108</sup>

This was followed by a description of Kohima that to her appeared squalid with its corrugated iron and cosmopolitan population (Gurkha officers, Assamese soldiers, Sikhs looking for girls, Bengalis with children, drunken Naga women etc.) and so we may safely assume was proof to her of cultural decay and to her knowledge exactly what the governor would want and the Congress would perceive as progress.<sup>109</sup>

By December 1947 the governor assured the NNC that they would be consulted before any constitutional proposals were to be implemented, further, that the aim was to put into effect the agreement reached in June.<sup>110</sup> This was so, notwithstanding that Hydari indicated in a speech held in Gauhati in March 1948 that he proposed the incorporation of the tribes of Assam into the economy of Assam in the course of the running five-years-plan without, however, wanting to force integration on them.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Letter from Pawsey to Archer, dt. Kohima, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1947. In *ibid.*, paper 82.

<sup>107</sup> *Archer Papers* MSS Eur F 236/79, paper 18, undated.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, paper 20, Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Communication from Archer to Secretary NNC, dt. Mokokchung, 27<sup>th</sup> December 1947. In *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78.

<sup>111</sup> *The Statesman*, 28.3.48, attached to a confidential communication from the Office of the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, New Delhi, to the Commonwealth Relations Office, London, dated 13<sup>th</sup> April 1948. In OIOC, L/PJ/7/10635.

That the new Indian state was determined to hold its grip over and integrate the northeastern hill areas is also confirmed by the discussion of the constituent assembly surrounding the adoption of the sixth schedule (see sub-chapter 3.9). One side of the debaters propagated a stand, best described as benevolent paternalism, as represented for example by Ambedkar who stressed that the hills would, despite all safeguards, nevertheless be indisputably part of Assam and after a lapse of approximately ten years would have to have lose their local autonomies and by then would be fully integrated into the province.<sup>112</sup> The other side of debaters saw such a proceeding as painfully sluggish and displayed an aggressive and impatient expansionism. Kuladhar Chaliha, Brajeshwar Prasad, Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri, and Shibban Lal Saksena decried the hill people in general but the Nagas in particular as primitive savages, their insistence on being different as the outcome of an evil plot staged by British imperialists and foreign missionaries, and any concession to these tribals as the blueprint to catastrophe. As Brajeshwar Prasad explained:

The responsibilities of parliamentary life can be shouldered by those who are competent, wise, just and literate. To vest wide political powers into the hands of tribals is the surest method of inviting chaos, anarchy and disorder throughout the length and breadth of this country.<sup>113</sup>

The implementation of the “principle of self-determination”, for Prasad, is equivalent to the opening of Pandora’s Box.<sup>114</sup> Yet, it was rather a question of emotions, since reality was far less seriously opposed to the integrity of the newly established Indian union, as the president of the constituent assembly Rajendra Prasad made evident in a retort to a critic of that very sixth schedule: “Power is given to the Parliament under the paragraph 20 to repeal the whole of the Schedule, if it thinks necessary. What more do you want?”<sup>115</sup>

A paper produced by the Calcutta branch of the British high commission on the hill areas of Assam recognised this power of the Indian parliament to amend or repeal any part of the sixth schedule. This “reform” had predated any external or communist threat and hence was:

...dictated...by a desire to speed administrative reforms with the object eventually of extending the areas under normal administration, of reducing to uniformity further areas of a province which

<sup>112</sup> *Constituent Assembly Debates*. Official Report. Vol. IX, 30-7-1949 to 18-9-1949; 5<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1949, pp. 1004-1005.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 6<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1949, p. 1009.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1013. For the whole debate about the Sixth Schedule, see *ibid.*, pp. 1001-1097.

abounded in special problems, and of initiating developments which the British had allegedly neglected.<sup>116</sup>

Further, notes exchanged between the high commission in Delhi, and the commonwealth relations and foreign office in London, between April 1948 and May 1950, show that the British officials had decided not to exhibit publicly any interest in the developments in the Northeast, since the Indian authorities on their side, according to the British (and as we also have found it in the debates of the constituent assembly) were convinced that the sixth schedule was the outcome of a deliberate ill-will on part of the former imperial power. In early 1950 accusations were made by the Indian home secretary Iengar that British officials and missionaries in the past encouraged Naga aspirations for independence. This, in the course of the exchange of notes, was denied by a former British member of the Indian external affairs ministry in an answer to an inquiry by the commonwealth relations office. This notwithstanding, the official continued, Britain would be found objecting towards anything like Naga independence. We also gather from these communications that the Northeast was perceived as of vital strategic concern to India's officials, and the British themselves were worried about Communist infiltration into the Northeast, and concerned about India's capability to halt the advance of Communist ideology. The Nagas, so these British officials were concluded, had been incited by Communists.<sup>117</sup> The Indian officials believed in the omnipresence of a multitude of national and international threats and conspiracies aimed at the destruction of independent India. This paranoia seemed to resemble their ruler predecessors' and led, at least in the periphery, to the continuation of the "garrison state".

#### 5.4 Greater Assam

For Assam Delhi was far away and busy with other things, and that remained true throughout, and not only for the period under consideration here. Assam in the late 1940s and early 1950s, was present very infrequently in the international press, and that only due to floods and earthquakes, occasional and localised violence described as communal, tribal, or Communist, and finally in the context of India's Northeast Frontier policy, which was determined by her considerations for her own defence against Communist China and Nepali Communists.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>116</sup> *Special Report No 52: The Assam frontier areas under the new constitution*. Office of the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, 6, Albuquerque Road, New Delhi, dated 13<sup>th</sup> February 1950, Harrison, to B. J. Greenhill, Commonwealth Relations Office, London, S. W. 1. In OIOC: L/PJ/J/10635.

<sup>117</sup> Notes exchanged between the Office of the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, New Delhi, the Commonwealth Relations, and the Foreign Office, London, dated between April 1948 and May 1950 and Confidential (FL 10114/11). L. A. C. Fry, Foreign Office to B. J. Greenhill, Commonwealth Relations Office, dated 7<sup>th</sup> March 1950. Both in OIOC, L/PJ/7/10635.

<sup>118</sup> *The Times*, 20.11. and 23.12.1946; 2. and 27. 1., 24.3. and 12.4.1947; 30.12.1948; 8.3., Aug.-Sept. (major earthquake) and 30.10.1950; 16.4.1952.

Indeed, Assam itself was of very marginal interest. The Nagas on their part first were mentioned in association with the plan of the construction of an imperial war cemetery at Kohima, and the Naga hills as possible source of arms for communist insurgents in Upper Assam, and in relation to a major headhunting incident.<sup>119</sup> General questions in the *Lok Sabha* in 1951 on the potential of the NHD for mineral wealth and agriculture, and in 1952 on the eradication of headhunting in the Naga tribal areas via development schemes, indicate that the Nagas did not yet pose a political problem for the central administration.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, the short discussion in the *Lok Sabha* on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1951 on communications in the Naga hills supports statements made by two of my interviewees that in the initial post-independence time nothing much had changed in the Naga hills, and rather that the Nagas were administering themselves for the time being.<sup>121</sup> For although Assam was now in charge of administering the NHD, and the governor of Assam in charge of the Naga hills tribal area as agent of the president of India,<sup>122</sup> neither had initially the means nor the manpower effectively to implement the duty going along with the office - contrary to that run statements in the literature that suggest the build-up of the Assamese administration immediately after the Transfer of Power.<sup>123</sup> Yet these will have referred to 1948 or even 1949, and not 1947. How the change on the spot might have been, we will try to unravel closely in the next chapter. Here it is important to note that though it had been brought to Nehru's attention that the Nagas were dissatisfied with the neglect of their point of view, the incorporation of the hill areas was left to the Assam administration. The Assamese themselves were for a long time fighting Bengali dominance and demanding *swaraj* for Assam, independent from India. The quest for preserving Assamese identity turned into the one of building a Greater Assam by an Assamisation of the hills, triggering in turn a chain reaction of independence demands from the hill people. At the end of the British *raj* literally everyone in and around Assam wanted independence. The Nagas were by no means an exception, but maybe only the most stubborn. Most of the different hill and plains people gave in to Congress for the time being, but the post-independence history of the Northeast shows that this was on revocation. However, the Assamese élite became dominated, already under the Ahoms, by caste Hindus who, then organised in Congress, decided for several reasons (among them the fear of Pakistan and

<sup>119</sup> *The Times*, 22.9. and 30.10.1950; 1.9.1951.

<sup>120</sup> *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 8, 1951, 26.5., Columns 4679-4681 and *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 1, 1952, 19.5., ?

<sup>121</sup> *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 8, 1951, 26.5., Columns 4646-4647; Interview with Mr. Yong Kong, London, 7.8.2001 and with Mrs. Adino Phizo and Mr. Kevilevor Phizo, London, 19.7.2001.

<sup>122</sup> Through the provisional constitutional order of August 15<sup>th</sup> 1947 were the before excluded and tribal areas now not anymore under the jurisdiction of the governor and his representatives, but did now fall under the Assamese administration, see Shibani Kinkar Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-East India* (New Delhi, 1973), p. 82.

<sup>123</sup> Luingang Luithui and Nandita Haksar, *Nagaland File: A question of Human Rights* (New Delhi, 1984), p. 23; Nari Rustomji, *Imperilled Frontiers: India's North-Eastern Borderlands* (Delhi, 1983), p. 60.



Communism) to remain within the Indian union.<sup>124</sup> The Assamese for long had viewed the exclusion of the hill regions from the administration of Assam as a devious divide-and-rule device on the part of the British.<sup>125</sup> The Transfer of Power brought the opportunity to reverse this. Now, as quick as possible, the Assamese wanted what they saw as a political, cultural and administrative reunification of the hills and the plains. The moment was there to build a Greater Assam, including the hill regions reaching until the international borders of China, Burma and East-Pakistan.<sup>126</sup>

### 5.5 Hostiles

The first incident, giving the Naga hills wider national public attention was when in March 1953 Nehru,<sup>127</sup> together with his Burmese colleague U Nu, toured the Indo-Burmese border region, primarily “...to study personally the law and order situation in the frontier areas.”<sup>128</sup> The source for the situation were the movements of “dacoits” and “lawless elements”.<sup>129</sup> When Nehru and U Nu visited Kohima about 3,000 Nagas left the reception ground as a protest against Nehru’s refusal to their demand for independence.<sup>130</sup> An unmatched re-narration of Nehru’s humiliation, who normally used to be the darling of the masses, is given by Gita Mehta:

The airplane landed, a great white bird with the symbol of the Indian nation, Emperor Asoka’s pillar of truth, blazoned on its side. Would the child-like tribals be frightened by this miracle of aerodynamics descending from the heavens with its cargo of democratic divinity? Would they run for cover? But no, they were standing steady under quivering head-dresses watching aircraft personnel leaping out to fix the steps for the Prime Minister’s descent, as the press photographers pushed forward for a clear view through their lenses.

<sup>124</sup> Girin Phukon, *Assam Attitude to Federalism* (New Delhi, 1984), pp. 5, 20, 46, 55, 57, 68-73, 91 and passim. Phukon’s book seems to me the best on the time around the Transfer of Power.

<sup>125</sup> Thus a typical explanation of the Naga’s uprising is to blame collectively the CIA, British secret agents, Communist China, and Christian missionaries, all in lieu threatening the unity of India, see for example Saroj Chakrabarty, *The Uplaval Years in North-East India: A documentary in-depth study of Assam holocausts 1960-1983* (Calcutta, 1984), p. 97.

<sup>126</sup> Rustomji, *Imperilled Frontiers: India’s North-Eastern Borderlands*, pp. 11, 27-28 and 36.

<sup>127</sup> Though Nehru had been earlier approached several times by Naga delegations in general and by Phizo, who slowly crystallised as the Naga national leader, in particular. In the words of the head of the intelligence bureau Mullik: “Phizo saw Pandit Nehru...some time in 1949 in Delhi, but at that time the Prime Minister got the impression that Phizo was crank and had not be taken seriously. Phizo again met Pandit Nehru in Shillong or Dibrugarh in April 1950. The latter gave Phizo almost a blank cheque within the Constitution and told him that the provisions made in the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule should be tried, and anything not found to be satisfactory by the Nagas could be amended and there would be no difficulty about it. But this assurance did not satisfy Phizo. He wanted a definite clause to be inserted on the terms of the 9-point agreement that the Nagas would have the right to secede, if they so desired, after ten years from the date the Constitution came into force. This, however, the Prime Minister was naturally not willing to concede.” See B. N. Mullik, *My Years With Nehru: 1948-1964* (Bombay, 1972), p. 299.

<sup>128</sup> Associated Press, Delhi, March 11, *The Times*, 12.3.1953.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Reuter, Kohima, March 30, *The Times*, 31.11.1953.

Finally the great man himself appeared – to be received by a reverence so profound that even the accompanying journalists were silenced. Possessing a sense of history, the leader solemnly descended the aircraft steps, assuming this warlike people wished to give him a colourful guard of honour.

I suppose they did. Because as soon as he was on terra firma, they all turned with regimental precision and lifted their colourful sarongs. The Prime Minister of India found himself taking the salute of hundreds of naked tribal behinds.<sup>131</sup>

It was thereafter that GOI gave Assam's chief minister Bishnuram Mehdi a free hand for a tougher policy.<sup>132</sup> However, the first incident that drew the attention of the international press and of Delhi was the attack on Yimpang in which 57 people were killed and which was portrayed as the result of an inter-village feud between the former village and another one named Pangsha.<sup>133</sup> When in late April 1955 reports came into Delhi saying that troops were being dispatched into Tuensang, the official explanation was that they were sent there to hunt "subversive elements and restore order". The Assam Rifles obviously had been attacked and weapons had been distributed to some villages to terrorise the population.<sup>134</sup> A month later A. K. Chanda, deputy minister for external affairs admitted in the *Lok Sabha* that it were separatists who had assaulted another village on grounds of its cooperation with GOI, and he promised "prompt and effective action against the wrongdoers."<sup>135</sup> In July Nehru, in his double functioning as prime minister and minister of external affairs, admitted that some areas in the Northeast Frontier Area (NEFA) had been declared disturbed, but could not say whether the armed units operating there were the paramilitary Assam Rifles or the regular Indian army. When asked about the possible reasons for the unrest Nehru suggested it were the Nagas of the adjacent NHD who were inciting the villagers in Tuensang.<sup>136</sup> The central government, so it appears, had to rely for information on the remote Northeast's local administration.<sup>137</sup> Two weeks later the parliament was informed, in response to a well-aimed question, that the regular army was not yet involved in any fighting and was only performing garrison duties in Tuensang. Nehru referred to petty incidents.<sup>138</sup> A week later it became evident that Burmese security forces were cooperating with their Indian colleagues in fighting "hostiles", and according to Nehru's information, were estimated at being between 400 and 500 strong. The questions, as a rule, were posed by Rishang Keishing, who as member of parliament for the reserved scheduled tribes of

<sup>131</sup> Gita Mehta, *Snakes and Ladders: A View of Modern India* (London, 1997), pp. 95-96.

<sup>132</sup> Nehru, albeit informed by IB officer S. M. Dutt on potentially dangerous situation in the Naga hills, trusted the judgement of the Assamese government and considered it as an internal affair of Assam, see Mullik, *My Years With Nehru*, p. 301.

<sup>133</sup> Reuter, Shillong, Assam, Nov. 28, *The Times*, 29.11.1954.

<sup>134</sup> Reuter, Shillong, Assam, April 21, *The Times*, 22.4.1955.

<sup>135</sup> Reuter, Delhi, May 5, *The Times*, 6.5.1955.

<sup>136</sup> *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 4, 25<sup>th</sup> July 1955, Columns 2944 – 2946.

<sup>137</sup> *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 4, 28<sup>th</sup> July 1955, Columns 3111 – 3112.

<sup>138</sup> *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 4, 10<sup>th</sup> August 1955, Columns 3541 – 3542.

Outer Manipur, seemed to have independent means for information on the Northeast.<sup>139</sup> All the efforts to portray what was going on in Tuensang as a series of petty incidents were contradicted when details arrived that the political officer of the NEFA administration had asked the army to assist the local administration, and GOI had assented to post one battalion in the southern sector of the Tuensang division.<sup>140</sup> By the end of that month, finally, *The Express* had news that the Nagas were fighting a war of independence, and that Nehru had sent in “steel-helmeted troops”; further, that the Nagas had proclaimed a republic and had elected some “Hong Khin” as head of state. Nehru, so *The Express* continued, had asked Burma for help and the Burmese military had launched operations against the Nagas. Casualties were mounting on both sides, and *The Express* predicted that the Nagas would be capable of holding up the struggle for a long time.<sup>141</sup> As early as from September 1955 onwards regular troops had been also sent into the NHD and were engaged in regular fighting.<sup>142</sup> By the end of September the correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* Taya Zinkin, reporting from Bombay, wrote about military operations against “terrorists” in the Tuensang area who were attacking villages, and drew their weapons from World War II dumps or were supplied by the NNC. In the previous two weeks, according to official numbers, nearly twenty IA troops had lost their lives as had 54 Nagas. From originally 500 “rebels” there were still some 200 left fighting. Zinkin repeated the Indian litany blaming everyone and everything but themselves, and that the demand for independence among the Nagas was created by the last Assam governor Andrew Clow<sup>143</sup> and supported by foreign missionaries. Indians, according to Zinkin, were outraged at that demand, were of the opinion that it was unrealistic and that the Naga hills were anyway not economically viable. Zinkin may well have represented the liberal end of the spectrum of Indian opinion.<sup>144</sup> *The Times* admitted that information was only available from official sources and that what happened since independence may never be known. Nevertheless it corrected the numbers of the insurgents upwards to now nearly 2,000 and it seemed that Nehru had ascribed the reasons for the uprising to a hastened pace of assimilation on part of the Assam administration.<sup>145</sup> By late December 1955 the official number of casualties on Naga side was 258 killed and 68 wounded since the beginning

<sup>139</sup> *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 4, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1955, Columns 3683 – 3685.

<sup>140</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, Aug. 19, *The Times*, 20.8.1955.

<sup>141</sup> Bertram Jones from Calcutta, in *Express*, Tuesday, 31.8.1955.

<sup>142</sup> C. L. Proudfoot, *Flash of the Khukri: History of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Gorkha Rifles, 1947 to 1980* (New Delhi, 1984), pp. 53-61.

<sup>143</sup> While it is true that Clow's predecessor Robert Reid was in favour of some scheme for the hill tribes that would have excluded them from Indian politics, it is also true that he could not get anyone interested in that, see Sir Robert Reid, *Years of Change in Bengal and Assam* (London, 1966), p. 110. Andrew Clow, to the contrary, even tried to persuade the Nagas to acquiesce themselves with being part of Assam and hence part of the Indian Union, see Nari Rustomji, *Enchanted Frontiers: Sikkim, Bhutan and India's North-Eastern Borderlands* (Bombay, 1971), p. 48. Clow also personally repudiated this accusation, see To the Editor of *The Times*, 7.10.55.

<sup>144</sup> Taya Zinkin from Bombay, Sept. 27, in *Manchester Guardian* (MG), 28.9.1955.

<sup>145</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, Sept. 29, *The Times*, 30.9.1955.

of the fighting.<sup>146</sup> That one would have expected the ratio between killed and wounded the other way around, is a phenomena that we are to encounter more often. The parliamentary secretary of the external affairs ministry, Hazarika, told the *Lok Sabha* that the “disorders had arisen from the demand by rebel tribesmen for an independent State”; further, that the above mentioned casualties had occurred “while Indian troops were restoring order recently in the Naga tribal area of India’s north-east”, but “that the situation had improved considerably”.<sup>147</sup> The situation, according to GOI representatives’ descriptions would continue to improve over the following years, and would be part of a strategy to play down the scale of the fighting and destruction. Those who demanded independence had to be only a few, and were singularly responsible for the fighting, they and their demand defamed and ridiculed as “misguided”, “extreme”, “hostile”, “terrorist” etc. The overwhelming majority of the Nagas had to be protected from them by Indian troops. Thus, by the end of 1955, eight years after the Transfer of Power, the fighting in the Naga hills, whether in the district or tribal area, had made its way into the consciousness of the decision-makers in the Indian capital as a minor but persistent threat to India’s newly won territorial integrity.

By April 1956 according to the press already three battalions of the regular IA had been deployed to the Naga hills, to an area which then held approximately 350,000 inhabitants, and this despite Nehru’s assurances that the situation was improving, that more and more had surrendered, and that those who continued only had World War Two weapons, and were engaged only in guerrilla warfare. Nehru also had reminded the IA that they were not fighting in enemy country and “that their approach to the people should be one of extreme friendliness”.<sup>148</sup> That this was then beyond the IA’s capacity will to be shown in detail further down, but Nehru’s exhortation stemmed from an awareness, according to the *Manchester Guardian*, that the uprising had genuine motives:

...New Delhi is well aware that the solution of the problem does not lie in a display of armed might alone, for the problem is mainly political. In his evidence before the States Reorganisation Commission Phizo demanded independence for the Naga land. If after nine years of Indian independence Nagas still talk of independence the malady must have deep roots requiring careful diagnosis and appropriate treatment.<sup>149</sup>

It had by then been understood in Delhi that measures, previously undertaken by the GOI to hasten civilisation in the Naga hills, were taken as aggression against their way of life by

<sup>146</sup> Delhi, Dec. 20, *The Times*, 21.12.1955.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> *MG*, 28.4.1956.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

the Nagas and thus could be exploited by the “extremists.” In the beginning, so it was believed, there was trouble in the Tuensang area which had awakened the otherwise dormant design for independence in the NHD. The desire for independence arose, according to “observers”, due to the suspicion that was felt towards the Assamese, and Phizo wanted to form a separate state out of all hill districts, and that the opinion among the people was divided, and that the states reorganisation committee had not taken it into consideration back then. Delhi saw that the unification of all Naga territory had a case, further that its administration could be conducted by elected leaders. Once violence had stopped these were matters that could be negotiated, although Nehru made it clear that independence was out of the question.<sup>150</sup>

Despite the repeated incantation of an improved situation, at the beginning of May 1956 details of a battle came in between Indian security forces (ISF) and 200 rebels armed with machine and sten guns, as well as with regular rifles near Kohima (where the IA had its headquarters), during which 30 rebels were killed. The IA ultimatum to surrender all arms by 3<sup>rd</sup> May had ran out and now a full-scale military campaign was expected.<sup>151</sup> A day later it was reported that since mid-April more than 100 rebels had been killed and many more wounded, and that fourteen villages had been burned down by the rebels. Nehru stated he had no information about any assistance by Pakistan or any other foreign government for the rebels, and denied that the rebels had gained control over any territory.<sup>152</sup> On the side of the government 17 people had been killed, 30 wounded and five were unaccounted for. Nehru signalled his government’s readiness to grant a wider autonomy to the Nagas on the condition of the cessation of violence.<sup>153</sup> Later the same month, Taya Zinkin of the *Manchester Guardian*, accused the Shillong (Assamese), administration of having created the troubles in the NHD with its “ineptitude”, since there reigned tranquillity in the neighbouring Manipur and Tuensang hills which were ruled by the centre. The Nagas in Tuensang seemed, according to Zinkin, content to remain inside the Indian union. Zinkin ridiculed the Nagas’ demand for independence as well as the Nagas themselves in the usual way. He had been to the Naga hills and related a story he had heard about a district official whose chopped off head “...arrived in Shillong, neatly packed in a wicker-basket, with the enclosed note: ‘Please next time send a more polite man.’”<sup>154</sup> In Zinkin’s view the insurgency, or, “...the whole trouble...” as he termed it, was due to the civilising vigour of the Victorian-minded and prudish Assamese officials; the Nagas’ resistance but a refusal “...to cover those shiny bottoms...”<sup>155</sup>

<sup>150</sup> Mainly *MG*, 28.4.1956, but minor info also from Times correspondent, Delhi, April 20, *The Times*, 21.4.1956.

<sup>151</sup> BUP, New Delhi, May 3, in *MG*, 4.5.1956 and Reuter, Shillong, Assam, May 2, *The Times*, 3.5.1956.

<sup>152</sup> BUP, New Delhi, May 4, in *MG*, 5.5.56.

<sup>153</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, May 4, *The Times*, 5.5.1956.

<sup>154</sup> By Taya Zinkin, Bombay 21, in *MG*, 22.5.56.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

To do justice to Zinkin, he also described how the *Hydari Agreement's* existence, after Hydari's death, was simply denied by the GOI. Thereupon the Nagas started with non-cooperation and soon after the terror started. The situation in the hills was severe, the IA in a difficult position, and the Nagas violently split into rebels and loyalists.<sup>156</sup>

Later that month Lakshmi Menon, the parliamentary secretary for external affairs, was speaking in parliament on the improvement in the Naga hills, despite isolated attacks. Nehru also stated that once the problem of violence was tackled, the political matters had to be settled together with the Naga leaders.<sup>157</sup> It was the Indian member of parliament (MP) Joeshwar Singh who called into doubt all affirmations that the insurgents were but a few and certainly soon would be part of the past. Singh held first-hand information, since he had been held in captivity by the Nagas, and after his release stressed that there was no way of playing down the situation since, despite the Indian troops having their headquarters in Kohima the stretch between Kohima and Khijuma, near Mao in Manipur, on the Dimapur-Imphal road, was effectively under Naga control.<sup>158</sup>

Singh's evidence was further corroborated by the fact that India continued to move IA reinforcements into the Naga hills. GOI had further decided on publishing newspapers in seven different Naga languages to counter Phizo's propaganda and to convince the Nagas of remaining within the Indian union. Phizo, by now, had been singled out as the main culprit. The task of counter-propaganda, however, was entrusted to the army, since the Nagas, as had now become apparent, did not trust the Assam government. Delhi now clearly saw the Assamese civil authorities as being responsible for the trouble in the first place, and for the prospect of its protracted nature. Still, the army had problems finding its way around, distinguishing friend and foe, and building up an intelligence network. This, as well, was blamed on the basic mistrust by the Nagas of the Assamese.<sup>159</sup> The Assamese clearly fulfilled a scapegoat role, in the absence from the narrative of the British and missionaries.

Hitherto, GOI had to rely for information on the provincial administration and its agents or on the IA personnel deployed there. It thus could very well have been the case that the information reaching Delhi was tailored for provincial or institutional interests. Although, by the end of July 1956 the minister for home affairs, Dattar, had visited the Naga hills, and had met, among others, the governor and the chief minister of Assam,<sup>160</sup> it is still to be assumed that he relied for the organisation and course of his visit on the men on the spot. The official body-count to date was 371 killed on the rebels' side compared to 68 on the side of the government. The

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> BUP, New Delhi, May 23, in *MG*, 24.5.56.

<sup>158</sup> BUP, New Delhi, June 19, in *MG*, 20.6.56.

<sup>159</sup> *MG*, 5.7.56.

army was now in command of the area, but was hindered in the progress of its operations by the seasonal monsoon in the already difficult terrain.<sup>161</sup> The chief of army staff had toured the Naga hills in the previous June to assess the situation.<sup>162</sup> Shortly afterwards, with nearly a month's delay, the *Lok Sabha* was informed of an attack by Nagas, carried out in the middle of July, on a railway station in the Sibsagar district and the damaging of a railway bridge with the probably intended consequence of disrupting train services.<sup>163</sup>

Then from September 1956 onwards voices were raised, publicly suspecting that GOI might deny access to foreign journalists not so much because it held foreigners (the British and missionaries) responsible for having instigated the unrest in the first instance, but rather "...due to an unwillingness on the part of the Indian government to have their actions in that area exposed to world opinion?", as was suggested by Graham Greene, who pretended to have applied in vain for a visa and come across a significant justification for the denial:

An official at the High Commissioner's Office in London has informed me that no permits to this area have been allowed for many months past and that there is no chance at the moment of my receiving a permit. I suggested that an Indian writer would not be forbidden access to Cyprus, and his reply was that the case was different - Cyprus was "colonial territory," a new definition of colonialism, an area open to world opinion.<sup>164</sup>

Indeed, for the Naga hills the previously so much criticised and denounced *Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation 1873*, and the *Chin Hills Regulation 1896*, had been reactivated, this time to keep out the international press.<sup>165</sup>

In October the Assam government again predicted an early successful conclusion of the "police action" with, around the corner the end of the monsoon and the ensuing offensive. This notwithstanding the special correspondent of *The Times*, who had come as far as Shillong, was declined permission to visit even Kohima, despite him agreeing to close supervision. The officials, it appeared, were by now in a belligerent mood:

This new-found confidence about the military situation seems to have banished finally any leanings towards a "negotiated" settlement. "Phizo is a madman and has simply got to be smashed," an Indian official said. "He is so completely obsessed with the idea of independence that there is no further purpose in talking with him." In the same spirit, references to the Naga "rebellion" are now somewhat

<sup>160</sup> *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 5, 31<sup>st</sup> July 1956, Column 639.

<sup>161</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, July 31, *The Times*, 1.8.1956.

<sup>162</sup> *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 5, 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug. 1956, Columns 784-785. The questions of the MP Bibhuti Mishra betrayed a concern whether the chief of army staff had also had an opportunity to meet the village people.

<sup>163</sup> *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 5, 10<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1956, Column 1101.

<sup>164</sup> Graham Greene, in To the Editor of *The Times*, 3.9.1956.

<sup>165</sup> Times correspondent, Calcutta, Sept. 6, *The Times*, 7.9.1956.

frowned upon: the present events are described as “just a police operation against a band of terrorists”  
 ...<sup>166</sup>

In the same month Nehru toured Assam for four days and discussed the state of affairs in the Naga hills with NEFA – officials and a delegation of Nagas from Mokokchung. Simultaneously the intensified military operations announced were under way in the discussed area under the command of lieutenant general Thimayyas.<sup>167</sup> Nehru then, at a public meeting at Jorhat, called “...the demand for an independent Nagaland absurd. Nagas were as independent as other Indians and the demand therefore did not arise.”<sup>168</sup> In his speech he seemed to equate Naga independence with their continued preservation as museum pieces, and a merger with Assam, as he suggested for NEFA, seemed to amount to the arrival at modernity. Nehru, who as we know by now, was in theory sympathetic to the tribals, could retain his sympathy only once the tribals followed his evolutionist worldview and shed their past and difference. Nehru was not only not capable of understanding minority fears in other terms than as vested interests of a local élite, but he was also utterly exasperated at every insistence of difference that he saw as fissiparous manifestations of past backwardness, coming into his way of building a nation. Nehru, who was aware of contemporary literature on nation and nationalism, knew that the nation had still to be achieved, and the partition painfully alerted him to its fragility, to its potential for “balkanisation” and from then it was his paramount task to fight off any attempt to leave the Indian Union.<sup>169</sup>

In December 1956 the guerrilla war, defying all avowals to the contrary, continued into the cold season, and it is the first time we find a reference to the so-called “resettlement schemes”: “...good progress had been made in many areas resettling villagers who had been driven away.”<sup>170</sup> A week later the army issued an optimistic all-clear for the Naga hills that betrayed that the Nagas had fought in an organised way, that there had been no day in 1956 without fighting and that the Naga fighters had previously brought territory under their control. The army had established twenty bases and was perpetually patrolling the jungle paths, forcing the rebels to take recourse to guerrilla techniques.<sup>171</sup>

### ***5.6 Divide-and-Rule***

In January of 1957 Naga snipers shot at trains passing in Assam bordering the Naga hills with the effect of suspending train services.<sup>172</sup> This might have been due to efforts to slow down troop

<sup>166</sup> Times special correspondent, Shillong, Assam, *The Times*, 12.10.1956.

<sup>167</sup> Times correspondent, Calcutta, Oct. 19, *The Times*, 20.10.1956.

<sup>168</sup> Times correspondent, Calcutta, Oct. 21, *The Times*, 22.10.1956.

<sup>169</sup> Brown, *Nehru, A Political Life*, p. 141 and chapters 10 and 11, pp. 185-222.

<sup>170</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, Dec. 7, *The Times*, 8.12.1956.

<sup>171</sup> *MG*, 18.12.56.

<sup>172</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, Jan. 10, *The Times*, 11.1.1957.



deployment, since one week after the second general elections, Anthony Mann, for the *Daily Telegraph* reported from Calcutta that more than 30,000 Indian troops, at least one and a half regular divisions, were fighting the Nagas. Mann drew parallels to the Mau Mau in Kenya.<sup>173</sup> Zinkin in Bombay also wrote that the Naga hills had been turned “...into no-man’s land and guerrilla jungles...”. The military, he continued, permanently issued statements about the impending collapse of the uprising. Movements inside the Naga hills were only possible in convoys, and even the trains were interrupted in Upper Assam. Phizo, despite having a reward on his head, had managed to become a hero in the Naga hills, and so much so that Congress had not dared to contest elections there. The wider picture of the hills showed that as a result of the general elections Congress had lost all contested seats in the hill districts. This was taken as a result of dislike of the Assam administration by all hill people.<sup>174</sup>

In 1957 the central government took away control over the Naga hills from the Assam state government and sent in some administrators, considered as elite. Some Nagas were won over to cooperate and were made into the Nagas People’s Convention (NPC).<sup>175</sup> The NPC on its part asked for the application of greater force against the Naga fighters. However, there seemed to exist some doubt whether it was the right policy by Delhi to rely on the NPC, since it was not clear whether it had any support of the majority of the Nagas.<sup>176</sup> In July 1960 GOI and the NPC signed an agreement by which the previous NHD and the Tuensang area was to form the sixteenth state of the Indian union.<sup>177</sup>

The end of August 1957 saw large-scale army operations but no security in the Naga hills. The NPC in Kohima had demanded separation from Assam and the unification of Naga areas under central rule, called the uprising a rebellion against the Assam government and stressed that there always was peace in centrally administered Tuensang.<sup>178</sup> A month later GOI declared an amnesty after a meeting between Nehru and a Naga delegation, consisting of nine Naga leaders, on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> September in Delhi. Nehru retold the delegation that independence was not

<sup>173</sup> Anthony Mann from Calcutta, in *Daily Telegraph*, Tuesday, one week after the second general election (no exact date). The number of 30,000 for the troops fighting in the Naga hills was later confirmed to be the official number by Stephen Harper from New Delhi in *Weekly Dispatch*, Sunday, 31.3.57.

<sup>174</sup> Taya Zinkin from Bombay, March 26, in *MG*, 27.3.57

<sup>175</sup> The NPC was a joint venture of dissident NNC leaders, members of the Naga church, and Mullik’s Intelligence Bureau (IB), see Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict*, pp. 52 and 56. While the intention of the Nagas engaged in the NPC was to find a negotiated settlement, the intent on the Indian side was clearly to divide the Nagas. This policy was already criticised in the *Rajya Sabha* in 1958 as short-sighted, see *Rajya Sabha Debates*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 27. Aug. 1958, Column 1263. Bhola Nath Mullik’s IB as an organisation had “...deep colonial roots. Established in 1887 as the Central Special Branch, it had been organized by the British to keep tabs on the rising tide of Indian nationalism. Despite several redesignations before arriving at the title Intelligence Bureau, anticolonialists remained its primary target for the next sixty years.” See Conboy and Morrison, *The CIA’s Secret War in Tibet*, p. 32. At least in the periphery, the IB could continue its institutional tradition.

<sup>176</sup> Rawle Knox, ‘Nagaland To-day: Why Nehru Cannot “Free” Hill Tribesmen’, New Delhi, Jan. 7, *The Observer*, Jan. 8, 1961.

<sup>177</sup> Gavin Young, ‘A meeting with Nagas’ prisoners’, *The Observer*, April 9, 1961.

<sup>178</sup> Taya Zinkin from Bombay, Aug. 26, in *MG*, 27.8.57.

possible, yet that the constitution could be changed to meet their demands. He accepted the proposal of merger between Tuensang and NHD into one unit within the Indian union, administered by the governor of Assam at the behest of the president of the union and under the authority of the ministry of external affairs.<sup>179</sup> Nehru now fell in with the chorus blaming British and missionaries for “Naga troubles”. The former isolated them from the rest of India, allowing only the latter to enter the Naga hills who had spread hatred for the Indians, and:

Some of the Nagas were converted to Christianity. ...and were educated to some extent. Because of their education they became the leaders of the Nagas. One of the last acts of the British officials was to encourage these Nagas to claim independence.<sup>180</sup>

In parliament Nehru responded to questions on the agreement reached with the Naga delegation and stated that it had been accepted by the NPC, i.e. that it had given up its demand for independence. Further, responsibility for the new NHD would lay with the ministry of external affairs, working in close cooperation with the ministry of home affairs and in consultation with the Assam government. Finally, already convicted or detained persons had been released, and only very few minor incidents of violence were still occurring. Yet no de-grouping of villages had hitherto been undertaken.<sup>181</sup> It was then the home minister Pant who introduced the Bill for the administrative unification of the Tuensang tribal area and the NHD in parliament and the motion was adopted.<sup>182</sup>

By May 1958 the Nagas seemed intent to carry their struggle into Assam. Armed Nagas operated in the districts of United Mikir, Cachar and Sibsagar and GOI declared the whole of the former and parts of the second and third as to be “disturbed areas”.<sup>183</sup> When martial law was declared under the name of *The Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Bill (1958)*, this was criticised by the members of the *Rajya Sabha* for its prolonged duration (without name and legalisation martial law had been already practised in the Naga hills since 1956), or on the grounds that it might lead to loss of control over the military. But Nehru in his final statement in that debate made it clear that measures like these were the normal tools of any state, otherwise Fascism would be the inevitable outcome.<sup>184</sup>

In September 1958 news came through that Phizo had made his way to East Pakistan, and was for the moment in Dacca. It was evident that Phizo sought to relate his case to the

<sup>179</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, Sept. 26, *The Times*, 27.9.1957.

<sup>180</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, Oct. 3, *The Times*, 4.10.1957.

<sup>181</sup> *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 8, 11<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1957, Columns 9-12.

<sup>182</sup> *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 8, 20<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1957, Columns 1437-1438.

<sup>183</sup> Reuter, Shillong, Assam, May 2, *The Times*, 3.5.1958.

outside world, but Nehru cautioned the *Lok Sabha* saying that Phizo had been hitherto unsuccessful, and that there was no danger that the issue of Naga independence would be taken up in the United Nations.<sup>185</sup> Later this month questions were answered by Lakshmi Menon regarding the number of casualties, and Menon, reading out an obviously prepared chart, divided into Nagas, Indian civilians, and IA personnel, killed, wounded, or taken prisoner (respectively: 1207, 1235, 1686; 28,36,2; 162, 452, Nil), was confronted with the question why the numbers of killed Nagas and those wounded were about the same. One would expect the latter to be several times higher. Menon was not in a position to answer this question, signifying again that the central government was out of the picture and that developments on the scene were reported by the respective agencies, i.e. in this case by the ISF, especially the IA. Further, when it was asked whether listing “Nagas” and “Indians” meant that the former were not Indians, it was answered that the latter meant Indians other than Nagas, but when it became clear that the Nagas’ list did not include any casualties of friendly Nagas, the matter was interrupted.<sup>186</sup> This illustrates the fact that the Indian state, when fighting another people, had to deny it even to itself, which in turn resulted in such surreal debates.

In October new raids by armed Nagas in Manipur were reported,<sup>187</sup> and although it is unclear where the author had his information from, a report by *The Times* special correspondent dating from the end of the month described a war-ridden and destitute country, in which the army did not know who was friend and who was foe, mostly the former by day and the latter by night:

Unable to identify the enemy, Indian soldiers have killed several innocent people on the slightest suspicion. Several villages have been destroyed, and their inhabitants sent to live in bigger villages watched by the Army. But still the enemy remains untractable.<sup>188</sup>

International observers still were banned from verifying the completely positive picture painted by GOI on the developments in the Naga hills in the months preceding March 1959. The Nagas of 16 tribes had demanded to be united in one unit and that now had been achieved. They were now administered by a number of “hand-picked” men of the Indian frontier administrative service, a branch of the external affairs ministry and thus removed from the Assam administration. Every year the equivalent of nearly one million English pounds were spent on

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<sup>184</sup> *Rajya Sabha Debates*, Vol. XXII., No. 1, 25. August 1958, Columns 963-976; 27. August 1958, Columns 1253-1312 and 28. August 1958, Columns 1313-1474; Nehru’s statement is, of course, at the end, i.e. 28. August 1958, Columns 1473-1474.

<sup>185</sup> Reuter, Delhi, Sept. 2, *The Times*, 3.9.1958.

<sup>186</sup> *Rajya Sabha Debates*, Vol. 22, 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1958, Columns 4431-4433.

<sup>187</sup> Associated Press, Calcutta, Oct. 6, *The Times*, 7.10.1958.

<sup>188</sup> Times special correspondent, *The Times*, 28.10.1958.

welfare and economic development. New roads, hospitals, and schools were built in collaboration with the “peaceful Nagas”. Agriculture was again flourishing. Rebels were and had already responded to the amnesty, and some of them had settled to a quiet life. Re-grouping of villages had been given up, and we may assume that this meant that de-grouping had been effected. Naga volunteers had been armed to protect the villagers from the rebels. IA forces had been considerably reduced. All in all, the problem looked solved, though it was admitted that there still remained approximately 2 – 3,000 rebels at large.<sup>189</sup> The next thing we hear is that six persons died, among them four policemen, in an ambush by Nagas near Imphal around the beginning of November 1959.<sup>190</sup>

In 1960 Phizo had reached London, accused India of massive human rights abuses and demanded a fact-finding mission on the situation in the Naga hills. Two days after Phizo’s arrival in London, the Nagas resumed their attacks in Dimapur area and interrupted the train services between Gauhati and Dimapur. The Indian defence minister Krishna Menon, then in London, denied all charges made by Phizo, that ISF were undertaking punitive expeditions including systematic rape of women and the destruction of the crops.<sup>191</sup> At the end of July 1960 Phizo held a press conference in London where he repeated in detail his accusations that would qualify for the UN definition of genocide.<sup>192</sup> This clearly motivated GOI to do something to regain the initiative and so the foreign affairs subcommittee of the Indian cabinet had decided to suggest the setting up of a Naga state as part of the Indian union. Incidentally a Naga delegation had arrived in Delhi which was just demanding what the foreign affairs subcommittee had proposed.<sup>193</sup> On the first day of August and then again three days later, Nehru informed the *Lok Sabha* that his government had agreed to convey statehood to the former NHD and therewith fulfil the demand of the NPC as presented to him in the form of what would become known as the *16-Points-Agreement*. He further briefed the house that the new state would not be able to pay for its own administration and therefore needed to be heavily subsidised. Nehru had declined an offer by Phizo to cooperate, since he could not agree to his conditions for cooperation and due to Phizo’s allegations against the ISF who, except in very few cases, had behaved “according to high standards and high traditions.” Yet Nehru admitted, when asked, that Jayprakash Narayan had visited Phizo in his hotel, indicating some effort to find a common way. Finally, GOI had negotiated and found an agreement with the elected representatives of the Nagas, meaning the NPC. Some members of the house criticised the name “Nagaland” of the new union state,

<sup>189</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, *The Times*, 20.3.1959.

<sup>190</sup> Reuter, Imphal, N.E. India, Nov. 1, *The Times*, 2.11.1959.

<sup>191</sup> Reuter, Delhi, June 16, *The Times*, 17.6.1960; Times correspondent, Delhi, June 17; *The Times*, 18. 6. 1960; *The Times*, 20., 27. and 29. 6. 1960.

<sup>192</sup> *The Times*, 27.7.1960.

<sup>193</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, July 26, *The Times*, 27.7.1960.

finding it too “outlandish”, others asked how it possibly could be that citizens of India could have an agreement with their own government.<sup>194</sup> *The Times* speculated that this concession of statehood would give a strong boost to the demand for a *Punjab Suba*. Phizo, on his part, had denounced the agreement as null and void, since the NPC was not representative, and before any agreement could be reached, a joint Indo-Naga commission would have to investigate the atrocities committed in the Naga hills and foreign journalists would have to be given free access.<sup>195</sup> The Indian correspondents in London, as well as Nehru, described Phizo “...as a sinister but slightly comic mountebank poohpoohing his activities...”. The continued ban of foreign journalists from the Naga hills led to the growing suspicion that GOI had something to hide there.<sup>196</sup> The whole chimera of control over and peace in the Naga hills became apparent when the minister of defence Krishna Menon had to answer questions regarding the shooting down of an Indian air force plane there, bringing to the fore the struggle of the IA when, for example, its outposts were besieged in the rough terrain. It had to rely on fighter planes that in turn had to cover supply aircraft that dropped supplies to the beleaguered forces.<sup>197</sup> Obviously the Indian state in all its senses had still very incompletely penetrated these hills, had even problems holding its bridgeheads there. The increase of Naga attacks was interpreted by GOI as a sign of desperation in the face of the successful negotiations with the NPC, while they were most likely to convey the fact of their irrelevance to the political problem at stake.<sup>198</sup> The continued increase in fighting was admitted and at the same time downplayed by Menon and Nehru in the *Lok Sabha* by a demonstratively displayed nonchalance and a vagueness in their statements (“firing etc.”). It was not only to be made clear that this was to be handled by the military but also that the military had everything under control and that did not need closer scrutiny by GOI. Nehru further briefed the parliament that the elections to the interim body (on its way to Nagaland statehood) were nearly completed and that it soon would be able to function (as being advisory to the governor of Assam who was also to be governor of Nagaland), and he also admitted that the NPC had asked for the inclusion of all Naga-inhabited land (Manipur hill-areas, Assam bordering Naga hills, parts of NEFA north to the Naga hills), but that GOI had not consented to that.<sup>199</sup>

Simultaneously, there were preparations under way to launch a guided tour for the international press to the Naga hills,<sup>200</sup> which then materialised in December 1960. During this one-week-tour the Nagas were, despite the close supervision and shielding of the journalists,

<sup>194</sup> *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 44, 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1960, Columns 146-157 and 899-915.

<sup>195</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, July 31, *The Times*, 1.8.1960.

<sup>196</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, Aug. 4, *The Times*, 5.8.1960.

<sup>197</sup> *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 46, 5<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1960, Columns 6913-6918.

<sup>198</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, Oct. 10, *The Times*, 11.9.1960.

<sup>199</sup> *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 47, 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. 1960, Columns 1516-1521.

repeatedly able to bring their point for independence across to them, at the same time demonstrating their unbroken ability to strike at the ubiquitous ISF even at their stronghold Kohima.<sup>201</sup> Many of those who openly approached the journalists in this way were later reported to have been arrested.<sup>202</sup>

Phizo's renewed proposals, a referendum to assess the Naga populations' satisfaction with Union statehood, and secondly, as a political solution to the continuing war, a qualified sovereignty jointly guaranteed by India, Pakistan, and Burma, which did not necessitate an UN membership. GOI's reaction was to deny the possibility of negotiations with Phizo or any of his representatives.<sup>203</sup> Pressure mounted on GOI, exerted by officials, army, and pro-Indian Nagas, to crush the Naga resistance by force.<sup>204</sup>

Prior to this, the Reverend Michael Scott, who had helped Phizo to come to London, and had supported his cause since then, but insisted on not being his representative, had arrived in Delhi, and, although he had not been allowed to proceed to the Naga hills, had been given time to discuss Phizo's standpoint with Nehru.<sup>205</sup> Scott had already acquired a name as a fighter for the weak in Africa,<sup>206</sup> and later would be one of the members of the Nagaland peace mission. There are strong indications that GOI at this point would have been able to negotiate directly with Phizo who still commanded the overwhelming support of the Naga people. The granting of statehood, the declaration of an amnesty, the pouring in of funds, and the calling off of the army - all were done in order to create moderates.<sup>207</sup> In the end this divide-and-rule policy, with the full understanding that the overwhelming majority of the concerned population, was adverse to such a co-option and creation of a collaborative class, cannot be considered as successful, even when evidently succeeding in fulfilling the ultimate objective to keep the periphery inside the Union, for it creates a low-level war zone.

### ***5.7 Statehood and Peace Initiative***

In February 1961 the minister of home affairs Govind Ballabh Pant admitted in the *Rajya Sabha* an intensification of rebel Naga activities around the turn of the year and this also on Manipur territory, but denied that this indicated the Manipur Nagas' demand for inclusion in the future Nagaland state.<sup>208</sup> In August 1961, the chairman of the interim body, Imkongliba Ao, was

<sup>200</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, Nov. 22, *The Times*, 23.11.1960.

<sup>201</sup> Times special correspondent, Mokochung, Nagaland, Dec. 17 (delayed), *The Times*, 19.12.1960.

<sup>202</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, Jan. 11, *The Times*, 12.1.1961.

<sup>203</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, Jan. 1, *The Times*, 2.1.1961.

<sup>204</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, Jan. 11, *The Times*, 12.1.1961.

<sup>205</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, Jan. 1, *The Times*, 2.1.1961.

<sup>206</sup> See for example his two articles in *The Observer*, 20. and 27.8.1950.

<sup>207</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, Jan. 15, *The Times*, 16.1.1961.

<sup>208</sup> *Rajya Sabha Debates*, Vol. 32, 15<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1961, Columns 57-58.

assassinated, and was succeeded by T. N. Angami.<sup>209</sup> The guerrilla war kept its momentum, troops continued moving in and this all was interpreted by GOI as a sign of growing desperation on the side of the rebels. Thus the intensification of the fighting could be considered as an improvement of affairs, the eradication of the “hostiles” had only not yet been effected. When pressed, they escaped into Burmese territory. In this way 1961-2 witnessed the absurdity that the escalation of the war was portrayed as a positive development, with its solution always around the corner.<sup>210</sup>

The wider context showed continuous proof of discontent with the federal set-up. The granting of statehood to the Nagas and the decision to declare Assamese an official language lent renewed vigour to the by then already long-standing demand for a separate state by the Assam hill people, who accused the Assamese administration of aiming at dominance.<sup>211</sup> Support for the picture of a region in which frustration was the main growing factor is lent by the former US ambassador to India, J. K. Galbraith, who was able to visit parts of the Northeast in May 1962 and reported about it in one of his letters to Kennedy:

My recent travels have taken me up along the Chinese frontier and back to the Burma border. In addition to their better-publicized problems with the Chinese, the Indians are having very serious trouble in living with people within their own borders. This is an area with a large number of ethnically separate groups and all are unhappy in their present relations with the Indians. The Nagas are in open revolt and tie down a couple of divisions but they are only the extreme case. A half dozen other ethnic or linguistic groups are asking what they can have in the way of independence, autonomy or self-determination.<sup>212</sup>

The internal pacification was accompanied by the external, and Nehru’s aggression towards Goa finally shattered India’s image as mediator and peace maker in the world, and vehemently brought to the fore the difference between discourse and action since independence:

Indian military action to safeguard her own interests has never squared with her peaceful international protestations. Kashmir and Hyderabad asserted Indian rights against Pakistan in the chagrin after

<sup>209</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, Aug. 24, *The Times*, 25.8.1961 and Delhi, Sept. 22, *The Times*, 23.9.1961.

<sup>210</sup> Bombay, Jan. 30, in *The Guardian*, 31.1.62; Times correspondent, Delhi, Feb. 1, *The Times*, 2.2.1962, Delhi, March 23, *The Times*, 24.3.1962, Delhi, May 4, *The Times*, 5.5.1962 and *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 61, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1962, Columns 1306-1307, Vol. 2, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1962, Columns 2593-2594 and Vol. 3, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1962, Columns 4419-4426. By August 21, 1962 Nehru motioned two bills in the *Lok Sabha* to provide for a union state of Nagaland disjoined from Assam, a move that from the start was intended to split the Nagas, see P. H. M. Jones, ‘India and the Nagas’, in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 37, No. 9, 30 Aug 1962, p. 389 and Guy Wint, ‘India’s “Irish” Problem’, *The Observer*, April 15, 1962.

<sup>211</sup> Times correspondent, Delhi, May 17 and 18, *The Times*, 18., 19.5.1961 and June 20, 21.6.1961. While Nehru signalled willingness to grant certain autonomy in the Northeast, he opposed the Sikh demand for a Punjabi-speaking state.

<sup>212</sup> Galbraith, *Ambassador’s Journal: An American view of India*, p. 110.

partition and without consistent principle. Action against the Nagas, certainly in its early stages, was in no way conciliatory. Goa is a case of ruthless aggression.<sup>213</sup>

The start of 1963 was characterised by the build-up for a massive military campaign to be thrown against the Nagas.<sup>214</sup> According to a comment in *The Observer*, the IA, frustrated by the thrashing it had received from the Chinese, but now re-armed by America and Britain, saw the Naga hills as a welcome training ground to lift the morale of the troops and test the new hardware. The task was the extermination of the Naga guerrillas.<sup>215</sup> At the same time Nehru declined the truce offered repeatedly by the Nagas guerrillas,<sup>216</sup> and Phizo's offer to come to India for talks.<sup>217</sup> This scenario continued,<sup>218</sup> and Nehru, his military, and his humiliated population seemed decided at least to bring the Naga campaign to a successful conclusion.<sup>219</sup> GOI went ahead with threatening the Naga population with holding it responsible in toto, in case the rebels should not respond to its amnesty offer.<sup>220</sup> Phizo, from London, appealed to the UN to halt the build-up of attacks by the Indian air force, and the on-going arrangements for putting the populations of 700 villages into concentration camps. At the same time Phizo signalled the Nagas' willingness to accept the verdict of plebiscite, even when carried out under Indian military occupation.<sup>221</sup> The resettlement scheme was confirmed by *The Guardian* that the GOI planned to regroup about 700 villages into "...200 self-sufficient centres to afford greater protection to the people." The aim was the separation of the fighters from the villagers, the wording "...the complete transfer of people from scattered villages to big centres to be raised overnight with full civic amenities" evokes the picture of holiday resorts. However, the report further recorded an intensification of the fighting.<sup>222</sup> The amnesty offer proved to be a failure and the violence was also carried into Manipur. GOI now demanded an unconditional surrender,<sup>223</sup> and the Indian press called for no mercy towards the "hostiles". In the meanwhile it had become known that Nehru secretly had sent his parliamentary secretary S. C. Jamir to London in order to meet

<sup>213</sup> Times commentary, *The Times*, 19.12.1961.

<sup>214</sup> Staff Reporter, *The Observer*, 27.1.63.

<sup>215</sup> Comment, *The Observer*, 27.1.63.

<sup>216</sup> Staff Reporter, *The Observer*, 18.11.62; Staff Reporter, *The Observer*, 27.1.63; *The Guardian*, 9.3.63; Weekend Review, 'Guide to Little Wars', *The Observer*, 10.3.63.

<sup>217</sup> Reuter, New Delhi, March 2, *The Observer*, 3.3.63.

<sup>218</sup> James Mitchell, 'Still hope for Naga truce', New Delhi, April 13, *The Observer*, 14.4.63; Idem., 'Nagaland offer by Nehru', New Delhi, April 20, *The Observer*, 21.4.63; Special Correspondent, 'Flare-up in Naga war feared', *The Observer*, 12.5.63.

<sup>219</sup> Comment, *The Observer*, 12.5.63. Nehru had been politically decidedly weakened through the border war debacle, and those who thought he had a conciliatory influence on the jingoistic forces in his country and military, now saw this restraint fast evaporating, see Michael Scott, 'A People in Danger' *The Observer*, 25.8.63. For Nehru's fall from grace, see Guy Wint, 'Nehru's declining grip' *The Observer*, 26.5.63.

<sup>220</sup> Observer correspondent, New Delhi, June 1, *The Observer*, 2.6.63.

<sup>221</sup> *The Observer*, 28.7.63.

<sup>222</sup> Bombay, July 24, *The Guardian*, 25.7.63.

<sup>223</sup> James Mitchell, 'Naga rising spreads', Delhi, August 10, *The Observer*, 11.8.63.



Phizo.<sup>224</sup> Nothing, however, came of it, and with the inauguration of the Nagaland state on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1963 the road was closed for further negotiations with the guerrillas.<sup>225</sup>

The international press was banned during the elections for the new Naga state assembly and they were, according to eye-witness accounts, not only held under close military surveillance, but also accompanied by severe military repression.<sup>226</sup> Then, Nehru in his very last months reopened the negotiation process in giving his go-ahead to a peace initiative of the Naga Baptist missionaries, the formation of a peace mission that included the foreigner Michael Scott. This initiative would, via the cessation of hostilities,<sup>227</sup> lead to a lasting ceasefire, that for several years brought a lull to the Naga hills.

### 5.8 Conclusion

Whereas Singh writes that Nehru already had laid the foundation for what he terms as ethnic democracy, it would appear that Nehru and the INC had clear plans to conquer the people at the periphery. For this a near-total consensus prevailed among the Indo-Assamese decision-makers and agents, to continue the old garrison state of the dead *raj*. Nehru's pose as, and speech of, a freedom fighter, and the euphoria of a post-colonial and self-determined world had,<sup>228</sup> for quite some time, obscured the survival of the "garrison state" that now had to fight more viciously than ever. This was so because by then any form of imperialism had lost its legitimacy and concomitantly the idea of self-determination had firmly taken root among the populations the Indian union set out to subjugate, strengthening their resolve to resist and making any war into a peoples' war. This had as a consequence that the "garrison state" now had to fight the people as a whole, and since it had to pretend to fight on behalf of this very people it was actually fighting, it had to employ terror to deter and criminalise those who resisted.<sup>229</sup> Finally, the resistance of the peripheral people against being included into the Indian union embittered the Indians, who, after their own long subjection, now took it personal and would not allow anyone to endanger their nation-building.

<sup>224</sup> Observer correspondent, New Delhi, September 28, *The Observer*, 29.9.63.

<sup>225</sup> James Mitchell, 'Naga peace move dropped', *The Observer*, 1.12.63.

<sup>226</sup> Special correspondent, 'More torture by India, say Nagas', *The Observer*, 23.2.64.

<sup>227</sup> James Mitchell, 'Peace talks reopened quietly' New Delhi, April 25, *The Observer*, 26.4.64; Observer correspondent, 'Breakthrough in Naga peace talks', New Delhi, May 9, *The Observer*, 10.5.64; Editorial, 'The Man Behind The Saint', *The Observer*, 31.5.64.

<sup>228</sup> Brown, *Nehru, A Political Life*, p. 187.

<sup>229</sup> For this argument, see Heike Behrend, 'Frauen und Krieg. Zur Gewalt in postkolonialen Widerstandsbewegungen in Afrika', In Peter J. Bräunlein and Andrea Lauser (eds.), *Krieg und Frieden. Ethnologische Perspektiven* (Bremen, 1995), pp. 161-172.

## Chapter Six

### *The Nagas' War*

#### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, from the perspective of the Nagas, we will provide evidence that the newly independent Indian state was not exceptional, but conformed with nation-building policy of many post-colonial states that has been characterised by state-terror and genocide.<sup>1</sup> Initially it was Assamese expansionism that already employed terror; this, in turn, made Nehru send the Indian army into the Naga hills which unleashed a genocidal campaign. The Nagas, faced with this onslaught, united to an unprecedented degree, and from then on thoroughly considered themselves as a nation. The Indian "Other", the enemy, trying to define the Nagas by violence, served as the negative against which unification could be defined.<sup>2</sup> Christianity, far from being a prime mover itself, was employed as a means for mobilisation and unification.<sup>3</sup>

The Nagas were living in a terrain which was difficult to access, and even under British imperialism were only very lightly administered. On the departure of the British there existed a small western educated Naga élite. The mass of the Nagas was by then not affected, and in general neither was aware nor did they care, since they lived their life relatively undisturbed, and so did not anticipate any radical changes, if they were aware of any to come at all. This was not much different on the plains, where, there also, the great majority of the people was unaware of the political developments. The main difference in the hills was that any kind of feudalism was consciously rejected, prevalent there was a high political participation in opposition to subordination, an ethos of freedom not known on the plains. However, the educated élite of the Nagas, always in contact with the more traditional leading figures of the different Naga groups, now entered the political process at the worst of all times. The British, trying to uphold the image of an ordered retreat, muddled through as fast as they could, and on their way out, tried to advise the Nagas to remain within the Indian union. The Indian political élite for its part, inherently split, and in its respective groupings only loosely structured, sent off different and contradicting

<sup>1</sup> Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The quest for understanding* (Princeton, 1994), pp. 7 and 22-24; Leo Kuper, 'The Genocidal State: An Overview', In Pierre L. Van den Berghe (ed.), *State Violence and Ethnicity* (Niwot, 1990), pp. 19-52, p. 20; *Cultural Survival Report 22. Southeast Asian Tribal Groups and Ethnic Minorities* (Cambridge, 1987) and James Mayall and Mark Simpson, 'Ethnicity is not enough: Reflections on Protracted Secessionism in the Third World', In Anthony D. Smith (ed.), *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Leiden, 1992), pp. 5-25.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking ethnicity: arguments and explorations* (London, 1997), pp. 69, 107, 137 and 139; Carole Nagengast, 'Violence, Terror, and the Crisis of the State', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1994, 23, pp. 109-136, p. 122 and Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, 1985), pp. 230-231 and 262.

<sup>3</sup> See sub-chapter 4.5.

signals. The Nagas then came around from their demand for immediate independence to one accepting an interim solution, a scheme that had even been suggested by Nehru himself in one of his publications in as late as 1944. However, the Nagas who again received different and conflicting responses, were signalled and assured in their demand, requested to await further negotiations, and, in the end, simply ignored. The Indian state and its agent started and continued with its incorporation of the Nagas and their territory. This was the first time the Naga population in general came into direct and lasting contact not only with this new state and its agents, but for the first time at all with any foreign agency that tried to actually govern them. The imperial predecessor in the main ruled through the indigenous structures, was only slightly present, and villages for years saw no British at all. But now the Nagas were confronted with the will and actions to effectively incorporate them into the economy and administration of the new polity. As a rule the Assamese and Indians regarded them as inferior, their language and way of life considered as something to be overcome and changed into that of the dominant group, or were not even considered as being capable of assimilation and relegated to the lowest layer of society. The Nagas had to realise that the legal safeguards of their rights were nil and void in the reality of state incorporation. Local communities reacted to that in defence of their self-esteem and perceived right to their way of life in either non-cooperating and/or threatening and/or attacking the agents of the new state with words or deeds. The élite, partially engaged in renegotiating their political leeway, was also busy in trying to mobilise and unify those which were perceived of being the bearer of their identity, and to value it positively, in face of all the derogation.<sup>4</sup>

It was now to the agents of the new state, who had just turned from servants into masters, to teach these savages a lesson. Again, irrespective of the official propaganda by the centre, which either denied the existence of trouble at all, or if admitting it, denounced it as the product of foreign agents or the actions of misguided child-like fellow citizens, in need of guidance, the agents on the spot were convinced that the savages understood only one language: force and violence. Terror and torture became part of a deliberate policy.<sup>5</sup> In the long run it served the determination to unite and fight back. The ensuing fighting developed into a full-scale war and more and more Indian troops were sent into the Naga hills. Due to the superior firepower of the Indian army (IA) the Nagas resorted to a guerrilla war in which combatants and

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<sup>4</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*. London, 1990 [1959], p. 261 and Charles Taylor, 'Nationalism and modernity', In John A. Hall (ed.), *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 191-218, p. 212.

<sup>5</sup> On torture and terror as deliberate policy, see Herbert C. Kelman, 'The Social Context of Torture: Policy Process and Authority Structure', In Ronald D. Crelinsten and Alex P. Schmid (eds.), *The Politics of Pain: Torturers and Their Masters* (Boulder, 1995), pp. 19-34; Ronald D. Crelinsten, 'In Their Own Words: The World of the Torturer', In *Ibid.*, pp. 35-64 and Michael Taussig, 'Culture of Terror - Space of Death: Roger Casement's Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1984, 26, pp. 467-497.

civilians were hardly to be distinguished. The state forces, seldom able to catch those who were ambushing them, redirected their reprisals against the whole population, and thus firmly established a regime of terror out of their personnel's fear and to deter civilians from helping the guerrillas. Therewith they guaranteed themselves being continuously seen as a foreign occupational power in clearly creating a them-us divide inscribed in violence, making sure that the bequeathed humiliations would always drive people into the forces of resistance. The experience of such violence, especially against non-combatant elderly people, women and children, and the stories about it, constituted from then on an integral part of the Naga social identity and of the history of this identity. It was this ongoing war of the Indian state against the Nagas as a whole, already under Nehru's premiership, that cemented the Nagas into a nation using Christianity as a distinguishing unifier and determined to fight off of what they saw and still see as an invasion of their land.<sup>6</sup>

## 6.2 Finding One's Stand in a Post-Imperial Asia

Thus, in order to understand why the majority of the Nagas supported the guerrilla war we have to uncover the responsible factors affecting the mass of the people over a considerable period of time.

However, the happenings in the Naga hills before and after the Transfer of Power are anything but well documented. This is the outcome of at least three factors. First, the Indian government's success in shielding off, denying, and defying its agents' conduct there. Second, the world opinion's general indifference to the Nagas' fate. And, finally, the Nagas' unwillingness to document something that is so obvious and so emotionally important to them in a detailed and systematic way. Horam writes that a reconstruction of the exact course of events proves difficult, since there is rarely any material about this time, and since most of the participants are dead and if they had produced written material, it was lost or destroyed in the fighting of the coming

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<sup>6</sup> In addition to the already cited literature the following works delivered the comparative and theoretical thoughts to this Introduction: Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983); Carter G. Bentley, 'Ethnicity and Practice', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1987, 29.1, pp. 24-55; Pierre L. Van den Berghe, 'Introduction', In idem (ed.), *State Violence and Ethnicity* (Niwot, 1990), pp. 1-18; Joyce Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab: unheard voices of state and guerrilla violence* (London and New Jersey, 1995) and Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, *Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogues with Sikh Militants* (Philadelphia, 1996).; Sumantra Bose, *The Challenge in Kashmir: Democracy, Self-Determination and a Just Peace* (New Delhi, Thousand Oaks and London, 1997); E. Valentine Daniel, *Chapters in an Anthropology of Violence: Sri Lankans, Sinhals and Tamils* (Delhi, 1997); John L. Comaroff, 'Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Politics of Difference In an Age of Revolution', In John L. Comaroff and Paul C. Stern (eds.), *Perspectives on Nationalism and War* (Amsterdam, 2000 [1995]), pp. 243-276; Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, 'Trials by Fire: Dynamics of Terror in Punjab and Kashmir', In Jeffrey A. Sluka (ed.), *Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror* (Philadelphia, 2000), pp. 70-90; Walker Connor, 'Homelands in a World of States', In Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson (eds.), *Understanding Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 53-73; Ashutosh Varshney, 'Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society: India and Beyond', *World Politics* 53 (April 2001), 362-398 and David Webster, "'Already Sovereign as a People": A Foundational Moment in West Papuan Nationalism' *Pacific Affairs*, Winter 2001-2002, Vol. 74, No. 4, pp. 507-528.

years.<sup>7</sup> This notwithstanding, the material I have laid out here should sufficiently support my argument, but can only be considered as the beginning to more research on that rather under-worked field.

Again, notes taken, and documents written by British officials, as well the exchange of communications among them and others, or simply received and stored, as in our case by W. G. Archer, are for us, a major source of information on the developments in the Naga hills in the years around the Transfer of Power.

We have evidence that in the very first phase when it had become known that the end of the *raj* was imminent, the Nagas decidedly were poised towards regaining their former freedom. In this way at the end of December 1946 Sa'adulla the former prime minister of Assam reported about a delegation of Nagas that had come to see and tell him that the Nagas were determined to become independent again with the British departure. They also told him that they had already conveyed this message to Bardoloi, the then prime minister of Assam, who had toured the Naga hills during the previous month. Sa'adulla quoted one of the leaders as saying the following:

We fought the British in 1879 and we will fight anyone who attempts to rule over us. The British conquered our country by force of arms, now that they are going to quit, the land is ours, and we purpose to govern the hills as best as we can.<sup>8</sup>

Though it is not specified who the Nagas were, except the reference to them as “leaders” on grounds of the quote, we might well assume that they came from Khonoma. A further indicator for this is that Archer in succession to the above, has added a quote by Pawsey who must have said that it was the Christian clan of Khonoma that was in favour of complete independence, that another of the Khonoma clans was indifferent and the third against independence. According to Pawsey the Christian clan of Khonoma wanted independence to re-impose Khonoma's domination “...to terrorise the region – as Khonoma did before...”<sup>9</sup> Archer, then relatively new as SDO NHD, gives the following account from a conversation he had in the village of Khonoma on the last day of the year 1946:

After lunch I sat on a high fort post...talking to Ünelhu about the coming changes. He is attached to the public works side of the Deputy Commissioner Office and is himself a resident of Khonoma. He was full of pride in the village and dismay for the future. “Even if the British go” he said “Burma will come in. From congress we can expect nothing. But Khonoma will fight.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> M. Horam, *Naga Insurgency: The last thirty years* (New Delhi, 1988), p. 55.

<sup>8</sup> Hand-written copy of article by the newspaper *The Statesman*, from 26.12.46 by Archer, in *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78, paper 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, paper 2b.

<sup>10</sup> *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/74, dated 31<sup>st</sup> December 1946.

The Naga National Council (NNC), so Archer wrote at the end of 1946, was nearly exclusively composed of government servants and by then the only political mouthpiece of the Nagas. Hitherto Pawsey, the DC, had always been consulted by the NNC for advice but this had become a problem for him under the new political situation. What Archer wrote in relation to the article in *The Statesman* hints that he understood the demand for complete independence as a tactical, bargaining one, starting with independence but aiming at effective autonomy. The nearing end of British rule had surprised everyone. The NNC thereupon instantaneously materialised, and in Archer's view, the absence of Pawsey (on leave) given as responsible for the lack of unity among the Angamis who had split into western, eastern, and southern Angamis.<sup>11</sup> However, Archer's view of the affair was most likely tailored to the British view. The data suggests that it was more like the following: the Nagas hearing of the imminent departure of the British decided to be again independent, since they had been this before. It was then the British officers who had talked them into changing their stand, and so the Nagas agreed somehow, that is to say not unanimously, on the interim solution by February 1947. This in turn was portrayed by the British as Nagas' traditional divisiveness.<sup>12</sup>

On 13<sup>th</sup> January 1947 Archer tells us something about Kevichusa Angami (tribal attachment here had obviously been turned into family name) who came to tea. Kevichusa had served as sub-deputy magistrate and in this position had been transferred 17 times, and until 1942

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<sup>11</sup> *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78, paper 2c and 2d. Some of the existing literature has the following on the NNC: C. R. Pawsey, DC of the NHD from 1937 to 1947, did help in April 1945 to form the Naga hills district tribal council (NHDTC), with the aim to repair some of the damages, done in the course of the fighting of the Second World War (Nehemiah Panmei, 'Naga movement and its ramifications', In R. Vashum, Aleube Iheilung et al (eds.), *Nagas at Work* (New Delhi, 1996), pp. 85-100, p. 87). The NHDTC, however, did not last long. Its name was changed into NNC by representatives of all tribal councils, meeting February 1946 in Wokha. The NNC was to be the political mouthpiece of the Nagas. It consisted of 29 members, representing the different tribes on a proportional basis. Office bearers of the NNC were elected by its members. Every Naga was a member of the NNC and every family contributed voluntarily to it (M. Alemchimba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland* (Kohima, 1970), p. 165). For several years the NNC published the newspaper *Naga Nation*, using it for the political forming of opinion of the Nagas (Panmei, 'Naga movement and its ramifications', *Work*, p. 87). The NNC saw itself as a territorial organisation, an inter-tribal government, not of tribes, but of a nation, and was, according to the two sub-districts Kohima and Mokokchung, organised into two central councils. Both of these councils were themselves divided into tribal ones, which again were split into sub-tribal councils. Approximately five villages formed a sub-tribal council. The members of these councils were not elected, but agreed on by consent. The central council of Kohima had 12 members, seven of them were Angami. The Mokokchung council consisted of 15 members – five Aos, four Semas, three Lothas, two Sangtams and one Chang. The Konyaks were in the beginning neither present nor represented, neither were the groups from the unadministered areas. The founding president of the NNC was Mayangnokcha Ao, Imti Aliba Ao was secretary and jointsecretary was the Angami T. Sakhrie. Imti Aliba, son of a priest and graduate from the University of Shillong, had been previously the secretary of the Assam Hills Student's Association, a student wing of the Communist Party of India. The central council of Kohima was headed by the teacher Angami Lungalong (Shibanikinkar Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-East India* (New Delhi, 1973), p. 141). Decisions inside the NNC were achieved by general consent, see Luingam Luithui and Nandita Haksar, *Nagaland File: A question of Human Rights* (New Delhi, 1984), p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> Further evidence about efforts to finding a common solution to all the hill people is that the Assam Hills Students Association founded in Calcutta in 1945 proclaimed on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1947 an Indo-Burma Movement with the aim of unifying the tribal people and territories of Indo-Burma and of making them via a plebiscite independent or autonomous, see *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78, paper 3.

always had been posted outside the Naga hills. He had thus, as many others of the Naga élite, a clear idea of the Northeast. Kevichusa told Archer that hitherto all work had been done by the tribal councils, and that it was only for the cabinet mission that the NNC had been founded.<sup>13</sup> He continued to tell Archer about the ongoing divisions among the Nagas. Khonoma and the Western Angamis, for example, were for complete independence while the rest was not sure whether this could be achieved. Simultaneously no-one had faith in the guarantees given by the Indian National Congress (INC) after Nehru's letter to Sakhrie (about which we already learned in the previous chapter) that was interpreted by the Nagas as assurance of a genuine autonomy, but then his subsequent directive to the governor of Assam to remove the *Chin Hills Regulation* negated that. The NNC was about to protest but faced the problem that nearly all its members were in government service and thus blocked from political work. Another point of concern was the lack of any Naga representation in either the constituent assembly or the advisory committee that made the Nagas fear that the constitution would consequently not take their needs into consideration.<sup>14</sup>

By February-March the NNC sent a memorandum to the British prime minister, with copies to Simon and Churchill, asking for to set up a 10-years interim government, during which they could develop themselves politically and decide afterwards whether they would prefer complete independence or some arrangement with the Indian Union. The British in Delhi and London, however, had decided to ignore the NNC.<sup>15</sup>

The NNC also wanted to represent the tribal areas, i.e. the by then still unadministered part of the Naga hills, yet were discouraged to do this by Archer. This was so since the constitutional adviser Rau had recommended to Mills to treat the excluded and tribal areas as separate cases.<sup>16</sup> While the Nagas frantically worked for a unified stand British and Indians now both suggested separate solutions and stressed the Nagas' divisiveness.

On April 11<sup>th</sup> the NNC met to choose five members that should start to work on a draft constitution for the Naga hills. One of the appointed members was Mayangnokcha and the work

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<sup>13</sup> On 18<sup>th</sup> April 1946 Kevichusa and Mayangnokcha were chosen by the Kohima tribal council to represent the Nagas vis-à-vis the cabinet mission, if they were called upon. Kevichusa was E.A.C. (we get to know later that he was assistant to the DC) and Mayangnokcha headmaster of the government Middle English school Mokokchung, In *ibid.*, paper 1, dated 2.5.46.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, paper 5 and 6. It is not clear whether Mayangnokcha's listing for the advisory committee was inconsequential or not known. To recapitulate, the basis for the Transfer of Power in India was created on May 16<sup>th</sup> 1946 through the cabinet mission's plan. The constituent assembly of India set up an advisory committee on the aboriginal tribes, which was divided into three subcommittees. One of it was meant to report on the north-eastern region, and should make suggestions on its future administrative form. Chairman of this subcommittee was Gopinath Bardoloi, the then chief minister of Assam, one of its members was to be Aliba Imti Ao, see Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-East India*, p. 76.

<sup>15</sup> Lord Pethick-Lawrence to Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma, India Office, 12 April 1947, In Nicholas Mansergh and Penderel Moon (eds.), *The Transfer of Power, 1942-7, Volume X, The Mountbatten Vicerealty: Formulation of a Plan, 22 March – 30 May 1947* (London, 1974), No. 134, pp. 217-220.

on the constitution was to begin on May 1<sup>st</sup> in Kohima. By then the “...solidarity of the Naga Nation...” had been decided by the NNC as “...its ultimate goal.”<sup>17</sup> Three days later Aliba Imti was nominated instead of Mayangnokcha. The Angamis, according to Pawsey, were afraid the Aos might go over to the Congress, and were increasingly annoyed by the Assam governor’s appeasement towards Congress. Furthermore, it had already become clear that the subcommittee would not be able to go to Wakching, to meet there the representatives of the tribes living in the tribal areas, hence they were asked to come to Mokokchung. The representatives were Hopongki for the Sangtams, Imlong for the Changs, and Ching kai for the Konyaks.<sup>18</sup> All of whom were by then still completely independent.<sup>19</sup>

By 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1947 the constituent assembly informed the hill people of the decision to grant independence to India not later than June 1948 as announced by the British prime minister Attlee in the house of commons. At the same time the coming of the subcommittee of the advisory committee to the constituent assembly was announced with the already mentioned statement that they did not come with a pre-arranged plan, but at the same time clearly limiting the scope to a solution inside the legislation of the province of Assam.<sup>20</sup> This memo was not distributed to the tribal area, but forwarded to the “...representative people and bodies...” as the secretary to the governor of Assam Adams expressed it,<sup>21</sup> giving us an organizational chart of contemporary Naga politics:

- Copy forwarded to: - 1. Naga National Council.
2. Addl. Deputy Commissioner, Mokokchung.
  3. Headmaster Govt. High School, Kohima.
  4. Angami Sub-Tribal Council.
  5. Kacha Naga & Kuki S. T. Council.
  6. Lotha Sub-Tribal Council.
  7. Sema Sub-Tribal Council.
  8. Rengma Sub-Tribal Council.

<sup>16</sup> Personal communication from Mills to Archer, dated Shillong, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1947, In *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78, paper 28.

<sup>17</sup> Mayangnokcha to Archer, dated Mokokchung, 26<sup>th</sup> April 1947, In *ibid.*, paper 40.

<sup>18</sup> Pawsey to Archer, dated Kohima, 29<sup>th</sup> April 1947. In *ibid.*, paper 41. In the end, however, the subcommittee only came as far as Kohima, and did not even make to Mokokchung.

<sup>19</sup> J. P. Mills, Adviser to the Governor of Assam to G. E. D. Walker, Political Officer, Tirap Frontier Tract, Confidential, Memo. No. All/46, dated Shillong, 16<sup>th</sup> April, 1947 and Memo No. 63/G., by C. R. Pawsey, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, dated 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1947. In *ibid.*, paper 13.

<sup>20</sup> Constituent Assembly of India, to The Hill peoples of the Naga Hills, Mikir Hills, Cachar Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, and Garo Hills, signed R. K. Ramadhyani, Deputy Secretary Constituent Assembly of India, dt. 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1947, In *ibid.*, paper 25. The members of subcommittee were the Assamese Gobinath Bardoloi, the Khasi J. J. Nichols-Roy, Rup Nath Brahma, the Naga Aliba Imti, and A. V. Thakkar, In *ibid.*, paper 109 and 115.

<sup>21</sup> Memo No. 688-371/C., Governor’s Secretariat, Shillong, the 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1947, sd/ P. R. Adams, Secretary to the Governor of Assam. In *ibid.*, paper 26.



9. Ao Sub-Tribal Council.<sup>22</sup>

The “Sub-Tribal” obviously is “Sub” in relation to the tribe of the Nagas. Seen like this we find here six sub-tribes politically represented.

The subcommittee on May 7<sup>th</sup> cancelled Mokokchung and Wakching, and announced its arrival at Kohima on 19<sup>th</sup> of May, staying the two subsequent days.<sup>23</sup> The NNC, the same day, dispatched this information to the different tribal councils (this time no “sub-”), and to Pawsey and Archer, and that all members were to come (“without fail”) to Kohima on May 16<sup>th</sup> 1947.<sup>24</sup> A day later a provisional programme was formalised that showed the sequence in which the different persons and parties were to meet the subcommittee, and gives a more complete picture of the structure of contemporaneous Naga politics than the above one dispatched by Pawsey. First, DC Pawsey was to see the subcommittee, then the members of the NNC, then the ones from the Kohima central council, followed by the Mokokchung central members, then subsequently by the Rengma, Lhota, Sema, Zemi, Sangtam, and Chang tribal council members (the last two from the administered parts of their tribes). Then, the representatives of the independent Naga tribes, followed by the one of the church (“collectively”), the women’s society, the student’s leaders, and finally the *gaomburas* and the *dobashis*. The visit was to be concluded by a trip to the interior, a football game, and a garden party.<sup>25</sup> What we find here is the overarching organisation of the NNC, consisting of British educated government servants, members of the district and sub-district capitals, as well as members from both the administered and of the unadministered parts of the Naga hills, the church as party, as well as the women’s organisation, and the students’, and the village chiefs and interpreters – a rather pluralistic picture.

The tribal area groups like the Konyaks, Phoms and Kalyo Kengus could not be contacted and thus had to go unheard by the subcommittee. Yimchunger and Sangtams had drafted memoranda that could be presented, and the Changs were represented by Imlong. In general the restriction of the subcommittee’s visit to Kohima seemed to limit the scope of representation considerably.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Memo No. 1108-15/G., dated Kohima the 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1947, sd/C. R. Pawsey, Deputy Commissioner Naga Hills. In *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Telegram to SDO Mokokchung, dated Shillong, 7<sup>th</sup> May [1947], 11:55h. In *ibid.*, paper 45.

<sup>24</sup> Office of the Naga National Council. 7<sup>th</sup> May 47. No. 94 – 112/NNC, Joint Secretaries N.N.C. T. Sakhrie. In *ibid.*, paper 46.

<sup>25</sup> Office of the Naga National Council. Provisional Programme. T. Sakhrie, Joint Secretary Naga National Council, 8.5.1947. In *ibid.*, paper 47.

<sup>26</sup> Archer to Pawsey, Mokokchung, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1947, In *Ibid.*, paper 90. Before its visit to the NHD, the subcommittee had received a list of organisations, which had to be interviewed, from the then DC Pawsey, who himself was not present at the time of the visit. At the time of the visit of the subcommittee on May 20<sup>th</sup> 1947 at Kohima there was no permanent president of the NNC. Therefore, Kevichusa Angami, senior extra-assistant commissioner of Kohima, functioned as his deputy. The members of the subcommittee first refused to talk to a government official as a representative of a political organisation (Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-East India*, p. 141), but had to realise, that nearly all leaders of the Nagas were serving in the government (*ibid.*: 69). Kevichusa and Lungalong presented

On May 12<sup>th</sup> Archer conveyed his opinion on the position of the tribes in the hitherto unadministered tract (mentioned were the Phoms, Kalyo Kengyus, and Konyaks) to Pawsey, since they were not able to make themselves heard by the subcommittee:

So far as I know the tribal areas (except the Konyaks) want to be integral part of the Naga State and at the same time [underlining in the original] get lavish grants from the centre. The Konyaks aren't at all on grants they want to go on head-taking but have no objection to forming a single Naga unit provided the first two points are observed.<sup>27</sup>

Naga decisions are reached by consensus not by majority, so that may have been responsible for the conflicting conditions - if they were conflicting at all - and one wonders what the second point to observe had been. A unified Naga state would have been possible, as would have been grants, if not from Assam, then from the centre, and if simply to keep and help develop that area in exchange for the right of stationing troops at the border for strategic purposes. The question of headhunting (as shown in Chapter Two), intimately connected to the one of political autonomy and power, as well as to the discourse on the tribes' right to independence, could safely be left to the Nagas to sort out.

Further information on some Konyaks' point of view around that time on the situation we get from some excellent notes taken by Archer. In one of these notes Archer quoted the Konyak *gaonbura* from Kongon:

What have we gained from British rule? Only Loads to carry. Letters to be sent, house tax to be paid. How happy we were before they ever came! British or Congress rule - it is all the same. All we want is to ...[unreadable, possibly the last word is "needs" or "heads"].

Then, Archer continued:

When I said to a *gaonbura* of Kongon "Is it good that head-hunting has been stopped?" he replied "What shall I say? Taking heads from nearby villages like O...ig [unreadable] or Wakching - that is bad. But to take them from distant villages how good that is."

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themselves as the sole representatives of the NNC, supported through the statement of Mayangnokcha Ao, who confirmed that their authority was based on general agreement (ibid.: 142). Both conveyed to the subcommittee the demand of the NNC for a 10-years interim solution, with an arrangement for extensive autonomy, and the inclusion of the option to secede from the Indian union after that period. The members of the subcommittee told the Nagas that they were not authorised to recommend any arrangement outside the Indian constitution. The Nagas replied that they are not prepared to accept anything inside the constitution. The talks did not bring about any results (Alemchimba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland* (Kohima, 1970), pp. 169-170.

<sup>27</sup> Archer to Pawsey, Mokokchung, 12<sup>th</sup> May 1947. In *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78, paper 94.

The chief that was to represent the Konyaks vis-à-vis the subcommittee did not see that his fellow-Konyaks were convinced that the new rulers would be able to subjugate them:

Chengais' [otherwise Chengkai] interpretation of the prevailing Konyak view – “If the British cannot control us, how can a plainsman?” and “A column – what’s the use of that? It comes and burns a village. Then it goes away and we sit and laugh.”<sup>28</sup>

The Konyaks, or at least those who talked to Archer, were either indifferent about or did not know who, for example, Mohandas Gandhi was. After Archer had told them about his assassination, and after they had inquired into the details, they just laughed, and when they got to know that he had been fighting for India’s independence, they stated that it then had been him who was responsible for all their trouble, and they asked whether he had been Hindu or Muslim. They were aware of this existing difference.<sup>29</sup>

Later, in autumn, the situation in Konyak area started to get confusing, as the following extract of a memo written by Archer in his function as SDO, confirms:

The Ang with some Konyak villagers of Wangla (Sq. 229) saw me today and reported that Chingai, Head Interpreter Wakching realised ten rupees from each of the administered Konyak villages in September 1947. Chingai, they say, announced that ‘there was no longer any Sahib in Mokokchung and they must pay him ten rupees for buying a new one!! The Ang of Mon (unadministered - Sq. 205) is said to have protested and to have announced that he would declare his own Raj instead.

This is the second recent incident involving Konyaks – the first being a minor one from Namsang village which also declared that there was no longer any Raj in Mokokchung and accordingly refused to give coolies.<sup>30</sup>

While the refusal to comply to forced labour is readily understandable, as is the declaration of ones’ own *raj*, but the idea to collect money to buy a new *raj* seems rather strange – maybe *raj* then meant protection, and one had to pay for it.

During the course of the first half of 1947 Archer believed he was witnessing an increasing demand for complete independence among the Nagas, the wish to get a pan-Naga state, including the Tirap frontier tract (TFT), the NHD, the Naga hills tribal area (NHTA), and

<sup>28</sup> This and previous two quotes: Notes by Archer, undated, but most likely from around May – June 1947, due to their location between other documents dating from then. In *ibid.*, paper 101.

<sup>29</sup> *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/79, paper 12, undated. According to Yonuo the communal violence which accompanied the negotiations about the modalities of India’s independence, resulting in more than 200,000 killed, induced the NNC to ask the Assamese on May 21<sup>st</sup> 1947 not to accede to the Indian Union, but to join, as an independent state, a ten year federation with an likewise independent Nagaland (Asoso Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study* (Delhi, 1974), pp. 171 and 184). When the Assamese rejected this suggestion, the NNC fell back on the demand for an autonomous district as a stepping stone to independence (*ibid.*, p. 196).

<sup>30</sup> Memo. No. \_G., Office of the SDO, Mokokchung, dated the 9.10.47, ADC Archer, In *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78.

the forests that in the past had been transferred to the Sibsagar district. Further, a growing uncertainty about the intentions of the central government, and an unwillingness to take into consideration any sharing of sources with Assam, and, so Archer, a general vagueness paired with confidence about the funding and controlling of a future Naga state that, especially with hindsight to the tribal area, was definitely to the dislike of Archer.<sup>31</sup> Overall the opinion among the Nagas at the point did have a propensity towards complete independence and the incorporation into this scheme of all Naga inhabited areas, then a reluctance to any common solution with Assam, a growing distrust towards the coming Indian government, and finally for Archer too much naivety in their belief of being capable of creating a viable state. Archer thus remained inside the liberal tradition legitimising imperialism. The Nagas, however, hitherto lightly, certainly not effectively, if at all, administered, had been viable before the British arrival, as they were then, and there was no reason to believe on their side why they could not be so in the future. This standpoint was not, as Archer saw, a new development but simply a return to an earlier one.

By the end of June Pawsey sent a message to Archer, telling him, among other things that the negotiations between Hydari and the Nagas were not going well.<sup>32</sup> In Archer's papers we find a draft of the *Nine-Points-Agreement* resulting out of these negotiations, that would have given the Nagas wide judicial, executive, and legislative powers. It said the Nagas were to come under a DC appointed by the governor of Assam but otherwise were free to administer themselves what they could pay for themselves. Point six ensured the re-transfer of forests from Sibsagar and Nowgong districts back to the Nagas and to bring as far as possible all Nagas into one administrative unit for which this agreement then would be in force. These two points remained important demands of the Nagas until today. Point eight granted that both, *The Chin Hills*

<sup>31</sup> Undated notes by Archer. In *ibid.*, paper 102.

<sup>32</sup> Pawsey to Archer, Kohima Naga Hills, Assam, 27.6.47. In *ibid.*, paper 57. The advisory committee submitted its report on July 28<sup>th</sup> 1947 that had been accepted by all political groups of the hill regions of Assam, yet not by the representatives of the Nagas (Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-East India*, p. 76). This was the reason why subsequent to the visit of the subcommittee Nehru did send the then governor of Assam, Sir Akbar Hydari to Kohima, to negotiate once again with the NNC (Alemchimba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, p. 171). The NNC finally accepted the agreement as a starting point for further negotiations and a possible better arrangement in the future (Z. A. Phizo, 'A Letter from Jail', In Luingang Luithui and Nandita Haksar (eds.), *Nagaland File: A Question of Human Rights* (New Delhi, 1984), pp. 41-56, p. 51; Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study*, p. 175). But at this time 4/5 of the NNC members were government officials and directly subordinated to Pawsey. During the talks with Hydari Pawsey did exert pressure on them, and made it seem as if the agreement was accepted unconditionally (Phizo, 'A Letter from Jail', p. 51). Hydari communicated to the Nagas that they never could expect more than autonomy, and did warn the NNC that, if they tried to secede, they had to take the intervention of the Indian army into account (Alemchimba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, p. 172). This threat by Hydari, according to Phizo, was received by the NNC and Naga population alike as a challenge, and did set up both against the agreement (Phizo, 'A Letter from Jail', p. 51). Also the fear of the Nagas of a possible electoral success of radical Hindu parties, like the *Jana Sangh*, *Rama Rajya Parishad*, *Rashtriya Swyam Sewak Sangh*, *Hindu Mahasabha* or *Arya Samaj*, in the eyes of the Nagas would be tantamount to cultural annihilation, did lead the NNC to shrink back more and more from joining the Indian Union. Even if they disagreed within the NNC about how to achieve independence, all agreed that this was the aim they were striving for (Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 176).

*Regulations* and *The Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations* would remain in force, and thus contradicted Nehru's former directive to the governor. Hydari, however, had been sent by Nehru to the Naga Hills with far-reaching powers and the order to achieve an agreement. The last, the ninth point, should develop into the main bone of contention between the NNC and the governor. Due to the centrality of this agreement I give the full text of the draft as found in the contemporary papers of Archer in the footnote below.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78, paper 58: Below is copied what later should be named the *Nine-Points- or Hydari-Agreement*:

A. G. P. [G. S. (C).] 3 - 50 - 5 - 7 - 1947. Secret. Tribes Represented at Discussions on the 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1947, at Kohima:

Western Angamis  
 Eastern Angamis  
 Kukis  
 Kacha Nagas (Mzemi)  
 Rengmas  
 Semas  
 Lothas  
 Aos  
 Sangtams  
 Changs

#### HEADS OF THE PROPOSED UNDERSTANDING

That the right of the Nagas to develop themselves according to their freely expressed wishes is recognised.

1. **Judicial.** - All cases whether civil or criminal arising between Nagas in the Naga Hills will be disposed of by duly constituted Naga Courts according to Naga customary law or such law as may be introduced with the consent of duly recognised Naga representative organisations save that were a sentence of transportation or death has been passed there will be a right of appeal to the Governor.

In cases arising between Nagas and non-Nagas in (a) Kohima and Mokokchung town areas, and (b) in the neighbouring plains districts the judge if not a Naga will be assisted by a Naga assessor.

2. **Executive.** - The general principle is accepted that what the Naga Council is prepared to pay for the Naga Council should control. This principle will apply equally to the work done as well as the staff employed.

While the District Officer will be appointed at the discretion of the Governor Subdivisions of the Naga Hills should be administered by a Subdivisional Council with a full time executive President paid by Naga Council who would be responsible to the District Officer for all matters falling within the latter's responsibility, and to the Naga Council for all matters falling within their responsibility.

In regard to: (a) Agriculture - the Naga Council will exercise all the powers now vested in the District Officer

(b) C. W. D. - the Naga Council would take over full control.

(c) Education and Forest Department - the Naga Council is prepared to pay for all the services and staff.

3. **Legislative.** - That no laws passed by the Provincial or Central Legislature which would materially affect the terms of this agreement or the religious practices of the Nagas shall have legal force in the Naga Hills without the consent of the Naga Council. In cases of dispute as to whether any law did so affect this agreement the matter would be referred by the Naga Council to the Governor who would then direct that the law in question should not have legal force in the Naga Hills pending the decision of the Central Government.

The Naga representatives rejected the recommendations made by the subcommittee to the advisory committee, due to the fact that they did not treat the NHD as independent, but as part of Assam, with far-reaching powers for the governor of Assam, among them, for example, the one to dissolve the NNC. Instead the Naga delegates referred to the agreement reached shortly before with Hydari and asked that it should be presented to the constituent assembly for acceptance as basis for the future relations between India-Assam and the Naga hills. The subcommittee, chaired by Bardoloi, declined and referred to Attlee's statement in the house of commons that the excluded areas would be part of Assam.<sup>34</sup>

The incongruent policy took its toll and in mid-July the NNC had, according to Pawsey "...a minor split and the Extreme independent party have broken away." Pawsey, to be sure, perceived this as a very positive development. For him those who had broken away were a tiny minority, led by the Merhema *kebel* of Khonoma, and he continued to write that the "...outside villages are fed up with it all."<sup>35</sup>

4. **Land.** – That land with all its resources in the Naga Hills should not be alienated to a non-Naga without the consent of the Naga Council.

5. **Taxation.** – That the Naga Council will be responsible for the imposition, collection, and expenditure of land revenue and house tax and of such other taxes as may be imposed by the Naga Council.

6. **Boundaries.** – That present administrative divisions should be modified so as (1) to bring back into the Naga Hills District all the forests transferred to the Sibsagar and Nowgong Districts in the past, and (2) to bring under one unified administrative unit as far as possible all Nagas. All the areas so included would be within the scope of the present proposed agreement. No areas should be transferred out of the Naga Hills without the consent of the Naga Council.

7. **Arms Act.** – The Deputy Commissioner will act on the advice of the Naga Council in accordance with the provisions of the Arms Act.

8. **Regulations.** – The Chin Hills regulations and the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations will remain in force.

9. **Period of Agreement.** – The Governor of Assam as the Agent of the Government of the Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of 10 years to ensure the due observance of this agreement, at the end of this period the Naga Council will be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga People arrived at.

<sup>34</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the Assam Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee at Shillong on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> July 1947, dated 8<sup>th</sup> July 1947 at Shillong, sd. R. K. Ramadhyan. In *ibid.*, papers 60-70.

<sup>35</sup> Pawsey to Archer, 18.7.47, Kohima, Naga Hills, In *ibid.*, paper 72. It was this break-away faction that, when the Indian government interpreted the agreement in such a way that neither autonomy nor secession could be considered (M. Horam, *Naga Insurgency: The last thirty years* (New Delhi, 1988), p. 43), and when it became clear that the constituent assembly of India was unwilling to accept the agreement at all (Luithui and Haksar, *Nagaland File*, p. 22), travelled to Delhi, in order to present its case, among others, to Gandhi. The meeting was held on July 19<sup>th</sup> 1947 in Bhangi colony. Gandhi ensured the Nagas on India's peaceful standpoint and guaranteed them complete freedom to decide, including their right to independence (Panmei, 'Naga movement and its ramifications', In Vashum, Iheilung et al (eds.), *Nagas at Work*, p. 89). It was on this occasion that the Nagas had to promise Gandhi that their policy would be one of non-violence, Interview with Yong Kong, London, July 1<sup>st</sup> 2001. In the initial phase of their resistance the Nagas implemented this, modelling their resistance along the lines of non-violent non-cooperation of the INC.

On 30<sup>th</sup> July Archer received a confidential memo forwarded by Pawsey and sent to him by Adams on 18<sup>th</sup> July, the advisor to the governor of Assam, in which he informed him that Nehru had congratulated Hydari on his success in the negotiations at Kohima (and Imphal), and that Nehru had forwarded the papers (i.e. the *Nine-Points-Agreement*) to the constituent assembly and the states department, and though nothing had been decided yet, Adams was optimistic. Pawsey asked Archer to inform Mayangnokcha.<sup>36</sup> This contradicted the decision of the Subcommittee which had decided to ignore the agreement and confirms the confused state of affairs in which people like the Nagas had to make their decisions. In accord with that is Pawsey's observation on the Shillong administration that, around the beginning of August, descended into chaos, making it unlikely to receive any orders from that direction.<sup>37</sup> Around the same time Mills expressed his surprise on hearing that the Nagas were out for complete independence, and in putting up rumours of tribal war simply perpetuated the colonial rationale:

My dear Bill, ... I am entirely bewildered by the announcement in the Statesman that the Nagas prepare to declare their independence. Surly only the Angamis want it. The Rengmas, I'm told, are already putting up defences against possible Angami raids - they are old enemies. Nlou...o [unreadable] of bhot...so [ditto] in G. S's Office, is convinced that the Lhotas will be raided, too.<sup>38</sup>

Simultaneously, a Naga delegation had been in Delhi, trying to see Nehru, yet who referred them to Ramadhyani who in turn refused to amend the ninth clause of the agreement with the same argument as the subcommittee, i.e. that all hill tribes should be receiving the same conditions. Nehru seemed to have said that the agreement was between the Nagas and the Governor of Assam, hence only the latter was able to alter it. When on this point one Naga delegate stated that the Nagas then will have it their way, Nehru answered that, and now I quote Archer's notes "...India could not be split into a 100 pieces - Nagas got angry with him - Nehru said if they fought we all ...[unreadable]"<sup>39</sup>

On the very day India achieved her independence Imti Aliba and Kumbho Angami, for the NNC, sent communication to Hydari, following a telegram dispatched the previous day, to stress again that the Nagas only could be part of the Indian Union, if the *Nine-Points-Agreement* was accepted with the ninth clause modified as follows:

<sup>36</sup> Confidential. Memo. No. 61/C, dated Kohima the 30<sup>th</sup> July, 1947. Copy of D.O. No. 973/c dt. 18.7.47 from P. F. Adams, Adviser to the Governor of Assam, to C. R. Pawsey, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills. In *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78, paper 79.

<sup>37</sup> Pawsey to Archer, Kohima, 3.8.47. In *ibid.*, papers 82 and 83.

<sup>38</sup> Mills to Archer, Lum Soh Phoh, Shillong, Assam, Aug 4<sup>th</sup> 1947. *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/79, paper 7, dated Wokha, 7<sup>th</sup> August 1947.

The Governor of Assam as the agent to the Government of the Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of 10 years to ensure the due observance of this agreement, at the end of this period the Nagas will be free to decide their own future!<sup>40</sup>

Certainly the new version of the clause left less room for ambivalence and clearly conveyed the freedom to secede without naming it, and so it is not astounding that Hydari refused the alteration of the ninth clause of the agreement with the following wording:

I therefore propose that the wording of the understanding reached at Kohima which I have scrupulously followed and the substance of which has been accepted both by the Prime Minister of the Indian Union and of Assam should be maintained.

I hope the Naga Leaders will accept this position. If they do not then I am afraid we must maintain the status quo till they do or till the constituent Assembly passes the Constitution Act whichever is earlier.<sup>41</sup>

Shortly before that, confusing the picture further, the Kohima and Kacha Nagas had declared their independence and left for Shillong, probably to see Hydari. The other Nagas, for the time being, stuck with the *Nine-Points-Agreement* with the meaning of a ten years interim period, that, as we have seen, had been declined by Hydari. On the very day of Transfer of Power the Indian ceremonies were boycotted by the Nagas in Kohima, instead a Naga flag was hoisted by Mrs Kevichusa and only taken down after Pawsey had convinced her in the course of long negotiations. The hauling down of the Naga flag, however, triggered the angry reaction of a Naga crowd. The civil surgeon, obviously Indian, hoisted an Indian flag outside his house which was immediately hauled down by the Nagas. Naga government servants refused to take the new oaths of allegiance. A day earlier the Khonoma group, according to Archer, had sent out telegrams to declare Naga independence, and Archer was not sure whether Pawsey had intercepted them all. At last Archer could not find anything about the Nagas in the press. Hydari then also revised his former decision and declared his willingness to accept the revised form of the ninth clause but stated it would not convey the right to secede from the Indian union after the lapse of ten years. Finally, Khonoma seemed not to know, again, according to Archer, what to do after their declaration of independence and came round to agree to the ten years interim period.<sup>42</sup>

Archer himself on the 15<sup>th</sup> August was in Wokha, Lhota country, where the day was just like every other day and everyone was busy working on the fields due to the end of the

<sup>40</sup> Communication from NNC (president Aliba Imti, secretary Kumbho Angami) to governor of Assam, dated Kohima, 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947. Copy in *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78.

<sup>41</sup> Extract from a letter dated 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 from His Excellency The Governor of Assam, copy as Memo. No. 6462-63/G., dated Kohima the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1947, Sd/ C. R. Pawsey, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills. In *ibid*.



agricultural period. In general the Lhotas, according to Archer, wanted an Assam *raj*, since they expected money and prosperity from the connection with the plains.<sup>43</sup> The run-up to the British departure and the very day itself constituted a bewildering chaos in the Naga hills in respect to politics due to the turmoil prevailing in the wider framework and it would be incorrect to post-facto order it into a nice and smooth narrative arriving inevitably at the outcome. The Nagas had to navigate between the different and incongruent statements and acts of the following: the Assam government, the governor of Assam, the departing British administrators, the subcommittee, and the different agents at the centre (Nehru, who said one thing and then did the opposite; Gandhi and Rajagopalacharia, who promised them their right to self-determination, and other minor ones contributing to the confusion). At the same time they had to unify themselves and negotiate their organisation and stand for the future, and everything with no prior experience, and without recognising that for all Indian actors their independence would be out of question.

In the ten days between August 24<sup>th</sup> and September 2<sup>nd</sup> Hydari propagated the fusion between hills and plains and Pawsey had set up a committee to work on a Naga constitution. Aliba Imti was angry about that and Nehru had announced that the *Chin Hills Regulation* – that controlled the movements into the hills – had been ended, without consultation with local authorities. Archer mused it happened for party political purposes.<sup>44</sup> A paper dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> September, and probably written by Archer's wife, described the post-Transfer of Power atmosphere in Kohima as tense, reiterates the boycott of celebrations, and states that though the group that was for complete independence was small, it included:

...some of the most powerful personalities. It's chiefly people from Kohima and the Khonoma group that want it. I was ...[unreadable] when reading a few days ago on a ...[ditto] of the first siege of Kohima – 1871 [9?] to find that it was the Khonoma group that led the attack on the new british Raj. It is those same 6 villages Khonoma, Jotsoma, Mezoma, Sachema, Kigwema and Kirufena who once were leading the attack...(..).

After having stated this, she commented on the rest of the Nagas:

But the majority of Nagas although they do not go quite so far as the Khonoma group are very definitely wanting independence within the Union and all of them who are Court servants have refused to make the new oath of allegiance to the Indian Union.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/79, papers 7 and 18, undated.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, paper 8, undated.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, paper 13, dated August 24 – September 2 [1947] and paper 14, undated.

The *Urna Die* (Our Home News) published by the information department of the People's Independence League, dating from the last days of August 1947, and probably written by members of the independence group that broke away from the NNC, therein published a declaration of independence comprising the southern Nagas, including the Manipur hill and Cachar Nagas on August 14<sup>th</sup> and that they would negotiate to join Pakistan "on suitable terms."<sup>46</sup> The paper quotes John Adams, Lincoln, Webster, Don Quixote and Patrick Henry on "liberty" and "independence" giving ample proof of the influence of western ideas. Moreover it is written in a colourful Christian language, and constitutes evidence that the English the Nagas learnt was the English of the American Baptists' bible – heavy, turgid, verbose, and metaphorical. Furthermore, that publication gives testimony to a split among the Nagas that happened on 13<sup>th</sup> August in Kohima at the NNC meeting, and somehow the anonymous author holds the Mokokchung group of the NNC responsible for the failure of the interim solution that had been projected from 19<sup>th</sup> February 1947 onwards.<sup>47</sup>

Shortly afterwards Aliba Imti inquired with Hydari whether his refusal to modify clause nine was his last word.<sup>48</sup> Three days after that Aliba Imti, in a communication to the chairman of the tribal council of the AOs, wrote that he had anticipated the resistance of the Indians towards the modification of the ninth clause of the agreement, and therefore he strongly advocated action:

(1) Decision should be made in favour of non-cooperation with existing govt. (2) One month ultimatum be given to the govt. of India. (3) From the beginning of Nov. '47, the govt. servants of Naga people should be ready to lay down their pens.<sup>49</sup>

The same day Aliba Imti wrote to Nehru and insisted "...upon the recognition of our 'Claim' submitted to you during our New Delhi discussion",<sup>50</sup> a reminder, so to speak, to Nehru, held in strong words, but also expressing awareness of the fact that Nehru also had other things (the Nagas were aware on the occurrences in Kashmir and Punjab) to do. The "claim" Imti brought forward for recognition was the modification of clause nine.<sup>51</sup> Mayangnokcha, though by then not a member of the NNC anymore, was informed by Aliba Imti that on 23<sup>rd</sup> September a NNC

<sup>45</sup> This and previous quote, In *ibid.*, no numeration, dated Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> Copies of the *Urna Die* (Our Home News), published by the information dept. of the People's Independence League. AZ/8 2847 & 3047 AZ8C [the "47" will be the year, the "8" the month, the number before the "47" the day of the month, the question remains what the 'AZ' is standing for], In *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Aliba Imti, president, NNC to His Excellency, The Governor of Assam, Shillong, dated Kohima, the 6<sup>th</sup> September 1947. In *ibid.*, as copy to the ADC Mokokchung for information.

<sup>49</sup> Aliba Imti, president, NNC to chairman, tribal council, dated Kohima the 9<sup>th</sup> Sept. '47. In *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Aliba Imti, president, NNC to Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, The Prime Minister of Indian Union, dated Kohima the 9<sup>th</sup> Sept. '47. In *ibid.*, as copy to the SDO Mokokchung for information.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

meeting was due. Pawsey and Archer had argued against working out the details of an agreement with the governor of Assam during a general meeting.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, four days later we come across a communication signed by four Aos, one Chang, and one Sangtam, to Aliba Imti, stating they would not be able to attend the meeting, and suggesting the set-up of a small committee that in consultation with the DC should work out such an agreement and the legislation based upon it, and finally that the draft that was to be arrived at in this way should be presented to the NNC for approval.<sup>53</sup> It seems that the British officer's influence was stronger among the Aos and their neighbours in the Mokokchung subdivision. However, this suggestion was adopted at the NNC - meeting at Kohima on 23<sup>rd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> September as point two of the agenda, and the members elected. Point one requested all tribal councils to give their opinion on what to do vis-à-vis the Indian government and its reluctance to concede the Naga's demand. Point three to approach the DC to leave the collecting of the taxes to the NNC for the ongoing year; point four that "...the Gurkha and other domiciled people..." could not be included at that stage, and therefore had to be represented by the NNC for the moment; point five the adoption of an resolution of the Dimapur tribal union to keep the Dimapur area inside the Naga hills; point six about the necessity for the presence of the members; and finally point seven on the instantaneous admittance of the Konyak tribal council into the NNC via its representatives Jugai and Sayong for the Lower Konyaks and Zulumung for the Upper Konyaks. Resolved was also that the next meeting was to be held in Wokha on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1947.<sup>54</sup> From a paper, written by a proponent for immediate independence after the above meeting, we gain an understanding on the composition of the NNC - representatives of eight tribes: 7 Aos, 4 Semas, 3 Lhotas, 7 Angamis, 1 Chang, 2 Sangtams, 3 Zemis, and 2 Rengmas - 29 in total, Angamis, Aos, Semas, and Lothas represented the strongest. It seemed, however, that the NNC meeting at Kohima had failed to make a quorum, since only five members had attended (in sharp contrast to the public that attended in considerable numbers and left disappointed). The author accused the Aos for wanting to leave everything to the DC, and the NNC in general for having no policy worth the name. Between the break-away group, demanding complete independence, and the NNC, despite their conflicting standpoints, continued to be interaction, mutual debate and influence, a process of bringing the other around or finding a common line. Also we can comprehend from this paper that the educated Nagas were conscious about the wider developments, the statements in the Indian newspapers assuring the existence of one whole undivided India, the ones made in the constituent assembly on the impossibility of retaining any restrictions on movement inside the

<sup>52</sup> Mayangnokcha to Archer, dated Mokokchung, 15<sup>th</sup> September 1947. In *ibid*.

<sup>53</sup> From the members [of the NNC probably] Imkongmeren Ao, Imtisosang Ao, Yajenlemba Ao, Subongnoklu Ao, Imlongchang, and Hopongki Sangdem, dated Mokokchung, the 19<sup>th</sup> September 1947. In *ibid*.

Indian union (with reference to the Northeast), on the Lushais' (the later Mizos) decision to join Burma and the governor of Assam's reaction stating that the Lushais were part of the Indian union, were not free either to join Pakistan nor Burma, could be granted as much autonomy as they could manage, had first to bring their house in order, that they could not secede after ten years, and had to stay within India. The Lushais' reaction seemed to have been disenchantment, since they had thought they really were free to choose, or at least, that was how they had understood the subcommittee's assurances. The author of the paper stated that the Nagas' position was not different from the one of the Lushais', and mentioned that the members of the NNC's delegation to Delhi were told by the responsible officers in the external affairs department that the Nagas could not be granted any special status apart from that conceded to other tribes. Thereupon the author challenged the NNC by suggesting putting the decision to the Naga people in the form of a referendum, and continued confidently: "We know definitely that people in the villages are very angry and they will never agree to join India." And he ended with what he titled as "First Sign", a piece of news that said that Bardoloi and Nehru had agreed to settle Punjab refugees in the Dimapur area.<sup>55</sup> Kumbho Angami thus strongly expressed his protest towards the premier of Assam Bardoloi to settle refugees on Naga land, reminded him that this would run counter to the *Nine-Points-Agreement* and requested him to call off the scheme.<sup>56</sup>

More than a month later, at the beginning of November, the NNC dispatched an *Ultimatum to the Government of India* that was addressed to Nehru. This paper gives us an important contemporaneous recapitulation of recent developments from the NNC's point of view. It said the NNC had submitted on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1947 to GOI a memo requesting an interim solution of ten years with option to secede after ten years. Yet, there had been no reply, and after the lapse of three months they re-sent the memo with further details on the envisioned scheme, in essence demanding autonomy plus the option for independence after the interim had passed. The same memo was also submitted to the subcommittee with whom the NNC met on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1947. Yet the subcommittee had its own scheme and was not willing to go beyond it, hence the NNC rejected it. This resulted in the governor of Assam Hydari journeying to the Naga hills to negotiate with the NNC and the outcome was the *Nine-Points-Agreement*, sans the amendment granting the right to secede after ten years, and thus not agreed on unanimously by all Nagas. A minority still wanted to have this amendment made, and finally the NNC decided that it would

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<sup>54</sup> Resolutions passed in the N.N.C. Meeting at Kohima on 23 - 25 Sept 1947, Secretary NNC, Kumbho Angami. In *ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Copy of the *Urra Die* (Our Home News), published by the information dept. of the People's Independence League. This time no date was given, but surely it must have been written shortly after the September meeting of the NNC. In *ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Letter from Kumbho Angami to The Premier of Assam, Shillong, dated Kohima, 29.9.1947. In *ibid.*

have what in the end had already been the original demand. Since then the NNC has been threatened, and when in Delhi asked Nehru for this amendment, received a disappointing treatment. This having been so, the document concludes, the NNC had no choice but to issue an ultimatum of 30 days to GOI, after which the Nagas would stop cooperating with India and would secede from the Indian union on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1947.<sup>57</sup> Aliba Imti then informed the tribal councils that until an answer was received by GOI, people should be forbidden from working on tea-plantations or similar plains-holdings, and that Nagas living outside the Naga hills should be kept informed of the situation and were called upon to follow closely the developments between the Nagas and GOI.<sup>58</sup> Eleven days later an even more urgent telegram left the NNC office:

National Council sits 26 Kohima. All members and public leaders must attend without fail. Situation very critical. Meeting may last days. Sd/Kumbho.<sup>59</sup>

By the beginning of December 1947 the NNC seemed to have agreed on December 31<sup>st</sup> as the ultimatum to leave the Indian union.<sup>60</sup>

Another meeting of the NNC was scheduled for the 28<sup>th</sup> December 1947.<sup>61</sup> From the notes Archer made on the communication he had received from Mayangnokcha we gather that he suspected that the meeting was about the “constitutional proposals” and his opinion that those whom he called “moderate leaders”, and we may assume that these were the ones who were in favour of autonomy only, were in a difficult position as long as there were no funds arriving, we may assume from the centre.<sup>62</sup> Pawsey had already suspected at the beginning of November that there would be no funds for Tuensang, i.e. the tribal areas, since the centre was far too busy with Punjab and Kashmir.<sup>63</sup>

In the meantime the governor of Assam assured the Nagas that the proposals to the constitutional assembly would be drafted in cooperation with the Nagas, and that a draft should

<sup>57</sup> Ultimatum to the Government of India, To Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister, Indian Union, from T. Aliba Imti, president & Kumbho Angami, secretary, on behalf of the NNC, dated Kohima, 4<sup>th</sup> November 1947. In L/PJ/7/10635.

<sup>58</sup> Memo No. /83/NNC, Urgent, Subject: Precautionary Measures. Office of the Naga National Council, Kohima, Naga Hills, Assam, 9/11/1947, T. Aliba Imti, President, NNC. In *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78.

<sup>59</sup> Copy of telegram from the Secretary, NNC to the Chairman, Mokokchung Central Council. Date of dispatch: 20.11.47 Date of receipt: 21.11.47. In *ibid*.

<sup>60</sup> *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/79, paper 4, dated Charali, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1947.

<sup>61</sup> Memo No. \_ Office of the Naga National Council, Head Office, Kohima, dated, the 21<sup>st</sup>. Dec. 1947, Aliba Imti, President. In *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78.

<sup>62</sup> Communication from Mayangnokcha to Archer, dated 23.12.47, with the attached telegram signed by Aliba Imti, in *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/76. From the telegram we learn that copies of it were sent to the chairmen of tribes of the Ao, Sema, Lhota, Sangtam, Chang, and Konyak tribal councils with the request to inform the divisional members. Mayangnokcha himself was chairman of the Mokokchung central council.

<sup>63</sup> Pawsey to Archer, dated Kohima 5<sup>th</sup> November 1947, In *ibid*.

be ready by 20<sup>th</sup> January 1948.<sup>64</sup> Six months later, on June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1948, a delegation of Nagas asked Hydari if the agreement still was valid and would be implemented. Thereupon Hydari and Bardoloi gave them written assurances that this never had been put into question.<sup>65</sup> Contrary to these assurances, the Assamese and Indians continued to build up their administration,<sup>66</sup> and by November 9<sup>th</sup> 1949 the chief minister of Assam, Gopinath Bordoloi, informed a NNC-delegation that GOI never had accepted the Hydari-agreement. This was taken by the NNC as a betrayal. Those inside the NNC, who had hitherto favoured an interim solution, now lost ground, and a clear majority now swayed towards immediate independence.<sup>67</sup> Alemchimba sees the NNC at this point unanimously behind the demand for independence.<sup>68</sup>

### 6.3 The Takeover

In the previous chapter we already noted the scant documentation of events from 1948 to 1955, when finally regular fighting had started. At least for the central government the Naga hills did not pose a problem till 1955. Further, discussions in the *Lok Sabha* on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1951 on communications in the Naga hills supports statements made by two of my interviewees that in the initial post-independence time nothing much had changed in the Naga hills, and rather that the Nagas were administrating themselves for the time being.<sup>69</sup> For although Assam was now in charge of administering the NHD and the NHTA by the governor of Assam as agent of the president of India, neither had initially the means nor the manpower to effectively implement the duty going along with the office. So the build-up of the Assamese administration effectively started in 1950 or after. Then, however, the massive influx of foreigners that looked down on the Nagas as savages further aggrieved the Nagas and only strengthened their resolve to be independent. Only administrators who could be spared elsewhere were sent into the Naga hills, and those in turn tried to get reposted to the plains as fast as they could. The attempted incorporation of the people was accompanied by the attempted penetration of the land with the help of a massive material onslaught of build-up in infrastructure. *The Times* saw this in line with other post-colonial states:

Like other newly independent countries, India was very keen to consolidate her territory and bring it under uniform administration. From Delhi, thousands of miles away, and from not-so-distant Shillong, administrators were dispatched to the land of the Nagas, where the British had mostly left

<sup>64</sup> Office of the adviser to His Excellency the governor of Assam for tribal areas & states, Walker, to W. G. Archer, ADC, Mokokchung, Naga Hills, dated Camp Margherita, the 26<sup>th</sup> Dec. '47. In *Archer Papers*, MSS Eur 236/78.

<sup>65</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 177.

<sup>66</sup> Luithui & Haksar, *Nagaland File*, p. 23

<sup>67</sup> Panmei, 'Naga movement and its ramifications', p. 89.

<sup>68</sup> Alemchimba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, p. 174.

the tribes to look after themselves. The task of the administrators (who had no knowledge of tribal society) was to raise the primitive Nagas to the level of the Indians, so that they could enjoy the same benefits as other citizens of the country. This miracle of transformation was to be accomplished as soon as possible so that the Nagas would cease to feel different from the Indians and would give up their demand for a separate homeland.<sup>70</sup>

Otherwise information abounds that the Nagas felt aggrieved by the take-over of the Assam state administration and its officials.<sup>71</sup>

Possibly due to strategic reasons GOI made an effort to install itself immediately in the hitherto independent areas. Thus, by February 1949 the chiefs of what they called “Free Nagaland” sent via Kohima a letter to the governor general of India (and to the United Nations Organisation (UNO)). This, and the subsequent document, furnishes us with crucial insights into the stand of the Nagas in the former unadministered part of the Naga hills in the immediate post-Transfer of Power period, and particulars about the move of India’s state agents into this area. Therein the chiefs state being the descendants of the villages Khukishe and Khetoi, occupying an area “...between the Tizii river and Patkoi Hills or Saramati...”, a territory never included in the administered part of the Naga hills and self-ruling all along, without any interference even by the British. They stressed their sovereignty stemming from them having always looked after their own security and protection, of being utterly democratic, and wishing to be on friendly terms with the Indian Union, but that they “...strongly object the encroachment of our sovereign right and annexation of our land in any form at any time.” India put up military bases in their territory and had begun to demand tax, forced labour and imposed fines. The letter reiterated the desire of the chiefs to be on amicable terms with India, but that they were worried about the plan to occupy their land which had always been independent. The concluding paragraphs called for a stop of this encroachment and offered negotiations:

Therefore, we urge Your Excellency to look into the matter immediately and stop all the designs of control and annexation of our Free and Independent Territory, so that we may not be unnecessarily dragged into a conflict, which will ruin us and will not make India a nation any more stronger.

For further discussion of this very important matter if the Indian Government finds it necessary, we hope the Indian Government would be pleased to fix a time as to when an Ambassador

<sup>69</sup> *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 8, 1951, 26.5., Columns 4646-4647; Interview with Mr. Yong Kong, London, 7.8.2001 and with Mrs. Adino Phizo and Mr. Kevilevor Phizo, London, 19.7.2001.

<sup>70</sup> Special correspondent, *The Times*, 28.10.1958.

<sup>71</sup> Rawle Knox, ‘Nagaland To-day: Why Nehru Cannot “Free” Hill Tribesmen’, New Delhi, Jan. 7, *The Observer*, Jan. 8, 1961. The best and most competent account is given by Nari Rustomji, *Imperilled Frontiers*, passim. Rustomji, a Parsi, and previously DC in Assam was part of this administration as adviser on tribal questions. He served under nine different governors.

from Free Nagaland would be welcomed by the Indian Government to meet preferably in Shillong as it would be inconvenient for our people to come so far to New Delhi.<sup>72</sup>

Nearly nine month later the chiefs of “Free Nagaland” sent anew a memorandum to the general secretary of the UNO (with a copy to the British chief delegate to the UNO and possibly also one to the president of the USA). Therein, in an urgent tone, they asked for help, being convinced of facing an imminent Indian invasion of their country, and thus “...appealed to reason rather than to force...”. The memorandum repeated their claim of always having been independent and that they intended to remain so, and, that they wished for cordial relations with the Indian Union. Describing their country as being situated between China, Burma, and India, they accused the latter “Following close upon the attainment by India also of independence...” (the “also” alluding to their own consistent independence in contrast to India’s long dependence) to secretly engaging in subjugating their country and simultaneously keeping it concealed from the other two neighbouring countries. Indian officials ostensibly had begun to demand “...tributes or taxes...” from the population of this land. Thereupon the Nagas had lodged a formal complaint “...to ascertain whether the officials were indeed acting on the orders of their Government or were, as was the general suspicion, attempting to collect money for their own personal pockets.” The suspicion was unjustified and confirmed was India’s aspiration for occupation both by letters from the GOI demanding taxes and the acknowledgement of its suzerainty. Moreover “These demands were accompanied with threats that India would not hesitate to use force in the event of our non-compliance with their orders.” The threat of invasion by military force had been conveyed openly to the Nagas by Indian officials, and, so the memorandum continues, they were conscious about the fact that they could not stand up to the military might of India, and hence were asking the UNO “...for rescue.” They stressed again their own age-old tradition of independence in contrast to India’s long history as “...slave country...” and that though they were “...poor and backward...” and without “...representations in international affairs...” they intended to remain sovereign,

...or else we should have become province within the Republic of Burma, our immediate eastern neighbour, kith and kin with whose people we are. Again, we have China to our North whence came our ancestors and from whom we inherit our treasured culture and tradition. Most important of all are the Nagas in Naga Hills whose struggle for freedom from India’s domination had, naturally, our whole hearted sympathy. Mention must be made to the fact that these Nagas are our own people though not independent like us. Our consistent policy is the establishment of a free, sovereign Naga State in which these Nagas shall also have a share provided they of their own free will elect to sever

<sup>72</sup> Letter from Khetoi, Kukishe H. Q., Free Nagaland, P. O. Kohima, Naga Hills, to His Excellency, the Governor General of India, New Delhi, dated February, the 16<sup>th</sup>, 1949. In L/PJ/7/10635.



their present administrative relations with India and take part in the Naga Union Government. It must, however, be clearly understood that any effort on the part of these Nagas for their own freedom is entirely of their own initiative and we have not the slightest desire to interfere in such an issue in the deciding of which their own free will must prevail.<sup>73</sup>

Expression is here given to the feeling of relatedness among the Nagas of “Free Nagaland” to those in the Naga hills formerly under the *raj*, and to Burma and China, on grounds of descent, ongoing social and cultural relatedness, a feeling of affinity that is much later granted paramount importance in their resistance towards the Indian state by Sanjoy Hazarika.<sup>74</sup>

Of utmost significance was also Zaphu Angami Phizo who, in June 1946, returned to Nagaland, and later on would become the “voice of the Nagas”.<sup>75</sup> Even when he had already been for a long time in exile in London, he remained for most of the Nagas, as long as he was alive, their only leader. Described as “Moses of his people” or “father of Naga nationalism”, he unified the Nagas, who beforehand had been divided into clans and tribes, and he “...spelt out loud and clear what was in the heart of many Nagas, namely, an independent Naga nation.”<sup>76</sup> Phizo, born in Khonoma, because of anti-British statements was sent into an exile of his choice. He went to Rangoon. Phizo was made to understand that he only could return after the British left the Naga hills. When in 1942 the Japanese army and Subhas Chandra Bose’s Indian National Army (INA) marched into Burma, the Japanese asked Phizo and his brother whether they wanted to cooperate with them, in return for Naga independence. Phizo agreed and consequently was admitted into the INA.<sup>77</sup> After the Japanese had been driven out of Burma Phizo became a British prisoner of war, and following his release in 1946, he returned to Kohima, where T.

<sup>73</sup> From Khukishe H. Q., Free Nagaland, to the Secretary General, UNO, Lake Success, New York, USA, dated November 1949, signed by Khetoi, chief of Khukishe; Khevishe, chief of Tsüko and Vihoto, chief of Hoshepu. In L/PJ/7/10635.

<sup>74</sup> Painting it in an imaginative language:

The jungles of Southeast Asia sweep down from Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh across seven other nations. Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Kampuchea, Malaysia, and Vietnam – spanning political boundaries, irreverential even of physical frontiers. Ethnic coalitions, oral traditions and lifestyles based on respect for nature have mattered more in these regions than frontiers. Here men and women, with common origins but different nationalities, share a racial, historic, anthropological and linguistic kinship with each other that is more vital than their links with the mainstream political centres, especially at Delhi, Dhaka and Rangoon.

It is this affinity that has played a role in the unrest and insurgencies that have long troubled the Northeast of India. The embattled communities have been bonded by suffering and opposition to the brutality of government crackdowns against militancy and revolts.

Affinity and Identity. These, more than any other factors, represented the principal compulsions that triggered the Naga, Mizo, Meitei, Tripuri and Assamese affirmation of separateness from the non-Mongolian communities that dominate the Indian subcontinent.

Sanjoy Hazarika, *Strangers in the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India's Northeast* (New Delhi, 1995), p. XVI.

<sup>75</sup> Horam, *Naga Insurgency*, p. 45.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. To underestimate Phizo’s role, for Aosenba, is to fail to comprehend Naga reality, see Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict* (New Delhi, 2001), pp. III-IV.

<sup>77</sup> Nirmal Nibedon, *Nagaland: The Night of the Guerrillas* (New Delhi, 1983), pp. 23-34.

Sakhrie introduced him into the NNC. Sakhrie then was the general secretary of the NNC, came from the same *kebel* of Khonoma as Phizo.<sup>78</sup> The *kebel* was that of Merhema, having a long tradition of a dominant position in the Naga hills as well as of resistance against outside forces.<sup>79</sup>

In 1948 Phizo withdrew from the NNC and founded the People's Independence League (PIL). He did this to consolidate his position as a leader, and to push the demand for a sovereign Nagaland that was to include the NHD, the Tuensang frontier area, but also all the other Naga-inhabited areas of India and Burma.<sup>80</sup> To build up a national consciousness, Phizo and his staff incessantly toured the Naga Hills, organised the youth in the Naga Youth Movement (NYM) and the women in the Naga Women's Society (NWS). In every village people from all walks of life started party cells, to support the party, and to which the villagers could come and discuss with the party workers. The councils of all levels (village, mountain chain or tribe) backed the party.<sup>81</sup> The same year Phizo was detained on grounds of anti-Indian subversive activities, and on his release unanimously elected President of the NNC on December 11<sup>th</sup> 1950.<sup>82</sup> Following his election he filled most of the important positions in the NNC with his own people from the PIL.<sup>83</sup>

As early as November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1948 Phizo, in a letter that he wrote in jail in Calcutta to the Indian governor general Rajagopalacharia, expressed his concerns that the repressive Indian policy in the Naga hills was bound to fail "...my turbulent Naga people cannot be frightened into submission."<sup>84</sup> Phizo perceived the ISF's conduct as intended provocation to give GOI a pretext at hand to declare a state of emergency that would result in military rule. The Nagas, however, would answer with non-violent resistance.<sup>85</sup>

In 1950 Phizo met Nehru and informed him about the decision of the Nagas not to join the Indian union. Nehru rejected this claim, and at the same time began to claim the NNC only represented a small western influenced minority, the overwhelming majority of the Nagas, however, decisively wanted to be part of the Indian Union. This brought Phizo to the decision to carry out a plebiscite.<sup>86</sup> In a letter to the Indian president, dated January 1<sup>st</sup> 1951, Phizo invited

<sup>78</sup> Nibedon, *Nagaland: The Night of the Guerrillas*, p. 57. Nibedon saw Sakhrie as the strategic head of the NNC, and as the visionary of the Nagas. (ibid., pp. 57 and 60). Sakhrie later was murdered and Phizo was held responsible for ordering his murder. Sakhrie was against armed resistance.

<sup>79</sup> See Pieter Steyn, *Zapuphizo: Voice of the Nagas* (London, 2002). Steyn, though mostly not giving his sources, must have moved through the Naga hills with Angami Nagas in the course of World War Two operations, and part of his book is a recollection of oral history narrated on these occasions.

<sup>80</sup> Horam, *Naga Insurgency*, p. 59.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Panmei, 'Naga movement and its ramifications', p. 89.

<sup>83</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 201.

<sup>84</sup> Phizo, 'A Letter from Jail', pp. 52-53.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>86</sup> Luithui and Haksar, *Nagaland File*, p. 24.

the Indian government to send observers to monitor the planned plebiscite.<sup>87</sup> Therein Phizo also reiterated the excesses of the ISF, claiming they “...slaughter our nationals in cold blood.”<sup>88</sup> GOI ignored the invitation, the plebiscite, however, was started on May 16<sup>th</sup> 1951, and brought to an end in August of the same year.<sup>89</sup> It was carried out by the two youth organisations NYM and NWS, touring all villages. Voting was mostly by thumb-print, considered as being more meaningful and credible, and therefore meant to pre-empt possible accusations of fraud.<sup>90</sup> The plebiscite resulted in 99 per cent assent in favour of independence, weighed several kilograms and was sent to the Indian president.<sup>91</sup> GOI, in the end, refused to recognise the result, for Phizo and the NNC, however, it presented an unequivocal confirmation of their policy and a strong mandate for their mission.<sup>92</sup> In December 1951 a delegation of the NNC confronted Nehru with the result of the plebiscite. Nehru called the demand for independence absurd and warned the delegation about the possible violent result of their policy.<sup>93</sup>

The plebiscite showed for the first time the organising capacity of the NNC, which it proved again during the general election of 1952,<sup>94</sup> resulting in a total boycott:

...the government went ahead with the election arrangements and the entire election paraphernalia was made ready, electoral rolls were prepared, polling booths were set up, ballot boxes were made and Returning Officers were stationed. Nagas, on the other hand, were indifferent to the going-on and went about their daily work with studied calm and the whole election show proved to be a mockery as a result of the election that never was.<sup>95</sup>

On March 11<sup>th</sup> 1952 again a delegation of the NNC, led by Phizo, set out to see Nehru, who then lost his composure, shouting at the Nagas that they would never get their own state. The NNC thereon told Nehru that they were determined to continue their fight for independence through non-violent means, following the examples of Gandhi and Christ.<sup>96</sup>

The new chief minister of Assam Bishnuram Medhi openly propagated the Assamisation of all minorities, if necessary by force,<sup>97</sup> and he had herein the full support of the Indian foreign

<sup>87</sup> Z. A. Phizo, ‘A Letter to the President of India’, In Luithui and Haksar, pp. 57-60, p. 57.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>89</sup> Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-East India*, p. 108.

<sup>90</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 202.

<sup>91</sup> Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-East India*, p. 108.

<sup>92</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 202.

<sup>93</sup> Alemchimba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, p. 174.

<sup>94</sup> Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-East India*, p. 108.

<sup>95</sup> Horam, *Naga Insurgency*, p. 50.

<sup>96</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 204. Nehru’s statement at that occasion became infamous among the Nagas: “Whether heaven falls or India goes to pieces and blood runs red in the country, I don’t care. Whether I am here or for that matter any other body comes in, I don’t care. Nagas will not be allowed to become independent.” Kaka D. Iralu, *Nagaland and India: The Blood and the Tears*, (no publishing place mentioned, 2000), p. 80.

<sup>97</sup> Rustomji described Medhi as “...shrewd, narrow-minded and parochially Assamese.” Rustomji, *Imperilled Frontiers*, p. 36.

ministry.<sup>98</sup> Medhi's attitude towards minorities was well-known throughout the hills, consequently, during his visit to Mokokchung in 1950 he was received by demonstrations.<sup>99</sup>

In the aftermath of the 1952 elections boycott, following the last meeting with Nehru, the Nagas started their civil disobedience campaign; they refused to pay taxes, the *gaonburas* returned their red coats – signs of their official function; government servants left their offices and students their schools.<sup>100</sup> To the Assam administration this came equal to an open rebellion, and it reacted with a massive deployment of armed forces into the Naga hills, convinced, according to the insider Rustomji, that these “savages” would only understand the language of force.<sup>101</sup>

On October 18<sup>th</sup> of the same year, following reports that the Assam police had tortured a Naga-boy to death, a demonstration was staged in Kohima, in the course of which one demonstrator was overrun by an Indian police officer and the till then peaceful demonstration took a violent turn. During the following fighting a highly respected Angami judge, who intended to arbitrate, was shot and killed.<sup>102</sup>

Consequently the atmosphere was already heated between the Nagas and the government when Nehru and his Burmese colleague Thankin U Nu visited Kohima on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 1953. Yet this was exactly why the Nagas welcomed the visit. Representatives of all tribal councils and other leading personalities from all over the Naga hills came to Kohima. They saw it as a favourable opportunity to convey to Nehru their unanimous desire for freedom and drew up a memorandum.<sup>103</sup> The then DC of the NHD Barkati, however, did not allow them to present it to Nehru, or even to utter anything during the visit, they should rather be quiet and listen to what the two Premiers had to say.<sup>104</sup> The Nagas assumed that Barkati's orders were Nehru's, so they left the place, chosen for the visit, at exactly the moment when Nehru and U Nu appeared. Furthermore, as sign of their disapproval, the Nagas slapped their backsides while leaving.<sup>105</sup> Nehru was furious and held Medhi responsible for that fiasco, who in turn sacked Barkati on the spot.<sup>106</sup> Thereafter the Indian government decided to give Medhi a free hand and warrants were issued to arrest eight NNC-leaders.<sup>107</sup> Thereupon nearly the whole leadership of the NNC went underground, for the time being, and the Assam Police (AP) shortly afterwards started to raid one village after the other.<sup>108</sup> The number of the randomly arrested, of the tortured and the

<sup>98</sup> Nibedon, *Nagaland: The Night of the Guerrillas*, pp. 54-56.

<sup>99</sup> Alemchimba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, p. 175.

<sup>100</sup> Panmei, 'Naga movement and its ramifications', p. 89.

<sup>101</sup> Rustomji, *Imperilled Frontiers*, p. 31.

<sup>102</sup> Alemchimba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, p. 180.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 204.

<sup>105</sup> Nibedon, *Nagaland: The Night of the Guerrillas*, p. 48.

<sup>106</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 205.

<sup>107</sup> Horam, *Naga Insurgency*, p. 51.

<sup>108</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 205.

sexually harassed and raped women went up.<sup>109</sup> More and more AP units were moved into the Naga hills,<sup>110</sup> and once in the country, they forced the population at gunpoint to carry their equipment, a practice legalised by the Assamese government in September 1953.<sup>111</sup>

All authors agree about the consequences of the police operations: for Alemchimba they were a confirmation of the NNC-propaganda.<sup>112</sup> Panmei,<sup>113</sup> Luithui and Haksar<sup>114</sup> and Horam<sup>115</sup> see in them the reason why so many went underground and why the Nagas now once and for all developed “...a burning resentment against India and Indians...”.<sup>116</sup>

One of the attempts to defuse the situation was the Naga goodwill mission to Assam (NGM). The Nagas hereby accepted an invitation of the then president of the Assam Pradesh congress committee (APCC), Bimala Prasad Chaliha. The NGM travelled from November 30<sup>th</sup> to December 15<sup>th</sup> 1953 through Assam’s bigger towns. Its 12 members came from the Naga women’s federation, the women’s association, the different local councils and from the NNC.<sup>117</sup> From its report we learn about the mood in Assam towards the Nagas, as well as about the situation in Nagaland from the perspective of its members. It said that although the APCC, under the leadership Chalihas, was positively inclined towards the Nagas, it nevertheless did not accept their demand for an independent state. The Praja Socialist party seemed not yet decided, but from the Bolshevik party of Assam the Nagas hoped to get support, despite ideological differences.<sup>118</sup> The Communist party of Assam was categorically against Naga sovereignty, and the Hindu Mahasabha Assam branch rejected the demand of the Nagas and called upon the Indian government to immediately start a programme for their Hinduisation.<sup>119</sup>

The Indian press portrayed the Nagas as puppets of a foreign conspiracy, described the land of the Nagas as an integral part of India, and called the endeavours for independence as being separatist and anti-Indian. The resultant problem was an internal matter for India, and the population in general believed the press in this. They were convinced that the Nagas had to be subjugated and tamed, in order to then adopt them into their civilised society. This made law and order measures necessary, due to the primitiveness of the Nagas. The Indian politicians portrayed the Nagas as backward head-hunters and even educated Indians believed the Nagas to be savages, devoid of reason, cannibals, and denied that they were human and the possibility of

<sup>109</sup> Luithui and Haksar, *Nagaland File*, p. 26.

<sup>110</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 205.

<sup>111</sup> Luithui and Haksar, *Nagaland File*, p. 25.

<sup>112</sup> Alemchimba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, p. 182.

<sup>113</sup> Panmei, ‘Naga movement and its ramifications’, p. 90.

<sup>114</sup> Luithui & Haksar, *Nagaland File*, p. 26.

<sup>115</sup> Horam, *Naga Insurgency*, p. 55.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>117</sup> ‘Report of the Naga Goodwill Mission to Assam (22th December 1953)’, In Luithui and Haksar, pp. 74-94, pp. 74-75.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

having a political consciousness. Therewith they implied, that the British and the missionaries were behind the Naga's demand.<sup>120</sup>

The members of the NGM were warned that there existed a strong tendency inside Assamese politics to declare a state of emergency in the NHD, in order to break the resistance of the Nagas before any news of that could come to be known by the outside world. This was intended to be achieved by the Indian government by terrorising the village populations and it was believed it could be successful without necessarily having to apprehend the leaders of the Nagas.<sup>121</sup> This was to happen after the visit of the Indian president, scheduled for the middle of February 1954. The Nagas had to expect mass-imprisonment and a bloodbath, exceeding by far everything which was experienced until then. The report mentioned two newspaper articles from December, 3<sup>rd</sup> 1953, in which Bishnuram Medhi ruled out every possibility of independence for the Nagas. Medhi saw only a handful of Christian Nagas behind the demand for independence who had been incited by missionaries and the British. He refused to talk to the NNC and called for an iron fist policy.<sup>122</sup> It was well-known in the political circles of Assam, according to the report, that Medhi just waited to get a free hand for sending the army into the NHD.<sup>123</sup>

The situation in the NHD, already from September 1953 onwards, had been characterised by the *Forced Labour Regulation* (issued in September 1953), the introduction of the *Standing Order* from October 1953, that both took the jurisdiction out of the hands of the local councils; in new emergency laws; in thefts and looting committed by ISF of the houses, gardens, fields and firewood of the Nagas; in the treatment of the Nagas by the ISF; in the disrespect towards Naga traditions and religions; in raids on villages and the terrorising of the population; in the tearing down of house roofs, and the peeling of the bark from the trees, in order to kill them; in the torture of detainees, and the encouragement by the authorities to do so; and finally, in the order to the ISF to rape Naga women when- and where-ever possible.<sup>124</sup>

By autumn 1953 the Naga population had rallied behind the NNC, and the civil administration had collapsed.<sup>125</sup> By 1954 the underground had spread into the Tuensang frontier division (TFD).<sup>126</sup> India had already sent troops into this previously unadministered area in 1948, in order to build up its administration. The Nagas who were living there saw that as an invasion.<sup>127</sup> So it is not surprising that the propaganda of the NNC fell on fertile ground there. Phizo tried to win over the tribes and their chiefs of the TFD – the Konyak, Chang, Phom und

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., pp. 78-80.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., pp. 91-92.

<sup>125</sup> Panmei, 'Naga movement and its ramifications', p. 90.

<sup>126</sup> Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict*, p. 50.

Yimchunger – for the NNC. On September 18<sup>th</sup> 1954 he proclaimed “The People’s Sovereign Republic of Free Nagaland”, with Hongking, as president. According to Nibedon, this government had the full support of the population of the TFD.<sup>128</sup>

In 1954 the Assam Rifles (AR) began to undertake comprehensive military operations in Tuensang. The paramilitaries used village rivalries<sup>129</sup> to portray themselves as ordering forces and the whole affair an atavistic tribal war. On 7<sup>th</sup> of July 1954 a contingent of AR surrounded the village of Chingmei and opened fire: 31 inhabitants survived with bullet wounds, the rest were killed, among them old people and children. On November 15<sup>th</sup> AR-units raided the village of Yingpang, killing 60 men, women and children. Twelve days later the village Chingmei was bombarded again and this time completely destroyed.<sup>130</sup> In March 1955 units of the AR were attacked in the TFD, as retribution for the destruction of villages in the Aghueto area. On 20<sup>th</sup> July 1955 a state of emergency was imposed in the TFD.<sup>131</sup>

At this time the whole leadership of the NNC had resurfaced and was no longer underground, and denied having anything to do with the unrest. On August 15<sup>th</sup> 1955 Phizo and other NNC-members met Medhi in Shillong. They called upon the government to stop the fighting and handed over a declaration in which the NNC once more confirmed their commitment to non-violence.<sup>132</sup> The ISF brought the situation in the TFD under control,<sup>133</sup> for the time being at least.

At the beginning of 1955 a state of emergency was also imposed on the Mokokchung sub-district.<sup>134</sup> According to Yonuo a NNC-delegation met again with Medhi in October 1955, to discuss the possibility of a peaceful solution, yet with no result since Medhi was determined to solve this by force.<sup>135</sup> If this is correct, then this meeting would have taken place after regular fighting had already started, and considerable acts of violence had already been meted out.<sup>136</sup>

January 1956 marks the beginning of widespread armed conflict, and on January 31<sup>st</sup> of the same year a state of emergency was imposed on the whole of the Naga hills.<sup>137</sup> Nibedon saw the reasons for the uprising in the conduct of the AP- and AR-units, who had been “...on a

<sup>127</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 211. As confirmed by the further above mentioned and partially quoted documents originating from there.

<sup>128</sup> Nibedon, *Nagaland: The Night of the Guerrillas*, p. 49. “Hongking” means “Get out” in Chang language, see Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement*, p. 50. Phizo had been to Tuensang already from late 1952 onwards, and enjoyed a strong standing among the tribes there, see Steyn, *Zapuhiza Voice of the Nagas*, pp. 86-87. Thus it is clear that if there was a president of this government, it was Phizo. See also *ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>129</sup> Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>130</sup> Luithui and Haksar, *Nagaland File*, pp. 26-27. See also Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement*, p. 51.

<sup>131</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 213.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* and Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement*, p. 52.

<sup>133</sup> Luithui and Haksar, *Nagaland File*, p. 27.

<sup>134</sup> Neville Maxwell, *India and the Nagas* (London, 1973), p. 11.

<sup>135</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 214.

<sup>136</sup> See the beginning of the following sub-chapter and Kaka D. Iralu, *Nagaland and India: The Blood and the Tears*, pp. 86-89.

rampage...”<sup>138</sup> and had spread terror.<sup>139</sup> In this way they drove élite and the mass of the Nagas alike,<sup>140</sup> into armed resistance.<sup>141</sup> The armed forces of the Nagas soon reached a strength of approximately 15,000 troops and overwhelmed the Assamese paramilitaries.<sup>142</sup>

On March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1956 the NNC set up the Naga federal government (NFG) in Phensiyu, in Rengma area, replacing the Hongking government. The NFG passed a constitution and declared Nagaland as a sovereign republic.<sup>143</sup> Nehru was outraged. In his eyes the Nagas were about to endanger the nation-building project that had just begun. He ordered the army to quell the uprising. The commander in chief of the army was said to have replied to Nehru that it was a political problem, in need of a political solution. Nehru retorted that this was why the army was there,<sup>144</sup> and on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1956 Nehru handed over the responsibility for NHD to the army.<sup>145</sup> The army moved into the Naga hills and occupied the most important centres.

### 6.5 War

The village diary of Mokokchung tells a tale of a systematic terror campaign against the villagers at the hands of the paramilitary Assam police battalion (APB), starting with destruction of houses and beatings on 26 April 1955; rapes on 14 May and destruction of 200 granaries and all of the fields also in the same month; further destruction of the harvest on September 9 and the rape of five women, including two aged 13 and 14, beatings of a couple in the police station, leading to the death of the man in the course of the week. On 29 April the following year again the APB, now reinforced by the 9<sup>th</sup> Gurkha rifles, set ablaze the whole village including the granaries, several villagers were arrested and severely beaten, two men, among them one 60 years old, taken away and shot. Their bodies were never handed over to their families. On 17 May 1956, a young man from the village was shot, as was one 13-year old girl on 14 July, and on 10 December, the APB attacked the village, killed two boys aged 14 and 13, and injured one aged 15. And then it became worse and more comprehensive.<sup>146</sup> A meticulous description of human rights violations that even today are endemic in India, and part of a wider culture of violence in South Asia for which Imtiaz Ahmed holds the violent anti-colonial resistance responsible.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>137</sup> Luithui and Haksar, *Nagaland File*, p. 27.

<sup>138</sup> Nibedon, *Nagaland: The Night of the Guerrillas*, p. 41.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>143</sup> Panmei, 'Naga movement and its ramifications', p. 91.

<sup>144</sup> Nirmal Nibedon, *North East India: The Ethnic Explosion* (New Delhi, 1981), p. 28.

<sup>145</sup> Luithui and Haksar, *Nagaland File*, p. 27.

<sup>146</sup> 'Village Diary - People of Mokokchung Village, Nagaland, dated 27 April 1964', In IWGIA Document 56, *The Naga nation and its struggle against genocide: A report compiled by IWGIA* (Copenhagen, 1986), pp. 136-140.

<sup>147</sup> Imtiaz Ahmed, 'The Cry of Sakeena: A post-nationalist critique of violence in South Asia', *Mainstream*, Vol. 37, No. 11, March 6, 1999, pp. 14-21, p. 15.



From an autobiographical account of a member of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Gurkha rifles we receive additional evidence that regular troops had also already been sent into the NHD as early as September 1955. The Gurkha and his colleagues were told it would only be for a few days, but in the end they stayed on for two years, and were involved in regular combat.<sup>148</sup> For *The Times* fighting started in February 1956 with devastating effect:

...Indian troops and the rebel Naga tribes are now engaged in a game of death. Terror has paralysed life there. Fields lie fallow. In the orchards, orange trees are drying up for want of care and the ground is littered with decayed fruit. Most of the region's 350,000 inhabitants, whose villages have been regrouped, degrouped, and regrouped again, are destitute, living on rations the Indian troops give them every third or fifth day.<sup>149</sup>

However, despite these harsh measures, and despite the continuous influx of troops, not much had changed by 1958, since:

...the Indian Army does not know who is a loyal Naga and who is a rebel; they look the same. By day they are loyal, and by night they join the rebels, supply them with food and clothes, and tend their wounded. Unable to identify the enemy, Indian soldiers have killed several innocent people on the slightest suspicion. Several villages have been destroyed, and their inhabitants sent to live in bigger villages watched by the Army. But still the enemy remains untractable.<sup>150</sup>

It has to be stressed that we do not know on what basis these newspaper reports were written, whether they were based on accounts of eye-witnesses to whom the journalist had access or from where else he had his information. Until then only Nagas and Indians had access to the war-zone. However, the more time progressed the more concerned the reports on the situation became. Further proof of the severity of the situation, and certainly contributing to its further deterioration, was the legislation of *The Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Bill, 1958*. This, however, was simply a geographic extension of the already granted special powers to the IA in the NHD in 1956. In 1957 it was extended to the combined area of NHD and NHTA. Special powers meant in essence the declaration of martial law, and the bill of 1958 was simply the post-facto legalisation of an already established practice. That one normally does not have martial law on a permanent basis was noted back then by P. N. Saprú, during the debate in the *Rajya Sabha*: "I can understand your having martial law and martial law is, after all, a temporary law. Martial

<sup>148</sup> C. L. Proudfoot, *Flash of the Khukri: History of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Gurkha Rifles, 1947 to 1980* (New Delhi, 1984), pp. 53-61.

<sup>149</sup> Special Correspondent, *The Times*, 28.10.1958.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

law you don't have for three years; you don't have for two years; you don't have for a year."<sup>151</sup> Further support is to be drawn from three case studies documented by IWGIA, telling tales of whole tribal populations going to live in the jungle from 1956 to 1959 in order to escape the IA, permanently on the run, malnourished and sick. By 1959 they returned, but still the work in the village and on the fields was done by women, children, and elder people while the men were fighting in the jungle till the ceasefire of 1964.<sup>152</sup>

Gavin Young of *The Observer* who in early 1961 travelled illegally through the Naga hills with the Naga resistance, captured some of the stories in which the Nagas told their reasons to fight. Young tells us the following about what was told him by a lieutenant P. Vikura from the Naga home guard:

His face was impassive as he told me his story. His father had been bayoneted to death by Assamese riflemen of the Indian Army in 1956, and his mother gaoled. Vikura, who was eighteen at the time, was at school in central Nagaland. He and two hundred other students ran off into the jungle when the Indians began to organise Naga students into labour squads. He has been with the Home Guard ever since.<sup>153</sup>

Young also met Isak Swu who back then was acting foreign secretary and the younger brother of the then leader of the federal government of Nagaland. Swu had studied politics and economics in Gauhati, and

...would have preferred to have continued his studies at a Baptist seminary in the United States. "But I could no longer tolerate seeing the Nagas treated like beasts by Indian officials and Army officers," he told me. "I tried my best to explain the position of my people in an attempt to minimise their maltreatment, but my efforts were in vain. After the burning of six villages, including my own, in the Sema area round Chishi, I found I had no reasonable alternative but to come away and work in the national movement."<sup>154</sup>

While GOI in its propaganda played on incidents of conflict between single Naga villages, thus trying to portray a scenario of civil war in which the Indian forces would enter as arbitrating and finally ordering forces, in reality its agents and agency tried everything to bring about a field of

<sup>151</sup> *Rajya Sabha Debates*, Vol. 22., No. 1, 25. August 1958, columns 963-976; 27. August 1958, columns 1253-1312 & 28. August 1958, columns 1313-1474; for Sapru's comment, see 27. August 1958, column 1287.

<sup>152</sup> 'Three case studies', In IWGIA Document 56, *The Naga nation and its struggle against genocide: A report compiled by IWGIA* (Copenhagen, 1986), pp. 73-82.

<sup>153</sup> Gavin Young, 'Commonwealth's Unknown War - 2: Jungle Baptists Fight It Out With India', *The Observer*, May 7, 1961.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. Swu today, together with T. Muivah, leads the contemporary main national resistance group, the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN), demonstrating, despite the long years of war and many breaks, an amazing continuity.

infighting factions and irreconcilable standpoints. Gavin Young in 1961 talked to a young Naga who in the late 1950s was forced to join the village guards that were supposedly created to protect the Naga population from the “hostiles”. In 1959 then, he and 58 others were commanded into a village suspected of collaboration with those demanding independence. In this operation he became witness to the lengthy torturing of five villagers. Furthermore, in an earlier operation conjointly with the Assam rifles he had to watch the repeated rape of a Naga girl and the battering of the male population ordered by an Indian officer. Thus, he later ran away to the Naga army, bringing with him six Indian rifles.<sup>155</sup>

By November 1960 access for the international press to the Naga hills was still denied, so when judging the situation there, Ursula Graham Bower, an anthropologist working among the Nagas during the *raj*, had to rely on Indian sources. Hence she was quoting the Indian journalist Easwar Sagar of *The Madras Hindu*, who had been able to tour the Naga hills for one week and whom Bower quotes with his description of getting to Kohima:

...The newcomer is instantly aware of the numerous eyes and ears which are sharply tuned to look for trouble: the vehicles in convoy with escorts out to front and rear, the soldiers in the road protection parties guarding the bad points on the route, the innumerable check-posts, the two sides of the road denuded of all trees and high grass which could provide cover for the sniper, the armoured cars which patrol the streets of Kohima...<sup>156</sup>

For Bower this was proof enough that the “hostiles” were active at the very nerve-centre of Indian power in the Naga hills, for which, however a small guerrilla force would suffice to keep the 30,000 Indian troops engaged. Furthermore, she tried to make sense of reports of outbreaks of violence in the very opposite and extreme corners of the Naga hills, the north-eastern among the Sangtams and in the south-western close to Tamenlong. For her this were as expressions of dissatisfaction. Finally, she took from the Indian press the information about the “grouping” of village populations into “concentration camps” in which the detained people had to live on half rations. Bower at this point of time has understanding for the GOI’s policy and applied measures.<sup>157</sup>

When finally a group of 12 foreign correspondents were allowed on a strictly guided tour of the international and national press into the Naga hills by the end of 1960, *The Times* correspondent understood from the omnipresent ISF, more than 30,000 of them, and their

<sup>155</sup> Gavin Young, ‘Commonwealth’s Unknown War – 3: Charges of Atrocities on Nehru’s Doorstep’, *The Observer*, May 14, 1961.

<sup>156</sup> Easwar Sagar in *The Hindu*, undated, cf Ursula Graham Bower, ‘Nagas Fight on in Closed Land’, *The Observer*, Nov. 13, 1960.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. That 30,000 Indian troops were fighting ca. 2,000 Naga army were the official Indian government numbers, Gavin Young, ‘An Unknown War – 1’, *The Observer*, April 30, 1961.

patrolling in double strength, that the Naga army was still able to operate. Moreover, the “overground” supporters were repeatedly able to approach the press corps with their statements, blaming the ISF of committing atrocities, denouncing the NPC of being Indian puppets, and reasserted their determination to complete independence.<sup>158</sup> In a follow-up article *The Times* correspondent narrated how everywhere on their tour, despite close supervision by officials, the people told them of their wish to be free, and his conclusion was that all of them wanted to be as independent as possible from any country, and that the difference between those in the NPC and those in the NFG was one of degree, the former did not believe in the possibility of sovereignty, and thus tried to get as much independence inside the Indian union, whereas the latter insisted on complete independence.<sup>159</sup>

*The Observer* correspondent, also party to this tour, and at this stage definitely anti-Naga, also testified how, despite all arrangements, the group was approached by pro-independence Nagas as for example Phizo’s niece Beilieu and Lungshim Shaiza, a relative of hers. The DC Naga hills Ramunny finally conceded meetings between the journalists and the pro-Phizo group on the condition that the former would also see the NPC.<sup>160</sup> Knox, after his visit, was convinced that 90 percent of the Nagas would opt for independence if asked.<sup>161</sup> He also seemed to see the necessity of some sort of inquiry into atrocities conducted by the ISF to appease the Nagas:

Because the Nagas have long memories it may also be necessary to satisfy them by some sort of governmental inquiry into the past activities of the Indian security forces. Indian official records show 60 to 70 complaints of brutality over the past five years. All were inquired into and 24 persons punished. I have had access to the laboriously compiled, handwritten records of a single Naga village – Indian military unit and officers, places and dates, are listed – that make more than 70 such complaints.<sup>162</sup>

His account also hints at the entire alibi-function of Indian investigations. Indian officials seemed also to have admitted that they aggravated the situation by considering and treating the Nagas as

<sup>158</sup> Special correspondent, Mokokchung, Nagaland, Dec. 17 (delayed), *The Times*, 19.12.1960.

<sup>159</sup> Special correspondent, Jorhat, Assam, Dec. 22, *The Times*, 23.12.1960. On the officials shielding off of the correspondents from the population and its surreal results the journalist gave us the following notable anecdote:

“The feeling that they were being denied free access to all opinions reached its strongest pitch perhaps – and certainly the tour its most bizarrely comic moment – when, after a tribal dance, an imposingly barbaric chieftain came forward to make a long and passionately chanted declamation, emphasizing his points by driving his spear into the ground: according to the translator all this was about his people’s satisfaction with the hospitals and dispensaries the Government had built, but according to the ubiquitous whisperers of the “overground” it was in fact a turbulent affirmation of the Nagas’ desire for independence. The annoyance of the officials seemed to reinforce this claim.”

<sup>160</sup> Rawle Knox, ‘Nagas Slip Messages to Reporters’, Kohima, Naga Hills, Dec. 17, *The Observer*, Dec. 18, 1960.

<sup>161</sup> Rawle Knox, ‘Nagaland To-day: Why Nehru Cannot “Free” Hill Tribesmen’, New Delhi, Jan. 7, *The Observer*, Jan. 8, 1961.

<sup>162</sup> Rawle Knox, ‘Nagaland To-day: Why Nehru Cannot “Free” Hill Tribesmen’, New Delhi, Jan. 7, *The Observer*, Jan. 8, 1961.

inferior,<sup>163</sup> and Young's description of part of his interview with the crew of the downed Indian Air Force plane in early 1961 is illuminating on what Indian army personnel might have had in mind when facing the Nagas. This holds true even when taking into consideration that it was conducted during Naga capture:

"I knew very little of the situation in Nagaland at that time." Singha told me. "In the I.A.F. we are not briefed on the Nagas – mainly, I suppose, because we are not expected to come into contact with them in the normal way."

"My impression was that the rebels were a handful of guerrillas or dacoits. I knew that some of them at least were Christians. But I found this difficult to reconcile with my belief (and that of the rest of my crew) that Nagas were head-hunters and even cannibals."

Naga officers (who are practising Baptists) shouted with laughter as Misra added, "When we climbed out of the aircraft we didn't know how we would be received. I believed we might be eaten."<sup>164</sup>

The Nagas on their part were aware of being looked on "...as colourful, semi-naked savages",<sup>165</sup> and this was so despite many of them being educated and having English as second language.<sup>166</sup> Gavin Young's description of the IA's inability to locate the captured Indian Air Force men demonstrates its being an occupational force in 1961:

For more than seven months, Indian Army units in Nagaland (believed to comprise three divisions or 30,000 men) have been searching for the men in vain. All their efforts, including the use of military aircraft, have been frustrated by the extreme difficulty of operating effectively in such savage terrain against a well organised, well armed and determined Naga military force which seems to have the support of most Nagas civilians. It is this difficulty, too, which has baulked Indian attempts to end by force the Nagas' war for independence for their remote, land-locked country; a bitter, costly struggle which assumed nation-wide proportions in 1955 and 1956 and which shows no sign of abating.<sup>167</sup>

Young himself witnessed the scorched earth policy of the IA resulting besides widespread destruction in food shortages. And Isak Swu, whom we earlier quoted on his rationale to join the resistance, told Young in 1961:

We want to be rid of these Indians once and for all, after all the crimes they have committed in our land. They say we are poor and backward and that they will bring us prosperity. We say, rather poverty

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Gavin Young, 'A meeting with Nagas' prisoners', *The Observer*, April 9, 1961.

<sup>165</sup> Gavin Young, 'An Unknown War – 1', *The Observer*, April 30, 1961.

<sup>166</sup> Gavin Young, 'Commonwealth's Unknown War – 3: Charges of Atrocities on Nehru's Doorstep', *The Observer*, May 14, 1961.

<sup>167</sup> Gavin Young, 'A meeting with Nagas' prisoners', *The Observer*, April 9, 1961.

and rags and freedom to choose our friends and allies than all the schools and hospitals in the world with Indian overlords.<sup>168</sup>

Young was shown evidence that the Nagas had built up an effective parallel administration, that rested on voluntary support of the population, contrary to Indian government statements that the “hostiles” terrorised the population. We know by now from comparative cases, and the Nagas back then already told Young so, that the guerrilla war could only be sustained for so long due to the voluntary support of the people. A not inconsiderable amount of funding was used to ensure the collaboration of parts of the Indian officialdom:

A significant item in the Budget covers payments to Indian Civil Servants and soldiers, including officers. When I asked Naga officials if Indians did indeed accept bribes, they laughed as if the question were hardly worth answering. “Some Indians who realise the true state of affairs sympathise with us. In some cases officers secretly tip us off before an attack and they have helped us in other ways. But they wouldn’t dare express their views openly.”<sup>169</sup>

Young starts the concluding part of his trilogy stating that Indian casualties in this war were “...three times higher than combined British losses in Cyprus and Mau Mau operations...” and by describing the ease with which Naga units were traversing the country even in 1961, unafraid of any Indian attack, well-armed with weapons and ammunition captured from the ISF, but contemplating getting heavier arms from the Chinese, if no-one else would supply them.<sup>170</sup> That the Naga fighting units could move in such a casual way is itself proof of the occupational quality of the IA, otherwise they would have been informed of the presence of this very visible foreigner and his whereabouts. Young, when travelling with the Naga soldiers through the Naga hills, came across villagers living in sheds in the jungle to either escape or being put into one of the Indian-built concentration camps and being coerced into labour squads for the Indians. The children especially, so Young witnessed, showed signs of malnutrition.<sup>171</sup> This information is important, because it has often been written that “regroupment” and populations living in the forest had only been a feature of the very early years, i.e. 1956-7, and that thereafter the situation had improved considerably. Added to these statements were often claims on the break-down of the resistance, or loss of support for it from among the population. Young’s testimony from his peregrinations alone show, on the contrary, the Naga units moving like “fish in the water”, due to

<sup>168</sup> Gavin Young, ‘Commonwealth’s Unknown War – 2: Jungle Baptists Fight It Out With India’, *The Observer*, May 7, 1961.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Gavin Young, ‘Commonwealth’s Unknown War – 3: Charges of Atrocities on Nehru’s Doorstep’, *The Observer*, May 14, 1961.

precisely having the support of the population. The IA, quite the reverse; and owing to it being an occupational one, was left with no choice, and continued to target the population, driving it from their villages and fields into the woods. On the other hand, the refugees Young had a chance to meet, were happy not afraid, when coming across the Naga army that helped them with food and medicine. In the same vein, were the Naga troops welcomed by the large villages and the risk of hosting them willingly accepted. Young was given binoculars and shown by his village hosts Indian military posts, that had been established in regular intervals on the prominent ridges, visible from the village perimeters. Adding to that the Indian air force frequently patrolled the area. But again all this confirmed that the ISF were an alien body in a foreign territory with no connections to the civil population whatsoever, deepening the rift by perpetuating rampant human rights abuses:

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

Refugee women described how Indian troops had arrived in their village on September 6 last year [1960], searching for the Home Guard and the four captive Indian airmen. "We were all rounded up and the men separated from the women. Our men were forced to run the gauntlet of Indian troops armed with stout sticks. Then they lay helpless on the ground. Three men died then – one of them a travelling pastor."

"Later we women were told to run into the jungle and scatter. Afterwards we heard from survivors that most of the men had been shot 'trying to escape.' We were about 120 men and women before the Indian patrol arrived. There are thirty survivors, only three of them men. All our crops were burnt. How can we dare go back?"

These women and their children are being cared for now by the Home Guard. Other villagers complain that they are forced to work for the Indian Army as menials without pay, facing a beating if they refuse. Nagas ask: "Are we animals to be treated like this? Isn't there some international law to protect us from this treatment?" They say that whole villages have been moved to other areas of Nagaland and regrouped in "concentration camps."<sup>172</sup>

Out of what Isak Swu had to say to Young it is clear that for him the reality of the Naga hills was difficult to reconcile with Nehru's rhetoric and international standing, and although he strongly believed that Nehru, as prime minister, had to be aware of what was going on, he nevertheless

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<sup>171</sup> Gavin Young, 'Commonwealth's Unknown War – 3: Charges of Atrocities on Nehru's Doorstep', *The Observer*, May 14, 1961.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

was not quite sure.<sup>173</sup> Young's series of articles precipitated a number of venomous letters to *The Observer* editor by readers of Indian origin that, among other things, blamed Young's report "...to be unduly elaborate and often obscene."<sup>174</sup> However, Young in his retort to these letters, clarified once more the Nagas' point of view as it had been relayed to him. He had been told by the Nagas that they had not started to fight for 8-9 years, and only did so when they were sure to be looked upon as only "a batch of bandits." Furthermore, they did not fight to achieve independence in the sense of achieving separatism, but independence understood by them as their traditional one, that they never had surrendered. Finally, according to Young's impression, though the Naga leaders were demanding complete independence, they were prepared to accept something short of it.<sup>175</sup> After the Indian government's version had also been published, which, of course, did not contain much new information but pretty much simply denied all Young had written,<sup>176</sup> Ursula Graham Bower set out again to sift the evidence. While she was proceeding in a very careful way, she, from her own experience, and in the face of the Indian predilection to blame missionaries and British imperialists for the Nagas' recalcitrance, decidedly concurred with Young in his portrayal of Nagas' perception of their right to freedom:

...one must again emphasise that the Nagas' deep-rooted desire for freedom, and their sense of 'apartness' from the plains people, is common alike to Christian and pagan. It reaches far back into history and long antedates both the missionaries and the British.<sup>177</sup>

This is in line with the argument I had brought forward in Chapter Two that the hill people's perception of themselves, regardless of European imperialists' presence or absence, was a conscious distancing from the plains people, defined by their own free and self-determined way of life in contradistinction to the plains' feudalism. Coming back to Bower's effort to understand the state of affairs in the Naga hills from a distance via the available evidence, she draws a conclusion I would like to support:

And now to consider the picture. In the first place, the official Indian view is that the backbone of the resistance has been broken and the guerrillas reduced to a minority, but the N.N.C.'s armed forces are well-organised, well-disciplined and well-equipped and, though nothing is definitely known of their numbers, 1,500 to 2,000 seems possible – the N.N.C. claim many more. There is no sign of outside assistance, either in arms or money; morale is high; relations with local villagers seem good; both the guerrillas and their civilian supporters appear to move freely in spite of the presence of Indian troops,

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> 'Letters to the Editor: The War In Nagaland', *The Observer*, May 28, 1961.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> T. N. Kaul, 'A Reply to Gavin Young: The Nagas of India', *The Observer*, June 25, 1961.

<sup>177</sup> Ursula Graham Bower, 'Sifting the Evidence on Naga Problem', *The Observer*, July 2, 1961.



and underground and overground civilian ‘hostiles’ are active even in and about Kohima, as witness events during the recent Press visit. All this argues fairly widespread popular sympathy, and the minority, if such it is, is far from negligible.<sup>178</sup>

Her careful wording notwithstanding, she is likening the NNC to an iceberg and the NPC “...to a shallow-draught boat, with all its bulk above the surface and possibly not much grip on the water...”<sup>179</sup>

By May 1961 it had been confirmed by the Burmese Foreign Minister U. E. Maung that Indian troops had operated in and from Burma, and that there had been a stop to this. The IA in the first half of this year seemed to have been carrying out constant assaults in the Tuensang area, operating also from the Burmese side, in an effort to find the Indian Air Force captives before the onset of the summer monsoon.<sup>180</sup> Phizo, later that year, informed the press about a substantial increase in Indian troops in Nagaland and an increased offensive backed up by Air Force: “The people in the Pochir area are being hunted day and night. Men, women and children are shot like animals. In one small village they beheaded 20 people.”<sup>181</sup> The situation had not changed much in April the following year. 40,000 Indian troops, and that was the official number, were unable to win the war. Moreover, Naga leaders had obviously agreed to respect India’s perceived strategic concerns and had offered free military passage in exchange for non-interference into the internal affairs of Nagaland. Guy Wint here saw parallels to British-Irish history, and that Britain back then, like India, missed the opportunity, and later was left with nothing.<sup>182</sup> This is to say, that even after seven years of fighting,<sup>183</sup> the door was not yet closed to a face-saving solution for both sides<sup>184</sup> that could not only have ended the war, but also would have avoided the consequences of its long-term continuation.<sup>185</sup> However, despite the heavy

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> AP, Rangoon, May 6, *The Observer*, May 7, 1961.

<sup>181</sup> Staff Reporter, *The Observer*, September 3, 1961. Phizo claimed a doubling of force from 40,000 to 80,000. The area of Pochir is located ca. 50 miles eastwards of Kohima in the direction of Burma.

<sup>182</sup> Guy Wint, ‘India’s “Irish” Problem’, *The Observer*, April 15, 1962. A comment later that year likened the fate of the Nagas to that of the Irish and Red Indians in the past, and the Kurds and Angola in the present, called it a scandal, and stated that whether the Nagas could be accommodated inside existing state boundaries depended on state policies, ‘Comment’, *The Observer*, September 16, 1962. David Astor, one of the owners of *The Observer*, was in the vanguard of decolonisation, according to one of his main centre-page authors who did not agree with that standpoint, see Sebastian Haffner, *Als Engländer maskiert: E in Gespräch mit Jutta Krug über das Exil* (Stuttgart & München, 2002), p. 64. My own impression, however, when flipping through the year’s issues, was that, at least in relation to the Nagas, there was no over-reporting at all.

<sup>183</sup> Wint quotes the Nagas on claiming 70,000 casualties to that point, adds however that he thinks this number is excessive, Guy Wint, ‘India’s “Irish” Problem’, *The Observer*, April 15, 1962.

<sup>184</sup> In granting, for example, as much autonomy to the Nagas as had been to Bhutan. Editorial, ‘The need of Asian unity’, *The Observer*, November 4, 1962.

<sup>185</sup> Among these we may list the direct and indirect casualties, devastation of infrastructure (villages, fields etc.) and environment, prevention of economic and cultural development, destruction of social fabric, creation of culture of violence, a gun culture with many opposed and irreconcilable actors, groups of war-winners, rampant drugs-abuses and epidemic spread of HIV etc., in short the denial of a decent, dignified life to whole generations of people.

military presence in and around the Naga hills, 153 Nagas managed to reach East Pakistan nearly unhindered, a distance of about 500 miles with the main objective of countering India's propaganda maintaining that the majority of the Nagas wished to stay inside the Indian union, further, to give testimony about army excesses.<sup>186</sup> George Patterson, for *The Observer*, flew out to Pakistan to meet this party of Nagas. He was informed by the military commander of the Naga forces, general Kaito, that the ISF kept 214 bases all over the Naga hills, and he gave the following description of the Naga army, that modelled itself on its opponent's predecessor and on the model of the opponent itself, and puts in front of us the picture of a regular army:

Kaito estimated the Naga "Home Guard" at 40,000 trained soldiers, in four divisions, each with its regional commander. They had barracks and training grounds. Their military organisation and ranks, he said, were patterned on the British and Indian Armies, in which many of the Nagas had served. Their uniforms were Indian Army olive green, with Gurkha-type slouch hats and steel helmets. They had light arms and ammunition, but these had been of little use recently against the helicopter spotting and communication system of the reinforced Indian Army and jet bombing attacks.<sup>187</sup>

The Nagas relayed a series of instances of combat and successive Indian reprisals to Patterson, of which he gave the ensuing:

At Satazou village, 37 miles from Kohima, a battle took place between Naga Home Guards and a Sikh Regiment in which the Indians lost over 150 dead, including the brigade commander and medical captain. In return the Indians burned down 14 villages [names given] and destroyed all rice stores and domestic animals. In one village, Iphonumi, the Chief, Kivimhu, could not escape because his wife, Ghuvuli, was about to give birth. The Indian Army took Kivimhu away, beat and tortured him.

At the same time other Indian troops tortured Ghuvuli, accusing her of giving help to the rebels, and, finally, thrust bayonets into her abdomen and forced out the unborn child. Later Kivimhu was taken to the spot, shown his dead wife and child, and asked if he was pleased with the result of his actions. He asked permission to bury his wife and child, but was refused and was subjected to more torture. No one was allowed to bury the dead bodies, and they were gradually eaten away by dogs and pigs. When the Indian troops went away the villagers buried the bones.<sup>188</sup>

To call this unduly elaborate and often obscene would be to blame the messenger for the message. The number of casualties among the Nagas was put above 100,000, and four times the number, so Patterson quoted his informant:

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<sup>186</sup> Special Correspondent, *The Observer*, May 20, 1962.

<sup>187</sup> George Patterson, 'Naga general: I have Indian 'atrocities' proof', *The Observer*, June 3, 1962.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

...Naga men, women and children are being held in 180 concentration camps and prisons in appalling conditions. Our men are made to stand in unnatural, stunted positions night and day, unable to lie down or stand up. The Indians want them to confess information which often they do not have...(...) No food is given them and if their relatives try to bring them food it is taken away by the Army and the relatives are beaten and tortured as collaborators. Women give birth to children unattended. No sanitation is provided. Cold water is thrown on camp inmates during the night to keep them from sleeping, and break their resistance. When mothers have asked for water for their crying children, this has been refused.<sup>189</sup>

This was followed by a plethora of rape allegations most inconspicuously committed in churches, or forced copulation at bayonet point of Naga men and women, all obviously designed to humiliate the Nagas where it hurt them most. Hence, included into the destruction of the villages and rice storage houses were more than 400 churches.<sup>190</sup> These reports render it comprehensible that the Indian genocidal campaign strengthened the case for Christianity in the eyes of the Nagas, and served as its ultimate catalyst among them, as is corroborated by the data. Patterson's report further bears testimony to a rather naive belief among the Nagas in the UN and its willingness to act on their behalf.

As was said at the beginning, the exact sequence of events is difficult to establish without further in-depth research. Yet, considering our above quoted contemporary evidence, it nevertheless suffices to demonstrate that the Indian state engaged from the very beginning onwards in a genocidal campaign aimed at subjugating the peripheral Nagas. Horam states that there are no neutral reports about this time and the following years, that there had been accusations and exaggerations on both sides, on the one hand about the number of killed, and on the other about the rebels who surrendered.<sup>191</sup> This, of course, has to be like that, as in any war, and needs careful sifting of the evidence, but nevertheless, would not be impossible. In many books on Naga modern history, written by Nagas and Indians, not only in official replies, do we find very general statements about the careful behaviour of the ISF, accompanied by reports on the excesses committed by it, which the Nagas would never forget nor forgive. This contradiction seems to indicate that even critical minds did not want to present themselves as unpatriotic prosecutors of the Indian *jarum*. Yet, what we get to know is enough to point towards a war of an occupying force against an occupied people. In the following we will see that the literature agrees with this judgement, even so, as a rule, it hastened to employ an appeasing tone and spread the blame equally on Nagas and Indians. Whether this was due to the acknowledgement of the continued power imbalance and the wish for further accommodation, or is ascribable to the

<sup>189</sup> George Patterson, 'Nagas: Indians killed one in ten', Karachi, June 9, *The Observer*, June 10, 1962.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Horam, *Naga Insurgency*, p. 69.

success of Indian propaganda, we are unable to say. This notwithstanding, even according to the then chief of the Intelligence Bureau and Nehru's confidant Mullik, it was the people of the Nagas fighting the ISF, making the massive presence of troops mandatory.<sup>192</sup> The army had orders to break the resistance of the Nagas, unofficially also that of the civil population:

...there can be no denying fact (...) the military applied themselves with full-blooded vigour to the business of 'softening up' the recalcitrant Naga. (...) There was soon retaliation from Phizo's private army and it was not long before it was a matter of doubt as to who was softening up whom...<sup>193</sup>

The ISF were not able to bring the situation under control. The only ones they could apprehend and hold responsible were old people, women and children – every Naga was a “hostile”, as the Nagas then were called.<sup>194</sup> For ambushes the ISF took revenge on the civilians.<sup>195</sup>

Scott, member of the peace mission in the 1960s, was the only non-Indian and non-Naga, who could move officially and unhindered through Nagaland in the middle of the 1960s. He drove more than 3,000 miles through the Naga hills, visited many villages and talked to a lot of people.<sup>196</sup> Hundreds showed him their scars, injuries and crippling, told him, that the ISF attacked villages, suspended their inhabitants from the ankles and then beat them up.<sup>197</sup> Scott writes that he personally couldn't possibly verify all the accusations, but that he saw everywhere widespread destruction and heard everywhere personal accounts.<sup>198</sup> According to them dozens of villages were raised to the ground, their populations driven into the jungle, their elders beaten up and tortured, churches desecrated by obscene actions and/or burnt down. Many Nagas were resettled, herded into overcrowded and unhygienic camps, where famines ensued, during which many of the children died.<sup>199</sup>

Maxwell, the *The Times* correspondent, was part of the mixed group of Indian and western journalists who was being allowed on an organised tour into Nagaland. In a follow-up publication he wrote that he was secretly handed over a detailed list of cruelties committed by the ISF in a village. Later, one further such list reached him:

<sup>192</sup> Luithui and Haksar, *Nagaland File*, p. 29.

<sup>193</sup> Rustomji, *Imperilled Frontiers*, p. 31.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>195</sup> Nirmal Nibedon, *North East India: The Ethnic Explosion* (New Delhi, 1981), p. 29.

<sup>196</sup> Michael Scott, *The Search for Peace* (London, 1968), p. 14.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

...detailing the names of the victims, the nature of the ill-treatment (beating, rape and other sexual acts, torture by water or electricity, desecration of churches, and killings by bullet or beheading), dates, and very often the names of the units – even the individual soldiers.<sup>200</sup>

The meticulous listing of the excesses and what was known about comparable wars – in Malaysia, Algeria, Vietnam – was contributing for Maxwell to the credibility of the accusations. However, a final proof could only be brought about by an independent commission,<sup>201</sup> and this the Indian government refuses to allow until today. Maxwell also reports on the Indian parliamentarian Lohia, who succeeded in 1956, despite the prohibition, to reach the Naga hills. He was arrested and deported. After his return he reported to the Indian parliament, that the ISF would indulge in an “...orgy of murder...”, of mass rapes, torture and massacres of the village population.<sup>202</sup>

Stracey, an Anglo-Indian, responsible in the 1950s and 1960s for the Nagaland forest administration, wrote about the situation there: “...the usual series of arrests, beatings and worse (...) along with burning of villages, destruction of granaries and orchards and lifting of livestock...”,<sup>203</sup> and about curfews and *shoot on sight* orders.<sup>204</sup> Even though Stracey saw these measures as necessary,<sup>205</sup> he doubted that they would be successful:

Destroy Nagaland, yes – by regrouping the villages so as to isolate them from contact with the hostiles, by filling the jails with suspects, by literally creating a scorched earth peace – but end the movement... .<sup>206</sup>

His doubts about the success of all these measures were not nourished by the to be expected antagonisation of the population, but by the inaccessible and uncontrollable nature of the border with Burma.<sup>207</sup>

Rustomji confirms the resettlement of whole villages, the locking up and cramming in of whole parts of the population behind barbed wire, the scarcity of water, the absence of sanitation, medical facilities, schools or even real dwellings. This was done, according to Rustomji, to teach the Nagas a lesson, and the responsible authorities, with minor exceptions, did not see it inadequate to lock away these “primitives” or to transport them from one place to another like animals.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Maxwell, *India and the Nagas*, p. 11.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>203</sup> P. D. Stracey, *Nagaland Nightmare* (Bombay, 1968), p. 83.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Rustomji, *Imperilled Frontiers*, pp. 49-50.

Ten years after that, the Mizos began their independence struggle, and were to face the same “law and order-measures” of the Indian government:

...the regrouping of their villages into virtual concentration camps by security troops under order of officials in the Home Ministry in Delhi (...). Tens of thousands of persons were uprooted and moved, within a radius of about twenty to fifty kilometres, to a settlement. The old buildings and homes were either torched, demolished or left to rot. The destruction of this symbiotic relationship between the land and its people (...) destroyed the structure of society among the Mizos. (...) Stories of atrocities: rape, extortion, destruction of property, damage to churches and illegal detentions abounded.<sup>209</sup>

Jamir, the long-time chief minister of the Nagaland state, and back in 1960s parliamentary secretary to Nehru, i.e. certainly not Delhi’s opponent, wrote about the then predicament of the Nagas:

The ten years from 1954 to 1964 were marked by untold bloodshed and violence. (...) Police action, mass arrests, the burning of villages and granaries, the grouping of villages, the isolation of all Underground families in heavily guarded camps (...). The expedience of declaring curfews in many villages during harvest season to pressurise the villagers into bringing about the surrender of the Underground from the respective villages (...). These harsh punitive measures not only failed, but they merely increased the antagonism between the Naga people and the authorities (...). Most of the villages and granaries were burnt down and the people preferred to run away and hide in the jungles for safety rather than live under a constant threat to their life and limb and to the meagre remains of their property.<sup>210</sup>

Hence, India led a “...full-scale war ...”,<sup>211</sup> “...short of an extermination campaign ...”.<sup>212</sup> The result was the complete and utter antagonisation of the population,<sup>213</sup> hate of the ISF<sup>214</sup> and forced more and more people into armed resistance:

...it is ironic but true that the very same Army which was in the Naga Hills to prevent insurgency drove so many Nagas to insurgency and rebellion. Before the Army stepped in, official callousness had done enough damage but the bunglings in the corridors of power were trivial compared to the pig-headedness of the Indian soldiers who became the most effective agents for recruitment of talent to the Underground ranks. Naga Nationalism, hitherto an embryonic concept, now became the obsession of almost every Naga. No longer was it possible to point out this or that village or tribe as agitators for the

<sup>209</sup> Hazarika, *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War & Peace from India's Northeast*, pp. 113-114.

<sup>210</sup> S. C. Jamir, ‘Nagaland and the Special Constitutional Provision’ In Luithui and Haksar (eds.), *Nagaland File*, pp. 61-72, p. 63.

<sup>211</sup> Horam, *Naga Insurgency: The last thirty years*, p. 206.

<sup>212</sup> Nibedon, *North East India: The Ethnic Explosion*, p. 46.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Horam, *Naga Insurgency*, p. 88.

entire Naga Hills from the Konyaks to the Zeliangs became the locus of agitation which had for its goal – Naga Independence. The Naga search for a distinct political and social identity had formally began.<sup>215</sup>

Indian officers and politicians proclaimed for years that violence would be the easiest and fastest solution but again and again they were wrong. Different Governors over 30 years stated as to have solved the Naga problem. Yet this was always only:

...the exhaustion following army repression (...). The violence of military operations on the other hand sows yet further seeds of discontent and bitterness, and no sooner have the victims of such violence recuperated than they take to arms again with redoubled vigour and the whole brutal process of repression and violence is started anew.<sup>216</sup>

In this way the war started in the middle of the 1950s, and continued till 1997, when it finally transformed into a low-level civil war that permanently threatens to relapse into a full-scale guerrilla war.

## ***6.6 Conclusion***

The Transfer of Power in India saw also the transfer of power in the NHD to the Indo-Assamese administration. One consequence of this was the influx of numerous tradesmen from the plains. Another, the coming into effect of new laws, which brandished traditional usufructs as illegal. The theory of the sixth schedule was telling about the protection of minorities. The reality of the conduct of the new masters spoke of chauvinism and indifference, of subjugation and colonisation, instead of equal rights, of assimilation into the lowest layer of Indian society, not of respect. We have seen that this is a common aspect of the nation-building of post-colonial states, making the “post-“ invalid for the periphery.

The new administration penetrated now into even the most remote villages. Every Naga was from then on confronted with his categorisation as an inferior primitive, as someone who had no rights in what he had hitherto considered as his own country. Suddenly, the collective identity had for everyone noticeable consequences, the negative categorisation in concert with the exerted pressure to assimilate, served as catalysts for this very identity. Nehru’s integration was perceived by the Nagas as invasion, and as insincere, as treasonable. Violent transgressions on the side of ISF, obviously in accord with official policy, further eroded any willingness to submit to Indian rule. By 1950 this had all led inside the NNC to a change of mind. An interim solution

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>216</sup> Rustomji, *Imperilled Frontiers*, p. 48.

was now no longer considered as acceptable, the demand now was for immediate independence. The means to work towards this end, however, remained for the time-being non-violent.

In order to refute the accusation that only a tiny western influenced minority was behind the demand for independence, the NNC decided to conduct a plebiscite. The population could be mobilised for that through the already established party structures and voted against the new administration. It is questionable that the mass of the Nagas had already then thought at that point in time in terms of “nation” and “self-determination”. More likely, they voted against what they perceived as an invasion by the Indians. Confronted with the plebiscite, Nehru categorically ruled out the possibility for self-determination. The answer of the NNC was to employ *satyagraha*, the strategy of non-violent non-cooperation the INC itself had used against the British. GOI, however, busy with the fallout of partition and with Kashmir, delegated the Naga question to the Assamese state government. This government saw the Nagas as a horde of savages who would only understand the language of violence, and consequently started a campaign of terror to show the Nagas their place. Jenkins has demonstrated that a state which during the incorporation of a region continuously falls back on violence will fail to establish its monopolisation of violence.<sup>217</sup>

The reasons for the protracted guerrilla war were rooted in the Indian state’s massive use of violence, annulling Gellner’s “weakness of nationalism”,<sup>218</sup> the upholding of it in the face of overwhelming force, ample proof, according to Walker Connor, of the collective will and consciousness of a people, finally forced together by the Other’s scorn and use of force.<sup>219</sup> Without this long-drawn-out war and intimate threat, the local Naga groups, though acknowledging relatedness, would certainly have chosen to remain politically independent also from each other. Their unification may be likened to the process Linda Colley has described for their former imperial rulers, for whom permanent warfare with the outside was the main unifying factor.<sup>220</sup> But other than with Britain, the successive unification of the Naga people seems to have been a more egalitarian process. Similar as to Britain, religion was to be the nation-builder, but as a function not as a factor. In other words, the war forced upon the Nagas by Nehru served as a catalyst for the Naga nation, and of developing it into a Christian one.

So we may say that Singh’s re-evaluation of India as an “ethnic democracy” would have to be predated. Not only were the structures prepared for it under Nehru, but India, from the very start onwards, used force to coerce the periphery. This force can safely be termed state terror and genocide, since it aims at the physical elimination of a people and/or them being different.

<sup>217</sup> Jenkins, *Rethinking ethnicity: arguments and explorations*, p. 137.

<sup>218</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 43-50.

<sup>219</sup> Connor, ‘Homelands in a World of States’, p. 61.

<sup>220</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992).



## *Conclusion and Epilogue*

The aim of this work has been to demonstrate the continuation of two interrelated processes; that the continuing political divide between hill and plains people dates back to the pre-colonial period, and that this divide is rooted in the efforts of subjugate the hill people which has often promoted attempts to conquer them by force. That the hill people's resistance has resembled a movement for political independence is as such no mere accident of history. In other words, if instead of conquest by force mutual relations based on the principles of equality and voluntarism would have been offered, especially during the first two decades after India's independence, at a time when the ideology of imperialism had already been thoroughly discredited, then there was possibility that the region would not be torn by the kind of civil and nationalities wars that afflict it today. Such a post-colonial constitutional framework is more likely to have accommodated the demands of most of the nationalities in India's troubled Northeast region.<sup>1</sup>

The method chosen to demonstrate this argument in our case-study of the Nagas was to render the respective historical agency meaningful by embedding it into a larger framework. Since the British and Indians were more powerful agents, the chapters about them precede those dealing with the Nagas: Chapters One and Three focused on the invasions by the British and Chapter Five the Indians'. The reaction of the Nagas to these incursions is dealt with in Chapters Two, Four and Six. The initiative for conquest always lay with the British and the Indians. Both had to adapt their strategies of invasion and occupation to the circumstances created by the Nagas.

While British imperial ideology drew its legitimacy from the proclaimed difference of the Other and from the right of conquest, the Other, once conquered, was not only allowed, but had to remain *different*. In the case of the economically unpromising Naga hills this meant that within certain limits the Nagas were allowed to handle their own affairs and encouraged to keep their identity. This helped the Nagas to come to terms with their subjugation and defeat. The independent Indian union, on the other hand, was based on the negation of imperialism by the right to self-determination and was theoretically a voluntary union of people. Imperialism thus

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<sup>1</sup> For the argument that centralisation leads to discrimination and this in turn to demands for secession and that the formal right to secede is the most effective check against centralisation and thus against secession, see Detmar Doering and Jürgen G. Backhaus, 'Introduction: Secession as a Right', In idem (eds.), *The Political Economy of Secession: A Source Book* (Neue Zürcher Zeitung Publishing, 2004), pp. 7-17.

ends where consent starts. Since the Nagas refused to give their consent the government of India had to use force, which in turn, only strengthened the Nagas' resolve to regain independence.<sup>2</sup>

The pre-modern multi-centred world knew regional empires, states etc., but due to a lack of means of communication and control, in addition to shortage in manpower and surplus of land, the centres did not seriously try to subjugate inaccessible frontier areas that constituted a refuge for populations outside larger polities. When European states began to erect world-wide empires, many of these former regional empires and states turned into peripheral colonies from the perspective of the European metropolises. The frontier areas of these peripheries now were in many cases pacified, but not really integrated into the administration of the colonies, and when these colonies themselves returned from periphery to centre by regaining their independence, they in turn endeavoured to incorporate the former frontiers that represent the peripheries of today. In this way the former colonised periphery has transformed into a metropolis and now exerts imperial policy on the former frontier, its contemporary periphery. However, if empire was justified in the past, today most states aim to rule by the principles of self-determination and, at least in theory, the rule of law. The case of the Nagas demonstrates that imperialism and colonialism are very much a feature of nation-building in India.<sup>3</sup>

To recapitulate: the British "military-fiscal state", itself a product of permanent warfare on a global scale with its rival France, acquired actual control over the East India Company's holdings in South Asia by the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The British possessions in India developed into state-like structures that were equally militarised, its personnel poised for conquest and thus were adequately described as "garrison state". When Burmese actions delivered the pretext for war the British invaded Assam, expelled the Burmese from there and thus came into contact for the first time with the hill people known to the plains people as "Nagas". Initially the British saw the Nagas as potential allies and described them neutrally, but when British interest directed itself at the hills, their inhabitants were suddenly portrayed as "bloodthirsty savages" who had to be subdued for the sake of Assam and also their own.

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<sup>2</sup> See Paula Banerjee's findings on the women's resolve to become independent in her 'Between Two Armed Patriarchies: Women in Assam and Nagaland', In Rita Manchanda (ed.), *Women, War and Peace in South Asia: Beyond Victimhood and Agency* (New Delhi, Thousand Oaks & London: Sage Publications, 2001), pp. 131-176.

<sup>3</sup> See O'Leary who, by engaging with Gellner's theory of nationalism, makes the observation that after the First World War and despite the Wilsonian doctrine the victorious powers redrew the boundaries not on the basis of self-determination but along geopolitical lines, and during the Cold War borders were preserved with the complete disrespect of the principle of self-determination, so he concludes that "...power politics, and power resources, provide an alternative (or at least a supplementary and over-determining) selection mechanism to that implicit in Gellner's theory." Brendan O'Leary, 'Ernest Gellner's diagnosis of nationalism: a critical overview, or, what is living and what is dead in Ernest Gellner's philosophy of nationalism?', In John A. Hall (ed.), *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 40-88, p. 61.

<sup>4</sup> More than half century before acquiring nominal control.

However, when several different strategies did not effect the subjugation of the Nagas, this objective was abandoned for more than a decade.

These people of the hills were conscious of themselves as politically different and as comparatively free in contrast with the people living in the quasi-feudal states of the plains. They also knew that they were militarily weaker and that it was only the difficulty of their terrain that protected them. Socially, they were organised in a multitude of polities, which were partially based on a mix of (strategic) kinship and territory, had a high military participation, a strong ethos on individual freedom and collective responsibilities, and cross-cutting ties between the different groups whose actual extent and quality still evades rigorous analytical understanding. Hence when the British invaded their hills the Nagas could rally, and also enforce, strong support. They employed a mix of staunch resistance and conciliation, always with the understanding that the foreign conquerors would never stay.

From the middle of the 1860s onwards the British again started to encroach on and partially conquer the Naga hills; a process that dragged on into the twentieth century and was never completed. The motivations for this renewed move forward – a move that not only affected the Naga hills – were manifold and can be ascribed roughly to three reasons: the wish to distract from politics at home, the imperial ideology of late Victorian Britain, and the beginning of a new round of great powers rivalry.<sup>5</sup> None of these reasons actually demanded the conquest of the Naga hills that were of only marginal interest to the British. This explains the reluctant and partial nature of the conquest and defined the set-up of the administration as consequently very light. Moreover, in order to avoid problems experienced in other hill regions, the Naga hills were excluded from the administration of the plains and protected from unhindered immigration. When the British were eventually forced to leave India they did not - despite being conscious of the fact that hill and plains cultures were antithetical<sup>6</sup> - want a separate solution for the Nagas beyond the vague demand for the inclusion of some safeguards for them and other minorities in the constitution of the Indian Union. The Congress-dominated constituent assembly was determined to allow only nominal safeguards and projected the integration of the hill people via assimilation.

The light British administration notwithstanding, the opening up of the Naga hills had a devastating effect on the populations there, with resulting famines, forced labour, epidemics, loss

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<sup>5</sup> These are the reason *in addition* to those leading to the empire in the first place.

<sup>6</sup> As Neville Maxwell reminded me of in a letter, dated January 29, 2001.

of self esteem and value. In respect to their social and political identity formation it meant the widening of their horizon through heightened interaction among themselves as well as with an increasing number of Others. This process was, however, confined only to a small and western-educated élite that was predominantly trained by Christians, often Christian themselves, and employed in the service of the colonial government. Confronted with contemporary affairs and influenced by western ideas, this élite started to think about its people as a “nation”. But the élite was an exception. For the majority of the Nagas it was only the Second World War that made them receptive to arguments of their élite that a life purely oriented at and dedicated to the locale was not possible anymore. The boundaries of the populations which were considered by the plains people as “Nagas” had already been roughly defined before British arrival. The British were only left with the task to find out the basis of this categorisation and the finer divisions among these people themselves.

The hardening of these boundaries into national ones was realised by post-colonial policy. The agents of the newly independent India professed to respect the right of the Nagas to speak for themselves. This, however, was only liberal rhetoric. As a rule Indians and Assamese looked down on the Nagas as half-savage *junglis*, saw them as unintelligible forest dwellers that had to be ruled and Indianised, if necessary by force – the best language these savages understood. This attitude and objective was not uncommon in the post-colonial world. The government of India thus deprived the Nagas of any right that could have gone unchallenged and, finally, invaded and occupied their country. When the Nagas refused to obey orders or to cooperate, they were terrorised into submission. The Nagas retaliated in kind and Nehru sent the army in. From then on it was the Indian army that was the main nation-building agency in the hills. As Naga resistance persisted, the Indian state started to employ a second strategy: concessions, a share of power and funds to build up a collaborator class in order to divide the Nagas. The strategy which McGarry and O’Leary define as “Hegemonic Control”<sup>7</sup> has divided Naga factions against each other. From the perspective of the Indian State, it has proven extremely successful.

It was precisely these short-sighted and very crude measures that antagonised the Nagas to the extent that they categorically refused to become incorporated into the Indian union and became determined to keep fighting for regaining their freedom, despite heavy costs. The modern Indo-Naga war is clearly a product of post-colonial politics and could have been avoided. There were several points and turns where Phizo signalled that the Nagas would accept

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<sup>7</sup> See John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary, *The Politics of ethnic Conflict Regulation: Case Studies of Protracted Ethnic Conflict* (London, 1993), see chapter 1.

something short of complete sovereignty. Nehru had the standing to push such constitutional arrangement through parliament, but it seemed not to have been within the scope of India's decision-makers' imagination. Rather than negotiate, India's political élite then and now were ideologically inclined for expansion and domination, not for accommodation. An interesting topic for future research would be into the different sources that feeds this post-colonial ideology that has served as the ideological underpinning for the post-colonial policy as it was employed vis-à-vis the Nagas,<sup>8</sup> in particular, and the periphery in general. Qualitative research among retired army and administrative personnel who have served in the Naga hills would have to be part of such an undertaking.

Regarding the Nagas themselves, further research is urgently needed. This would include recording oral histories which could then be embedded, and cross-checked with other historical and contemporary sources about the region. Likewise, a detailed narrative of the Nagas under British colonialism is still missing – a task which would require a major research effort in which the excellent collection of documents held by the British Library would need to be carefully evaluated. Above all, the very recent history of the Nagas demands that researchers be allowed free access to the region to write a history that transcends the all pervasive propaganda as well as addresses the serious limitations of the region being sealed off from the rest of the world for several generations.

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<sup>8</sup> Chandler, for instance, has demonstrated at the example of the notorious Tuol Sleng prison under the Democratic Cambodia regime that to understand the unique form of state terror we have to abolish the tradition-modern divide, see David Chandler, *Voices from S-21: Terror and History in Pol Pot's Secret Prison* (Berkeley, 1999).

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

*Identity, War and The State In India:  
The Case Of The Nagas*

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| Page 33                    | <i>Naga Frontier</i>   | Source: H. K. Barpujari, <i>Problem of the Hill Tribes</i> (Gauhati, 1978).   |
| Page 62                    | <i>Map of Burma</i>  | Source: Captain Henry Yule, 'On the Geography of Burma and its Tributary States', <i>Journal of the Royal Geographical Society</i> , Vol. 27, London, 1857, pp. 54-108. |
| Page 75                    | <i>Angami Naga Country</i>                                   | Source: J. H. Hutton, <i>The Angami Nagas</i> (Bombay, 1969 [1921]).  |
| Page 121                   | <i>Naga Tribes</i>   | Source: Ibid.   |
| Page 190                   | <i>Japanese Offensive</i>                                    | Source: S. W. Kirby, <i>The War Against Japan</i> (London, 1961).   |
| In pocket at end of thesis | <i>India and Adjacent Countries, Sheet No. 83, Dibrugarh</i> | Source: Survey of India Office, Calcutta, 1924.   |

*Abbreviations*

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| AP         | Assam police   |
| APB        | Assam police battalion                                 |
| AR         | Assam rifles   |
| CC         | chief commissioner                                     |
| DC         | district commissioner                                  |
| EIC        | East India Company                                     |
| GOI        | government of India                                    |
| IA         | Indian army  |
| IB         | intelligence bureau                                    |
| INA        | Indian National Army                                   |
| INC        | Indian National Congress                               |
| ISF        | Indian security forces                                 |
| MP         | member of parliament                                   |
| MNF        | Mizo National Front                                    |
| NEFA       | Northeast Frontier Area                                |
| NFG        | Naga federal government                                |
| NHD        | Naga hills district                                    |
| NHDTC      | Naga hills district tribal council                     |
| NHG        | Naga home guard  |
| NHTA       | Naga hills tribal area                                 |
| NPC        | Naga People's Convention                               |
| NSCN (I-M) | National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isaak - Muivah) |
| NSCN (K)   | National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang)      |
| NNC        | Naga National Council                                  |
| NWS        | Naga Women's Society                                   |
| NYM        | Naga Youth Movement                                    |
| PIL        | People's Independence League                           |
| SDO        | sub-divisional officer                                 |
| SP         | superintendent   |
| TFD        | Tuensang frontier division                             |
| ULFA       | United Liberation Front of Assam                       |
| UNO        | United Nations Organisation                            |



## *Glossary*

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <i>alhou</i>       | supreme being in Sema cosmology                              |
| <i>ang</i>         | chief among the Konyak Nagas                                 |
| <i>dobashi</i>     | interpreter  |
| <i>gaonbura</i>    | village headman  |
| <i>germa</i>       | auspicious days during which certain activities were taboo   |
| <i>godown</i>      | warehouse (here for storing food provisions)                 |
| <i>kebel</i>       | territorial division of Naga villages                        |
| <i>lungkizumba</i> | supreme being in Ao cosmology                                |
| <i>mandala</i>     | symbolic figure representing the universe                    |
| <i>morung</i>      | young men/ women dormitory with social and educational tasks |
| <i>raj</i>         | British rule in South Asia                                   |
| <i>raja</i>        | king   |
| <i>ryat</i>        | settler-cultivator   |
| <i>satyagraha</i>  | non-violent non-cooperation                                  |
| <i>sepoy</i>       | soldier in British service                                   |
| <i>swaraj</i>      | self-rule  |
| <i>thana</i>       | police post  |
| <i>tsungrem</i>    | earth spirits  |
| <i>ukepenopfu</i>  | supreme being of Angami cosmology                            |

## *Spelling*

It was endeavoured to standardise the spelling of names and places in the main body of the text. The spelling in the quotes and in the sources in the footnotes that is often at random, however, was left untouched. The important places and names, though, will be recognisable.

In the same way the spelling in the quotes was left in the original, despite often being mistaken or dated.

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### ***5. Newspapers and Journals***

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